

The Merry Month of May

— Laurie Clark

Bracelets that look like miniature maypoles can be made with the children before doing this circle. A round form can be made from paper twists, pipe cleaners or other material that fits over the child's hand. Streamers of various bright colors of crepe paper can be cut into thin strips and tied onto the bracelet. This is a fun way for the children to practice tying. This decorative bracelet can be worn during the May Day dances to make them festive. This circle gives the opportunity to whistle, something the children love to practice. A small felted robin bird can also join this circle.

On May Day we dance
On May Day we sing
For this is the day
We welcome the spring

Turn round

*Crouch down
Jump up to standing position
Clap on the word "spring"*

Song

D G G G A B A B
It is the merry month of May
B D' D' B B A B A
Oh happy, happy is this day
D G G G A B A B
So let us skip and skip and play (*Repeat*)
B D' D' B B A
then clap our hands and shout, hurray!

Form a circle and walk around

Continue walking round

Skip or use other movements such as, tiptoe, run, hop

Clap, jump and shout (can substitute whisper) hurray!

Follow indicated movements while speaking:

Little Kings and Queens of May
Listen to me on this very fine day
Our tiny friends like to celebrate too
I will tell you what we shall do
On our magic flute we shall play
Have our little friends come from far away
A little more on our magic flute we will play
Now we will put our magic flutes away
And see who comes to join us on this May Day

*Hands form a ring on head like a crown
Hand near ear*

*Pretend "flute" comes out of pocket and whistle as
fingers go up and down "flute"
Repeat flute playing*

Here come Mister and Mrs. Grasshopper
They jump as high as they can!
They love coming to May Day Land!
(*Repeat*)

Jump up one time from a crouching position

The roly poly bugs are shy
and roll up into a ball
They listen to the flute
but will do nothing else at all!
(Repeat)

Tuck knees to chest and raise head up to knees

Mr. and Mrs. Beetle come
with their baby beetles to May Day
They crawl and crawl along
as mother beetle does say,
“Come along, baby beetles, come this way.”
(Repeat)

Crawling

The ladybugs all come together
and polish each other’s backs,
They are all dotted and red.
“We want to look our best on May Day,”
they all said.
(Repeat)

*Sitting in a circle, children gently rub
each other’s backs in a “polishing” motion*

All of our little friends have come
to listen to the band
Marching, marching in a parade
through the land
Marching, marching here we go
Marching along, listen to our song.

*Rhythm instruments can be passed out to the
children and they can be in a “parade,”
marching around the room or through
the hallway.*

Now our little maypoles we will pass around
We will pass them round without a sound.

*Teacher takes the maypole bracelets out of a basket
that has been covered with a spring colored silk.
They can be passed round the circle from child to
child until everyone has one and is ready to play the
maypole game.*

Now the May Day Circles fly round and round
Above our heads then near the ground
Above our head, then near the ground
the May colors fly round and round
Now we spin them round and round
Above our head then near the ground
Now we give them a shake, shake, shake
A whooshing sound they do make
Now they glide from side to side
From side to side they do glide
Then, rainbow snakes, on the ground we’ll make
Slithering, slithering, so many snakes!
Now they go round and round us, there they go
Not too fast and not too slow
In front and in back of us they go
Not too fast and not too slow
Now throw the maypole gently in the air
But not too high, then catch them

*Follow the movements that are indicated
Each of the movements can be repeated*

See the rainbow colors fly!
Now up and down they fly,
like a bird with colored wings
Then into the basket they return—
what else will this May Day bring?

But who is this coming along?
It is robin redbreast singing his spring song.
He flies around and lands in our hands
We will make a nest
So Robin can take a rest
Listen to dear Robin sing
May Day songs to welcome the spring!

Now robin flies away
but we will lie down to rest
After celebrating May Day,
it has been the very best.

*A felted robin or other little bird is gently passed along
the circle from child to child as they put both their
hands together like a little nest. Whistling bird
songs can be made as the bird is passed round.*

The children lie down and rest

*Teacher can sing a lullaby, or play the lyre or the
glockenspiel while the children rest.*

An Explanation of the Movement Activities in *The Merry Month of May*

This circle adventure includes potential for many different developmental movement possibilities.

Proprioception or the sense of self-movement is experienced through the body's position. The contracting and stretching of muscles and the compression of the joints gives signals to the brain to obtain the correct muscle tension for certain tasks and positions the body correctly. For example, if a ball is being thrown and is about to hit the head, then the signal is sent to immediately duck down to avoid the collision.

