

Movement in Early Childhood Education

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More than ten years ago I wrote an article on the morning circle for the *Star Weavings* newsletter. Much has happened since then. We have seen more children with movement disturbances, and we have learned to understand more about hyperactivity and attention deficit. In the area of remedial work, practitioners from different backgrounds have worked with movement programs in order to assist school-aged children with learning difficulties.

In defining the specific task of the early childhood educator in the realm of movement, I would like to start by looking at the spiritual foundation.

Movement Is Will Activity

In his lectures to the teachers of the first Waldorf School, Rudolf Steiner describes the realms of thinking and will as opposites within the human soul (*Foundations of Human Experience*, Lecture 2).

Thinking and the ability of forming concepts link us to the past, to pre-earthly life. It is an activity based on the soul force of antipathy – that is, the ability of stepping back and reflecting. Will activity lives in the soul realm of sympathy, with the inherent gesture of uniting. It is directed towards creating something new, which will bear fruit in the future. Will is closely linked to and relies on sense experience.

Steiner describes will as inner movement, which passes through all four members of the human being, and at last becomes deed. Ideally it originates as intention in the ego, yet often will seems to act “blindly” – the intention is hidden. In the astral body, will takes on the quality of interest, of being moved inwardly. To be interested in things is a feeling-will activity. Intention and interest then work on the etheric body, which acts as the driving force within the physical body. This force then causes the

actual action. In the action itself, will as a process of movement comes to an end and loses its quality of inner activity (*Foundations of Human Experience*, Lecture 4).

Steiner describes further that the movement of the limbs is caused by a “force body,” through which the ego impresses itself on the muscle and bone structure of the physical body (*Foundations of Human Experience*, Lecture 12). In *Being Human*, Karl König likens movement to the image of a musician (the ego) playing on an instrument (muscles and bones). Movement is the music that arises in this process. This picture of the inner soul-spiritual movement and its passing into the physical-etheric body is a key to understanding movement and working with it.

The Development of Movement in the Young Child

Karl König has given three images for the purpose of understanding movement disturbances. They also serve well in describing the essence of the incarnation process of all human beings, and provide a good foundation for understanding the first three years of life. The images relate to the incarnation into the Earth realm, the ability to make judgments related to the earthly environment, and the emerging of ego consciousness.

Movement in the Context of Incarnation into the Earth Realm

Incarnation is the process of finding one’s place in the world, of becoming conscious of and comfortable with one’s position in the three spatial dimensions of the Earth: the vertical or frontal plane, the horizontal plane, and the sagittal plane (which divides right from left). For the young child, the frontal plane arises when the upright, vertical posture of the human being is achieved, in which the standing human being separates the front space from back space. The child experiences the space in front quite comfortably, as the eyes can see what is there. The space in the back is more difficult to become comfortable with. While the front is explored actively through all forms of moving forward, the back space is the unknown and is explored through the sense of hearing. To become comfortable with the back space is crucial for the development of trust. If the child does not achieve this balanced position between front and back, then

insecurity and a fearful attitude towards life may arise.

In kindergarten education, we work more with the front and less with the back space. But there are games that one can play for the exploration of the back space. One can listen into the quiet space after the song is over, one can play the lyre or the cymbals behind the back of a child, or play games that require the closing of one’s eyes and listening.

In exploring the front space, there are of course all the different ways and paces of walking, running, and stopping, which need to be practiced all through early childhood. Varied, lively movement patterns are a constant source of joy for the children. A few steps into the back space may be added to encourage the child in using his senses of balance and hearing.

Incarnation is very much a process of “moving into,” of contracting from the far soul spaces of the cosmos into an earthly body. One can study this in the movement development in the first year of life, even in the movements in the womb. Some of the primary reflexes are wonderful images of the gestures of contraction and expansion. The withdrawal reflex gives the gesture of curling up, the Moro reflex the gesture of expanding into the back space. The tonic labyrinthine reflex expresses contraction in bending forward and expansion in bending backward. The symmetrical tonic neck reflex shows the expansion in the wonderful upward stretch of head and arms and the contraction in the lowering of head and arms below the spine level towards the ground. These reflexes supersede each other in strict sequence within the healthy development of movement, and they are replaced in the course of the first year of life by the postural head righting and equilibrium reflexes as steps towards upright standing (Blythe, *The Well Balanced Child*).

