Gateways

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From the Editor

Stephen Spitalny

A colleague in Denmark, Christine Christiansen, sent along a short and noteworthy quote from *The Sense of Wonder*, by Rachel Carson, perfect for starting off this issue of *Gateways*. Carson writes, "If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in." It reminds me of something Rudolf Steiner wrote (in *The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy*) that has appeared in these pages before. "Pleasure and delight are the forces that most properly enliven and call forth the organs' physical forms. . . The joy of children in and with their environment, must therefore be counted among the forces that build and shape the physical organs. They need teachers that look and act with happiness and, most of all, with honest, unaffected love. Such a love that streams, as it were, with warmth through the physical environment of the children may be said to literally 'hatch' the forms of the physical organs." Two different takes on how important it is for developing children to be surrounded by adults who live joyously.

In taking an overview of this issue, it seems there is almost a theme—the development of the senses, though, the senses taken from a very wide viewpoint. It has been described in various ways how the totality of the young child is like a sense organ. All that is experienced, on many levels, is taken deeply in and become the substance, as it were, for the building up of children's physical bodies and their patterns of soul response to experience. These sense impressions, or images, come in a wide ranging variety and include what can be seen, heard, smelled, tasted and touched, as well as the feelings and thoughts of the people around them, the images from stories told to them, the screen media watched and the food ingested. From one angle, we can say it is important to make sure the child is experiencing healthy images, healthy sense impressions that will support her or his development. Through another lens, we can say that all sense impressions are a type of nutrition, not unlike food. And we could say it is important to make sure the child is given nutritious experiences that are full of healthy building material especially during their formative years, for the building up of soul capacities, life forces and the physical body. One could say that the central role of early childhood educators is to create a healthy environment for the children to develop within, as well as advise parents as to how they could create a healthy environment for their child's developing as well. This issue of *Gateways* offers a variety of thoughts about the creation of that healthy environment, not merely the support of the lower senses, but also how the adult can be a healthier element of that environment, and even how the food the child eats, the food provided by the adults, is also an essential part of that environment.

The Alliance for Childhood has just released their latest research project report entitled *Crisis in the Kindergarten: Why children need to play in school*. Written by Joan Almon, former chair of WECAN, and Edward Miller, this report is a call to action to bring play back into programs for young children.

> *Didactic instruction and standardized testing have pushed play out of early childhood education. Meanwhile, other social and technological trends in children's lives, such as increasing screen time and the linking of toys to TV shows, films, and commercial*

web sites, also undermine creative play. "Adult life begins in a child's imagination," writes poet Dana Gioia, former chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, "and we've relinquished that imagination to the marketplace." The withering of imagination in childhood is a looming catastrophe with consequences as profound as global climate change, but much less widely recognized. The very attributes we most want to nurture in our children—creativity, initiative, collaboration, problem-solving, courage—are best developed through imaginative play. Just as decisive action is needed to reverse the process of climate change, we must change course now to restore child initiated play and learning to our schools and communities.

The Alliance for Childhood website (allianceforchildhood.org) has many articles, reports and fact sheets about play on their home page. Their earlier reports on children and technology are also available on the website.

Several days after receiving the Alliance report, I was at a bookstore and a book by Stuart Brown leaped off of the shelf and went home with me. *Play: How it shapes the brain, opens the imagination and invigorates the soul* was recently published (in March 2009) and is a wonderful book! Stuart Brown, MD is the founder of the National Institute for Play, and has devoted many years to thinking, researching and writing about play, in adults and in children. Dr. Brown offers a deep understanding of what true play is, and points to play as the most advanced process for developing the brain and supporting social integration, in all species, not only human beings. How is it humans have the most potential of all for play? This very readable book is filled with research and description of neurological response and development, and stories from Brown's many years of practice and research. He writes about his "concerns about play revolving around screens (television, computers, Game Boys, games on cell phones and iPods)…The intense visual stimuli that screens provide, along with a captivating narrative, can be very seductive playmates" (p. 183-184).

Brown describes qualities he thinks important in early childhood teachers: "It is a wonder to watch someone who is really good at balancing children's simultaneous needs for supervision and freedom, for order and disorder. My friend Mindy Upton is one such wonderful teacher. She runs a preschool in Boulder, Colorado where the kids have a lot of structure, but they are free within that structure. Mindy, like the best teachers and caregivers, can make a game of anything. There is joy, evident even in the cleanup" (p. 98). This hearkens back to the quotes at the beginning of this letter.

The Alliance for Childhood report and Dr. Brown's book are excellent resources for standing firm in the work of Waldorf early childhood education where play plays a central role in the children's day, and for promoting the revival of play based programs for all young children.

As editor, I appreciate hearing from readers, whether it is a question, a quote (such as the one beginning this Letter from the Editor), comment, suggestion, disagreement, or request for a particular topic to be addressed. I am grateful for all the contributions of articles, whether we were able to use them or not. This enterprise depends on YOUR contributions for filling the pages.

This issue we have included an article by Maggie Reilly. She offers another wonderful quote from Steiner, this on the theme of the adult as part of the environment that is helping to shape the developing child, and a reminder about the importance of imitation.

Most people would ask how a child should behave, but anthroposophy comes along and says that adults should learn how to behave in front of children, even in words, attitudes, and thoughts. Children are much more receptive in their souls than people commonly think, and certainly more receptive than adults. . . What you do in detail is less important than the kind of person you try to be and the thoughts and ideas you carry. It is not enough to hide things from children while allowing yourself thoughts not intended for them. We must have and live the thoughts than we feel could and should live in the child. This is uncomfortable, but nevertheless true.

The Child's Relationship to the Doll

• Bernadette Raichle

In 1995, Bernadette Raichle began Awhina Day Nursery and Kindergarten in New Zealand, which has been a model and inspiration for many others seeking to provide anthropsophically-based out-of-home care for young children. In her book, Creating a Home for Body, Soul, and Spirit: A New Approach to Childcare *(WECAN, 2008) Bernadette explores in loving detail the many aspects of making a true "home away from home" for children. These excerpts from Chapters 12 and 13 give a few of her insights.*

There is nothing more sacred than making a doll for a beloved child. The creating, which may be experienced as an "ensouling," begins with the first piece of fleece that is taken to begin rolling the head, organically building up, little by little, each layer of wool . . . a gesture of enfolding, of wrapping, until you have before you a beautiful sphere. For the young child, this sphere, which is later to become the head of the dolly, resonates of cosmic memories.

The loving gestures we use will "sing" to the child, who experiences them in every fold and every nuance of the dolly. The soul life of the very young child lives between two worlds, the spiritual and the earthly world, with the little child and his day-dreaming still passing lightly to and fro from one paradise to another — heaven and earth are one.

The Child's First Doll

The little child's first doll — I call it the sleeping dolly — is but a reflection of this cosmic realm and supports the little one as mediator between these two realms. The sleeping dolly, the simplest of dolls, accompanies the little child as she "sleeps" her way into earthly life.

One has only to watch the little baby having recently woken and at just six months able to take hold of her little sleeping dolly. First the baby's hand comes to rest on something that is already becoming a part of her. The little hand closes around the soft, wooly bundle and immediately lifts this to the mouth and nose, literally "tasting" the dolly and then holding it slightly away and simply breathing her in. I have spent many a moment in awe of the special quality of this moment. The baby of six months is "here" in that she is awake (from her sleep) but in her "dreaming" oblivious to anything in her nursery other than her dolly, which is simply a bundle of fleece and wool, lovingly fashioned in a simple way to imbue the qualities of the human being.

The Sleeping Dolly

Just as the young child lives in transition between the world of spirit and the earthly realm, it is the sleeping dolly who supports the daily transition from home to the day nursery and from day nursery to home again. Just as the child and family become a part of the day nursery environment so too does the sleeping dolly become part of the child's home.

In the early days of the day nursery, we found that many children liked to bring an array of soft toys with them. We simply asked that home toys stay at home and introduced the sleeping dolly, which was for sleep time only and which would go home with the child each day.

These dollies are very simple. However, to make a soft dolly with the child in mind carries with it certain responsibilities. We need to carry an inner picture of the "uprightness" of the human being, as well as an outer observation of the healthy physical being.

The sleeping dolly is made in what has been described as a "meditation in doing," carrying an inner picture of the child. It is with this attention to detail that the sleeping dolly is ensouled, and which enables the child to so readily take hold of this dolly. The quality of a harmonious whole is

reflected in the composition of the dolly, made from just one piece of fabric, and this in turn accompanies the child, who lives in a state of consciousness described as a "sleeping" or "mono-consciousness," which expresses the child's "at-oneness" with his environment.

Making a dolly is one of the greatest gifts we can offer the child, for it is in crafting the soft toy, with care and in a right process, that we ensoul the dolly with an inner gesture. It is this soul gesture that the child connects with. The dolly is imbued with dried lavender, surrounding the child with a quality of harmony and peace. Where possible, Awhina dollies are made from natural fabrics and materials that have been salvaged or recycled. This provides an "enduring" soul quality to the finished doll.

In the morning, the parent with the child carefully places sleeping dolly in the child's cot (for the baby) or the basket in the playroom (for the older child).

Occasionally parents are reminded that the gesture of respect and care that they give to the sleeping dolly will also be reflected in the gestures of the child. Parents are asked not to underestimate the significance of this special dolly to the child, which offers a unique bond that links the day nursery and home. When the parent handles this dolly with a genuine warmth and love, the child too is warmed by this loving gesture.

The sleeping dolly is for that sacred time of the day and night when the child reconnects with her spiritual origins. Dolly is there when the child drifts into sleep and dolly is there when the child reawakens to the world. It is just that, a dolly for sleeping. There are other dolls that the child has for play. This dolly, however, has a particular role in the child's soul life.

Doll Play for Older Children

Daniel Udo De Haes describes the little child as not yet having any conscious picture of the human being, but says that in his soul this concept lives as a foundation of his development. The child's soul continues to be vividly animated by an archetypal idea of humanity, and from it he begins and continues to fashion his life (De Haes, 25).

Little children, in their play, practice themselves into life. They re-enact the adult world of relationships in miniature. They learn little by little to become social, mainly by imitating those adults who are around them the most. Children come to an experience of "self" in their relationship with others — surrounded by adults, sharing healthy and loving relationships. It is natural for the child to imitate warmth expressed by the other. The outpouring of love is intensely felt in the whole being of the child — a two-year-old will, without any apparent motive, approach another, enfolding this child in her embrace. The joy experienced by all is so very tangible. The "need" to nurture the dolly, which arises primarily out of imitation, is also somehow an innate instinct in the healthy child and yet another reason to support children being in mixed-age groups.

At Awhina, play and dolls and the day in the life of the child are one. An environment where dolls are loved and respectfully cared for has very consciously been developed. Each dolly has a cradle with its own blankets and one or two even have little sleeping dollies. The dolls have become a part of the life of the children.

No house built would be complete without one or two (sometimes more) "babies" to care for. Often a highchair will be brought to the morning tea table — complete with a bib and a drinking cup — not for one of our Awhina toddlers, but for a dolly! The child does not distinguish between what is play and what is real, because they are one and the same. The child totally, and with his whole being, embraces the dolly and cares for it, his soul experiencing the image of the human being. With this unconscious yet profound experience, the child's journey into life and further development is strengthened and deepened.

Above all, the doll provides the possibility for the child to be supported in his need to become, to enter the world of relationship that begins with mother and father, brother and sister. The doll has the potential to become the child's first special friend because hidden from the unseeing eye of the adult are archetypal mysteries, so tangible to the child and his dreaming world of heaven and earth.

The Awhina dolls have been created with this cosmic picture in mind. On the one hand, the doll, a representative of the human being displaying healthy human qualities, supports the little child into the upright. It goes without saying that in making the doll we carry in mind a picture of the healthy human being with well-proportioned features. On the other hand, the doll imbues the child with cosmic memories, leaving him dreamily "absorbed" in the spiritual origin of mankind. These memories and recollections naturally live unconsciously in the little child, but manifest outwardly as a sense of comfort and security.

When making a doll, we need to learn to observe and in our own development learn to be self-critical. We must aspire to the best for our young children and sometimes this will mean re-doing again and again and maybe even again, remembering that the child will love and respect his doll as much as we love and respect his doll.

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The Puppet Play for Little Children

The very first story that the child hears comes from the mother, and may be in the form of a lullaby. The sound of mother's voice gently awakens the child and yet still allows for the child to experience the wholeness, the sense of oneness that is so much a picture of the little child and his environment. In the day nursery, we support this at-oneness or "sleeping consciousness," this quality of wholeness, in a number of ways.

We do this by using the third person voice (I refer to myself by using my name rather than using 'I' and I address the child by using her name rather than using 'you'), by not raising our voice to the child, and by means of the stories we bring to the child. These will be simple little stories about the child's day, or they may be in the form of a puppet play.

At Awhina we bring the same beloved puppet plays year after year. In doing so, the children come to know, love, and anticipate them. The puppet play accompanies the children for around three weeks, sometimes longer. They carry a simple story line that bears within it a symbolic picture — for instance, "The Giant Turnip," where good human qualities exist. Most of the puppet plays we bring have a repetitive quality with a sung refrain, which especially appeals to young children.

The puppet play is prepared by a co-worker for some time before it is shown to the children. The key to bringing the children with you right into the puppet play is preparation. The puppeteer's role is that of moving the puppets and of telling the story. The puppeteer's consciousness breathes into the puppet play and travels as far as the periphery of the cloth or veil. Beyond this point is the concern or realm of the other co-workers.

To maintain a sense of oneness, we need to ensure that the cloths are wrinkle-free and are of colors that support the story. There is a vast difference in the experience of a beautifully ironed cloth and one that is taken out of the basket and used as is. The puppeteer endeavors also to be wearing a color that simply becomes part of the scenery, allowing for the child to become one with the mood of the moment.

How the puppets are moved will have a profound effect on the children, as they will take the story back into their own playing. Is the puppet bumped along, or is it moved along as a picture of the human qualities of walking? Whatever we present to the children must be brought with truth and not in any way be caricatured or misrepresented. Just as important is how we handle the puppet. We take hold of the shoulders of the puppet rather than the head, for the head is a sacred part of the human body and should be respected as such.

For the very young child, the best stage for the puppet play is the body or the floor. In using our body we offer something of ourselves, and sometimes this is not easy. The floor is a wonderful stage. It provides much scope. The children are one with you and can participate easily, and it is natural that creative play should develop from this. Children are often on the floor, and you can be anywhere and everywhere.

References

De Haes, Daniel Udo. *The Young Child: Creative Living with Two to Four Year Olds.* Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1986

Bernadette Raichle *is now devoting her time to bringing what was developed at Awhina out into the world, writing, lecturing, and teaching internationally. She lives in New Zealand.*

The Kindness Ball

• Barbara Klocek

It was August and I was getting ready for the new school year. I was hoping for some inspiration, as I knew one of the children coming into my class had a real reputation in the community for being difficult. A harmonious social mood in my class is a high priority for me. I have come to feel that one of my tasks as a kindergarten teacher is to support learning the social skills needed for resolving differences and being inclusive.

