

Not Just kidding Around

Kim and Jason Kotecki encourage others to live more abundantly by embracing childhood ideals.

Between balancing the demands of career and family, paying the bills, running a household and maintaining your health, being a grown-up can seem like all work and no fun. However, Kim and Jason Kotecki believe you can mitigate the stress of what they call “Adulthood” by approaching life with childlike enthusiasm.

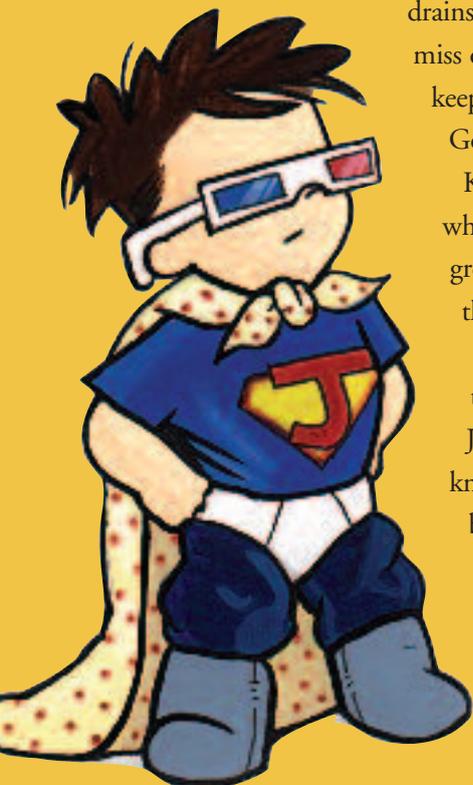
The Madison, Wisconsin-based couple, who hail from the Illinois Valley (she grew up in Ottawa, he in Peru), have built a business, Kim & Jason, around helping folks to rediscover their childhood values through motivational seminars, books, comics, and a Web site that includes a weekly TV show, blog and an online store.

Their “escape adulthood” mantra is firmly grounded in faith, says Jason. “It all stems from Jesus’ admonition that we should become more like children and also his idea that we should live life

abundantly,” he says. “I believe Adulthood drains us of our passion, causes us to miss out on the best parts of life, and keeps us from becoming the people God created us to be.”

Kim and Jason met as teens while Christmas caroling with a group of friends. Shortly after that, the two arranged to meet with a mutual friend. Though the friend didn’t show, Kim and Jason spent hours talking. “I

knew there was a real connection between us,” remembers Jason, who decided Kim was a keeper when she expressed appreciation for the cute comics he drew for her.



Kim, too, felt an instant affinity for Jason. “I knew Jason was ‘the one’ when I quickly discovered that I could be silly and 100 percent childlike around him, without having to filter myself. He welcomed my playfulness and joined right in.”

They went on to attend the same college and eventually married, in 2000. Those “sappy little drawings” Jason made for Kim evolved into a comic strip about the adventures of two 5-year-olds, and led to the launch of the Kim & Jason business. A friend encouraged Jason to write a book about the childlike ideals he’d been incorporating into the comic, and that first book, *Escape Adulthood: 8 Secrets from Childhood for the Stressed-Out Grown-Up*, was released in 2005.

At about that time, Jason began doing some speaking, first in schools talking about cartooning, and later in churches talking about the themes in his book. “The message really resonated with people, and now we speak all over the country—to churches, businesses and associations—about using these strategies from childhood to achieve life balance, stress less, and have more fun,” he says.

Since then, he’s written several other books on the topic, including the latest, *There’s an Adult in My Soup*, which debuted in September. Although the daily comic strip was retired in 2007, Jason has been working on a new, full-color Kim & Jason project.

As a boy growing up in Peru, Jason enjoyed art, but he aspired to become a superhero or a visionary filmmaker like George Lucas. Though neither of those dreams came to pass, Jason believes that he has achieved the essence of what he admired about both of those vocations: “When I dig deep and examine why I wanted to achieve those dreams, it becomes clear that I wanted to help people and to inspire and entertain them, using my creativity as a catalyst.”

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Kim also dreamt of work that would involve helping others and caring for those in need—in her case, she hoped to someday be a mother and a veterinarian. After graduating from Northern Illinois University, Kim spent five years as a kindergarten teacher before leaving teaching to focus on the Kim & Jason business full time. With the birth of the couple’s first child, Lucy Ruth, in December 2008, she added the title of “Mom” to her resume.

Becoming parents hasn’t altered their mission, but has added a new dimension to it. “Lucy’s presence in my life has opened my eyes to the juggling act of parenthood. It has lit a passion within me to help other parents figure out the alignment of their demands, in order to put family first and still live a stress-free, abundant life,” says Kim, who hopes to develop e-books and materials offering tips and inspiration to busy parents.

Both Kim and Jason believe that, in these challenging economic times, it is more important than ever to embrace a more childlike spirit. Jason notes that doing so allows us to choose joy in the face of the “doom and gloom” stories in the media. “It also allows us to look at the world with new eyes, seeing opportunities that we might otherwise overlook,” he says. “A childlike perspective also helps us focus on what’s really important in life, such as the memories we create with the people we love, which more often than not, have absolutely nothing to do with money.”

Despite their work, Kim and Jason aren’t exempt from Adulthood themselves. At those times, they find humor and prayer to be powerful antidotes. “My faith gets me through it,” says Kim. “Typically, it’s a simple little prayer for strength or patience, during one of those moments when you think you cannot continue to press on.”

Though running a business isn’t always easy, and has required a lot of faith and persistence, Jason says he wouldn’t have it any other way. “God has certainly blessed me with some wonderful talents, and I’ve worked hard to develop those gifts and follow my passion,” he says. “I know of no better way of nurturing your spirit than waking up each morning knowing that you are doing what you were created to do: use your talents to make a difference.” Adds Kim, “I believe we

are all called to an adventurous journey, if we’re open to it. God has something awesome planned for each of us, and it’s up to us to move forward in faith or stay back in fear.”

Fall into Fun

Fall is Kim’s favorite season and fall activities are the source of many happy childhood memories, such as jumping into a pile of crunchy leaves and roasting marshmallows in the fireplace. She encourages you to make it a point to delight in a few of these fall favorites:

- Listen to the crunch of dry leaves underfoot.
- Marvel at the gorgeous palette of foliage.
- Collect tiny treasures, like acorns or a particularly pretty leaf.
- Pile on the mini marshmallows and relish a cup of cocoa on the first chilly day.
- Snuggle into a bed made with the softest flannel sheets.
- Fill a dish with Halloween candy, just for you. Candy corn or pumpkins, anyone?



If you’re looking for ways to Escape Adulthood, and live a life with less stress and more fun, join Kim & Jason Nation at www.KimandJason.com.