

Rhythm as a Form of Creative Discipline

by Abbey Weimer

Establishing consistent rhythms at home and in a childcare setting can lessen many unpleasant and unhappy moments with children. A strong daily, weekly, or even monthly rhythmical schedule offers support for an individual child or group of children who are often struggling emotionally as the child's ego and will come forth. Rhythm is a framework for holding children close to the caregiver and allows the adult to always be one step ahead, which can eliminate a lot of stress. Sometimes, children have a rough time adjusting to transitions during the day (beware of this) a simple song that serves as a 'warning, something will be changing soon,' can be helpful. At cleanup time at LifeWays we sing, "cleanup fairies will come soon," and most of the time the two year olds are so keen to this simple warning of transition that they immediately begin telling all their friends, "clean up!"



As a young caregiver, who has no biological children of her own to go home to, I have learned what works for me at LifeWays when working with children who belong to someone else. Also, as a lover of children and families, when I am in the world I find myself observing all sorts of familial interactions. One such observation that I see all the time is the adult, who unfortunately without realizing it, burdens his/her child with too many choices. Of course, in our modern age we as adults have found the world and its millions of choices to be our playground that gets us to where we want to be in life. Complex decision making and even simple decisions belong to adults, not to children. Children most often feel confused and burdened when asked to make a decision for the whole family. Even a simple question like, "Do you want to eat here or go home and eat?" can be too much for a child to decide. Another type of question I hear adults ask is, for example, "Will you put your shoes on?" when the adult means, "Put your shoes on now please." The difference between these two sentences is that the second sentence does not imply a choice between wearing or not wearing shoes. It states, "put your shoes on," which leaves no room for any confusion as far as what the adult expects the child to do at this point in time. Establishing a strong rhythm in the home life will lead, eventually, to the

child putting his/her shoes on without asking, simply because the child will know what to expect; and oh how much more simple life would be (smile!). A child who has too many choices can quickly become exhausted (parents too). A child who has a strong rhythmical life will feel supported by the world in which he/she grows and will not be forced to wake too soon out of the dreamy consciousness of childhood.

Rhythm is the golden thread that weaves through our days, weeks, months, and years at LifeWays. "Outer activity comes to meet whatever wells up within the children as we move through repetitive daily and weekly rhythms" (Beyond the Rainbow bridge, by Barbara J. Patterson). Supportive rhythms/ routines help children connect in a stronger way to the cosmic rhythms of nature that have already been gifted us. In conclusion, while the world is running crazy outside we can offer the children of our world, who will inherit this world, a little bit of healing today, and believe it or not, the answer is as simple as rhythm.

Abbey Weimer recently left LifeWays Milwaukee after seven years as a beloved caregiver to pursue her new work as a massage therapist. She continues to teach Music in the LifeWays training in Wisconsin.