This child was prone to poking, pushing, grabbing, laughing at, and saying mean things to other children (and teachers). I had in place a "watching chair" as a discipline tool in my class. This was in fact any chair, but usually referred to several that were set to the side of the classroom. The rough or rude child would be led there, and with the teacher sitting with him or her, would have a chance to sit and observe ("watch") how the other children were interacting. This has the effect of bringing the child into stillness, which for many children is necessary in order for them to calm and collect themselves. It also serves to give positive feedback to children who are able to be kind and cooperative. I have found this a gentle yet effective way to encourage "listening" on the part of the children.

However, with this rough boy coming, I wanted another step as well as the "watching chair" to encourage kind hands and words. I had a copper ball in my classroom that was languishing in a basket. I woke up one morning with the inspiration to use this as a "kindness" ball that lives in the "kindness pouch." I took time to make a beautiful pouch with soft textures and a circle of heart trim around it.

It came into the class as part of the first story, brought by the king and queen puppets as a gift. The story related how children who were not being kind with their hands or words could hold it and roll it to warm it and this would bring the gold from their own hearts into their hands (or words). The pouch hung in a special place in the classroom. We could also fill it with kindness if we had extra kindness. We would often do this when we were waiting for the other children to finish washing their hands before story. It could be passed from child to child during this time becoming more and more filled.

What a gift it become to the class. It was a gentle reminder to be kind without needing to be punitive. It was especially wonderful for the little boy who was so rough, as I could say, "It seems like your hands have forgotten to be kind. The kindness ball will take the gold from your heart to your hands." Over time, it also provided a way for him to build better impulse control and to be seen as having a kind heart, in spite of his hands being rough with others at times.

The next year one of the children told me, "We need a kindness ball at our house." So we all had a wonderful time wet felting balls with a layer of gold on the outside. They all went home to help with kindness there. We also decided to make two wool ones for the kindness pouch. This made the passing of the balls much more fun at waiting times. It has truly been an inspiration in the class to help provide an imagination and action on building kindness in word and deed.

Barbara Klocek *has been teaching a mixed-age kindergarten for many years at the Sacramento Waldorf School. During that time she has also worked professionally as an artist and art therapist. She has offered many workshops for kindergarten teachers at Rudolf Steiner College, as well as teaching art nationally and internationally. She was a member of the WECAN Working Group on the Older Child and contributed articles and illustrations to the book* You're Not the Boss of Me! *(WECAN, 2007).*

Making Peace with Toddler Conflict

•Trice Atchison

Conflict is inherently distressing for all but the thickest-skinned among us. And, yet, there is a subset of people who seem, in contrast, to be enlivened by conflict. Perhaps humanity can achieve a healthy balance — one that can be learned beginning in early childhood — in which conflict is neither eschewed nor ignited, but is instead met with understanding and finesse. In this article, I hope to shed some light on this age-old challenge and, perhaps, offer some tools that may help us and our children deal more successfully with this inevitable aspect of life.

> A typical progression for new parents: *We have a child, and our hearts are melted. We're vulnerable, and so is our newborn. We try our best to shelter this innocent child, who grows fast and soon becomes a part of the wider world. We bring him to a playgroup, the park or a library read-along. The other new parents seem friendly enough, if also a little nervous, and the children happily observe and participate in the activities. This is healthy, this is good, this is peace, this is community.*
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> *And then a little boy, not more than two and for no apparent reason, reaches out to pull a tuft of our own child's hair. Hard! Unprovoked! Our child yells in protest. We are shocked and dismayed. This is not what we had in mind. We want a perfect, conflict-free world for our deeply loved child. No hair pulling, no hitting, no teasing, no excluding! These thoughts cloud the present moment, and we lose all perspective.*

Fledgling parents often seek a utopian experience for their child, and this can be especially true among parents drawn to Waldorf education. Many parents speak of the visceral reaction they had the first time they ever walked into a Waldorf early childhood classroom — the peach-blossom lazured walls, the simple cloth dolls and wooden toys, the fresh flowers on the seasonal table, and the smell of bread baking in the oven. Parents rejoice: *This is it! I've found a Garden of Eden for my child.*

I, too, was enthralled with the goodness and beauty I sensed the first time I entered a Waldorf nursery, and knew that this was the setting I wanted for my child. I still hold these positive views about a form of education that is healing, inspiring, developmentally appropriate and joyful. The difference now is that I know from experience that conflict and struggle also occur within those pastel-colored walls. We are, after all, still here on Earth.

Utopia is not ideal

As parents, we can strive to offer our children valuable experiences we may have enjoyed, or missed, as children, but we cannot surround them with perfect harmony. Even if we could achieve this end, we would not be serving our child's best interests. As Barbara Ehrensaft says in *Spoiling Childhood: How Well-Meaning Parents Are Giving Children Too Much, But Not What They Need,* "In human relationships, the act of reparation, making good on something that did not initially go well, is far better for character building than providing our children with a conflict-free, idyllic, 'perfect' childhood" (Ehrensaft, 238). Sometimes there's trouble in paradise. What's more, this trouble is normal, and a valuable learning experience for all of us as we help children navigate their way through conflict. To do this, we must become more aware of the feelings and preconceptions we bring to conflicts that we and our children encounter, and strive to be more objective and present in regard to whatever manifests in the moment.

Certain trends in parenting can make this objectivity toward and acceptance of conflict all the more difficult to achieve. These trends include: the blurring of boundaries between parent and child, especially common during the early years; an overzealous desire on the part of parents to offer their children an "optimal" childhood; and an overblown fear of conflict of any kind in the name of peace. In these ways, parents may be hampering their children in learning how to co-exist with others. As teachers and parents, we can help children build character and important life skills by accepting conflict ourselves as a normal part of toddlerhood, childhood and adult life. As psychoanalyst and pediatrician D.W. Winnicott said, "If society is in danger, it is not because of man's aggressiveness, but because of the repression of personal aggressiveness in individuals" (Ehrensaft, 187). In other words, an extreme aversion to, and lack of acceptance of, aggression as part of life — and a corresponding inability to address conflict — can actually lead to distorted forms of aggression that can harm individuals, families and the whole social fabric. Further, the lack of authenticity that accompanies this denial of aggression can result in children and adults who suffer from depression, anxiety and other ailments. We had better get a handle on this natural phenomenon, so that our classrooms and communities are not filled with children whose well-meaning parents and teachers are unwittingly creating turmoil, as with the child, Richard, described here:

> *Pamela and Gordon believed that a crying child meant a failing parent. As a small baby, their son, Richard, was given a warm and enriched environment. He had two parents who anticipated his every need and quietly removed obstacles from his course before he ever knew they were in his way . . . He had a bucolic and blissful first couple of years . . . His parents remained attuned to his every need. Richard smiled most of the time . . .*
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> *But then it was time for Richard to attend preschool. Nirvana quickly turned to purgatory. Pamela and Gordon [had] failed to present their son with the 'gradual failures' that would allow him to function in the world. . . . [Richard's] conflict-free home life existed in stark contrast to his new battlefield at school. Soon the battles were carried home . . . In the concerted effort to keep Richard satisfied and gratified, Richard was deprived of the basic tools that would help him cope in the world — patience, waiting his turn, dealing with frustration, problem solving, hoping for something better* (Ehrensaft, 163-4).

The unhappy situation described above begins in infancy, with the parents quietly clearing Richard's path of all obstacles. He never has to experience frustration or exert himself to solve a problem on his own — even one as simple as retrieving a toy he has flung out of reach. This practice starkly contrasts with the RIE (Resources for Infant Educarers) approach to young children, which discourages parents and caregivers from intervening too soon in a misguided effort to smooth a baby's path of obstacles. As RIE founder Magda Gerber writes in *Your Self-Confident Baby: How to encourage your child's natural abilities — from the very start,* "To respect your child is to create a little distance so that you refrain from interfering with her experience of encountering life . . . RIE's respectful approach encourages a child's authenticity, or genuineness" (Gerber, 3-4).

In this light, creating a frustration-free environment for a young child can be viewed as a form of disrespect — one that alienates the child from her truest self. Of course we are meant to protect and nurture our young children; but when we strive for the impossible goal of eliminating even small upsets and challenges — wanting everything to be easy and happy all the time — we can create a sense of helplessness in the child that keeps her from developing confidence in her own strength and emerging abilities. This sense of helplessness can cast a veil of uncertainty over her interactions with life, and is, in fact, an untrue assessment of all she really is capable of doing.

Approaches to addressing conflict among children

Waldorf early childhood teachers have often successfully used redirection as an approach to resolving conflicts among children. When Sally and Sammy are each insisting on using a child's broom at the same time, the teacher might get the dustpan and brush and show one of the children how to sweep up the dirt. Or she may encourage Sammy to bake some muffins in the play kitchen. This occurs without a long speech about the importance of sharing, or a dictate that each child must take a turn of a certain length with the broom before switching. Sarah Baldwin, author of *Nurturing Children and Families: One Model of a Parent/Child Program in a Waldorf School,* specifically reminds parents to be aware that children this young often simply cannot share, and recommends that parents and teachers work together to redirect children (Baldwin, 89).

The strong, healthy daily rhythm of a Waldorf classroom can do much to help prevent or minimize conflicts. The rhythm helps children to know what to expect, to transition smoothly from one activity to the next, and to avoid becoming over-stimulated or bored (conditions that can prompt conflict). Waldorf early childhood teacher Barbara Patterson, in *Beyond the Rainbow Bridge: Nurturing our Children from Birth to Seven,* says, "Like a heartbeat or the rising and setting of the sun, our classroom rhythms hold children in a secure balance. Our outer activity comes to meet whatever wells up within the children as we move through repetitive daily and weekly rhythms" (Patterson and Bradley, 119). The flow of activities each day is carefully thought out to allow for a natural "breathing in" and "breathing out" of focus and energy. Ronald G. Morrish, author of *Secrets of Discipline: 12 Keys for Raising Responsible Children,* supports this practice. He describes the need for children to have a healthy dose of rhythm and routine in their lives in order to avoid feeling off-balance and unharmonious: "These days, many [children] have to think their way through every part of the day. Many parents no longer stress routines and nothing is predictable. Children have to stay alert and deal with constant change . . . Too often, we forget that children struggle to get through days like this the same as we do. They also become agitated, irritable and unproductive" (Morrish, 57-8).

Additional wise strategies effective in minimizing conflict include a hearty mid-morning snack (heading off problems that can arise from simple hunger), and encouraging early bedtimes and daily naps to help ensure that children are well-rested. It is up to us as adults to create an atmosphere that, as far as possible, fosters peace and purposefulness — and, of course, to model peace ourselves. It is not helpful to toddlers or to children of any age to be placed in situations that cause undue stress and confusion, in which the children never know what to expect. A well-rested, well-fed, assured and engaged child will tend to play well by herself and co-exist well with others. But, as we know, even in such positive circumstances, conflicts crop up. Children also bring with them varying levels of coping skills from day to day; these can be due to simple overtiredness or other temporary factors, constitutional differences, and issues children may be absorbing from their family life, such as parents' marital difficulties or job pressures.

Patterson suggests various options for dealing with aggression and conflict when they occur in the classroom:

> *A child who bites can be given a large piece of apple or carrot and must sit beside the teacher to eat it. "We bite the carrot, not our friends." For a child who scratches, bring out the healing basket and trim the child's nails. "Kittens scratch, but not children." A child who spits may be taken to the bathroom to spit into the toilet* (Patterson and Bradley, 119).

Patterson also recommends listening carefully to children as they describe what happened in a conflict with another child, noting that a child who feels sincerely heard seems better able to let go of the conflict and move on. She also helps children struggling to enter social play in finding creative ways to become involved, increasing the chances that the other children will respond favorably to a new playmate. For example, a child of kindergarten age might be encouraged to knock on a neighbor's "door," basket in hand, to say that she's having visitors for tea and would like to borrow some dishes, as opposed to crashing in on the dish hoarders, accusing them of being unfair (Patterson and Bradley, 119).

RIE practitioners advocate more specifically and directly guiding children engaged in conflict.

First, however, children must have a chance to work out conflicts on their own — with just enough adult help as is needed to lead them through an impasse. In this way (as with the infant trying to reach a toy on his own) children's capabilities and competence are acknowledged as they gradually gain mastery in dealing with their physical world and social relationships. Gerber says:

> *I believe in letting children struggle over a toy as long as neither one is getting hurt or hasn't reached a point where he is past his limit of coping with the situation. Struggle is part of life, all aspects of life. There is a famous Hungarian stage play called* The Tragedy of Man. *In one scene God looks down and speaks to Adam and Eve, saying, "Struggle and keep hoping"* (Gerber 188-9).

Gerber's words bring to mind images of a woman laboring through childbirth, a chick pecking its way out of a shell, a sperm's journey during conception — all examples of rich and necessary struggle.

A helpful learning tool from RIE

A RIE-based article by Denise Da Ros and Beverly Kovach, "Assisting Toddlers and Caregivers During Conflict Resolutions: Interactions That Promote Socialization," offers specific guidelines for caregivers in dealing with toddler conflict and in exploring one's own inner response to conflict in terms of how it might influence the way a caregiver chooses to intervene (Da Ros and Kovach 29). The first step is quiet observation, maintaining an open and nonjudgmental attitude. Moving in close to the conflict and remaining at the children's eye level, the caregiver watches and waits, unless, of course, a child's safety is at stake (all the while ready to intercept any hitting gesture). The caregiver may then describe to the children what she sees ("I see that you have the sheep, Thomas, and that Sarah wants it, too."). The caregiver, curbing her desire to quickly solve the problem out of a need to erase her own discomfort, waits to see whether the children, thus acknowledged, still need to struggle. She offers just enough involvement, if any, to help the children solve the problem themselves. Often the simple act of moving in close, or of simply stating to the children what is happening, is enough to dispel the conflict. The caregiver stays nearby until the conflict is resolved, remaining available to comfort either child, and modeling gentleness toward both the "aggressor" and the "victim" (she does not actually view the children in terms of these limiting labels). The caregiver continues to verbalize what she sees happening until the toddlers disengage. Da Ros and Kovach conclude that "Adults' ways of relating and responding during toddler conflict will affect the immediate outcome of toddler problem-solving. When and how much adults should intervene, and the kinds of strategy they select, will affect the authenticity and competence of the toddlers who are in the adult's care" (Da Ros and Kovach, 30).

As Gerber, with her customary common sense, states, "If either child's emotions reach the boiling point and his behavior falls apart, or either child is intent on engaging in aggressively hurtful behavior like hitting or biting, you may decide to separate them. You can say, 'I don't want either of you to get hurt, and it looks like one of you might. I'm going to separate you now' " (Gerber, 190).

The Da Ros and Kovach article was especially helpful to me in practically dealing with classroom conflicts that occurred during parent-toddler classes I have taught at the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School. In classes that consist of up to eight parent-toddler pairs each day, with children ages one-and-a-half to four, conflict sometimes arises. In preparation for writing this article, I practiced the steps outlined above, and also took a closer look at my own deep discomfort with conflict, and with the mistaken idea that, ideally, there *wouldn't* be any in the classroom, or that a "good teacher" knows how to remove conflict in a snap. The insight to see conflicts as necessary and educational — and to question the wisdom of desiring an entirely conflict-free environment — helped me to become more effective in assisting the children and parents.