While these unconscious, instinctive gestures are replaced on the physical level with willed, conscious movement, they remain in the form of the archetypal gestures of contraction and expansion within our souls, and they remain within the psychological repertoire of individual reactive patterns. They are deeply human gestures, performed by the young child physically and the older child and adult inwardly. They should not be likened to or practiced as animal gestures, as they

are gestures of the incarnating ego, filled with bodily religious devotion.

But the practice of expansion and contraction in other forms will be a wonderful help for the incarnation of the ego. Eurythmy, in its educational and therapeutic forms, has always understood the harmonizing and balancing quality of these archetypal human movements. All through early childhood they can be practiced, starting with the gentle stroking of the baby's curled-up hand, followed by a variety of finger and hand games of opening and closing, and arriving at the whole body movements of curling up and standing straight or the moving between the center and periphery of the circle. Wilma Ellersiek's hand-touching games are a wonderful example of how we can work with the very young child towards a comfortable moving between these two poles of human existence.

Movement in the Realm of Feeling: Recognizing the World Around Us, Identifying, and Making Judgments

Karl König relates these abilities to the movement of the arms and hands. In gaining uprightness, arms and hands are freed from carrying the body and have the potential to explore the world. The image is that of the arms moving like wings on both sides of the body, above and below the horizontal plane, perceiving the different qualities of the space above and below, of the region of the limbs and of the head region. Hands make sense of the world in touching objects, in identifying/judging what is there and responding inwardly to this experience with sympathy or antipathy. This discriminating faculty develops strongly from the second year of life onwards, in conjunction with the development of speech. It is interesting to see in diagrams of the brain that the hand actually takes a large space in the part of the cortex that is responsible for the control of movement. The speech centers are located close by. Speech therapy has long discovered the connection between movement and speech development and the special role that the hand plays in the process of the differentiation of speech.

On a physical level, speech development is dependent on the successful integration of movement with the visual and auditory senses. On a soul-spiritual level, the acquisition of speech needs the model of the speaking human being, the tone

of voice, the color of a particular language, and the rhythm of speech. There is a link between speech and music, which has been acknowledged recently by Sally Goddard Blythe, Director of the Institute of Neuro-Physiological Psychology in the UK. In her book *The Well-Balanced Child*, she indicates that music can play a decisive role in overcoming problems with both speech and subsequent learning. In Waldorf early childhood education, it has always been good practice to model moving in conjunction with speech or in conjunction with singing. Waldorf kindergarten teachers practice this with the children on a daily basis in the morning circle.

The work of Wilma Ellersiek needs to be mentioned in this context as well, as her rhythmical musical hand gesture games provide an excellent educational and therapeutic tool for the development of speech and movement based on the involvement of the child's rhythmical system and life of feeling.

Right-Left Discrimination and the Awakening of Ego Consciousness

The third step in the development of movement is related to movement on both sides of the axis of symmetry of the body or midline, and to gaining awareness of right and left. König names three steps in the first year of life, which are a preparation for this achievement:

The first step occurs when the eyes of the child begin to look at an object (frontal plane) and the gaze then becomes focused (sagittal plane).

The second step is achieved when both hands of the child grasp an object and the hands thus move from the horizontal plane into the sagittal plane.

The third step occurs in walking, in the alternation of the left and right leg where the frontal and the sagittal planes are explored. This is a parallel movement of the legs on both sides of the body without a crossing over. Both feet and legs perform the same movements, yet with a time difference caused by the requirements of keeping balance in walking.

All three planes are used in varied combinations and manifold ways before a full integration is achieved.

König's observations can serve as an indicator towards the right approach to the learning of the right-left discrimination. All through early

childhood, the child continues practicing to move both hands in a parallel manner. The individualization and independence of the hands as a prerequisite for the crossing over from one side to the other develops only gradually.

Dominance – in right-handed children usually defined as preference for the upper, right, front option within the three planes – is the last aspect to develop and is finally achieved only around the ninth year. This step coincides with the major step of gaining consciousness of one's individuality. At the age of nine, the child has reached the adult proportion of the equal length of the body height and the outstretched arms. It has been observed in eurythmy lessons with children around age nine that they now for the first time perform comfortably the exact cross-position, the gesture of the ego. It is interesting that musically the child progresses from the pentatonic to the diatonic inner musical experience at the same time.

