

Babies of All Kinds

*Waldorf Curriculum
Preschool Newsletter*

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ACTIVITIES

As you well know, spending time with children is always rewarding. It can help you to see the world around you in a whole new way and to value things that you may take for granted or consider perfectly ordinary. On the other hand, when you are entirely responsible for their care, even small children can be intimidating. Just what do you do with them all day? This newsletter is here to help – whether you're a parent, grandparent, babysitter, caregiver, neighbor, or anyone acting as a substitute teacher and spending the day with a preschool-aged child.

The following sections will give some suggested activities for this week's theme as well as methodology and ideas for preparation.

Opening Verse

The Waldorf method places a strong emphasis on establishing rhythms throughout the day which give a comfortable sense of order and security to a child's life. One of these is to start your day (or your time together) with a short meditation called an opening verse. Choose a place which is clean and orderly; children are deeply sensitive to their environments and are unable to feel calm in the midst of chaos. Lighting a candle while you say the verse is customary, as this helps to establish a reflective atmosphere. Even if you choose not to do light a candle, the opening verse will be a transition for the child into your care. After you declare yourselves to be "ready now for work and learning", you can blow out the candle and begin your day!

Opening Verse:
In the morning at the sunrise
When the light of day doth break,
Children's souls, by angels guided,
Sleep from rested body shake,
Ready now for work and learning,
Happy, steady, and awake.

Handwork

The Waldorf view of Handwork is different from the usual craft projects done with young children. Handwork must have an authentic context – it must be truly useful and must be completed slowly, deliberately, and with pride. As children grow, they benefit from the lessons learned in doing handwork – that taking your time, following all the steps, and doing your best work will result in a product of which you can be proud.

Help the child to create a scrapbook page of himself as a baby or, if more photos are available, how he has grown from a baby to the age he is now. For directions on how to make a scrapbook (as well as useful tips on scrapbooking with children), visit <http://familyfun.go.com/arts-and-crafts/cutpaste/feature/famf29scrapbook/>

Game

You can either choose to prepare the game beforehand or you can collect all the necessary parts and have the child help you assemble the cards before playing.

To prepare: gather some photos of yourself as a baby as well as other people the child knows, such as siblings, parents, grandparents, or pets. For each baby picture be sure you have a picture of the same person now that they are older. Label the photos as you gather them to avoid confusion. You can also use the photo from a seed packet on one card and glue one of the seeds onto another card to be its match (you probably won't want to do this with more than one type of seed, however, or the game will become too difficult to be fun!)

Matching

For a younger child, matching the faces of a baby with its adult match will be challenging. Make it simpler by using matching cardstock colors to identify each pair. Cut the cardstock to be slightly larger than the photograph so that there is a small colorful border. Keep each color of cardstock unique for each pair; don't reuse the colors. Then place the cards with the pictures facing upward and take turns finding matching pairs. The colorful border will help the child be successful at finding each match and then you can discuss how much the person (or thing) pictured has changed.

Rhyme

Children love to learn new rhymes and they are an excellent way to develop memory skills. This one also includes a little bit of exercise:

When I was one year old
(children crouching on floor)
I was very small
Now I'm three years old (or four or five)
(children stretch up with hands above heads)
I'm very, very tall.

Stories

I Love You As Much

Flicka Ricka Dicka and the Three Kittens

A Lot of Otters

Planting a Rainbow

by Laura Krauss Melmed

by Maj Lindman

by Barbara Helen Berger

by Lois Ehlert

If you are not the child's mother, you can still easily share I Love You As Much; simply skip the words on the last page and ask the child instead what the picture is of.

Remember that storytime or puppet shows at your local library can be a part of your plans for the day but DO NOT take place of reading one-on-one with the child. This personal connection and quiet nurturing time is a very different experience than the social one of experiencing a story in a group.

Community Giving

There are many charity projects which involve giving gifts to babies or children in need. For help choosing a project visit www.interweave.com/knit/charities.asp -- many excellent charities are listed there. You and the child can work together to gather or make items for donation, prepare the package and mail them off. If the child is donating some of his/her own possessions make sure you check with parents first that this is OK; otherwise, you may be safer choosing things from your own home to donate and wrapping them up together.

For a project a little closer to home, contact your local animal shelter and find out what they are requesting as donations. Visit petfinder.com to help locate the animal shelters nearest you. Many shelters request donations of blankets and towels, as well as laundry detergent and other common household items – preparing a gift box need not be complicated. If the shelter requests cat toys, you can easily make some with the child by wet felting a jingle bell securely inside a ball (see Appendix). Kittens will love this!

Nature

There once was a time when Native Americans planted their seeds in little balls of clay. The clay prevents the seeds from being blown away or devoured by birds. This project is perfect to tie in with Planting a Rainbow or can be done on its own. Purchase self-drying clay from a craft store or have the child mix you up a stiff mud concoction of dirt and water. Any type of seed can be worked into the clay ball. Not all plants will thrive being planted this way, however; for best results include a variety of seeds in each ball. When planting a rainbow of your own, carefully choose the seeds to purchase, including several flowers of each color. As you make the clay balls keep them organized by grouping them on a paper plate labeled with each color – and then carry them to your garden and place as desired. No digging is needed; just place the balls where you want them and, as rain melts the clay, the seeds inside will sprout to life.