Practical applications

At the initial signs of conflict, I would move in closer. When warranted, I "reported" to the children, in simple language, what I saw. I was amazed at how affirming and calming these steps could be for the children. The feeling of "Ah, she understands," was palpable. At times, redirection still felt like the more appropriate response for such young children — but I also could more clearly observe how parents' overly enthusiastic attempts at redirection often backfired and, indeed, did not adequately acknowledge the child's feelings of frustration, inevitably leading to further frustration and conflict. (Perhaps the child thinks, "Why is she asking me to make muffins? Can't she see that I really want that broom?!") With empathy, I also was able to observe how uncomfortable some of the parents were with conflict in the classroom, particularly when their own child was involved in it.

I began to tell "victims," in a matter-of-fact manner, that they could say "No," or "I don't like that," when another child was invading their space. Years ago, I read a magazine article by a rape survivor who wrote about having been raised to be a "good girl" who never said no or wished to hurt anybody's feelings by refuting them, setting limits, or "making a stink." These learned habits of so-called "niceness" were the conditions that led to her rape. This harkens back to Gerber's goal of authenticity. It is simply false, unnatural, and even dangerous to smile apologetically and remain accommodating when someone is violating your personal space.

I wrote a letter on the topic of toddler conflict to the parents, and gave them a copy of the Da Ros and Kovach article. The parents joked good-naturedly when I mentioned the topic, "Oh, toddler conflict, we don't know *anything* about that!" Over the next weeks I saw the parents (and myself) develop greater comfort and skill in observing conflicts in process, allowing them some time to be resolved, and quietly acknowledging what was transpiring when a conflict was in effect. Of course, the children and parents were also by this time more familiar with me, each other, the classroom and our rhythm, but even considering these other factors, happy, peaceful play clearly increased as the weeks went on, in part due to the new awareness the adults were bringing to the classroom. Together we strived to refrain from distracting a child away from a conflict too soon or from trying to make the children "happy" by swooping in with a ready solution. If I noticed trouble escalating while I was busy with snack preparations and parents were occupied with their craft and conversation, I could say, "I think the children in the play kitchen may need to have an adult nearby," and one of the parents would get up, move in close, and be ready to respond or intervene as needed. Conflicts occurred less frequently in the final weeks, and there were no longer any full-blown struggles. A number of parents commented on how helpful they found the letter and article to be.

It's interesting to note that when spouses or other caregivers (such as a grandmother or nanny) would occasionally accompany a child to class in place of the parent who came regularly (and, therefore, was more likely to have read previous hand-outs), the more typical approach to conflicts began to be more noticeable to me. These strategies included trying to quickly solve the problem for the child, seeing one child as the aggressor, the other as the victim, or trying to "jolly" the child out of her frustration. The contrast in approaches indicated that we really had managed to begin changing the general classroom culture in this regard, with occasional lapses into old patterns. The group had, by this time, more information on the topic of toddler conflict and regular practice with our new approach.

RIE's emphasis on asking adults to notice and explore their own feelings and responses — while simultaneously keeping them in check — is key to this process. In short, allowing the conflicts to occur with less parental and teacher discomfort and less quick intervention, and verbalizing problems as they occurred, had the effect of noticeably increasing peaceful play within the classroom over time.

This "sports-casting" to the children differs from the traditional Waldorf approach, in which the teacher is urged to speak less and model more, to quietly and "behind the scenes" create a healing and peaceful environment, to indirectly address certain themes through story-telling and puppetry, and to show the children more acceptable ways to interact. However, my own direct experience and observations with the RIE approach to toddler conflict, as well as the parents' positive remarks and follow-through, convince

me of its worth and appropriateness within the classroom, in addition to the more traditional, and deeply valuable, approaches to conflict within a Waldorf early childhood classroom.

Overcoming our "harmony addiction"

Kim Payne — a psychologist and former Waldorf teacher who lectures worldwide on parenting, education and social issues — is opening new areas of inquiry within Waldorf schools by encouraging a more direct approach to conflicts among children of all ages. During a lecture entitled "When Push Comes to Love: How to Raise Civilized Children in an Uncivilized World," Payne said: "As adults, we need to get over our 'harmony addiction' and develop policies both at home and at school for dealing with conflict in a more straightforward way." He, too, urges us to embrace conflict — not to immediately separate children when they are arguing, but to help them work it out so that they can develop a sense of who they are in relation to others.

Sharifa Oppenheimer is another advocate for teaching children conflict resolution skills. In her book, *Heaven on Earth: A Handbook for Parents of Young Children*, she says, "It will require us to take our own emotions in hand and work with ourselves, not only to model justice, but also to shed light on human dynamics and creative problem-solving at an early age. . . . [When guiding children,] there are three essential elements to remember. 1) Use the same tone of voice you use for 'here's the towel.' Simple, informative, clear. 2) Rarely is there a situation in which there is a true 'victim' and 'aggressor.' There are two sides to every child's disagreement, and you need to know both. 3) Keep it simple. A few words used skillfully are far more effective than the best lecture on justice and equality" (Oppenheimer, 202).

My interest in how to handle toddler conflict has prompted me to begin studying the topic of conflict resolution more generally, and to engage in a more in-depth exploration of my own knee-jerk reactions to, and feelings about, conflict. Toward this end, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life* by Marshall B. Rosenberg is a valuable book that could have remarkably healing effects on individuals, families and organizations taking up the practices it outlines. The language and communication skills described are meant to strengthen our ability to remain open, human, authentic and responsive even in challenging situations. Rosenberg prompts us to abandon our habits of blaming, judging, retreating, threatening and pigeon-holing. Instead, he invites us to compassionately work our way through conflicts by observing our feelings, realizing our needs and calmly making requests. His nonviolent communication process (NVC) has been used with much success in situations ranging from family and relationship problems, to community-wide conflicts, to political strife on a global scale (Rosenberg, 8). The steps Rosenberg outlines can feel stilted and scripted at first, but, honestly, the world could use a helping hand in the form of a beginning script as we all gain practice with new and healthier ways of relating.

Hope for the future

As Morrish wrote, "A few years from now, our children will be in charge of our country and our communities . . . They will be responsible for looking after the environment, preventing wars, and educating a new generation of children. How well our children do in the years to come will, to a great extent, be determined by how well we raise them now" (Morrish, 141).

Our own discomfort with conflict and desire to squelch it can have a profound ripple effect into the future, leading to more complex problems. Like the children who have the potential to grow through conflict, if we let them, we all can benefit from learning the tools that lead to conflict resolution. With practice, we can become worthy examples to our own children, to the children in our classrooms and their parents, and to our communities — as we learn to make peace with conflict.

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The Sensible Child?

• Kevin Avison

The following article is an excerpt from the introduction to Rudolf Steiner and the Twelve Senses*, a collection of extracts from Rudolf Steiner's lectures on the subject of the senses. It was compiled for the 2008 Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship Easter Conference at Ringwood Waldorf School in England. The compilation was revised and re-edited from an original collection based on the work of Elisabeth Grunelius, Cornelia Hahn, and Helmut von Kügelgen, compiled for 1992 Kolisko Conference with introductory commentaries by Kevin Avison.*

> *In the first epoch, before the change of teeth, we may describe the child as being wholly "sense-organ." You must take this quite literally, wholly sense-organ.*
> —Rudolf Steiner, *The Kingdom of Childhood*

If the very young child is "wholly a sense organ" that has enormous significance for every aspect of the way we live. Sense organs are not merely passive, but neither is their development "pre-programmed." The senses interact with the environment and are modified by that environment. In the 1990s a leading neuro-scientist, Dr Alan Schore, frustrated by the well-patrolled borders of conventional scientific disciplines, set out to integrate the findings from neurology (how the brain works), biochemistry (the chemistry of the body), endocrinology (hormones), child development and psychiatry in effort to create some joined-up thinking on the subject of the development of young children. His work has led to a rewriting of the conventional map of human development—and the most important finding is that what babies need for optimal development is affection! (See Gerhardt's *Why Love Matters* for the best general introduction to Schore's work.)

When barricades around the former Soviet bloc finally fell during the 1990s, the personal fiefdom that was Ceausescu's Romania gained a new notoriety for the large number of orphanages where young children were discovered to have been kept in appalling conditions of abuse and neglect. Some of these orphans found their way to the west, where their development was studied. A shocking discovery was made. Children who had been left without affection or human interaction during the critical first three years presented as crippled in their learning, social skills, and their sensory capacity. MRI scanning revealed whole areas of their brains that had failed to develop, interior wastelands that appeared now to be off-limits to learning. Though we cannot always trace the causes so readily, we also know that scans of the brains of violently aggressive criminals frequently show similar neural black holes, especially around the prefrontal lobes, invariably accompanied by restricted or otherwise abnormal responses to stimuli.

All this confirms older research and what most people still instinctively know: that particular care is needed for the developing senses of babies—though rarely do they know it coherently or act on it consistently. Of all the senses, touch is probably the most crucial, and babies thrive on human touch; this sense is a gateway into the social world. All that tickling, jiggling and talking to, which is at first a sort of touching with the voice often leading actual touching (Pat-cakes, Insey-Wincey Spiders and all!), is as important as good nourishment for healthy growth and learning. As Steiner suggested, touch is the basis of all our foundation senses, and we are only now beginning to understand how all this "touching activity" triggers corresponding surges in growth hormone, the immune system, skin and muscle tone, and cell growth in the brain. Not surprising, then, that infant massage and massage in schools are beginning to be recognised for the contribution they can make to better-adjusted children and readiness for learning.

When baby is first born, sensing is the prime waking activity. At first the child only seems to know simple things and immediate needs: hungry/full, comfortable/uncomfortable, secure/insecure. The response to these brings immediate reaction, one way or the other. Very early on, however, sensation unites with emotion. The whole child is sense organ, and the only language that sense organ has at first is the language of feeling: every need a young child has is also an emotional need. A language of needs calls forth the child's emotional bond with the world, and provided it is met by the "mother-tongue" of the parent (whoever actually speaks it), all is well. As we now know—and this reverses previous understandings of cognitive development—Goethe was right that "feeling is the gateway to thinking"; our emotions are the heart of our intellect. To put it in another way: "Just as speech arises from walking and grasping, in short from movement [which we should see as "e-motional activity"], so thought develops from speech" (Steiner, *A Modern Art of Education* 112). But if there is a right way to stimulate the development of the child, the senses are also vulnerable to abuse, whether it is through deliberate act or unintended consequence. The "*Toxic Childhood* debate" is only the most recent of a large number of attempts to draw attention to changes in the nature of childhood (and sensory development) that show every sign of undermining the "nerve centers" of positive human evolution and civility. Unfortunately, the history of this research and its influence on practice and policy is one of indifference, ignorance, or the intellectual equivalent of a Gallic shrug: "What can you do?"—often followed by a justificatory, "Things have always been bad"!

In the 1960s teachers working from the University of Tübingen noted what they took to be a severe reduction in sensory awareness in their students. A few years later, American researchers made a similar observation. Students appeared less alert to information from their environment then previous generations and this was adversely affecting their learning. Following these observations, the German Psychological Association set up a joint research project with the university aimed at quantifying the phenomena. Tests were carried out on some four hundred undergraduate subjects per year over a twenty-year period. The conclusions of this longitudinal study are staggering and it is a matter of enormous significance that they have caused so little comment: "Our sensitivity to stimuli is decreasing at a rate of about one percent a year," their report states, adding that increasingly "brutal thrill" is needed for our brains to register stimuli (see Kneissle).

In two parallel studies, an independent child psychologist, Marcia Mikulak, examined children from a number of cultures, including pre-literate societies in Brazil, Guatemala and Africa as well as Europe and the United States. She found that, on average, sensory acuity and sensitivity to the environment were twenty-five to thirty percent higher in the children from so-called primitive settings. A further research project carried out in the late 1980s indicated that children from preliterate societies in Guatemala and similar countries where standards of living were deemed "low" showed prodigious capacity for learning. When these "deprived" children were given learning environments equal to those provided for North American and western European children, they demonstrated ability to learn estimated to be three or four times that of their "more fortunate" peers and far superior attention, comprehension and retention.

As Waldorf teachers we tend to be very sensitive and easily exercised by real or perceived threats to our practice, our curriculum. But those things are not important in themselves. The curriculum is strictly speaking not a curriculum at all, but a framework for an evolving practice which consists in creating and recreating translation between archetypes and the culture of the time. That means too that we cannot enjoy the luxury of wringing our hands over the damage that culture (or lack of culture) is doing to children, but that we are given the task to reinvent Steiner's indications in the light of each new challenge; and our core and essential purpose is to preserve and enhance the development of children, physically and socially and spiritually, by learning to work in such a way that what the children learn resonates throughout the twelve senses: "The real aesthetic

conduct of humanity consists in the enlivening of the sense organs and the ensouling of the life processes" (Steiner, *The Riddle of Humanity*, quoted in Lissau, 26). For this to happen, we must become increasingly artistically pragmatic, multi-disciplinary in our approach and logical (or, one might say as well, coherent) in our demeanor. Perhaps the best way to achieve this is through cultivating capability in an art or craft; in short, by doing all we can to become skill-full communities.

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Nutrition for Young Children

• Stephen Spitalny (including notes from Nancy Birang, NC)

I think about food and nutrition a lot these days, especially with regard to the various situations related to children's nutrition deficiencies including allergies, asthma, ADHD, ADD, autism, imbalanced brain chemistry and learning disorders. In my kindergarten, we make lunch each day together (the children do not bring lunch from home), so I have to make nutritional choices, and therefore food gives me much food for thought.

I try to base my choices for the children on some simple guidelines. I try to provide food that is organic, fresh and seasonal, and local. I feel lucky to live in California where there is something seasonal all year long. As we come into spring, there is much fresh produce available in the local farmers' markets, so it is easy to surround the children with good food based on sound nutritional choices.

As Waldorf educators I think it is our responsibility to think about all aspects of the children's lives, and what substances are going into their sensitive systems. Our world is rife with food that is harmful to human health, and even more so for developing bodies. Children, whose immune systems are not fully developed, are especially susceptible to toxins in food, and are dependent on the nutritive value in food to build their bodies. And with so much so-called "food" with little or no nutritional value, the onus is even more on us to be aware of nutrition. As a basic minimum, certified organic foods would be all that we provide for the children. Children need adequate and diverse nutrients, so we must see that they get them. All systems of the body depend on sufficient nutrients, as does the children's stamina and energy.

I recently went to a talk on children's nutrition presented by Nancy Birang, Nutritional Consultant. The following is a synthesis of her presentation mixed with my own thinking about Waldorf early childhood programs.

What Children Need

The Macronutrients:

- **Complex Carbohydrates** provide quick energy. *Sources: vegetables, fruit, whole grains*
- **Quality Protein** provides the body's building blocks; needed for growth and repair of muscle and other tissues, for immune support, to make up enzymes and hormones. *Sources: organic or hormone free animal products: beef, lamb, buffalo, elk, venison, ostrich, poultry, eggs, fish, beans, soy, legumes, whole grains, nuts, seeds*
- **Healthy Fat** provides long-term energy, insulation, counteracts inflammation; needed for hormone production, hormone balance, healthy skin and hair, digestion, vitamin absorption; necessary to burn fat. *Sources: cold water fish, nuts, seeds, avocado, olive oil, flax seeds*
- **Water** transports nutrients, eliminates waste, cools the body; critical for muscle contraction and all other bodily functions
- **Fiber** (the indigestible part of vegetables, fruits, beans, legumes) keeps the nutrients moving, gets rid of wastes, cleans out the tubes, prevents cancer

The Micronutrients:

Vitamins, Minerals, Trace Minerals, Other Nutrients are needed to use the carbohydrates, protein and fat; they are the cofactors for metabolism and cellular function, needed for fluid and electrolyte balance, acid/base balance; critical for overall optimal health

How Much They Need

While nutrient requirements vary with age, sex, weight, height, amount of physical activity and individual needs, in general, a growing child needs about 55-60 percent of his total daily calories in carbohydrates, about 15-25 percent in protein and about 20-25 percent in fat. The approximate number of calories and macronutrients needed for an individual can be calculated based on weight, height and activity level. There are websites that can help you with these calculations.