In early childhood, the right-left discrimination should only be gently prepared. The consciousness of the child should not be focused on working out which hand or leg should be used. Most of the guided movements in the morning circles should be based on parallel movements of both arms and hands. In some parts of the circle the hands can take on different roles such as nest and bird, pot and stirring spoon, cat and dog, little Miss Muffet and the spider, and so on. If verses such as "The moon on the one hand, the sun on the other . . . the moon on the left, the sun on the right" are used, they should be practiced without correcting children, if they do not show signs of left-right discrimination as yet.

Movement Programs in Early Childhood

Movement and the Child Under Three

The development of movement, speech, and thinking in the first three years of life is guided and protected by spiritual beings. They work through the environment, and the human being is seen as a model for such faculties as uprightness and walking. Without the model of human beings, the child does not achieve uprightness, but without the deep yet unconscious intention of wanting to be upright and walk – and this is the spiritual side – the model would be of no avail. Both have to come

together. In the early years, the child seems to be guided from inside, and seems to intuitively "know" what he or she needs to do: an endless practice of the most varied movement combinations. Rudolf Steiner advises us to leave the child undisturbed and uninstructed at this early stage of development. The child self-educates with the help of spiritual beings. The undisturbed exploration of movement "from inside out" is the precondition for the development of a sense of freedom in the child. This situation changes around the age of three. Now Rudolf Steiner recommends eurythmy as being of great benefit for children. Obviously the child has reached a level of development where the child not only unconsciously absorbs what lives in the environment, but is approachable to being guided into certain movement patterns and imitates them.

Imitation and Guided Movement with Children from Age Three to Seven

The child at the age of three lives in a natural desire to participate – filled with sympathy for the surroundings and with more ability to experience the self in relationship to other human beings. This participatory consciousness still mirrors the wonderful harmony and interweaving spiritual activity of the pre-earthly existence and of the early stages of human development. The child imitates out of a natural attitude of devotion and trust in the goodness of the world. As kindergarten teachers, we imprint our way of doing things into the still-malleable physical organs of the child. Hence, the great importance of the quality of our gestures. These gestures are imitated by the children and enter into the physical body of the child more deeply than the spoken word or the singing. We can observe various stages in the process of imitating movements: from the purely inward moving that may show itself only in the facial expression, to the small occasional hand movement, to the movement of the whole body.

The impulse to move lives much stronger in children than in adults. It is a natural expression of the strength of their will forces and their healthy etheric forces. Steiner points out that children in the fourth year naturally want to dance. He adds that if eurythmy could be introduced at this age, the children would be strengthened in their ego forces for developing responsibility regarding their tasks

in life in their twenties. He did not give reasons for this, but one can ponder oneself on the specific situation of the child at this stage of development.

On the one hand, the child is most active in the will, the consciousness is still dreamy, and the element of sympathy pervades the child's movements. In this the mood of sympathy, children naturally love to participate in the morning circle and to connect deeply with the teacher who is guiding them in movement.

On the other hand, there appear the first signs of the emerging ego consciousness. The child self-identifies as "I" and thus begins to separate in consciousness from other human beings. This is expressed by the child saying "no," "I don't want to," "I don't like it," "you are not my friend," and so on. This new ability can easily turn into the first expression of self-centered individualism. Steiner speaks about this double-edged nature of the ego, its egotistical and its non-egotistical side, and he points out that the future development of humanity will depend on the overcoming of the egotistical element.

The three- to four-year-old child naturally still has the potential for movement, which is not yet self-expression and which is therefore non-egotistical. Through guided movement, the element of devotion and sympathy can be strengthened in the children and can counteract the tendency towards an early-awakened self-consciousness, which weakens the natural vitality and the will forces of the child.

Eurythmy as well as the circle work based on imitation lead the child away from self-feeling towards an interest in and a feeling connection with what lives in the surroundings. This includes working with the feeling quality of language, of vowels and consonants, and with the rhythm and the musical quality of words and sentences, as expressed through the delicate movement patterns of the larynx. This is a whole new area of working with children in the realm of speech, following on the working with movement as described here. Stephen Spitalny has presented some initial thoughts on this. In therapeutic eurythmy and in chirophonetics, the connection of vowel and consonant sounds with movement is used; but in early childhood movement education, the conscious use of the sounds and rhythms of language has not been developed as yet. Wilma Ellersiek has done

pioneering work in this field.