If you don't have a garden, you can also demonstrate the concept that seeds are baby plants through a discussion of dandelions. Dandelions are a common weed and should be easy to find at a playground or park. Locate some which have turned white and show the child each tiny seed attached to its kite. Then blow them into the air together.

For a good book on this topic, you can also read [When the Wind Stops](#) by Charlotte Zolotow.

Closing Verse

Use this verse to end your time together on a high note, striving to go forth and made the rest of the day a good one. Like the opening verse, lighting a candle is customary and provides a sense of closure. When the candle is blown out, you will go forward feeling positive about the next thing to come your way.

The golden sun so great and bright
Warms the world with all its might.
It makes the dark earth green and fair,
Attends each thing with ceaseless care.
It shines on blossom, stone, and tree,
On bird and beast, on you and me.
So may each deed throughout the day,
May everything we do and say
Be bright and strong and true,
Oh, golden sun, like you!

OTHER IDEAS

Cooking

No specific cooking activities are suggested because many children and families have restricted diets such as vegan or vegetarian, gluten-free, kosher, etc. However, cooking is always a wonderful activity for a child to participate in. Bearing in mind any food allergies, and common-sense kitchen safety, consider preparing a simple recipe with the child. Children love to wash vegetables, measure and mix ingredients, and set the table for a meal. Preparing and eating a snack is always popular!

Play

Don't forget the many benefits of unguided imaginative play. You need to stay nearby for safety's sake, if the child is in an unfamiliar environment or you aren't certain what should or should not be childproofed. All children need daily time to play. In the preschool years, play is the WORK of the young child. Prepare an appropriate play space and then stay out of it as much as you can; give the child the simplest and highest quality toys you can find such as large pieces of cloth, blocks, dolls, and materials from nature (such as pinecones, feathers, or shells). Avoid plastic toys. Consider a basin of water and some measuring cups or add some dish detergent and give the child a whisk. The more open-ended a material, the more of the child will be brought forth in playing with it. The more structured a material, the less will be required of the child – and the less he will grow and develop when playing with it. As a simple test, try playing with the toys yourself. If you find you tire of a thing quickly, so will a child!

Helping

Helping around the home is an essential part of any Waldorf curriculum. It is not necessary to put a child in front of the television while you do the dishes or sort the laundry into lights and darks; let the child help you. Even if you have an automatic dishwasher, a child can help by rinsing the dishes before they are loaded. Children love to do work that they know is truly helpful and all young children thrive in situations where they are allowed to imitate an adult. Washing the dog, washing the car, sweeping or dusting, repotting houseplants, feeding the cats, setting and clearing the table... all of these are wonderful activities to do with a preschool-aged child.

PLANNER

Activities: highlight the activities you would like to do

Opening Verse

- candle

Handwork

- photographs
- acid-free adhesive, scrapbook papers and markers
- additional scrapbook page elements such as banners, charms, etc.

Game

- photographs
- assorted cardstock colors
- scissors
- acid-free adhesive

Rhyme

Stories

Community Giving

(for felted cat toy)

- wool roving
- soap
- warm water
- jingle bell

Nature

- self-drying clay OR dirt & water
- flower seeds
- paper plates (optional)

Cooking

Play

Helping

Closing Verse

- candle

PLANNER

Book List:

list the books you will be reading
feel free to substitute other books you may have on hand
which relate to this theme

Materials:

list all materials required for your chosen activities

APPENDIX

Wet Felted Jingle Bell Ball

Materials:

- **Felting wool** (Available in a wide range of colors, felting wool is prewashed and carded, or brushed straight.)
- **Large jingle bell**
- **Pitcher of hot soapy water** (A formula of 4 tablespoons of liquid dishwashing detergent to 6 cups of water enables the wool fibers to cling together and become felt. Use detergent that does not contain scents or dyes.)
- **Baking tray** (to catch excess water)
- **Sponge** (to sop up the water so it can be reheated)
- **Kitchen scale** (To make several same-size balls, you'll need to weigh the wool before you start.)

Place the jingle bell inside a small wad of wool, then wrap lengths of wool tightly around it. Keep adding layers until your fluffy ball is approximately twice the size you want it to eventually become.

Stuff the ball of wool tightly into the toe of a pair of old knee-highs or a portion of the leg of a pair of hose with a knot tied at one end. Work the fleece down tightly and tie another knot at the top of the ball of fleece to secure it in a ball shape.

Saturate the ball in the hot, soapy water, and then gently roll it from hand to hand without squeezing. Keep doing this for about ten minutes, dipping it in the hot water as it cools. The wool will seem like a wet, scraggly mess, but don't worry. Soon the ball will begin to harden. Just be sure the jingle bell stays firmly in the middle.

Check the ball to see if it is the size that you want; if you want to add more wool fleece carefully cut the top knot and remove the partially felted ball. Take your additional fiber and lay it out in three or four layers in a piece large enough to wrap around the inner ball. Place the wet inner ball in the center and wrap the new wool around it; carefully tuck it all back into the panty hose. Try and compact the fiber as much as possible before tying another knot to hold it in.

Again dunk the ball in hot water, squishing gently to allow water to penetrate the entire ball. Rub between cupped palms with increasing firmness as time goes on. When fibers or small pills of fiber begin to form on the outside of the hose, carefully cut off the knot and peel the hose off. Continue to rub and roll with increasing pressure until the ball is firm and hard. Rinse and allow the ball to dry completely. You can also add it to a tumble dryer with a load of clothes to dry and harden the ball.

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