

# Parent Handbook 2016



**Periwinkle**

**PRESCHOOL**

for Rudolf Steiner  
early childhood education



# Quick Reference Information

*(please remove this page and put up on your noticeboard)*

Periwinkle Preschool  
5 Sunrise Boulevard,  
Sunrise Beach,  
Byron Bay NSW 2481

Ph/Fax: (02) 6685 8898  
After Hours: 0413 006 899  
E: [info@periwinkle.nsw.edu.au](mailto:info@periwinkle.nsw.edu.au)  
W: [www.periwinkle.nsw.edu.au](http://www.periwinkle.nsw.edu.au)

The Director is: Ellon Gold  
Educational Leader: Kellie Dean

Your child's teachers are: .....

Your child's start date is: .....

Your child's days are: .....

## Preschool hours

Monday to Friday: 9.15 am – 3.15 pm

## Office/Accounts enquiries

Thursday: 8.45 am – 12.45 pm

## Newsletter submissions

Email: [periwinkle@nsw.edu.au](mailto:periwinkle@nsw.edu.au)

## Parent Information Evenings *(please diarise in advance)*

Orientation Evening: Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> January, 2016 7 pm – 8.30pm.....

Parent Information Night: 5th Thursday each term, 7 pm – 8.30 pm

## Parent Management Committee Meetings

Annual General Meeting: .....

Committee Meetings: Monthly, 7 pm – 9 pm

Executive Committee Contact Details (on Periwinkle noticeboard):

Name	Phone No.	Email
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# Welcome

Dear Parents,

Periwinkle offers a home-away-from-home environment for children aged three to five, with a play-based program that values the importance of self-initiated play, artistic work and household activities to meet the needs of what is an active and imitative stage of childhood.

Our daily rhythm explores the joyous and wondrous experience of the seasons and special occasions through music, storytelling and family festival celebrations. The young child, as an implicit learner, is nourished and guided through their daily learning experiences. We offer to ferry your little ones in a warm and loving boat across the sea from home to school.

We extend a warm welcome to you and your child and want you to feel an important part of our preschool community.

Periwinkle Director and Staff

*“The preschool years, the kindergarten years, (the years before formal schooling) are the most important of all in the education of the child.”*

*“It is absolutely essential that before we begin to think, before we so much as begin to set our thinking in motion, we experience the condition of wonder.”*

**Rudolf Steiner**



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# THE CENTRE

## Periwinkle History

Periwinkle was founded in February 1986 by Susan Perrow, inspired by Australia's first Steiner 'Vital Years Conference' held in Sydney the previous year. Periwinkle's first home was a rented church hall in Bangalow. Initially one group of 14 children attended two days per week, but this soon grew to two groups of 16 children, both for two days per week.

Four years later the preschool moved for two years into the Moller Pavilion in Bangalow showground. Meanwhile, on land in Sunrise Beach donated by Byron Shire Council, and with much community support and fundraising, the Periwinkle staff and parent committee slowly worked on constructing and completing the preschool's permanent home. In February 1992 a very excited group of families, in a cavalcade of cars and trucks laden with furniture and equipment, drove down the highway from Bangalow to Sunrise Beach to help with the 'final' move. At the opening ceremony, as the Byron mayor Ian Kingston planted a frangipani tree in the front garden, a chain of flowers was placed in a circle around the tree while the 300 people attending sang 'May the Circle be Unbroken'.

Today the Periwinkle 'circle' continues to grow in strength and beauty. It now offers full-day sessions, five days per week (with two-day and three-day programs). Hundreds of children from all over Byron Shire have come through its doors, and some of these children are now sending their own children to benefit from its quality early childhood program.

## Periwinkle Philosophy

Periwinkle's approach to early childhood education is guided by the indications of Rudolf Steiner – a platform from which we embrace and link our daily practices to the Early Years Learning Framework (part of the Australian Government's National Quality Framework for early childhood education and care).

Rudolf Steiner spoke about the experiences that are essential for the healthy development of the young child. These include:

- Love and warmth
- An environment that nourishes the senses
- Creative and artistic experiences
- Meaningful adult activity to be imitated
- Self-initiated free, imaginative play
- Protection of the forces of childhood
- Gratitude, reverence and wonder
- Joy, humour and happiness, and
- Early childhood educators on a path of inner development.

More information on how each of these experiences is incorporated into Periwinkle's program is provided in the article 'The Essentials of Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood Education' in the 'Reading' section of this handbook.

*Note: More information on the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) can be found at <http://deewr.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework>.*

# THE DAY-TO-DAY

## Hours of Operation

**Standard Hours:** 9.15 am – 3.15 pm, Monday to Friday.

In 2016 Periwinkle is running a transitional year to a five day fortnight in 2017.

This is to ensure 600 hours of Preschool for all 4 and 5 year olds attending Periwinkle.

This year some children will be attending a two-day or a three-day program each week and some children will be attending a five day fortnight.

**Holidays:** Term dates are set according to NSW School Terms. The preschool is closed over school holidays.

**Non-Pupil Days:** Children do not attend preschool on the following days:

- the first day of the school year, to enable set up and preparation
- the last day of the school year, for end-of-year clean up.

Parents are welcome to attend on these days to help staff prepare the gardens and preschool.

**Festivals:** Festivals are held four times a year (for the Autumn, Winter and Spring festivals, and the end-of-year break-up). On these days the preschool hours are shorter, to facilitate festival set up and clean up. Dates will be advised in advance.

## What to Bring

**At the beginning of the term** please bring for your child:

- ✓ A china mug
- ✓ A pair of soft-sole indoor slippers (please see the note below)
- ✓ A blanket (during cooler months)

**Each day** please bring for your child:

- ✓ One piece of fruit (organic) for a shared afternoon tea
- ✓ A complete change of spare clothes
- ✓ A suitably-sized case or bag to hold belongings
- ✓ A hat
- ✓ Suitable footwear

A wholesome breakfast snack, lunch and afternoon tea will be provided each day, prepared by the staff and children. If your child has dietary requirements, please advise the staff.