Archetypal Gestures in Working with the Morning Circle

As indicated in the section on the development of movement, there are movement patterns that express in image form the process of incarnation. They may be called "archetypal," meaning the representation of the essence or primal quality of an object, process, or being within the soul. In relation to the incarnation process, moving between expansion and contraction, in and out, above and below, up and down, front and back, and right and left have this archetypal quality. These movements follow the direction of the etheric forces in the child working from the head downward, and the direction of the soul-spiritual forces in the human being working upward through the limb system and the rhythmic system into the nerve-sense system. Within the physical body the expansion-contraction polarity is present in the breathing process, in the rhythm of breathing in and breathing out, which is the physical foundation of the life of feeling.

Within the morning circle, this breathing rhythm and the polarity of contraction-expansion are overall guiding principles. There are manifold images that lend themselves to express this polarity: opening-closing (performed with hands or as a group in a circle), going out-coming in (flying birds), lifting-pressing (the different walking of fairies or giants), jumping down (connecting with the earth), sleeping-waking, growing-withering (plant realm), hiding-reappearing. While they appear as will-filled movement, they must be brought to the child in such a way that the soul of the child is touched.

Working with the seasons of the year can help to express the feeling quality of moving between expansion and contraction as well. The mood of expansion belongs to spring and summer, the mood of contraction relates to autumn and winter. The expanding movement of spring can be performed as upward movement with the arms, the mood of summer as a kind of hovering or swaying movement in the region above the head. The contracting quality of autumn is expressed through the will-filled forward movement and the inwardness of winter by bringing movement to rest.

In studying the nature of the plant world or animal world in a specific area, one will discover

hidden links to the seasons. Birds, butterflies, and bees have a spring-summer quality, whereas some of the domestic animals such as cows and sheep fit in well with a more wintry mood. Plant cycles relate to the seasonal changes as well.

One can try to discover archetypal gestures in all realms of nature. In the realm of the human being, one can work with the gestures of care and love for other human beings, plants, and animals.

It is one of the great benefits of guided movement that one can bring the rhythmical element back into movement. Children of today do not find their way easily into rhythmical movement by themselves. Life has become too arrhythmic and children are surrounded by mechanically or electrically produced movement. They are drawn into imitating mechanical movement and quite easily fall into repetitive, lifeless movement patterns themselves. Through guided movement and images that speak to the child's feelings, it is possible to bring back the natural liveliness into the movements of children.

Observations and Suggestions for Working with Behavioral Difficulties in Movement Programs

Quite often, movement with children and especially the morning circle is not the joyful, harmoniously flowing experience it is meant to be. Instead it may be dominated by the teacher or caregiver struggling with all sorts of disturbances.

The cause may lie in flaws of the circle itself, in the inappropriateness of the images and gestures presented to the child. It may also lie in the adult not being fully in charge of the group or not inwardly fully connected with what he or she is doing. The possible reasons for difficulties need to be explored, but they are not the theme of this article. Instead, we will turn to analyzing some responses of children to guided movement that are disruptive to the morning circle.

The Developing Child

Many of the challenges in movement programs result from the developmental stage the children are passing through. There is a time for growing into the ability of participating in the morning circle, there is a "peak" time of enjoyment, and there is the time

of growing out of the morning circle. Refusing to participate or rejecting certain movement sequences may just be a sign that the child is "not yet there" or "not there anymore." The way in which children pass through these three stages varies greatly. It is influenced by factors such as temperament, strength of will, development of the lower senses, and the individual way that the child approaches the world. The child may be shy or courageous, quiet or forthcoming, cautious or daring, gentle or forceful.

The criteria for healthy development would be the following:

- An awareness of body boundaries of self and others
- Uprightness and comfort with forward movement
- Showing joy in life and signs of well-being
- Awareness of what is going on in the surroundings
- The ability to imitate.

The following examples assume that the child in question matches these criteria to some degree.

The child who is "not yet there"

A child may say after two minutes in the morning circle: "My legs are tired, I want to sit down."

Another child complains about tummy aches or headaches and wants to sit down when the preparations for the morning circle are on the way.

This may be an indication for the child not being comfortable as yet in moving with the group. Such a child should be allowed to sit down and watch until such time that he or she is eager and ready to join.

It may also be an indication of weakened life forces when children show signs of not being comfortable with an extended period of standing in an upright position. The childhood forces of levity do not counterbalance the physical weight sufficiently, and legs can become very tired and heavy then. This phenomenon of weakened life forces appears not only in the movement program, but all through the day. Waldorf early childhood education — with its strong rhythmical features, extended creative play, and the emphasis on the nurturing quality of the domestic arts — is a wonderful help in strengthening these children in order to participate fully in the movement program at a later stage.