Children need lots of water. How convenient is it for the children to get water for themselves during the kindergarten day—do they have easy access? Do we model drinking sufficient water so the children have something to imitate? Human beings need water for *all* bodily functions. The children are still in the process of building up their organs so water is essential!

Children's eating habits develop out of imitation so surrounding them with healthy nutritional behaviors is the key. A hopeful fact is that taste buds rejuvenate every two weeks, so when changing eating habits and breaking food addictions, the first two weeks are the hard ones.

Food Quality

What is a healthy diet? What is quality in nutrition? Modern commercially produced food has lost nutrient density due to the convenience and lower costs of production. One key to healthy eating is whole foods—as close to nature as possible. The value in whole grains is that the hull has high mineral content such as zinc and magnesium. Fresh fruits and vegetables are loaded with vitamins and minerals. Whole raw nuts and seeds are full of healthy fats and protein.

Protein is found in meats, fish, and raw nuts and seeds. Eating beans or legumes with a whole grain provides a complete protein. Animal products, including meats, cheese, and milk, from "clean" animals do not have hormones and antibiotics added. (In California, raw milk is available in stores).

Fats are found in whole milk products, and plants are also a good source of fats, especially avocados, olives, nuts and seeds. Coconut oil is rich in fat as well. Healthy fat is critical to development. The brain is more than 60 percent fat. Fats provide energy, nourish nerves and provide essentials for making hormones. DHA, an essential fatty acid, is critical for brain, nerve and eye development. Fat in milk also helps in the digestion of calcium.

Healthy fats have essential fatty acids (EFAs) such as Omega 3s (EPA and DHA). Low levels

of Omega 3s in foods are related to behavior problems, learning challenges "leaky gut syndrome," and allergies. Good sources of Omega 3s include cold water fish, cod liver oil, raw walnuts, flax seeds, chia seeds, and spirulina algae. The amount of Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty acids consumed needs to be balanced.

Organic oils can be a good source of fat, but extended high heating and/or processing can damage oil. Even olive oil, which has wonderful qualities when raw, can't withstand heat. Some oils that can withstand higher heating include coconut oil, grapeseed oil and red palm oil. These all also tend to be less processed.

Ghee (clarified butter) is an excellent choice. In most cases, children with dairy allergies can eat ghee because the allergenic compounds are removed from the butter. Ghee can be used at high heat with no damage. Coconut oils and ghee are saturated fats – they don't break down when heated.

Many folks tout the benefits of grass-fed, organic animal products. These milks, butters, yogurts, and cheeses are rich in DHA, vitamin A and vitamin D. They are higher in Omega 3s and higher in tryptophan.

There are a number of booster foods that can give the children various vitamins and minerals that have been taken away from commercial, processed food. We could add freshly ground flax seeds to everything (Omega 3s). Sea veggies (seaweeds) are great in soups and sauces. Nutritional yeast (vitamin B) adds to any dish. Spirulina has proteins and brings a balance to blood sugar levels. Children who eat dirt or sand may be trying to take care of their own nutrient deficiencies.

The modern diet is filled with nutritional vampires. Not only are these "foods" nutritionally deficient, but they leach needed substances from the body simply to try and digest them. The most common and worst offenders are high-fructose corn syrup (in spite of the industry's lovely new ad campaign), chemical preservatives, and artificial sweeteners.

Many children on the autism spectrum, with hyperactivity, ADHD, ADD, and autism, have altered intestinal flora and an unhealthy gastro-intestinal tract. Raw (not pasteurized), cultured and fermented foods can substantially help bring intestinal flora to balance. (See *Wild Fermentation* by Sandor Katz). Foods such as sauerkraut, kefir, yogurt, miso, and tempeh provide live helpful bacteria for the gastro-intestinal system.

Sprouting nuts and seeds makes the nutrients in them more absorbable, more digestible. Also some digestive irritants are removed through sprouting. And it is so easy and fun. Sprouting seeds and nuts is such a great activity in kindergarten. The children will love to help water and rinse them, as well as watch them sprout, and thereby be even more interested in eating them when they are ready.

How Do You Know if the Children Are Getting Enough?

Ask yourself if they are growing, thriving, playing, laughing. Do they look healthy: healthy skin, hair, teeth. Do they get sick often? Many colds? Bruise easily? Do they have allergies? Check with your pediatrician. Observe and record what they are eating.

One thing I have to do over and over, year-in and year-out, is to remind the parents to give their children a protein-rich breakfast to sustain them during their kindergarten time, and because they have their whole waking day to digest it. Too much protein too close to bedtime can become a sleep disruptor.

Some ideas that have become guiding principles for me in my kindergarten of three-to-six-year-olds:

- Have water accessible and easy to get for the children to drink at all times.
- Prepare and eat lunch together every day.
- Only use organic foods and whole grains.
- Soak the grains in water for at least a couple of hours if not overnight, and then rinse.
- Olive oil for salad, ghee or a high-heat oil for cooking.
- Establish a consistent weekly food menu rhythm.
- Grow some fruits and vegetables and include the children in the process.
- Shop at the local farmers' markets (we have them year-round in Santa Cruz).

For nineteen years I have been making lunches with the children in kindergarten. The parents do not send lunch from home for their child, which is a great convenience for them. Meanwhile, the children and I are able to have a community experience of preparing the meals, and eating the same things together. A host of other pedagogical activities arise as well, because after eating we wash and dry the dishes, sweep the floor, wipe the tables and take out the compost.

I am more than willing to take the time with daily lunch preparations and clean-up because I think these are essential life activities, for me far more important than any project could be, though we also do find the time to work on various other activities on a daily basis. There are two adults in my kindergarten, though for the eleven years before I had an assistant I still managed to make lunch as well.

Each day at about 10:00 (our arrival time is 8:30), we have a small snack of fruit and nuts. As for lunch, this year we have salad every day, usually with lightly toasted sunflower seeds added. The dressing is oil and balsamic vinegar. Mondays we have rice and lentils and vegetables. Tuesdays it's pizza (yes, with whole milk cheese, and leeks, olives and mushrooms), Wednesdays rice pasta and veggies, Thursdays rice and beans and tortillas, and Fridays we have soup. All sorts of things can be added to a soup or sauce – sea veggies and miso are readily hidden away while adding to the flavor. Most days we include shiitake mushrooms, mostly steamed or simply added to broth or sauce. Lots of beets, onions and greens (especially collards and kale) find their way into nearly everything as well. Flax seeds are also easy to add.

I so often hear from the parents that "my child won't eat salad," or any number of other foods. And the fact is the children will eat salad, and all the other foods we prepare and eat together (though some do pick the mushrooms out).

For a great article on healthy eating for all ages I recommend visiting the Bauman College website at http://www.baumancollege.org/about/eating-for-health-philosophy.html.

And as Nancy Birang says, eat SOUL Food! (Seasonal, Organic, Unadulterated and Local), both at home and with your young children!

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First Grade Readiness: The Development of Memory and the Transformation of Play

• Louise deForest

This article is part of the forthcoming WECAN publication First Grade Readiness: Resources, Insights and Tools for Waldorf Educators, *edited by Nancy Blanning. This much-requested volume will include perspectives from experienced teachers, doctors, therapeutic educators and others on what to look for in children who are preparing for the transition to the grade school, as well as examples of actual procedures used in serveral different settings. Contributors include Joan Almon, Michaela Glöckler, Audrey McAllen, Ruth Ker, and Nancy Blanning. The book is expected to be available by June, 2009.*

It is increasingly apparent to those of us working in the educational realm that the age at which a child enters first grade can be very significant in terms of academic and social success throughout the entirety of the educational process and beyond. A child who is too young for first grade, although many first grade readiness signs are already apparent, may spend his or her grade school years working very hard to keep up, never feeling that he or she fits into the social or academic world of his or her classmates. For some, this feeling of having to pedal very fast to stay on a par with others continues into adulthood, where they always have the sense that they don't quite "get it." Others may feel that there is still something unfinished in their growing up years. Early in my teaching career, I had the great good fortune to work with a very experienced and inspiring early childhood teacher. When I asked her, what in her life had led her to teaching kindergarten, she answered in all seriousness, "I went to first grade when I was five."

For those children who enter first grade older than the optimal age there are also dangers and long-term repercussions; as we know, our curriculum is based on Rudolf Steiner's understanding of human development and the content of the main lessons of each grade is geared to meet the needs of that particular stage of development. A child who is too old has the disadvantage of passing through thresholds of development without the accompaniment of his classmates or of the curriculum, leaving that child feeling isolated and different. Many of these children, not being met by the curriculum and not feeling integrated into the social world of the class, quickly lose interest in school and studies and can become under-achievers and never quite shake the feeling of being different.

In many of our schools, however, there is no educational consultant and the teachers often do not have the experience, knowledge or confidence to evaluate readiness. Signs of readiness are often confusing and contradictory; is it the losing of the teeth or the growth of the molars that is one signal of possible readiness? To make it even more complicated, each child develops according to his or her own individual timetable; one might be showing all the signs of physical readiness while still being socially immature, while another may be "awake" enough for first grade but still need more physical development. Too often we rely only on the birth date to move a child forward into the grades.

But children are always revealing to us their needs, gifts and challenges, if only we know how to read the signs. Everything they do, be it walking, playing, eating, even how they get sick, reveals something unique about them and their stage of development. They *want* to be seen by us, and it is up to us to develop the capacity to observe them objectively, with no preconceived ideas or judgments, and to put our observations into the context of human development. In this training—for that's what it is—I have found Rudolf Steiner's lecture "Practical Training in Thought" (Karlsruhe, January 18, 1909; available in *Anthroposophy in Everyday Life*) very helpful, for it gives very specific exercises to develop both our thinking and our capacity to observe.

In Chapter Three of his book *The First Three Years of the Child,* building on Rudolf Steiner's insights, Karl König speaks about the three phases of memory development over the first seven years. Every human being experiences these three types of memory (indeed, all humanity has passed through this evolution of memory), and if we're observant we can actually see the transformation from one to the next. The first and earliest type of memory, which began in Atlantean development, is called Localized or Spatial Memory and is often confused with the more mature Time Memory. This Localized Memory, however, is completely dependent on outer stimulation, and a memory only comes to mind because something in the environment of the child has reminded that child of something. A child can be going for a drive with her parents, for example, and suddenly begin to describe Grandma's house, complete with all the details. Parents often remark on what a developed and precocious memory their children have but what has really happened is that the child saw something—a tree, flowers, a house of the same color—and through that object, "memories" of grandma's house streamed forth. The same child would not be able to describe what Grandma's house looks like if asked to do so by her parents, but once the memory is sparked, so to speak, all the details flood through. This stage lasts up to the second to third year of life.

In the play of toddlers, we can also observe that the inner activity of imagination and creativity do not play a big role; instead, it is curiosity, the instinctive drive for varied physical movements and the need to understand the world that propels the child through his or her day. The favorite play of the very young child, as we parents all know, is banging pots and pans, climbing onto and into every available spot, pouring, fitting one thing into another, etc. A walk is often an excruciating experience for the adult who is trying to *get* somewhere, as the toddler needs to touch, taste, observe and interact with everything that crosses his path. I remember with some shame and regret, how exasperated I would get from the near constant dropping of objects—food, spoons, cups—from the tray of my children's high chair, and I couldn't help but think they were doing it out of mischief and joy in seeing their mother so frustrated. But if we truly observe what they are doing, we will come to understand that they are really trying to discover the laws of nature, things we as adults feel are self-evident. The material world is very new to our young ones and they spend their first years discovering how it works: gravity will pull an object, any object, down, no matter how many times you drop it; what goes up *does* come down, and so on. I remember one of my children sitting in the bathtub as the water ran from the faucet; for weeks he would repeatedly and with intense concentration try to grab the water coming from the tap. Finally he repeated it enough times to learn an essential lesson about the fluid nature of water and happily went back to splashing and pouring.

Somewhere between two and three, we begin to notice a change in both how memory works and in the play of the child. Steiner talks about this time as the birth of the I, when a child recognizes that he or she is a separate, independent being. My youngest son, Ry, then two-and-a-half, woke up one morning and, as if drunk, ran around the house saying/singing, "I am Ry. Ry am I. I, Ry." This rapture lasted the whole day and, while he continued to be the ever-active, rambunctious boy he has always been, he was also different from that day onward. In play, too, we begin to see that "pretend" has entered. Now they cook, take care of babies, go off to work (if they have Waldorf teachers as parents, they go to meetings), and are Mommies, Daddies, and babies. At first they play house-related play, imitating what they see in their own homes. They are not so much playing together as they are playing the same kind of play, side by side. Slowly, over the next few years, the pretend becomes more elaborate and veers from the home-centered play to imitating and playing the activities in the world around them. Suddenly we have carpenters, doctors, snow shovelers and teachers and, instead of the side-by-side play, children are playing together. Play is enormously creative and imaginative at this time, between three and five-and-a-half, and is constantly in the process of becoming; a truck becomes a space ship which becomes a restaurant which becomes.... It's a bit like the water streaming from the faucet

that my son tried so hard to hold—totally fluid and unpredictable and in constant movement. As Rudolf Steiner puts it, "Imagination in children represents the very forces [etheric] that have just liberated themselves from performing similar creative work within the physical formation of the brain" (*Soul Economy and Waldorf Education*, 114).

A healthy child will completely invest him- or herself in the role that he or she is playing and the objects become what the imagination makes of them. Children are often indignant when we adults call this "pretending." We can learn much about children, watching them play at this time in their lives when we can see how creativity feeds creativity and play is a form of nourishment. In the lecture titled "Self Education in the Light of Spiritual Science," Rudolf Steiner says, "Where do we find what works on the child as a higher Self, and which belongs to the child, but doesn't enter his consciousness? Astonishing but true: it is *children's play,* the meaningful, well carried out play of all children, that the higher Self works on." And later, "a child educates himself for life, simply through play" (10-11).

Memory also changes; what was once sparked by an outer object has now moved more inwards, relying on rhythm to put an event into the stream of time and space. König calls it Rhythmical Memory (as did Steiner) and the basis of this kind of memory is repetition. We Early Childhood teachers experience this type of memory after two or three weeks of school when our new nursery or kindergarten children, seeing the big bowl on the table and the grinders standing ready, know it is Bread Day—Localized Memory— which means that tomorrow is (for example) Painting Day—Rhythmic Memory. As parents, we see this in the daily rhythms we have put into place around our children; when it is bedtime, for example, once the regular routine is started, the Rhythmic Memory leads the child from bath to pajamas to brushing teeth to story to bed and good night.

