

## What is the Heart of the Wish?

The “Heart of the Wish” or the “Essence of the Wish” are terms we use to describe the underlying desire or motive in the child’s expressed Wish. It is often unsaid or only alluded to by the child, but if we can understand the heart of a child’s Wish it will ensure we are providing a unique, high quality Wish experience to each Wish family. Furthermore, it will allow us to focus on the why when planning the Wish in accordance with our policies and practices.

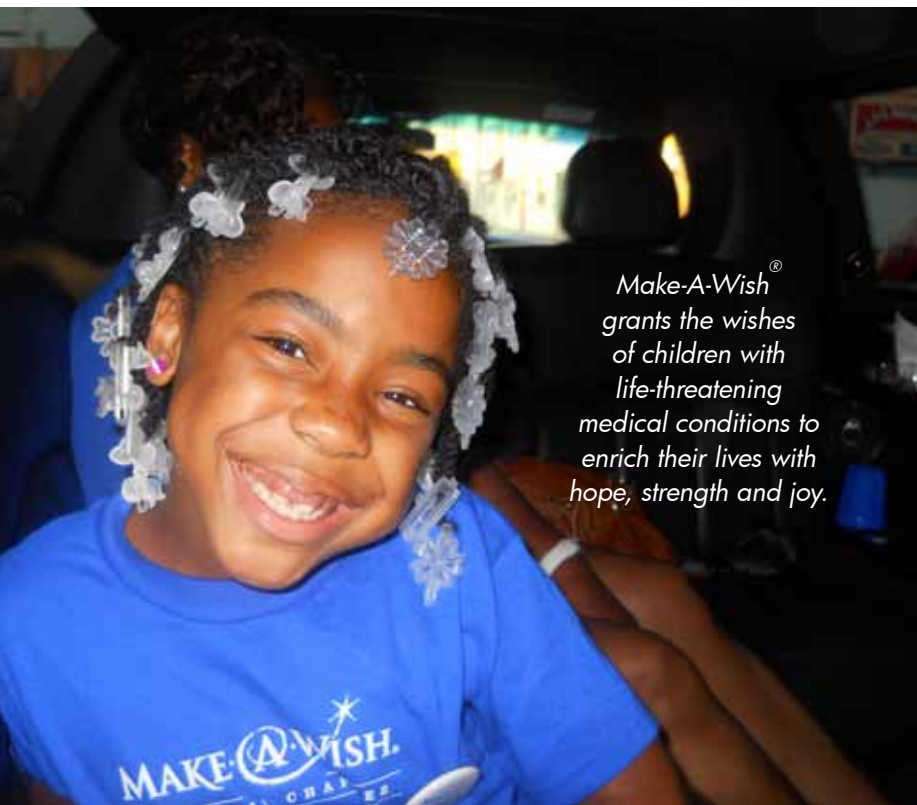
Ask open-ended follow up questions to understand the “why?”

Allow the entire family to be part of the experience, though the Wish Child should have the opportunity to have the final say.

Embrace the silence so that the child may think and not feel pressured.

Actively listen and echo what the child is saying back to him or her so the child knows you are hearing what is being said and offering a chance for correction if it is not quite what he/she meant.

On the following pages you will find further suggestions and example scenarios on how you can capture the heart of your wish child’s wish!



*Make-A-Wish® grants the wishes of children with life-threatening medical conditions to enrich their lives with hope, strength and joy.*

## Activities/Games



**Below are some great ways to get to know your child while letting wish ideas emerge...**

### Complete the “I Wish” Workbook

- This is provided to the Wish Family with their welcome packet, but is also attached in an email with your wish assignment should the family have misplaced their copy.
- There are two versions; one for children 12 and under and one for children 13 and over.
- If the family has not completed the workbook, walk through the different wish types with the child. Brainstorm different ideas and write them down as you go.
- For children 12 and under, their workbook will have images to help jump start their imagination.
- Encourage your Wish Child to color in the images or add new images while you ask questions about what he or she might like to do.

### Pro/Con List

- Bring it back to the basics by taking a few of their initial ideas and making a pro and con list for each idea.
- After your child is finished with the pro and con list for each idea, assess which one has the most cons and begin eliminating those concepts until the list has been narrowed down to one or two wish ideas.

### M&M Game

- Each M&M color represents a Wish category or question (e.g., Yellow = I want to go? Brown = I want to be?).
- Have the child take a handful of M&Ms. Before she/he eats each M&M, have him/her answer the question relating to the color.
- Invite siblings and parents to play too.

### It’s Raining Wishes

- Draw an umbrella on a piece of paper.
- Cut out a handful of raindrop shapes, or simply draw them on the paper, and have the child write different wish ideas on the raindrop and glue them to the umbrella.
- Invite siblings to play, too.