The child who is “not there anymore”

A child makes faces and bizarre movements, thus seeking and attracting the attention of other children. This child is very aware that he or she is counteracting the purposes of the morning circle, and observes what reaction this will provoke in the teacher.

Such a child is often very awake in the senses, advanced in verbal expression, and, even though not necessarily one of the older children, may have left the stage of the young child's dreaming, participatory consciousness. Such a child is weakened in her ability to imitate, as the individualization and separation process has taken place too early. It is not always possible to reverse this process, and participation in the circle may not be beneficial for that child but only bring disturbance to the rest of the group. The child may enjoy instead an extra time with the helper in the group and benefit from a one-on-one situation.

There are the six-year-olds who move along energetically, change direction, speak the verse twice as fast as the rest of the group, and thus live out their newly gained mastery of limbs and speech.

These are the children who are growing out of the kindergarten at a regular pace. Usually these older children can be addressed verbally and they accept the authority of an adult calling them back into line. At some times during the day, one has to give them space to live out their abundance of energy and their joy in life.

The child who turns away

There are children who “drop out” when a downward movement is performed. These children let themselves fall down with a bang and land flat on their tummies, face down. Once they are there, they usually stay and need a hand to stand up again. They do not seem capable of performing a slow downward or upward movement.

While this phenomenon could be interpreted as caused by a lack of will, there also seems to be an element of regression into earlier stages of development, away from uprightness and away from the challenges of the world. One should think of those children with compassion, as they express in their language that being human and being upright is something they cannot fully cope

with as yet. Given the fact that ego consciousness appears in children ever earlier today, this reaction of not coping is of no surprise. These children need patience and encouragement with a smile and a helpful gesture, but sometimes they just have to stay where they are and experience the group weaving the circle around them.

The child who seeks contact

There are children who use every chance to bump into each other, pull, push, tumble, or just roll on the floor. Any strong movement performed in the circle, such as the blowing of the wind or the galloping of a horse, is wildly exaggerated and this will usually find some followers among the children.

Whenever I observed this phenomenon, I felt that it had to do with incarnating into modern civilization and with the destiny of the sense of touch and the experience of resistance. Modern life, with its tendency towards comfort and passivity, may not give sufficient stimulation to the sense of touch and not enough experience of boundaries. In bumping into each other, a meeting takes place in which children can work out their body borders and sense of self in a very physical way. This is of great importance for later social skills. It is an important question, how to incorporate experiences for the sense of touch in movement education, as well as in other parts of the kindergarten day.

Stagnation in Development

So far we have been looking at children who progress in their development, even though there are some apparent difficulties. These are temporary or limited to one area and usually would not adversely influence activities such as play, participation in artistic and domestic work, or following routines. Yet there are children whose entire being seems to be affected by some kind of hindrance, which can be described as a lack of ability to move freely. This has consequences for the entire life and being of this child at a given time. It is a stagnation in the physical, emotional, and social development caused by a complex mix of hindrances that have built up in the physical body and soul of the child.

It is common practice today to approach movement disturbances by trying to improve the bodily condition through appropriate exercises, which then hopefully have an impact on the

improvement of the soul condition as well.

Steiner describes the body and the soul of the young child as not yet separated. What is done to the one is done to the other. However, he saw the educator's task in the healing of the soul. Accordingly we may attempt to reach the developmental goal of the first seven years of life, the development of a healthy body, by working from the soul aspect. That means that any movement activity, any preparation of the environment, any artistic activity would then be done in such a way that it speaks to the soul of the child. The soul forces in the child's body cause the movement of the etheric forces in and around the bodily organs. If it were only the physical forces in the body that mattered, and not the soul-spiritual forces, why would we bother having a beautiful environment for the children, or beautiful images in our stories, or beautiful gestures in our morning circle? How would the sense impressions of beauty get to influence the child's physical organs, if within the physical body there was not a soul-spiritual being to perceive them and react with inner movement?

I would like to encourage early childhood educators to plan movement programs in such a way that they reach and move the child's inner being. This is crucial for the normally developing child, but even more so for those children in whom development has become stagnant. In my experience, these children cannot relate to the morning circle work and do not benefit from it without additional support. I would like to contend that the key to the effectiveness of this support lies in reaching these children's inner being. There are two aspects to the inner being that need to be considered. These are the soul aspect, which has to do with consciousness of movement and the *will to move*, and the spirit aspect, which has to do with destiny as expressed in *ways of moving* and in the specific path of movement development. Here the teacher has to work closely together with practitioners of anthroposophical therapies.