And so we draw near to the six-year change, that developmental threshold when the etheric forces are freed from their formative work on the physical body and released into the capacity for thinking and independent picture-making ability, essential skills for the academic work that lies ahead. Almost overnight the child now can, at will, recall experiences or people she knows and create clear inner pictures of real or imagined things. A friend of mine in Finland described a conversation she had with a six-year-old in her class: they were harvesting autumn fruits and vegetables and this child asked her where the watermelon tree was so he could pick watermelons. She answered that watermelons were too heavy to grow on trees so they grew on long vines on the good earth. The child looked very puzzled and finally said, "But how can that be, when I can see a watermelon tree so clearly in my head?" Dr. Claudia McKeen, an anthroposophic doctor in Germany and a leading researcher on the question of first grade readiness, tells of a child who went on vacation in the Swiss Alps one summer; months later, having breakfast with his mother, he looked dreamily out the window for several minutes and then said, "I am walking up the path and I can turn around and see the village below. Now I am at the foot of the mountain and I can see the path we will climb." Several minutes later he said, "And now I am at the top of the mountain and everything below looks so small. Mom, can you see things in your head, too?" Konig calls this type of memory Time Memory, when we can produce an inner picture out of our own forces and the released forces of the ether body can begin to work in the soul realm of mental images.

In children's play, too, we see a change. On the one hand, the wellspring of creativity seems to have dried up and we hear, "I'm bored!" or "There's never anything to do!"—quite a change from the ever-active and ever-inventive child of only a few months ago. They mope around the class or the house, they are out-of-sorts most of the time, and the rest of the time, little rebels. They no longer give themselves over to the artistic activity, be it drawing, painting or beeswax, but seem to struggle with technique and achieving the look they want, which often results in frustration and discontentment. But once they become engaged in play, one immediately notices a different quality to their play. Now the child enters the classroom with a fixed and clear idea of what he is going to play that day and spends the rest of his time gathering the materials he will need to realize the idea he has. As I mentioned above, frustration comes easily, because it is now important that the outer object (a painting or a drawing, the rocket ship or boat) match the inner picture. No longer do the materials in the classroom determine the play; instead, they serve to enable the child to recreate his or her inner picture. One can notice that the child has left behind the physical active soul—fantasy forces and true inner imagination begins to develop.

There is also a new social quality to the play; in the past, the roles of each child evolved as the play progressed, gender appropriateness was basically irrelevant (boys could be mothers, girls could be big brothers) and it seemed that the children were carried by the play. Now, with older kindergarteners, the children carry the play and individual roles are assigned right from the beginning of play. There are rules now, more prescribed ways of playing the roles, and there is a strong impulse towards community building. Very often the play of the older child tends to encompass most, if not all, the class. Postman, Santa Claus, restaurant are a few of the many plays that tend towards inclusiveness and almost always they are carried by the older children. Six-year-olds are social geniuses!

It is vitally important for the future health of the individual that children be allowed to build this healthy foundation for thinking with no interference from well-meaning adults. "Accomplishments that come with forces that are available later on should never be forced into an earlier stage, unless we are prepared to ruin the physical organism" (Steiner, *Soul Economy* 116). While we adults often think that fantasy takes us away from reality and we have an obligation to bring children into the real world, "fantasy is the continuous joy that the child experiences on his waking to the earthly world" (König, 64). As teachers, it is our obligation and responsibility to safeguard this sacred time.

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FLY ON THE WALL

Sometimes, in our daily bustle, we forget how deeply the children are living into their life of fantasy. It is always so interesting, this "trek to China" that they make in the sandbox!

Two young five-year-olds shouted, "Let's dig to China!" A three-and-a-half year old, Mary, looked excited and rather anxious, all at once. She turned to the teacher and said: "If my mommy and daddy come to pick me up while I am gone, will you tell them where I am?"

Janet Kellman
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Working Together

• Maggie Reilly

While working on my Masters' project at Sunbridge College, I explored the relationship between the two adults working together in the kindergarten. In most North American Waldorf kindergartens this relationship is usually a teacher-assistant relationship. However, I am currently working with a co-teacher, so I used examples from my experience of co-teaching as well. The following excerpt from my thesis explores that sense one has when observing or working in a kindergarten class that is filled with the happy hum of working and playing children. It also illustrates the importance of having a positive relationship with one's co-teacher, assistant, or lead teacher.

> *This is how it is when, during the various stages of childhood, we bring the right thing to children at the right time. If, during the first period of life, we create an atmosphere of gratitude around children. . . out of this gratitude toward the world, toward the entire universe, and also out of an inner thankfulness for being in this world at all. . . the most deep-seated and warmest piety will grow. Not the kind that lives on one's lips or in thought only, but piety that will pervade the entire human being, that will be upright, honest, and true* (Steiner, *The Child's Changing Consciousness,* 127-8).

The ideal environment within a Waldorf kindergarten reflects warmth and love. The happy hum of activity and soul warmth of a kindergarten are created by teachers working through Anthroposophy to create a community that supports the incarnating child. This warmth and love will affect the children for their entire life.

There are several ways to observe health and harmony within the relationship between the adults in the Waldorf kindergarten. One can observe the relationship between the adults during the various activities of the day. The relationship between the adults within their meditative life will reflect soul-warmth towards each other and the children. Additionally, the teachers will use the environment with respect, safety, and care for the children. It is also essential to bear in mind that children imitate the adults they are around.

Observing the interactions, both verbal and non-verbal, between two adults in the kindergarten is one way to observe a harmonious relationship. Harmony can be seen in non-verbal communication such as open gestures, eye contact, and a comfort with body movement. As an example, my co-teacher and I using gestures to indicate a transition from one activity or another. We also glance at one another and smile in recognition of an observation. For example, we observed a child skipping for the first time during eurythmy, so we smiled with joy and made eye contact to acknowledge the new step this child had taken. Verbal communication is another way that one can observe harmony. Two adults that enjoy working together will have positive verbal communication and conversation. There is an ease of conversation that indicates both adults are comfortable and happy working together. This does not mean that one is constantly chatting with a coworker, but is seen more subtly in daily interactions. For example, before school my co-teacher and I usually have nice, friendly conversations as we talk about how our evening was, what our day will hold, and what we are looking forward to with the children. Additionally, if we are making a request of the other teacher, we strive to state our intention or request positively and with warmth.

One unique and essential element within Waldorf education is the use of meditation to support our work with the children. In a harmonious kindergarten, one can see that the teachers are working together in their meditative life. Although meditation lies behind the activity in the kindergarten, there is a quality of soul warmth between two individuals who share a meditative practice. My co-teacher and I share a joint meditative practice before each school day.

We both begin our morning by joining the full faculty in reading the Calendar of the Soul aloud and saying a verse together to support the work of the entire school. Then, after preparing for our morning, just before the children arrive we practice a meditation. We light a candle, and then recite each child's name to prepare both our class environment and our heart and soul to receive the child. I believe our joint meditative practice can be observed as warmth and love permeating our classroom. We also use an element of meditation during our child observations. Sharing artistic activity by painting together weekly and working jointly on birthday presents for the children are other meditative and artistic activities we enjoy together.

The very environment of the classroom speaks to the relationship between the two adults. The inner mood of the two teachers is often reflected in the play of the children, while the warm, inviting classroom is a merging of soul warmth and practical considerations. While there are many factors that contribute to an individual child's behavior, I truly feel that I can ascertain the relationship between the adults based on the children's play. Children work out of imitation and imitate both the inner and outer mood of the teachers. If two teachers are in harmony, there is a general harmony within the play. I have observed this in my own class. On a day that I was feeling particularly "out of it," I observed that the children were having a hard time focusing on activities and seemed exhausted. Although my co-teacher was working twice as hard to maintain the normal mood, my mood destroyed the normal kindergarten focus and calm. I went home and made sure to rest up and gain back my normal equilibrium. The next day we had an incredibly harmonious morning and I was deeply touched by how strongly the children imitated my inner feelings.

My co-teacher and I also utilize the environment and space with respect through cleaning and arrangement, which reflects the respect we have for each other. This is seen in the way we care for toys and way we have arranged the classroom. We spent a lot of time before school started thinking about the ways the children use the toys and the space and deciding where everything should be placed. Before the start of school, we worked with a lazure artist and lazured our classroom. The warmth, love, and laughter we shared while we meditated and focused on the walls of our classroom is a gift that we both enjoy in our love and work for the children. We strive to keep our classroom clean, warm, and inviting, and I believe this is something people observe when they visit our classroom.

It is our obligation to create a positive relationship with the other adults we work with. As Waldorf kindergarten teachers we strive to work through imitation. Through our daily tasks within the kindergarten we perform work, and while we do not expect children to imitate each action, we want them to imitate our dedication to our work, the inner work and purpose of the activity, and our being. Thus, each one of us must strive to be the best possible human being and be worthy of the children's imitation. Steiner discusses the importance of imitation by stating:

> *Most people would ask how a child should behave, but anthroposophy comes along and says that adults should learn how to behave in front of children, even in words, attitudes, and thoughts. Children are much more receptive in their souls than people commonly think, and certainly more receptive than adults. There are people, no doubt, who have a certain kind of sensitivity and immediately notice when someone comes into a room and ruins the previous good mood. Even though people today notice little of this, it is particularly strong in children. What you do in detail is less important than the kind of person you try to be and the thoughts and ideas you carry. It is not enough to hide things from children while allowing yourself thoughts not intended for them. We must have and live the thoughts than we feel could and should live in the child. This is uncomfortable, but nevertheless true* (Steiner, *The Education of the Child,* 105).

Part of this picture is our relationship and respect for all human beings—especially the person the children see us with most. If we do not speak to, gesture toward, and convey love for the person we are working with, the children can only imitate our discord and the lack of respect we carry. It is essential that we have a positive relationship in order to be worthy of the children. We as teachers often desire that young children will get along with one another—but if we do not convey a positive example the children cannot imitate us.

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Holding the Adult in a Meditative Light

Deepening Our Work with Parents in the Parent-Child Class

• Magdalena Toran

We are given through the insights of Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy a deep understanding of the young child. An archetypal image of health for the whole human being is continually guiding our work. This archetypal childhood is surrounded and penetrated by the calming strength of rhythm, physical and soul warmth, healthy nutrition, purposeful work, ample time in nature, healthy sleep habits, physical movement and above all love. We know too that the soul life of the mother and father deeply affect this incarnating child. It can be said that the child lives within the soul life of the adults surrounding her, especially the mother.

> *The mother's soul can be pictured as forming a protective cloak around the baby – a Madonna's cloak, raying out into the environment and affecting the whole atmosphere surrounding the child. It enfolds him in warmth and deeply affects him* (Salter 91-92).

This true image of the young child lives within us, but the realities of modern life and our own development as human beings can leave us many obstacles and challenges. These challenges can prevent our ability as parents to offer the ideal to our children.

In the Parent-Child work the teacher is in the unique position of having the parents and their children in the classroom. The parent then becomes, in a sense, the student. The guiding inspiration for this work of meditation on the adult came from recognizing that if I wanted to best serve the children, I needed to find a way to support the parents in their own unfolding. Some parents who enter the classroom are eager and open to receiving all that can be shared about the needs of their children. They feel safe and confident. Usually the children of these parents also feel safe and confident. The parents who feel anxious, stressed and defensive are the ones who is often not approachable in a verbal or direct way. It is those parents' children who need the most support.

> *During the early months, and in fact for the first three years, the young child, living within the cloak, experiences himself as part of the Mother, sharing fully her soul life. If Mother's soul life is calm and joyous, so will the baby within the Madonna's cloak be similarly affected. If Mother is nervous and anxious, this will also be expressed in the cloak* (Salter 91-92).

There are many ways for human beings to express warmth towards each other. We have all experienced the right word at the right moment (or silence when we needed it), the feeling of a hand on our shoulder, a phone call, someone's intentionality as they offer us a needed insight, hot soup on a cold day. Each person finds her own way of bringing warmth to another, and as the sun calls forth the flowers from the cold ground in springtime so we, too, open when someone turns warmly towards us. There is a call in me to discover how I might deepen that expression of warmth in my work that those in my care might open ever so slightly, that we might all be more deeply in loving service to our children. Prayer and meditation are ways in which a teacher can cultivate warmth between herself and a parent in service of a child. To approach another human being in this way can create a compassionate and informed understanding of the other, a bridge between the teacher and the parent.

I will share my insights and a method for approaching parents in this way as well as my experiences from engaging in this practice.

Before going into the methods of meditation and my experiences in practicing them there are some important preparatory considerations that I would like to develop. These are: the desire never to compromise the personal freedom of another; assessing one's motives; clarity of preparation; and no expectation of a response.

One overwhelming desire I had in the activity of meditation for adults in my care was not to compromise their personal freedom. I do not know what the person truly needs and it would be a grave mistake if I thought I knew. The only thing I could be sure of was that there was a suffering in the adult, which manifested itself as insecurity, fear, anxiety, over-confidence, coolness, and/or depression. The suffering of another is obvious to us and we know it is not the truest possibility of human life. But pain and suffering have their place in our development and it is not for us to wish them away. It is also not appropriate for me to pray for harmony between the parent and the child because there is again the possibility that they have something important to work out together. We cannot with our small minds know what is best for another person, which is why we have arrived at the place of prayer or meditation. (We should probably arrive there more often.) We can only claim the truth, which is that we do not know what to do for the other. There is simply a desire in us to be of service to them and to their unfolding. We do not know what form that will take. Claire Blatchford offers us this wisdom in her book *Becoming*:

> *You're pushing too hard in your prayer life*
> *for what* you *want to see in others.*
> *The spiritual world is so vast,*
> *So immense in its possibilities,*
> *Do not block the way with your preferences.*
> *Pray only for my [Christ's] light on and in others.*
> *Leave the rest, the details, to me and to the angels.*
> *Remember it is the intention that matters, that is all.*
> *Even for yourself, leave the imaginings to me.*
> *Let this teach you that true love brings freedom;*
> *It is free of personal expectations,*
> *it rejoices in the other,*
> *that is all* (105).

If we approach our meditation in this way we create an opening in ourselves where something higher can work.

A further development of this idea is the assessing of one's motives in the activity of meditating on another. Our motives must be truly selfless, originating from a loving desire to assist another in order that his highest and best self may emerge. Henning Köhler states, "We are concerned here with a totally selfless method, dedicated to serving mankind – This must be done consciously, with clarity, avoiding any trace of egotism…" (Köhler, 4) We can access in ourselves, using our cognitive forces as well as our heart sense, whether we are selfishly or selflessly

motivated. For example I was searching for further material for my research project for my training at Sophia's Hearth Family Center and chose someone in my class whom I found to be irritating and difficult. I went home that night and methodically and coolly held her in my thoughts. There was no warmth in me for this parent and I did not succeed in cultivating any. My motives were selfish. I needed material for my research project so I was going to pray for her! If I had held her in my heart out of genuine interest and a desire to be of service to her and her child then I would have been acting selflessly and perhaps experienced a different outcome. Köhler describes this by stating: "Finding answers by this method has to be based upon genuine interest and involvement; we must be really stirred by a desire to understand the child's [or adult's] being." (Köhler, 4)

Koehler goes on to say: "We will, as a rule, succeed in getting what sleep has to offer only if we have done a thorough job of preparation." It is my feeling that preparation encompasses many different aspects and will vary for each person. We must uncover for ourselves what our preparation entails. First there is the preparation of one's self. This may mean making more time in the evening than usual to become inwardly quiet. It is difficult to think clearly on another when one's own personal thoughts are filling the mind. It also helps to think about the person for a number of days in a row before the actual activity of meditation, just calling them to mind and reflecting on why you might be bringing her to your consciousness in a special way.

