

## Practical Parenting Awards

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Yesterday was probably one of the busiest days of my life! Earlier this year we were delighted when we heard that little Blankie Bear had been shortlisted for a Practical Parenting Award - from 100 entries down to the final 5. As we ummed and ahed about whether we could a) get a babysitter and b) afford to go, we decided that if we went up and back in a day then it wouldn't cost quite so much money and that the girls could be looked after by a babysitter until we got back. Yesterday morning was crazy - with lots of people ringing in the office and orders coming in from last weeks BPA Baby and Child Fair so when we eventually left the office an hour later than when we were planning to it was a mad dash for the train. Considering that we've both been staying up late every night this week working it wasn't long before we were both fast asleep on the train with all the weekly commuters around us quite unimpressed with me gently snoring in the corner.

The Aquarium was the venue for this years Practical Parenting Awards and it was an amazing location. The champagne flowed and there was an abundance of food, we had a fantastic time watching the fish and the shark dive was great. We were then led to our seats for the Awards. Comedian Jeff Green was the host and his introduction was hilarious - considering how many mums and dads were in the audience he entertained us with stories of his hormonal wife and his own experiences as a dad. As we cheered and clapped everyone who won we waited with baited breath to hear our category, but as we listened to the 'amazing people' stories from 'Birth story of the Year' to 'Health Visitor of the Year' we realised that it's not always about winning but how people cope with being a parent or how others help people when circumstances are really hard or difficult. When our category was called out we held our breath, but we had practised our Oscar losing set smile and applauded the winners. On reflection Blankie Bear was in the toy category and up against some fantastic interactive toys, so we could see that the snuggly bear may not be the whizzy toy a child would play with during the day but he would be the friendly bear you would take to bed with you to keep you company throughout the night.

We had to sneak out before the event finished as our last train left at 10.35. As we dashed out the door and ran past the millenium eye we were sad to miss the end of the party. Two and a half hours later we finally walked in the door, and then at 3am Charlotte woke me to tell me that she was cold and could she have a hot water bottle! Needless to say today I am very fuzzy round the edges but amazed at how far we have come in such a short space of time. Big congratulations to all those who won the awards and to the 'Amazing People'. Well done Practical Parenting - it was a great event - and as for Blankie Bear - well there is always next year and our new range!  
Mark enjoying his glass of Champagne and the fish

The amazing fish in the tank  
at The Aquarium