

Incorporating Movement for the Epileptic/ Hysteric Indications

Nancy Blanning

In many ways we already incorporate movements into our circle times that express the indications Steiner gave for these polarities. Whenever we vary tempo, particularly when we accelerate movement and speech to create a little bit of tension, we are giving a therapeutic gesture for the hysteric-inclined child. One could picture that with a particular child for whom this little “shocking” is intended, the child could be next to the teacher. The teacher’s calm, firm urging to “hurry up” will support the child in being “shocked” to make the shift in tempo. In general, whenever we alter the tempo, quickening or slowing down, we are offering healing experience for the hysteric constitution. For all children, the shift of pace is fun and offers opportunity to develop restraint and impulsive control of full body movement. Variation in tempo also provides a kind of breathing in the circle activity, the importance of which Steiner describes to us in the first lecture of *Study of Man*.

For the epileptic inclination, Steiner describes in *Education for Special Needs* that we want to bring the child into conscious relation to gravity. In subtle ways we do this whenever the child jumps off of something to the floor. The impact into the feet

and legs makes us more aware of body weight and the fact that we are propelled downward by gravity’s pull. The following movement journey, “Lazy Jack,” is unusual in that it employs beanbags; we do not usually carry anything or use props in our movement imaginations. This was done very consciously to emphasize the experience-of-weight element which Steiner suggests, but is something we would employ selectively.

There can be other opportunities besides circle time for giving a chance to feel weight. One favorite “game” I play with my students, which could be a small part of a movement imagination or even offered at outside or free-play time, is what we call “Erie Canal.” Using the old American folk song I remember from my childhood, the imagination is one of carrying heavy bags of grain onto a boat, which will deliver the grain downriver. A beam is propped up onto a stool or small platform, creating an elevated ramp that the child climbs up. Held in his hands or slung over one shoulder is a beanbag of anywhere from two to ten pounds in weight. I sing the song, which has a measured, slow pace to set the tempo, while the child carries the bag up and drops it onto the boat (that is, onto the floor over the edge of the stool). The child can jump off the stool or descend down the beam to get the next bag. This is repeated until all the bags are loaded. An individual child could repeat this several times; with a group, each child could carry one bag until all are loaded. When the boat has reached its imagined destination, then the bags can be unloaded and carried down off the ramp as well.

Children have loved this game. It seems to give a very satisfying feeling of experiencing one’s body through the proprioceptive (sense of self-movement) pull of weight in the limbs and in feeling related to the earth.



Lazy Jack

A movement journey based on the English tale from Jane Yolen's
Favorite Folktales from around the World

Composed by Nancy Blanning, 2008

Note: Movements in this journey were specifically chosen to incorporate indications, given by Rudolf Steiner in *Education for Special Needs*, to assist children who lean toward the constitutional polarities of epileptic/hysteric. How these apply to young children is described in the Spring/Summer 2008 Gateways article, "The Stars Are Brighter in Your Peripheral Vision," by Dr. Adam Blanning.

Preparation and equipment: Two beams of 6-8 feet in length will be needed to create ascending and descending beams. These are propped up on opposite sides of a **jump box** or very stable stool (possibly a piano bench), so the children can climb up the beam on one side and then descend down the other. A **blue cloth** will be laid upon the floor as a "brook" to be jumped over. Sufficient **bean bags**, ideally of 1½ to 2 pounds each, are needed so each person participating will have one to carry.

There was a lad named Lazy Jack

*Jump and make eurythmy /k/ gesture on "Jack,"
kick right foot forward and hit floor with heel.
Arch arms over head as roof.*

Who lived with his mother in a dreary,
poor shack.

The poor woman made her living by
spinning.

*Balance on left foot, move right as though
treadling, arms moving in circular motion to
suggest spinning wheel.*

But Jack just lay in the warm sun
grinning.

Standing still, look upward, grin.

At last she said, "I've made up my mind.
You must get work or a new home find!"

*Stomp foot for emphasis.
Cross arms on chest, nod head.*

So Jack went out to the world that day
Over the hills and far away.
Slowly up hill, quicker down

Ascend one beam, come down the other side,

*Slowly up, quicker pace down.
(Repeat as many times as necessary to
accommodate the whole group's passage across the
beams.)*

He found work with a farmer
Who paid him a penny round.
But jumping o'er the brook he lost it.
"Jack," said his mother, "always put it in
your pocket."

*Gesture digging, raking, pitchforking, etc.
Circle thumb and finger round.
Jump over blue cloth; gesture dropping the coin.