It is also important to be able to create a clear mental picture of her, her physical appearance and her soul gesture. Often the physical body is a strong expression of the soul gesture of the person. For example: does she walk heavily with slumped shoulders? Is the handshake limp and cool? Does she back away when being spoken to? All of these can be quietly noted, free from any sympathetic judgment. This is a way of coming into deeper relationship with the person, of deepening one's involvement with the other.

We can easily experience something done with preparedness and care versus something done absentmindedly and in haste. As with anything else in life we will have greater success by engaging in a caring, loving, thoughtful way. After preparing in this way one can approach the meditation with lightness, openness, and trust. There is a deep joy that comes from working in this way and as a practice develops a greater perception can occur of the helping spiritual beings that surround us. To think that the angels hear us does inspire joy and dedication!

Expectation of an outcome or response to a prayer can act like a dam upon the flow of assistance. One can think to herself "There, I've done everything right. I imagine this person with a clear mind and a loving attention and prayed my little prayer. When I wake in the morning I am going to love them all the better and know just what to do!" There is egotism in deservedness and expectation. So we must free ourselves from an expected outcome and only be grateful if one can perceive the activity of the angels in oneself or in the other. Again, the way in which help is received is as varied as the individual. Perhaps the assistance will manifest itself as something a week from now, or only after ten years. Perhaps it will be healing between the person in the prayer and someone you've never met. The possibilities for healing are endless. If you have approached the prayer with intentionality, integrity, and love, you can be grateful for that opportunity alone. And gratitude is important. If one does perceive a change in one's own being or in the other than it is extremely important to be grateful for that.

Description of Meditation

To arrive at a meditation for this I used as a model that which many early childhood teachers and class teachers use to meditate on their children. That is, simply put, to picture the child in one's mind before going to sleep. This practice is used widely and many authors have written comprehensively on the subject(for example Henning Köhler, Michaela Glöckler, Helmut von Kügelgen).

The teacher may find it helpful to prepare herself by coming into a more meditative mind. This can be done by saying quietly within oneself what is intended for the next few minutes, taking a series of deep breaths, and quieting the thoughts going through the mind. Then the teacher can call up in herself an image of the person. It is amazing how quickly the image of the other comes, as if it has been waiting all the time to be seen by us. We hold the image of the person in our heart and perceive him as clearly as possible. Often an image comes of time we have spent with him, how he has interacted with their child or with another parent. We can see him as he is walking, as he has shaken our hand, or as he is seated at the table. Whatever image comes we hold it lovingly in our heart.

The image of the other is held with the recognition that out of my limited self I do not know how best to serve this person in my care but that I am open to being in service to the highest in them. In doing this, the teacher creates in herself a vessel into which wisdom may flow. It is this opening that allows for assistance to be given. The teacher can ask for assistance at any time during this process from her angel or the Christ. The full image of the other is then offered up to the spiritual world with a grateful heart. Each one of us has a different experience or feeling of what it is that is supporting human beings in their development. This may be felt or experienced as warmth or a light, as the arms of the angels, as the Christ Being or the Christ Light. One colleague described it as "the ever unfolding rose of love." Whatever that is for each of us it has love at its source and it is into this love that we gently place the other. One can also give thanks at this time for the Love that one is experiencing and the help that is being offered. After this it may be important to come back into a more "everyday" mind, a few deep breaths and opening the eyes will gently bring the teacher out of the meditative experience. The teacher then goes into rest and into sleep.

It would be extremely presumptuous of me to say that I understand what happens to the human being during sleep and so I must lean into my sense of the activity that occurs there and what can be taken from the insights of Anthroposophy, which describe how in sleep we turn away from the world of the senses and toward the spiritual world. Something can happen in this time between our waking days where insights can be revealed to us. With curiosity we can explore what that means for each of us and for our children. We place this meditation at the end of the day and before going to sleep so that the angels and the spiritual world might assist us in our work.

Experiences resulting from engaging with my research topic

Each time I entered into the activity of meditation on an adult in my care I had valuable experiences, which strengthened my commitment to working in this way. The most noticeable experiences occurred with parents for whom I had followed all the indications offered in this paper. If ever I tried to "practice" meditating on someone with a desire to accumulate material for my research I felt an extreme emptiness both in the meditation and upon awakening. This affirmed for me that the greatest motive has to be a genuine interest in the well-being of the parent and her child. All of this work was intended to create an opening in the adult that might allow for deeper communication and assistance for the child we hold between us. What I found when I entered into the meditation in the most genuine way was that movement would happen that I could not have created out of myself. I will share an example of this. (Names have been changed to respect the privacy of the people involved.)

Sally Sullivan came to my class eager to participate and perceiving that Waldorf education was something she wanted for herself and for her daughter. She describes her daughter Annie as a "free sprit" and very bright. This is true of Annie; she is beaming with intelligence and strength. I perceived immediately that she "ruled the roost" and that her mother was almost frightened of the strength she saw in her daughter. Sally felt safe with me and we had many conversations about her daughter and how she might meet her. Annie responded well to me and to being in the class. But it was hard for Sally because Annie's behavior could at times cause embarrassment in her mother. Sally would back away from Annie energetically and physically when she started acting out for fear that she would have a tantrum from which Sally could not retrieve her. After the first few weeks of class Sally and Annie's attendance became sporadic, as Annie was often sick. One night I had a long conversation on the phone with Sally and she was saying that she thought it might be better for her and Annie not to come to class any more because it seemed to hard for Annie to be there. I trusted my perception that it was not hard for Annie

to be in the class but hard for her mother. I also felt strongly that Annie was meant to be in my class and that I might be able to help her mother perceive her daughter more clearly, and have a more enjoyable experience of parenting her. In that phone conversation Sally revealed more of what Annie's schedule was like. When I hung up the phone I was truly angry with Sally. I was angry with her for making choices for Annie that I perceived were making it very difficult for Annie to feel safe and be healthy in her body. I also was angry that she might take her out of the class when I felt that being there could help Annie and her mother.

When I took Sally into my sleep that night I had a strong image of her and my interest was genuine and very deep. I really wanted to help Annie and I felt a great love for her. I awoke in the morning with a profoundly new perception of Sally. I realized how before I was really filled with criticism and judgment of her for how she was with her daughter. I felt that I was really able to perceive what it was to think of her in that way. Instead I was filled with a deep love for her and for her path in life. There was in me a new space for Sally where she could come as she was and I would receive her. This opening in me really felt to be a gift. It was not something I could have done with my cognitive mind. I could have recognized I was judgmental and that I needed to change my perceptions of her but I could not decide to see her differently. Henning Köhler speaks of this: "What can be achieved in this way is naturally much richer, more and more deeply grounded, than any head knowledge one might try convulsively to translate into action, action taken mostly in vain. You experience how an insight, one that you are neither able nor willing to put into immediate practice but rather continue to 'meditate' on as a questioning carried into sleep, works formatively, reshaping the structure of your habits. And you experience, too, how you are enabled to read the 'answer' in your own changing conduct. It is an answer you could not have found by any amount of merely theoretical searching" (Köhler, 3-4).

After that experience Annie did not miss another class due to illness. She came often and grew more and more calm, as did her mother. Many other doors also opened. Annie's father, who had been reluctant to have Annie participate in the program, arrived at class one day unexpectedly. He continued to come often after that and I could tell that he was being nurtured by what he experienced there. Sally soon reported to me that Thomas was now willing to support Annie's application process for the Nursery at school. Last week I met them as they were coming in for their parent interview, eager to have Annie in the school.

This was the most profound experience out of all the meditations I practiced but it was also the one where my desire to be of assistance to the child was the strongest. My sense is that this loving desire is stronger than even the most thoroughly prepared meditation. As Köhler described in the above quotation, it may be and I imagine often is, our own conduct that needs changing in order to be of deeper service to another. In this instance an opening was created in me where Sally could feel truly safe. From that safety she could relax more and everything flowed more smoothly. I also believe the spiritual world could work more easily with us as there was less resistance between us.

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Magdalena Toran *completed her Waldorf early childhood training at Sunbridge College and has taken courses at Sophia's Hearth in New Hampshire. She leads parent-child classes, called Cricket on the Hearth, at the Hartsbrook School in Hadley, MA, where her son attends the elementary school.*

The Role of the Evaluator

• Holly Koteen-Soulé

There was an old woman lived under a hill
And if she's not gone, she lives there still
Baked apples she sold and cranberry pies
And she's the old woman who never told lies
—Nursery Rhyme

The Role of the Evaluator

A visitor to an early childhood classroom can bring a great deal of delight to the children, especially if the visitor slips in unobtrusively and is as happy to be there as the children are to have a guest. Imagine, on the other hand, how it might be for the children and their teacher to host a frowning, tight-lipped "know-it-all"! While every fairy tale may have need of such a hard-hearted character and the challenge that it represents, we would not choose such an archetype to be our evaluator.

Experience in Waldorf early childhood settings is not the only necessary qualification for an evaluator. There are specific qualities, capacities, and skills that an individual serving as an evaluator will want to cultivate.

Honesty is paramount, as indicated in the nursery rhyme above, but honesty as a virtue is more encompassing than merely "never telling lies." Openness, genuineness, sincerity, frankness, fairness, trustworthiness, and acting in an honorable manner are all embedded in the meaning of the word. Much of what an evaluator would aspire to could be found in this expanded definition of honesty, especially when it is coupled with the capacity for tactful communication.

Rudolf Steiner advised the teachers of the first Waldorf School to "have courage for the truth." He linked having courage for the truth to two other activities that are also relevant to our topic.

Imbue thyself with the power of imagination,
Have courage for the truth,
Sharpen thy feeling for responsibility of soul.

An evaluator's capacity to sense the truth finds its basis in an understanding of essential principles, while avoiding fixed notions of how those principles must be manifested in a particular situation. It is through the creative power of the imagination that the evaluator can recognize and celebrate an individual educator's artistic expression of common understandings. An evaluator will also be keenly aware of the deep responsibility of serving as a guide for the development of a fellow educator.

If we look again at traditional fairy tales, we can find several common elements that characterize the encounter of the hero and/or heroine with an individual who offers them guidance for their journey. The guide is not usually a companion, but someone whom the seeker meets and whose advice changes the course of the seeker's journey and allows it to come to fulfillment. Typically the guide is a person, but occasionally might appear in the form of a tree (as in the Grimms' version of "Cinderella" in which the heroine's counselor is the hazel tree with the white bird that lives in its branches) and sometimes in the form of an animal (like the cat in certain versions of the Russian fairy tale, "Baba Yaga"). In general, this character has more experience in the world, and so is referred to as "the Old One" in the list that follows.

The common motifs include:

- *The Old One shares somehow in the destiny of the seeker.*
- *The Old One already knows something about the seeker.*
- *The Old One offers a gift or means of protection.*
- *The Old One gives a picture of what lies ahead for the seeker.*
- *The Old One leaves the seeker free.*
- *The Old One teaches the seeker his or her art.*

Motifs often appear in combinations, but the

examples below were chosen to illustrate one or another of the aspects listed. Those familiar with fairy tales will be able to think of other examples as well.

The Old One shares somehow in the destiny of the seeker.

In the German fairy tale "Mother Holle," the old woman with the big teeth tells the girl not to be afraid, but to stay with her and be the better for it. When the girl wants to return home, Mother Holle says, "As you have served me so truly, I myself will take you up again." When the golden rain falls on the girl as she passes through the doorway, her words are, "You shall have that because you have been so industrious."

The Old One already knows something about the seeker.

The heroine of the Scandinavian fairy tale "East of the Sun and West of the Moon," meets three old hags, and each one says, "Maybe it's you who ought to have had the prince." The girl gets a gift from each of them, a golden ball, a golden comb and a golden spinning wheel. "Maybe you'll find a use for it, " each hag says in turn.

The Old One offers a gift or means of protection.

In "The Three Little Men in the Wood" from the Grimms' collection, while the girl is sweeping the snow from behind the house as the men had asked her to do, the three say to one another, "What shall we give her as she is so good and shared her bread with us?" One gives her beauty, another says that gold coins will fall from her mouth when she speaks, and the third that she will marry a king's son.

The Granddaughter in the Native American tale "The Arrow Chain," tells the chief's son, "My grandmother has been watching you climb up from the earth." The grandmother welcomes him and says, "You are brave to come up to the sky country, but what do you seek here?" After he tells her, she feeds him and then gives him four gifts: a pine cone, a fish eye, a rose, and a small sharpening stone, all of which he will need to escape with his friend and complete his mission safely.

The Old One gives a picture of what lies ahead for the seeker.

In the Spanish fairy tale "The Three Oranges," the prince who is seeking a bride not born of an ordinary mother leaves the castle with only three loaves of bread. He gives the first one to an old man who can hardly see or hear. The old man asks him what he is looking for and when the prince tells him of his quest, he describes the road to follow, warns him of the lion ahead and instructs him how to care for the maiden when she is released from the magic orange.

The Old One leaves the seeker free.

Gifts are given without restrictions in the little German fairy tale "Sweet Porridge," in the Scandinavian fairy tale "The Lad Who Went to the North Wind," and in similar tales involving a magic pot or a magic cloth. In these stories learning how to care for what one has received is the real gift.

The Old One teaches the seeker his or her art.

In the fairy tale of "The Donkey," which was discussed in the Introduction, the musician teaches his pupil to play the lute as well as the master himself. This gift becomes the means by which the donkey ultimately becomes fully human.

If we were to apply these motifs to the work of the evaluator, what might be illuminated for us? Are there potential correspondences that could be helpful to the person who takes on the task of offering guidance to fellow educators? Every evaluator is also on a path of development. Perhaps these motifs could serve as inner guideposts for the evaluator in this journey, even as he or she attends to the very necessary and practical details of the evaluation visit.

In addition, we offer below a checklist that outlines the different stages of the evaluation visit and questions to be considered at each stage.

CHECKLIST FOR THE EVALUATOR

Preparation For The Visit

• Am I inwardly and outwardly prepared for the evaluation visit?
• Do I have copies of all the relevant material?
• Do I know what the school expects of me?
• Do I know to what group or committee I am responsible?
• Do I know how to reach my contact person (phone and email) at the school?
• Have I read the teacher's self-evaluation?
• Have I set up a phone conversation or a meeting with the teacher prior to my visit?
• Do I have a schedule for my visit?
• Am I conscious of the teacher's questions as well as the questions of the school?

Initial Meeting with the Teacher

• How did I help us form a positive working relationship prior to the observation?
• Did we review the teacher's self-evaluation together?
• Did I ask the teacher about additional questions?
• Did I ask the teacher if there were anything that he or she would like me to observe?
• Was I able to listen without jumping to conclusions?
• Is my interest in this person genuine?

The Classroom Observation

• Was I a supportive presence for the teacher?
• Did I arrange with the teacher where to sit and what to do in order to be most unobtrusive?
• Did I take in impressions without falling into sympathy or antipathy?
• Did I make observations objectively?
• Was I able to be inwardly calm?
• Was I able to bring myself into the right mood for the children?

