

My fantasy of being a treasure hunter started with the Kidd family in the series "Treasure Hunters" by James Patterson. I did not just passively read these books, I joined in on the adventures, actively trying to theorize where I thought the treasure was before the Kidd children unearthed it. Soon I started applying the same passion to my own life. Now, whether it is our annual family woodland Easter egg hunts, looking for my mom's lost keys, or playing the New York Times Mini Crossword every day, I am always obsessed by the research, rummage, and reward of finding what I am looking for. But as the Kidd's taught me, the hunt is not about the treasure. It is about solving the problems that arise and enjoying the adventure.

This lesson comes to me once a week at the local library where I run a tech help program, [REDACTED]. Patrons come to me with an array of technological problems, many of which present unexpected challenges that I must overcome as I go. Sometimes the problems are easy. Resetting a Facebook password, filling out a document, or most recently printing out the itinerary for a cruise. Sometimes they are hard. "I need help buying crypto", one patron said. When this happens I rely on my problem solving skills, patience, and past experiences. Sometimes the solution just takes turning things on and off, and getting lucky. Sometimes I have to educate myself, researching the issue and recommended solutions to select the best approach. The patrons are always impressed by my persistence when trying to fix their problems. Even though the things I am doing seem simple to me, to them it looks like I am a master of technology. Their reactions help me to realize that you do not need to change the world every day. Helping your community a little here and there can benefit people's lives more than you realize. Like the Kidd children, I do not get to keep the treasure, the fixed piece of technology. Instead I am left with the satisfaction of trying my hardest to solve the problem. When I have tried my best to help the patron I leave them with their own little treasure map. Whether it is a physical piece of paper or a mental image, I give them a guide on what to do if they are having problems again.

The mini chess camp I teach over the summer helps me to develop problem solving skills in young children and teach them the fun in strategizing and facing challenges. Just as the Kidd's face dilemmas in the books, the children I teach need to weigh the outcomes of their next moves. I teach them to value the progress of the game, not just the end result. The most climactic and energetic games of the camp are always the matches where the players use lots of brain power to strategize each move. The reward of the victory is always greater when the challenge is harder. By the end of chess camp every year, the children feel as if they have mastered the chess board (or at least know enough to teach their parents when they get home).

The Kidd family taught me a valuable life lesson: on a treasure map, the best part is not the X, it is the dotted lines that lead you there. The best part of the map of life is that there is no X, only dotted lines leading you to your next adventure. I will continue my treasure hunting ways by following the dotted lines, trying my best to solve problems, and enjoying the people and places I discover along the way.