Gesture this action.*

REFRAIN:

A B A G A B A
Jack, oh Jack, you silly lad.
G G G G E G A G A G
What shall you do so things will not go bad?
A B A G A B A
Traveling through the world you go,
G G G E G A G
Shall you now go fast or slow?
A B A G A B A
Traveling in the world at last,
G G G E G A G
Will you go now slow or fast?

Sung while group circles around

holding hands.

Vary speed between faster

and slower, with some

unpredictability.

Another day he milked a cow,

*Gesture milking—fingers curling in one at a time,
index finger first, to squeeze out milk, alternating
hands.*

His pay a jug of milk right now.

He grinned and poured it in his pocket

just so,

But when he got home there was nothing

left to show.

“Oh, Jack,” said his mother, “don’t do just
what I said.

Next time carry it on your head instead.”

*Curl left arm to suggest pocket,
right hand gestures pouring into it.
Arms held open with empty palms.*

Place both hands on top of head.

REFRAIN *song as above*

Another farmer he did please
Who gave Jack a nice cream cheese.

On his head he carried it.

It melted in the sun.

Cheese and cream down his face

In rivulets did run.

“Oh, Jack,” said his mother, “This I
cannot stand.

Next time, for goodness sake, carry it
in your hands.”

*Hand each child a bean bag while
these two lines are spoken. Repeat as necessary
until all are handed out
Place bean bag on head and balance it there while
walking in circle. Repeat so everyone has at least
10 steps.*

*Index fingers trace lines down face, eyes down to
chin. Tip head forward to slide bean bag off head
into hands*

*Hands held out together, palms
upward, in carrying gesture.*

REFRAIN *song*

Next he helped the baker who
Gave him an old tom cat.
The cat did not sit still at all
But jumped and clawed and spat.

“Not in your hands,” his mother said,
“But tie it with a string.
Pull it along behind you
To home then bring.”

REFRAIN *song*

Then he helped a butcher
Who gave him a piece of meat.
He tied it to a string
And pulled it home through the street.

Said Mother, “You’re a ninnyhammer,
Jack.
Carry it upon your shoulder like a great
big sack.”

REFRAIN *song*

On Monday he was paid a donkey for
his work.
To lift the donkey to his shoulder Jack
did not shirk.
He staggered on along the lane
Until to the rich man’s house he came
Where there lived a pretty girl
Who always was so sad.
Said her father, “I will marry her to
Whoever makes her glad.”
She could not laugh or hear or speak.
She could not even make a peep.

*Walk around in circle form without
holding hands. Each carries her own bean bag.
Set pace according to how hard the bags are
to carry.*

Hold bean bag in upturned hands as the cat.

*Begin to shake the bean bag, tossing and catching
it as children can, letting it fall to floor on “spat.”*

*Hands, palms up, held open.
Tying gesture
Right hand extended back to gesture
pulling something along.*

Walk in circle holding bags.

Hold bean bag out as the meat.

*Place bean bag on floor and hold on to one corner
of the bag, leaning down to drag it a short
distance. Leave it on floor to free hands for
next gesture.*

Arms open in exasperation.

*Motion as though slinging a sack up on one’s
shoulder. Leave bags on the floor, circle around
holding hands.*

Do donkey kick 3X (see below)
Each pick up a bag from floor
Put bean bag up onto one shoulder to carry it
as the donkey.
Bend under the load, stagger along.
Continue to walk slowly through this stanza.*

But Jack and the donkey were so silly
to see,
She laughed and she giggled and spoke
with glee.
The donkey Jack put down.
They were married that day.
Now all the village can dance and play

*Place bean bag on the floor.
Everyone joins hands to dance
around in a circle.*

REFRAIN *with revised words:*

Jack, oh Jack, you silly lad,
All has turned out well,
Things did not go bad.
Traveling through the world you go.
Shall you now go fast or slow?
Traveling in the world at last.
Will you go now slow or fast?

*Dance around with varying speed
as before.*

Now we all can use a rest.
Lying on the soft ground is best.

*Everyone lies down for a resting
interlude. Sing lullaby if desired.*

*** DONKEY KICK:** *Bend over and place both hands on the floor. Kick your feet up behind you, holding weight on your hands. The donkey would kick up both feet together at the same time. This is ideal, but kicking up the legs one after the other in a kind of frolic is fine, too. The important aspect in this exercise is that the body weight is borne by the hands and arms and then that some pressure is brought into the feet, ankles, and legs as the body tips back down onto the feet. Rock back and forth between arms and legs bearing the body weight as the donkey would.*