The Post-Observation Conversation

• Were we able to find together a key to the teacher's future development?
• Were there sufficient time and a private space for an in-depth conversation?
• Did I ask the teacher if the day was typical or not?
• Did I allow the teacher to speak first?
• Did I offer my observations before offering any interpretations?
• Did I ask the teacher to explain why certain things were done as they were?
• Did I share out of my own experiences?
• Did I refrain from overwhelming the teacher with multiple suggestions?
• Was I honest in sharing my concerns?
• Did we agree on concrete objectives?

The Written Report

• Were my communications clear, professional and addressed to the appropriate persons?
• Did I ask the teacher to review the report for inaccuracies?
• Was there a fair balance of commendations and recommendations in the report?
• Were specific goals, timelines and support suggested in the report?
• Were options for professional development opportunities noted when appropriate?
• Did I respect agreements for confidentiality?

Even for experienced evaluators, who may already have internalized such a list, the questions above can still serve as useful reminders. For educators who are new to the task of evaluation the checklist can help them become successful guides for others. Working with the fairy tale motifs connected to the archetype of "The Old One" can add an enlivening artistic element to the work for both new and experienced evaluators.

Serving as an evaluator gives us a rare opportunity to lift ourselves out of our personal perspectives to stand for something larger than ourselves. It allows us to behold again, with our colleagues, the ideals to which we all aspire and to rededicate ourselves to our individual paths of development.

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Emmi-Pikler-Haus

A Pikler/Waldorf Residential Home for Young Children in Germarny

• Joyce Gallardo

Emmi-Pikler-Haus, a residential home for children from birth to six years old, is located in Gersdorf, a rural hamlet of Dahme-Spreewald, Germany, halfway between Dresden and Berlin. The nine children who live here range in age from five weeks to six years old. They are mostly social orphans—children whose parents cannot take care of them because of substance abuse or mental illness in the family. The children may have social-emotional or developmental disturbances, as many come from homes where violence, abuse or neglect is common. Each child's story is unique.

Here at Emmi-Pikler-Haus, the children live in a family-like life community with their caregivers, where they are sheltered and protected and given respectful, loving, and tender attention. Consistency and continuity in their daily life is so important for these children, for whom life before coming to Emmi-Pikler-Haus was a series of disconnected, fragmented, and often painful events.

Here life is rhythmical and predictable—bedtime and naps are at the same time each day; nourishing, wholesome meals are served at the same hour each day; there is time for indoor and outdoor play and time for rest. The regular, focused, and respectful caregiving times provide opportunities for intimacy and the cultivation of a special I-Thou relationship between the child and his caregiver; as the child's trust in the adults who care for him is slowly restored, a healing process can begin.

A Brief History of Emmi-Pikler-Haus

Ute Strub and her colleague, Elke-Maria Rischke, who were the main caregivers in the beginning at Emmi-Pikler-Haus, formed a seven-member association in 2004 to create this residential home for young children out of the fusion of the pedagogies of Hungarian pediatrician Emmi Pikler, founder of Loczy,a residential nursery in Budapest, Hungary (also known as the Pikler Institute), and of Austrian philosopher and scientist Rudolf Steiner, founder of the Waldorf School in Germany. It would be the first Pikler/Waldorf residential home for young children in the world. In March 2006, they were able to rent the former home of relatives of German poet Heinrich von Kleist, in the tiny hamlet of Gersdorf, and with several generous donations began to remodel the old kitchen and to lazure the walls in soft plant colors. The floors and doors were scrubbed and polished, and cotton and silk curtains softly tinted with rose and peach-colored plant dyes were hung to diffuse the bright sunlight streaming in through the big south-facing windows that overlook a large cornfield.

Little wooden beds with peach and rose silken canopies were constructed for the children who would live here. Objects from nature were collected and baskets of pine cones, shells, stones and sticks sat on low shelves, waiting for little hands to touch and play with them. A basket of dress-up clothes and hats sat nearby.

Wooden play stands were made and little wooden playhouses were draped with plant-dyed cloths for a roof, waiting for a little child to come "live" in them. A vegetable garden was planted and a lovely outdoor space in the garden was created with a sandbox and tree trunks to climb on. A deck was built out the back door where the children would nap under a canopy, protected from sun and wind.

In June 2006, Child Protection Services granted them permission to receive children at Emmi-Pikler-Haus, but the first child did not arrive until January 2007. By the end of May 2007 they were caring for six children and training two other caregivers with the financial support of Child Protection Services. Today, nine children live here who benefit from the respectful, loving caregiving and the creative, natural environment. Open, free, imaginative play without interference from the adults is supported and there are materials for the autonomous movement of the children in the house and garden.

Therapeutic horseback riding is offered for the older children on a nearby farm, where they are exposed to other animals as well. Throughout the year the festivals are celebrated with all the children, while each Sunday morning is marked by music, song and dance. Each evening a candle is lit at bedtime for story and a prayer, and in the morning the children are awakened by a song to the accompaniment of the gentle music of the kantele.

At Emmi-Pikler-Haus there is a recognition of the child's spiritual as well as earthly origin. They strive to work from an anthroposophical image of the child—that of the reincarnated human spirit who has experienced repeated earth lives, although for some of the caregivers the anthroposophical approach is new. Even though the Pikler approach does not articulate or work from a defined spiritual perspective, the I-Thou relationship that the caregivers at Loczy develop with the children underscores the depth of reverence and devotion with which care is provided.

The Development Diary, Child Study

The caregivers keep a development diary for each child in which they document his growth and development, similar to what is done at Loczy. There is regular medical observation by the house doctor, who is an anthroposophical pediatrician, and an individual daily chart is kept for every detail of the child's care as well. This documentation and study of each child's development is an inspiration for his caregivers, as they can see how their care and attention have contributed to the good health and well-being of each child. Once a week all of the caregivers meet and conduct a child study, which could continue for three consecutive weeks. This is reflective of the child studies that Waldorf early childhood teachers conduct, wherein through our observations we create a picture of the whole child for colleagues and then out of this sharing often come to insights about how we might best serve that child.

Parent Visits

On Saturday mornings from nine to twelve, parents may visit their child in the presence of an adult from Emmi-Pikler-Haus and afterwards discuss the child's progress with Pia Buerfent, the administrator, who was a child in Elke-Maria's kindergarten many years ago. This communication with the parents is part of a long-term attempt to reunite the children with their families. Yet, sometimes it is decided that it would not be healthy for a child to return to his family, and another alternative must be investigated, such as foster care or adoption. If a child is to be adopted or move into foster care, his caregivers carefully accompany him over the course of his transition, in conjunction with Child Protection Services.

A Visit to Emmi-Pikler-Haus

I visited Emmi-Pikler-Haus this summer after attending a seminar at Loczy, where Ute gave several workshops. Early in the morning, my husband and I took the two-hour train ride from Dresden to the town of Golssen, and then a fifteen minute taxi ride to the hamlet of Gersdorf, where Emmi-Pikler-Haus is located. The house is set back from the dirt road that winds past it, and is surrounded on both sides by gardens and cornfields. As we walked up the driveway, we heard the flapping of wings and saw a stork fly overhead to a huge nest on a large, high post near the house, where two young storks sat, theirbeaks open wide, waiting to be fed by the mother stork. How appropriate! I thought. In Europe, the stork is still a symbol of childbirth and is said to make its nest near where a child will be born. It is considered a blessing for a stork to build its nest near one's house or on one's chimney.

In the garden next to the house, the older

children were playing and ran to the little gate as soon as they saw us. They called out and we waved a greeting. Their caregiver smiled and bent down to speak to them softly in German and they ran back to their play in the sandbox.

Ute greeted us from the front door at the top of the steps. When we stepped through that big wooden door, the soft, diffuse light and quiet, peaceful atmosphere inside were a sharp contrast to the bright summer sunlight and the sound of a tractor harvesting corn on a nearby farm. The lovely, soft hues of the walls, the curtains that billowed pastel plant colors from open windows framed in natural wood, the wood floors that shone with just a hint of a shine, the aroma of delicious, wholesome food cooking in the spotless, welcoming kitchen, and the presence of the adults working were all like a gentle caress to the senses.

Little play houses were tucked away in corners of the play room and knotted dolls were sleeping in their basket beds. The children's beds were attractively arranged in a large airy room, all with silken canopies of a whisper of rose color. What a lovely place for children to live! I thought.

The Children of Emmi-Pikler-Haus

We went outside onto the deck just as the older children were coming up the stairs to wash their hands before lunch. One little girl tugged at her caregiver's skirt and whispered something to her. "She would like you to sing a children's song," the caregiver said. "Yes," I said, smiling, and with gestures, sang a song:

There's a sun for the morning
And a moon for the night
When the moon hides her face
Still the stars twinkle bright

Love and joy, light and beauty
Come from God high above
And He gives these good gifts
From a heart full of love.

The little girl smiled shyly and tugged at her caregiver's skirt once more. She whispered in her ear, "Again." Once again, I sang the song, and the children smiled sweetly. The little girl asked for me to sing the song again and again. By the fourth time I sang it, all of the children, their caregiver and Ute were doing the gestures with me. Then, off they went to wash their hands for lunch.

Elke-Maria invited us to walk in the garden with her, where she told us about the youngest child at Emmi-Pikler-Haus, Julie-Marie, who was just eight weeks old when she arrived. She had been held in a vertical position almost from birth, without adequate support to her head and back. When she was brought here two weeks ago, her whole body was tense and her hands were clinched in tight little fists up near her shoulders as she struggled to support her own head.

Another child came to Emmi Pikler Haus when he was four years old from a home where he had been physically abused. The first day he came to stay at Emmi-Pikler-Haus he said to his caregiver, "I want to stay here forever because I know you love me." Learning to model the behavior of the caregivers at Emmi-Pikler-Haus is a part of the long process of attempting to reunite parents with their children. By means of this modeling of the behavior of the caregivers, a new and positive relationship has developed between this child and his mother.

We went inside for lunch and Ute pointed out the baby's room. She was sleeping, but I could go in and see her for a moment. In this room, a peaceful sanctuary for the nurturing and healing of the infant's damaged life and touch senses had been created. The crib where baby Julie-Marie slept was like a "celestial incubator" in which she was enveloped in sheaths of protection. Over the crib was draped a rosebud-colored silk canopy, the same delicate color as her cheeks. Her pale white skin was almost transparent. Her little head was covered with a natural-colored silk hat and her silk cardigan and cotton bunting were also natural-colored. The bedding was of the same color, all of which gave her the appearance of a tiny angel sleeping on a cloud.

The baby's little hands were no longer clenched tightly, trying to hold up her head, but were relaxed and open on either side of her head, like the leaves of a plant. Her tiny pink lips curved ever so slightly into a sweet smile and she sighed softly in her sleep. With a last look, I slipped quietly out the door.

Lunch was waiting and with it a lovely social time with Ute and two of the caregivers. Ute told us that when the doctor who first brought Julie-Marie to Emmi-Pikler-Haus came to visit the day before, she brought him into the room where the infant was asleep. He said, "Yes, this baby looks very well, but now I would like to see our Julie-Marie." He did not recognize the infant just two short weeks after her arrival at Emmi-Pikler-Haus.

It would soon be nap time, and the children were being tucked into their beds, but still, there was work to be done. The three o'clock train would take us back to Dresden. With gratitude we bid everyone farewell, knowing that we would meet again.

Joyce Gallardo *has been an early childhood educator for more than twenty-five years. She is the director of Los Amiguitos, a family day care home, where she works out of the insights of Waldorf early childhood education, offering a kindergarten-nursery program that is enriched by the work of Emmi Pikler. She has completed RIE Level I training in the U.S. and introductory and advanced training at the Pikler Institute in Budapest, Hungary.*

Legacy of an Adopted Child

Author unknown

Once there were two women who never knew each other.
One you do not remember, the other you call Mother.
Two different lives shaped to make you one,
One became your guiding star, the other became your sun.
The first one gave you life and the second taught you to live it.
The first one gave you a need for love, the second was there to give it.
One gave you a nationality, the other gave you a name.
One gave you talent, the other helped you find your aim.
One sought for you a home that she could not provide,
The other prayed for a child and her hopes were not denied.
And now you ask me through your tears
The age-old question unanswered through the years,
Heredity or environment? Which are you product of?
Neither my darling, neither, just two different kinds of love.

Parenting with Spirit

• Reviewed by Stephen Spitalny

Parenting with Spirit; A Waldorf Guide for the Three Phases of Childhood by Cindy Brooks and Joya Birns (Parenting With Spirit Publications, 2008).

Cindy and Joya have put together a wonderful booklet for parents on how to relate to children during the first three phases of life. They offer an easy to understand picture of child development and simple guidance on various aspects of connecting with the children, from communication to discipline to the therapeutic use of story. The last issue of *Gateways* included two stories from Cindy Brooks that are included in this book.

Parenting With Spirit is an excellent resource for a parent library, as well as offering insightful tips that teachers can use, especially in the realms of communication and storytelling. The authors set out to describe a path of parenting with spirit that they articulate clearly, both in parent skills development goals and as a perspective on relating to the child's developmental stages. Each section of the booklet is concise but gives plenty of seeds for thought and further deepening and practice. Also, many of the sections are separated into the three main developmental phases from birth to 21 years, allowing the reader to focus on a particular stage if so desired. All of the suggestions are grounded in descriptions of how they relate to the particular developmental stage at hand, so the reader can understand easily why the suggestions are offered. *Parenting With Spirit* also includes helpful chapters by Scott Olmsted and Joan Agostinelli.

There is a section devoted to working with the spiritual world that is both accessible and inviting. Perhaps it could inspire readers (whether parents or not) to take up or deepen a practice of connecting with the spiritual world as a support for children and for one's own balance and sanity. I especially like the three star meditation in Chapter Two that is offered as a support for the adult in increasing calm and confidence, and regaining inner balance.

Currently the book is only available by contacting parentingwithspirit@gmail.com.

Conferences

June 22–June 26, East Bay Waldorf School, El Sobrante, CA: **Searching for the Spirit in Our Time; A Young People's Festival of Art, Anthroposophy and Agriculture** with Sibylle Eichstaedt, Christopher Guilfoil, Glenda Monasch, David-Michael Monasch, John Ryan, Ken Smith, Dorit Winter. Contact: Lisa Anderson, bacwtt.org, 415-332-2133, info@bacwtt.org.

June 23–27, Milwaukie, OR: **AWSNA Summer Conference: Weaving the Educational Task with the Social Mission of Waldorf Schools.** AWSNA conference for Teachers, Staff, Parents, and Board Members, hosted by the Portland Waldorf School. Keynote Speaker: Virginia Sease. Pedagogical Section Meeting: June 22 - 23. Contact: Connie Starzynski 808-377-5488, cstarzynski@awsna.org.

August 8–11, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **Soul Transformation and Social Renewal: Conference and Art and Science Exhibit** with Gary Lamb, Ulrich Roesch, Michael Howard, Henrike Holdrege, Dr. Gerald Karnow, Mac Mead, Michael Steinrueck, Laura Summer, and members of Think OutWord. What inner or spiritual capacities do we need to address today's financial and environmental crises, and to renew political, economic, and cultural life in the twenty-first century? Registration forms available at www.threefold.org/events, or contact Lory Widmer, 845-352-5020 x18, events@threefold.org.

August 12–16, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **The Relationship of Goethe's Fairy Tale to The Portal of Initiation**, Contact Barbara Renold: barbararenold@yahoo.com.

October 2–4, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **Creating Living Connections: Christian Rosenkreutz and the Social Impulse**, Annual Conference and Members' Meeting of the Anthroposophical Society in America. As they develop, details will be posted at www.threefold.org and on www.anthroposophy.org.