Body geography is another expression of the sense of self-movement. Going from a crouched position to jumping up to one's feet while clapping hands at the same time gives an opportunity to strengthen this sense. This is experienced in the first poem of the circle, "On May Day we dance." Other movements in the circle that strengthen this sense include skipping, tiptoe, hopping, jumping, and so on.

Vestibular movement or the sense of balance has its organ in the semicircular canals in the inner ear. Sally Goddard Blythe clearly describes this sense in her book, *The Genius of Natural Childhood*: "Each of the senses comprises specialized receptors sensitive to a specific range of movement frequencies (speed of motion). The balance mechanism for example re-

sponds particularly to slow, turning (rotation) or tilting movements and to movement that follows a linear direction (up and down or forward and back). The balance mechanism is most sensitive when movement starts, stops or when there is a variation in speed or direction." Balancing on one foot by hopping and using independent sides of movement by skipping both strengthen this system. Opportunities to stimulate this sense include moving in a circle together, turning

— *Movement has a starting and an
ending point, as do many things in life*

around individually (as in the first poem), and jumping up one time from a crouching position with Mr. and Mrs. Grasshopper.

This one-time movement, done just as the words "jump as high as they can!" are being spoken, also helps the children to practice impulse control. Movement has a starting and an ending point, as do many things in life, and this is a good way to experience that fact. The child experiences gaining impulse control through beginning and ending a gross motor movement. Later in life, this will become an inward ability to take an impression in from the outside world and bring it to balance in one's soul life. Coming to rest at the end of the circle brings practice of the stillness that will develop and later come to maturity.

The sense of touch is experienced through holding hands with one another, clapping hands, crawling with knees and palms touching the floor, and holding the soft felted bird while gently passing it on to the next child. The Ladybug poem gives the opportunity for the children to touch one another in a soothing and acceptable way. So often, it seems, we are telling the children to be gentle with touching (or not to hit, pinch or push). “Polishing” one another on the back allows the children to touch each other with a pleasant sensation that releases oxytocin, a hormone that brings a sense of calm and well-being. It is worthwhile to find a place in each circle where this acceptable touch is encouraged and experienced. More information about this can be found in the book *The Oxytocin Factor* by Kerstin Uvnas Moberg.

Immature movement patterns or infantile reflexes integrate the nervous system and are mostly matured in the first year of life. Often, they are not fully integrated for various reasons and exercises can be done to fully integrate them. Doing the movements of the roly-poly bugs and crawling with Mr. and Mrs. Beetle help to integrate and strengthen these reflexes. More information about these reflexes can be found in books by A. Jean Ayers and Sally Goddard Blythe.

The May Day Bracelet game provides the experience of directionality by naming the direction (round and round, side to side, up and down, in front and in back) while moving the streaming ribbons of the bracelet. We are speaking, moving and naming the three planes of space with a delightful imagination. Karl König describes the importance of experiencing the three planes of space in his book *Being Human*, where he speaks of the polarities that integrate and orient the human being in these three dimensions. “For someone who studies the human being, front and back separate the two worlds we call day and night. Up and down are two totally different worlds that we can call lightness and heaviness or buoyancy and gravity. These things are of the greatest importance.” Side-to-side motion, the harmonious movement of right and left, gives the opportunity of crossing the vertical midline. Dominance of one side or the other eventually (hopefully) occurs and gives the human being the ultimate experience of oneself as an individuality.

Potent imaginations that guide the movements are vital to engage the young child in the appropriate developmental approach. Through these imaginations and movements, the children are given the opportunity to feel and experience themselves “at home” in their bodies. When the child is able to establish a strong

physical foundation and orientation in space, it opens the way for integrating into the world with others in a healthy and balanced way later in life. Hopefully, this circle adventure and others like it will bring the children in our care a sense of well-being and a warm welcome into life. ♦

References

- Goddard Blythe, Sally. *The Genius of Natural Childhood*. Hawthorn Press, 2011.
 Moberg, Kerstin Uvnas. *The Oxytocin Factor*. Da Capo, 2003.
 König, Karl. *Being Human*. Anthroposophic Press, 1989.

Laurie Clark has been a Waldorf kindergarten teacher for over 25 years and currently works at the Denver Waldorf School. She is also a conference presenter, a teacher trainer, and a mentor. She has coauthored a book of original “movement journeys” with Nancy Blanning entitled *Movement Journeys and Circle Adventures* (available from WECAN).



A scene from Russia. Photo courtesy of Mary Lee Plumb-Mentjes