In the following paragraphs, I will give a brief description of three groups of children with more general developmental problems that are related to or expressed in the realm of movement.

The withdrawn child

Henning Köhler (author of *Working with Anxious,*

Nervous, and Depressed Children) has convincingly described how disturbances in the four lower senses can influence early development in all its aspects. In the withdrawn child, the sense of self-movement has not developed in the right way during the crucial time of the second and third year of life. Moving and exploring has either not been experienced enough or has not conveyed to the child the sense of freedom and confidence in mastering the body. On the contrary, the child's consciousness registers movement as potentially dangerous and reacts with fear and withdrawal. Verbal encouragement as well as working with imitation and example in movement will not have much effect. Once the critical second and third year have passed, the achievement of confidence in movement will rely on the building up of trust and confidence on the soul level. This can be achieved by providing a close and warm human relationship with such a child and by observing with empathy the subtle behavioral cues that may help to unlock the door to helpful intervention and further development. These cues are likely to be found in the area of play as well as in the area of movement. A health professional may give advice on further assisting measures in the realm of caring for the specific bodily needs and in balancing bodily processes.

The irritable child

These children have been in the focus of attention for the last ten years. They are the ones who cause disruption in the life of the kindergarten and in home life. Some of the disruptive behavior described earlier in this article will apply to these children as well. They would be able and may be very willing to participate in the morning circle, but they get overstimulated and agitated so easily that it is impossible to hold them within the activity.

Henning Köhler has interpreted the developmental stagnation in these children as caused by a body boundary problem together with an improperly developed sense of touch. They are either "thick skinned" or "thin skinned." In the first instance, to the children feel too enclosed in their bodies and will react with irritation and agitated behavior as a way to get out of the "prison." In the second instance, the child does not have enough of a protective layer towards the environment, and any sense impression or touching is experienced as

too much, even as painful. The child reacts with agitation in an attempt to override the sensation of discomfort or pain. The disturbance in the soul-body relationship of such a child relates back to the first year of life.

Therapy for these children needs to be based on a combination of medical treatment and an appropriate educational approach, which primarily takes away from these children any form of pressure and any form of overstimulation. Waldorf early childhood education has to offer much for these children. By working with rhythms modeled on the balance between breathing in and breathing out, one can reduce pressure and enable the child to move from a contracted soul condition into a more open space of experience. The relationship with such a child needs to be loving and undemanding, but less close than with the withdrawn child.

The defiant child

There are children who resist both the morning circle and other aspects of a Waldorf early childhood environment. At the age of four or five, they have around them already an attitude of mistrust and defiance, which one would rather expect from children approaching the age of puberty. These children may ridicule what is done in the circle or in storytelling, or they may show no interest in the toys or usual play activities of other children. They do not seem to have any specific problems with their general physical development or their senses; they are neither agitated nor withdrawn. Their stagnation lies in the soul realm, in not being able to move freely between sympathy and antipathy. They are living too strongly in isolation and the experience of being different than others.

Whether these children are a new phenomenon or have always been there can be disputed. Perhaps we just meet more of them now or have become more conscious of them.

Köhler describes his work with these children in his book *Difficult Children: There is No Such Thing*, especially in the chapter on the girl Mariella, whom he depicted with much empathy in a poem.

Why would a child psychologist use the art form of poetry rather than produce a professional case study to picture such a child? In meeting these children, we are experiencing the limits of a pedagogical or therapeutic relationship. All that is

left is the meeting of two human beings. There is no benefit in following a set of guidelines or just applying methods of behavior modification. The work with these children is built on trusting that the genuine interest of the therapist in the soul-spiritual being of the child may lead to the dissolving of blockages and towards a new beginning.

These children challenge us kindergarten teachers to think about our rhythms, routines, and activities in the Waldorf early childhood work, to think about what is important and what not, to experiment with new rules or less rules. Steiner speaks about the ego consciousness appearing as early as at eighteen months of age and the ego becoming stronger as human evolution continues. These children with their strong ego presence provide us with the task of penetrating with our soul faculties more deeply into the secrets of the human being. This will enable us to develop an education that provides the early-individualized child with the right environment and the right relationships for the development of their inherent strength in a positive way.

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