Workshops and Short Courses

May 16, Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH: **A Practical Path to Healthy Attachment: the Pikler Approach for Caregivers and Parents** with Nancy Macalaster. Contact Bonnie Chamberlin, 603 357-3755, bonnie@sophiashearth.org.

May 16, Fiber Craft Studio, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **Dyeing Silks with Plant Color** with Mikae Toma. 845.425.2891, fibercraft@threefold.org, www.threefold.org.

May 23, Fiber Craft Studio, Chestnut Ridge, NY**: Plant Dyeing for Parents and Children (Age 6–10)** with Chris Marlow. 845.425.2891, fibercraft@threefold.org, www.threefold.org.

June 19–20, Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA: **Working with Preschool Children Ages 3 and 4** with Rosario Villasana-Ruiz, MA and Lauren Hickman, MA. Contact Lauren Hickman, 916-961-8727 x117 or earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu.

June 21–27, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **The Voice of the Soul—Music and Movement: Summer Eurythmy Week**. One-week summer intensive in eurythmy led by Annelies Davidson and Natasha Moss of Eurythmy Spring Valley. Contact Lura Jacobs, 845-352-5020, ext. 13, info@eurythmy.org.

June 22–26 Sunbridge College, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **Tracing the Healing Roots of Waldorf Early Childhood Education** with Nancy Blanning and Laurie Clark. Contact: Susan Wallendorf, 845-425-0055 x16, Summer@Sunbridge.edu or visit www.Sunbridge.edu.

June 22–26, Waldorf School of San Diego, CA: **The Courage to Transform Ourselves: The Calling from a New Generation**, Rena Osmer. Contact Brooke Trudeau, 877-394-1444, office@waldorfteaching.org or www.waldorfteaching.org.

June 28–July 3 and July 5–July 10: Wilton, NH. **Renewal Courses 2009**. For a complete listing, visit centerforanthroposophy.org or call 603-654-2566.

June 28–July 3, Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA: **Fundamentals of the Waldorf Kindergarten** with Cynthia Lambert and Karen Viani. Contact Lauren Hickman, 916-961-8727 x117 or earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu.

June 29–July 3, Denver, Colorado: **Building the Moral Sense: Medical and Pedagogical Insights for Enriching the Work of Early Childhood Education**. Presenters include Dr. Adam Blanning, Nancy Blanning, Laurie Clark, and Marielle Levin. Contact Nancy Blanning, phone: 303-777-0531 x164, nancy.blanning@gmail.com.

June 29–July 3, East Bay Waldorf School, El Sobrante, CA: **Arts Intensive** with Christiaan Boele, Sibylle Eichstaedt, Patrick Marooney, Christopher Guilfoil, David-Michael Monasch, Dorit Winter. Two areas of emphasis (may be combined): Musical and Sculptural.

Contact: Lisa Anderson, bacwtt.org, 415-332-2133, info@bacwtt.org.

June 29–July 3 Sunbridge College, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **Enlivening Social Arts—Nurturing Relationships** with Patricia Rubano, Connie Manson, Celia Riahi. Contact: Susan Wallendorf, 845-425-0055 x16, Summer@Sunbridge.edu or please visit www.Sunbridge.edu.

June 29–July 3, Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH: **Creating an Outdoor Environment and Imbuing it With Life** with Carol Nasr Griset and Marjorie Rehbach. Contact Bonnie Chamberlin, 603-357-3755, bonnie@sophiashearth.org.

June 29–July 3, Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH: **Embracing Every Child: Supporting Children with Challenges**, with Jane Swain and Marjorie Rehbach. Contact Bonnie Chamberlin, 603-357-3755, bonnie@sophiashearth.org.

July 5–10, 2009 in Duncan, BC: **The Joys & Challenges of Working with the Older Child in the Kindergarten** with Ruth Ker and Barbara Klocek. Contact Ruth Ker, 604 748-7791, info@westcoastinstitute.org.

July 5–25, Stonehill College, Easton, MA: **Rudolf Steiner Institute**. Over 20 One- and Two-Week Courses, Children's program and financial assistance available. Contact: Lynn Bufano, 410-358-0050, reg@steinerinstitute.org. For a complete course listing see steinerinstitute.org.

July 6–10, Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH: **Working Well with Parents** with Carol Nasr Griset and Kim Snyder-Vine. Contact Bonnie Chamberlin, 603-357-3755, bonnie@sophiashearth.org.

July 6–10 Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH**: Creating a Program for Infants and Young Children** with Marjorie Rehbach and Kim Snyder-Vine. Contact Bonnie Chamberlin, 603-357-3755, bonnie@sophiashearth.org.

July 6–10, East Bay Waldorf School, El Sobrante, CA: **Common Sense and Presence of Mind and Guiding Principles in the Waldorf School** with Christof Weichert, Sibylle Eichstaedt, Christopher Guilfoil, Renate Lundberg, Lisa Sargent, Ken Smith. Contact: Lisa Anderson, bacwtt.org, 415-332-2133, info@bacwtt.org.

July 6–10 Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH: **Nurturing the Child in the First Three Years** with Jane Swain, Susan Weber, and Marjorie Rehbach. *This is the first week of a two-week course (see* Nurturing the Young Child *below). Participants may enroll for the first week alone or for both weeks. With permission of the faculty and based upon prior experience, participants may enroll for the second week only.* Contact Bonnie Chamberlin, 603-357-3755, bonnie@sophiashearth.org.

July 11, The Pfeiffer Center, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **Summer Tasks for the Vegetable Garden** with Mac Mead. Contact Carol Rosenberg, 845-352-5020 x20, info@pfeiffercenter.org.

July 12–17, 2009 in Duncan, BC: **The Journey from Kindergarten to Grade One** with Ruth Ker and Nancy Blanning. Resources for first grade readiness observation and assessment. Contact Ruth Ker, 604 748-7791, info@westcoastinstitute.org.

July 13–17 Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH: **Cooking for the Love of the World: Nourishing the Young Child** with Anne-Marie Fryer Wiboltt. Contact Bonnie Chamberlin, 603 357-3755, bonnie@sophiashearth.org.

July 13–16, Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH: **Nurturing the Young Child**, with Jane Swain and Susan Weber. *This is the second week of a two-week course (see* Nurturing the Child in the First Three Years *above). Participants may enroll for the first week alone or for both weeks. With permission of the faculty and based upon prior experience, participants may enroll for the second week only.* Contact Bonnie Chamberlin, 603-357-3755 bonnie@sophiashearth.org.

July 13–17, East Bay Waldorf School, El Sobrante, CA**: Waldorf for Grown Ups** with Deborah Krikorian with Lisa Sargent, Sibylle Eichstaedt, Christopher Guilfoil, Renate Lundberg, Ken Smith. Contact: Lisa Anderson, bacwtt.org, 415-332-2133, info@bacwtt.org.

July 20–24, Los Angeles, CA: **Fostering Moral and Physical Development in the First Seven Years**, Holly Koteen-Soule and Alice Stamm. Contact Brooke Trudeau, 877-394-1444, office@waldorfteaching.org or www.waldorfteaching.org.

July 20–24, Santa Cruz, CA: **The Question of Waldorf Early Childhood Education: A path toward finding your answers** with Stephen Spitalny and Dean Pollard. Experienced teachers as well as those new to the work are welcome. Contact Steve at 831-469-9835 or stevespit@gmail.com.

August 3–7, Sunbridge College, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **Introduction To The Waldorf Kindergarten** with Patricia Rubano, Leslie Burchell-Fox, Connie Manson. Contact: Susan Wallendorf, 845-425-0055 x16, Summer@Sunbridge.edu or please visit www.Sunbridge.edu.

September 5, October 3, November 7, Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA: **Early Childhood Enrichment Series for Educators and Caregivers**. This series of three hour workshops will be designed to provide an enrichment and deepening experience for teachers and caregivers who are working in state and private preschools, extended day programs or family childcare homes, with at least one session in Spanish. For more information contact Lauren Hickman at 916-961-8727 ext. 117 or at earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu.

September 5, October 3, November 7, December 5, January 30, March 6, April 3, May 1, Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA: **Family Ways Parenting Series** for parents, grandparents, teachers and caregivers of children birth to seven years of age. With Lauren Hickman and guest speakers. Sessions may be taken individually. Childcare available. For more information contact Lauren Hickman at 916-961-8727 ext. 117 or at earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu.

November 2009, Date TBA, Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA: **Workshop with Helle Heckmann**. For more information contact Lauren Hickman at 916-961-8727 ext. 117 or at earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu.

Ongoing Trainings

May 17–23, 2009, Boulder, CO: **LifeWays training and certification program** for parents, childcare providers and early childhood teachers. Cynthia Aldinger and Rahima Baldwin Dancy lead the first of four week-long sessions over the course of a year. Trainings also available in Seattle, Fair Oaks, Wisconsin, and Maine. See www.lifewayscenter.org or call 405-579-0999.

July 6–24, in BC, Canada: **Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Training.** First summer session of a two-year, part-time course of study in Waldorf early childhood education intended for practicing early childhood educators who wish to deepen their knowledge of Waldorf education. Each year, three weeks in July, and one week each in the fall and spring. Contact Dorothy Olsen, 604-740-0539 or Marjorie Thatcher, 604-985-3569, info@westcoastinstitue.org.

July 6–24 at Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA: New **Early Childhood In-Service training** begins. This two-year, part time Waldorf early childhood teacher training program is designed for those working in Waldorf early childhood classrooms; meets three weeks in the summer for three summers, and four intensives, one week in the fall and one week in the spring for two years, with mentoring during the school year. Contact Lauren Hickman, 916-961-8727 x 117or earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu.

July 6–17, Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH: **The Child and Family in the First Three Years**, part-time training program with Susan Weber, Jane Swain, Marjorie Rehbach. This session is part of a 13-month course, featuring a holistic, inspiring study of the development of the young child and the experience of creating a family arising out of Waldorf education's insights into human development. The program is designed for childcare providers working with infants, toddlers and young children, parent-infant and parent-toddler group facilitating teachers, and those who work with expectant parents, and early childhood teachers wishing to deepen their understanding of these early years as a foundation for their work with nursery and kindergarten children. Contact Bonnie Chamberlin, 603-357-3755, bonnie@sophiashearth.org.

Summer, 2009 in Chestnut Ridge, NY: **Applied Arts Program, Sixth Cycle begins.** The Applied Arts Program, a professional development opportunity for Waldorf handwork teachers and aspiring teachers, explores the art, philosophy, practice and pedagogy of teaching handwork. The course meets in the Fiber Craft Studio on the Threefold campus for two weeks each summer and one week each winter for four years. In their time together, students and teachers form a learning community that supports their artistic development as well as their spiritual and practical striving. Contact fibercraft@threefold.org, 845-425-2891.

September 18, 2009, Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA: **LifeWays Childcare Training Program** begins. One year part time LifeWays certificate training for childcare providers, teachers, nannies, parents and grandparents meets for three intensive sessions in Fall, Spring and Summer. Contact Lauren Hickman at 916-961-8727 ext. 117 or earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu.

September, 2009, Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA: **Full time Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher training program** and **Foundation Studies** classes begin. For more information contact Lauren Hickman at 916-961-8727 ext. 117 or at earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu.

September 2009–June 2010, The Pfeiffer Center, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **One-year Part-time Training in Biodynamics**. Eight Saturday sessions (with Friday added in April and May) and a final three-day session in June. More than just a gardening course, this training is a way to connect to the life-giving nature of Anthroposophy. Contact Carol Rosenberg, 845-352-5020 x20, info@pfeiffercenter.org.

September 27, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **Part-Time Frontier Eurythmy Training** begins; open to new and continuing students. School of Eurythmy faculty Christina Beck, Annelies Davidson, Barbara Schneider-Serio. Contact Lura Jacobs, 845-352-5020, ext. 13, info@eurythmy.org.

November 2009, Chicago and Kimberton, PA: **Educational Support Program** for kindergarten teachers, class teachers and remedial teachers begins. This program will consist of four long weekends and two weeks in the summer. Applicants may take one, two or three years. Visit healingeducation.org or contact Mary Jo Oresti, mjoresti@aol.com.

Performances

May 16, Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA**: Birds of Fortune: Fairytale Performance for Children and Families** with Susan Strauss and Jazmin Hicks. Contact RSC, 916-961-8727.

May 29 and 30, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **Eurythmy School Graduation Performance**. Graduating students of the School of Eurythmy. Reservations required. Contact Lura Jacobs, 845-352-5020, ext. 13, info@eurythmy.org.

August 2, Sunbridge College, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **Puppet Story Presentation** by Connie Manson. Contact: Susan Wallendorf, 845-425-0055 x16, Summer@Sunbridge.edu or please visit www.Sunbridge.edu.

October 24, Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA**: Harvest Marionette Show** and craft activity. For more information contact Lauren Hickman at 916-961-8727 ext. 117 or at earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu.

Puppetry Events

June 23–July 3, Viroqua WI: **The Fairy Tales and Marionette Performance Theater** with Suzanne Down, Juniper Tree School of Story and Puppetry Arts. Part 2 of certificate training program. Contact Suzanne, 1-888-688-7333, suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com.

July 1–5, Viroqua, WI: **The Art and Practice of Therapeutic Puppetry** with Suzanne Down. Contact suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com,1-888-688-7333.

July 5-July 10 in Wilton, NH: **Awakening: An Exploration of Fairy Tale, Puppetry Arts, and Human Encounter** with Janene Ping. Visit centerforanthroposophy.org or call 603-654-2566.

July 8–12, Boulder, CO: **The Art and Practice of Therapeutic Puppetry** with Suzanne Down. Contact Suzanne, suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com,1-888-688-7333.

July 16–28, Sacramento CA: **New One Year Part Time Format Certificate Puppetry Training**. Go to www.junipertreepuppets.com for school details. Contact Suzanne Down of Juniper Tree School of Story and Puppetry Arts, suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com, 1-888-688-7333.

August 1–5, Sacramento, CA: **Elements of Therapeutic Early Childhood Education** with Suzanne Down. Contact Suzanne, suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com, 1-888-688-7333.

October 10–11, Location TBA: **New England Regional ECE Professional Development Conference—The Art and Practice of Therapeutic Puppetry.** Contact Suzanne Down of Juniper Tree School of Story and Puppetry Arts, suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com, 1-888-688-7333.

October 17–18, Location TBA: **Mid-Atlantic Regional Puppetry Conference—The Art and Practice of Therapeutic Puppetry.** Contact Suzanne Down of Juniper Tree School of Story and Puppetry Arts, suzanne @junipertreepuppets.com, 1-888-688-7333.

Please submit calendar items for Nov. 2009 through summer 2010 by October 15 to Lory Widmer, publications@waldorfearlychildhood.org.

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Past issues of Gateways are available online with many articles posted at http://www.waldorflibrary.org/gateways.html. The most recent issues will not be posted online. Hard copies of current issues and back issues can be ordered from WECAN.

Seeking Your Contributions

- Articles based on your experiences, observations or research.
- Practical activities such as stories, circle times and crafts.

*Reviews of books that support our work.

- Articles about or interviews with the elders in the Waldorf early childhood movement.
- Websites that support early childhood work.
- Your comments and questions about Gateways and past contents.

Annual individual membership, which includes subscription, is $40.
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