

Seven Life Lessons Children Learn from Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer

BY MARISA SVALSTEDT



As a child, and even today as an adult, my favorite Christmas movie was always the 1964 film Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer. For some reason I always found it the most magical of all the Christmas movies. The stop motion animation always made the characters stand out in comparison to regular cartoon films, while the deep comforting voice of Burl Ives sings songs and narrates throughout Rudolph's journey. As a mother, I couldn't wait to show my daughter my favorite Christmas movie in the hopes of her feeling the same way. Having bought the DVD, I've been ready since October to finally debut it to my two-year-old. While I always enjoyed the story I've never stopped to truly think about the variety of messages delivered amidst all the singing and creativity. I'd never realized the several life lessons instilled in this classic Christmas tale; lessons that are just as valid today as they were the first viewing **on December 6th, 1964.**

1. **Don't judge others based on their differences**

Granted, Rudolph's difference is pretty cool to us. A shiny red nose is pretty darn cool; however, in this story different, no matter how glowing and shiny isn't very cool, and we

watch as Rudolph is treated like an outcast and defriended by those who'd previously thought he was just like them. In today's world, it's a very meaningful lesson. Children need to learn from a young age about embracing diversity, because no one should ever feel left out or treated poorly simply for being a little different.

2. **Follow your dreams**

Hermy, the elf who becomes Rudolph's sidekick is a fellow outcast because he doesn't wish to do the same job every elf is born into. He wants to be a dentist. Though he's told his dreams of being a dentist are ridiculous, he doesn't bow his head and do what others expect. Instead, he follows what is in his heart, and at the end of the story appears to be well on his way to becoming the first elf-dentist. It's a wonderful message that tells children they can grow up to be whatever they want as long as they never give up, and that they should never let anyone dictate how their life should be.

3. **You can't run away from your problems**

Rudolph and his friends leave home because they feel they don't fit in, but it doesn't matter where they go because they cannot escape who they are. Even when they find the island of misfit toys it's clear that though the misfits

have created their own community, they are still unhappy and unfulfilled. There is no Utopia, and though the grass may seem greener on the other side, it's probably not. One needs to learn to face fears, and fight battles if they are ever going to find peace.

4. Your home will always be your home

Even after Rudolph's long journey, despite his reasons for leaving, he is compelled to return and reunite with his family. In short, home is where one's heart is. My husband told me something similar when I spoke about moving across the country to a warmer climate. He said, "You're going to miss this place, because this place will always be your home," and after careful consideration, I realized he was right. There is always something comforting about home no matter how much has gone wrong over the years.

5. Parents are only human and make mistakes too

Rudolph's father makes the mistake of hiding his child's unique nose because he is afraid that no one will accept him. Unfortunately this delivers a message that he is ashamed of his own child, and doesn't love him for who he is, even though he clearly regrets his mistake later. Parents do things in the spirit of doing what they think is best for their child, but it doesn't mean that their solutions are always

right, or that they don't love their children as much as anyone else.

6. It feels good helping others

When Rudolph has Santa Claus visit the Island of Misfit Toys it is a beautiful moment indeed. The overjoyed toys are saved from their exile and destined to live in homes of their own with children who love them. The lesson is obvious. It is a joyful thing showing kindness toward others, and simply seeing the happiness brought by such kindness is more than enough reward.

7. Never underestimate the underdog

While Rudolph was originally shunned for his differences, he ends up being the hero of the story as he is able to light Santa's way through the fog. This speaks to every kid who's ever been teased for being a nerd, a dork, a loser or an outcast. One never knows who will grow up to be a great success. Greatness can be achieved by anyone, even those least expected.

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