

Why Rhythm?

by Jill Farrell

Sometimes it is hard to remember that children work differently than adults. The young child thrives in an environment when they know what to expect and then what comes after that. The young child will request the same book to read every night before bed time when they have literally hundreds of books to choose from. The same child will clearly favor one toy over others for days at a time or even weeks at a time. The young child will not tire from dropping the same toy out of their buggy time after time, over and over. She does it because she knows you will pick it up. As adults, we get bored reading the same story or picking up the same toy that has been thrown tens of times. Perhaps that is because we have lost some of the innocence of childhood. At LifeWays, I think that we aim to protect that childhood

innocence. I look for ways to get the children outside and into deep play. In order to do that I establish a daily and weekly rhythm

Each day looks the same and there are very few surprises. Each child knows that they nap after lunch, but before they lie down they scrape and wash their plates. Before lunch we wash our hands, it always that way with very little variation. This rhythm is comforting to the young child. It establishes a sense of security that enables them to get deeply involved in play at the appropriate times. They know that play time is outside or in the suite. They also know the appropriate times not to play, in the bathroom, or at meal times. Of course everyone needs a little reminder every so often, so we say, "You may drum with sticks outside in the forest, your fork and spoon live next to

your plate on the table" if a child is getting out a little rhythm of his own at the wrong time. When the rules are clearly defined for a child and their rhythm is established, there is less need for discipline.



In our weekly rhythm we give our songs a little variety. We change the pace, it goes up or down in intensity, but it is still the same song. Our weekly rhythm is set in our morning suite activities and in our meals. All of the children know that on Mondays we have breakfast for lunch. They have started referring to this day as brunch, which is very cute. Thursday mornings Miss Kathy makes baked oatmeal with the early morning children. Other morning activities are painting, drawing, play dough and cleaning. Believe it or not, on Fridays, the children LOVE getting out their squirt bottles and rags and wiping

down the furniture and toys! They like rolling up the rugs and putting them away. These subtle changes to the day really add to the whole scope of our time at LifeWays. We move through our days and weeks with a plan.

The rhythm even helps me as a caregiver get in tune with each child each day because I don't have to worry about what is going to come next. I may get a little bit tired of reading the same book every day before nap time, but I have to remember that the young child works differently than I do. The rhythm that we establish at LifeWays works to ensure confident and creative individuals with a strong sense of security which opens them up for deep creative play.

Jill Farrell is a caregiver at LifeWays Lake Country.