## Tips for Non-Speaking Wish Children

- It’s important that you gain insight into your Wish Child through the help of the Child’s family members and/or care taker(s).
- Ask the family if there is anything they can share with you to show or help you understand the Wish Child even better. (e.g., photos, stories)
- You will want to understand how your Wish Child communicates? Is it through:
  - Sounds/vocalizations (wail, cry, yell, laugh)
  - Non-Sounds (quietness)
  - Facial expressions (eye or mouth movement, smiling, pursing lips)
  - Body movements (nodding, tilting head, waving arms)
  - Actions (holding breath, reaching out)
  - Stillness (stopping movements, stiffening)
- Make sure the child is a part of the conversation when deciding this wish so you can gauge interest level and/or excitement.
- Ask what impact the wish will have on the child.
- Some families find it hard to choose a wish on behalf of their child. By asking these questions it might help the family determine the perfect wish for their child...
  - What makes your child happy/excited/stimulated?
  - What things overwhelm your child?
  - How does your child play?
  - Does your child go to therapy? If so, what is his or her favorite part?
  - What item(s) would improve his or her quality of life?
  - Where does your child seem the most comfortable?

## Tips for Young Wish Children

- Experts tell us that a young child will usually wish for a “thing” rather than a trip, and that children usually tell you their real wish after naming two or three other things first.
- Many kids between the ages 2 ½ and 5 can’t intellectually understand a wish so it’s important that you get to know your child first.
- Rather than asking your Wish Child questions similar to an interview ask questions while playing together. Studies have shown that play is a medium through which children explore, learn, connect and joyfully engage with the surrounding world.
- Completing the All About Me/Favorites section of the wish paperwork is especially important to fill out with your Wish Child to help you understand the child better and may make determining a wish a bit easier.



## Choosing a Wish

### Questions to ask when the wish is unknown . . .

It is possible that the Wish Child will not know what his or her wish is at the initial visit and this is OK! Your job as a wish granter is to help your child understand all the possibilities. Wishing is a big job and by asking these questions it will help your Wish Child imagine all the possibilities...

- If you could go anywhere where would you go?
- If you could have anything what would it be?
- If you could be anyone who would it be?
- If you could meet anyone who would it be?
- Where is your favorite place to go?
- What is your favorite thing to do?
- What makes you laugh/smile?
- What is your favorite toy?
- Is there always something you have wanted to try?
- What would make you feel special?



### Questions to ask when the wish is known . . .

Some Wish Children know exactly what they want, but even so, you still want to understand why the child has chosen this wish so we can ensure the heart of the wish has been captured. By asking these questions it will help you understand the why...

- Why, above anything else, is this your one Wish?
- What is the most important aspect of your Wish?
- Imagine your Wish has been granted. How would you hope to describe your Wish to family and friends?
- How do you envision your Wish?
- What excites you the most about your Wish?
- What were some of your other ideas and what brought you back to your final idea?
- Have you seen or done this before? If so, why is this so important?
- Close your eyes. How do you see your wish? What do you picture when your wish is granted?

### Choosing a second wish . . .

Due to our need for physician approval and compliance with national and local policies, it is extremely important that your Wish Child provide two wish requests. We will make every effort to grant the child's primary request. However, we cannot promise or guarantee that we will be able to grant the requested wish for a variety of reasons.

## Examples

Sometimes a broad concept can turn into a very specific wish request that is not directly related to the original wish idea. Dig deeper by asking follow-up questions.

- **A child may say his wish is for \$1,000,000.**

When asked what he would do if he had \$1,000,000, he says he would buy a gift for his sister because she has been so supportive throughout his treatments. You can see that the heart of this child's wish is not to have \$1,000,000. It is for his sister to know how important her support has been to him. The heart of this wish can be fulfilled in any number of ways, from a shopping spree where he buys his sister a gift to a trip where he and his sister can create new memories together.

- **A child may say I want to be a princess.**

Good follow up questions would be: "Why would you want to be a princess?" "What does a princess do that you want to be able to do?" You may discover that she loves the Disney princess movies so she wants to spend time with them as a princess herself, which we could likely arrange at Disney World. Or, you may find that she wants to be a princess because she wants to wear a fancy dress, get her hair done and celebrate as a princess with her friends and family. This would lead us closer to a Princess Party.

## Next Steps

If a wish is determined, mail the completed paperwork to the Make-A-Wish office as soon as possible. On average it takes six to 12 months to fulfill a child's wish, pending doctor approval.

If a wish cannot be determined during the first visit:

- ✓ Encourage your Wish Child to continue thinking about his or her wish.
- ✓ Ask the child to complete the "I Wish" Workbook as homework before your next conversation.
- ✓ Set a date to touch base with your wish child by phone.
- ✓ Set up another visit so that once the child has a wish in mind you can ask the appropriate follow-up questions to understand the heart of the wish.
- ✓ If you think the family may not be ready to start the wish process, be sure they know that temporarily postponing the wish is an option.
- ✓ If you get the sense the family is nervous about potential hidden costs, please make sure to reiterate that Make-A-Wish will cover all expenses of the wish experience.



## Getting to the Heart of a Wish