Please make sure your child's name is clearly labelled on all items.

Note:

Slippers can be ordered directly from "Into The Woods".

Discounts are available for Periwinkle families, and the slippers can be delivered free of charge to Periwinkle.

Into The Woods

21 Fingal Street, Brunswick Heads

Ph: 0417 041 897

Email: [sandi@sunshadowslippers.com.au](mailto:sandi@sunshadowslippers.com.au)

## What To Do When You Arrive With Your Child

Children must be accompanied into the preschool by an adult, who guides them through the following routine.

- 9.15am Arrive with your child (please be punctual as this is an important play and activity time).
- ✓ Sign your child in on the Attendance Sheet.
  - ✓ Check the Communication Book for any new messages.
  - ✓ Help your child put their bag into their locker.
  - ✓ Help your child put their fruit into the fruit basket.
  - ✓ Take your child to the toilet and help them wash their hands and dry them.
  - ✓ Allow your child to enter into free play or morning activity or present your child to the teacher.

*Please keep adult chatter to a minimum during this time.*

It is important that you **remember to sign your child in and out** each day.

### If your child is upset

Some children have more difficulty settling into a new environment than others and it is normal for a child to be hesitant the first few times they are left in a new situation.

We do advise that once you are ready to leave you make your departure as brief and matter-of-fact as possible. We strongly recommend that parents do not sneak off as this does not help children to build up trust, and may in fact hinder the settling process.

Time can be spent at the end of the day letting your child show you around the preschool. Please discuss any concerns you may have with the Director.

### If someone else will be collecting your child

If you have arranged for someone else to collect your child, you must inform a staff member and record the person's name on the Attendance Sheet. You will appreciate that the preschool cannot release your child to a stranger or non-custodial parent unless previously agreed in writing.

In a custody situation we require a Court Order if one parent is to have no rights to collect the child.

### If your child will be absent

If your child is sick, on holidays or unable for some other reason to attend, please advise the staff. If you are phoning out of hours, a message can be left on the answering machine.

### **If you wish to make an appointment with the Director**

If you need to discuss something lengthy and important with the Director, please do not attempt this before or during a session. A special time together can be arranged after the session.

## What To Do When You Collect Your Child

3.15 pm Arrive to collect your child. Your child will wait inside until you arrive and then will come out to greet you.

- ✓ Collect your child's belongings from their locker.
- ✓ Check the Communication Book for any new messages.
- ✓ Sign your child out on the Attendance Sheet.

Children must be collected promptly at the end of each session at 3.15 pm. Once you have signed your child out, you are responsible for their supervision – staff require this time for tidying up and to meet for reflective programming.

As you depart, please keep in mind that your child will be tired from a long day of play and work.

### **If you are running late**

**Please phone the preschool prior to 3.15 pm if you are going to be late.**

A late fee of \$15 per 15-minute block will be imposed for lateness. Of course, if there is a reasonable explanation given by telephone before 3.15pm or a real emergency has occurred then the late fee won't be incurred.

## Emergencies

Please note that our licence requires a set number of staff to be present at all times for a set number of children. This precludes a staff member accompanying a child from the premises for emergency treatment. A parent or designated guardian would be expected to attend if this situation arose.

The preschool must always have a child's parent/guardian contact numbers in case of emergencies. Please inform the Director immediately if you change your home or work address and/or telephone number.

## General Information

### Food

A wholesome, yet simple, breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea is prepared and offered to the children. We supply all the ingredients for these shared meals. In keeping with the atmosphere, environment and activities for the children, we ensure the food we provide is of the highest quality. Where possible, organic foods are used – sometimes from our own garden! If your child has allergies please speak to the Director.

Children need to bring a piece of fruit to share at snack time. Purified water is available for the children at all times.

### Sleeping Sheets

Your child will be allocated their own set of sleeping sheets for their entire time at Periwinkle, which will be used to cover their mattress during rest time. These are hired to you for \$5 per term.

### Name Labels

All clothing, bags, slippers, cup and hat must be clearly marked with your child's name.

### Clothing

We strive at Periwinkle to create a warm and gentle environment for the young children in our care and we ask for your support from home. Send your child dressed in practical, comfortable and simple clothing suitable for play with sand, water, clay, paint etc.

Please ensure your child's clothing is sun safe. We encourage loose-fitting:

- shirts with sleeves (no singlets or midriff tops please)
- dresses with sleeves
- longer-style skirts, shorts and trousers.

We ask that your child does not wear nail polish, make-up, jewellery, loud or negative prints of any kind (e.g. skull and cross-bone or black T-shirts), or TV or movie character clothing/costumes to preschool.

Please also send a change of clothing in your child's bag.

### Shoes

We ask that children arrive with comfortable play shoes. (Please no thongs.) These can be left outside in the 'shoe shop'.

## **Hats**

Please ensure your child's hat is sun safe. This may be a:

- bucket hat with a deep crown and brim size of at least 5cm
- legionnaire hat.

(Baseball caps or visors do not provide enough sun protection.)

## **Sunscreen**

If you wish for your child to wear sunscreen, please apply it before they come to school.

If required, staff will re-apply sunscreen throughout the day as directed by a child's parent. A medical form must be completed, providing clear instructions for application. A staff member will sign off on the form when the sunscreen has been applied.

## **Hair & Nails**

Please regularly wash your child's hair and check for head lice. More information on the prevention and treatment of head lice can be given on request.

We also ask that nails are kept short and clean.

## **Toys**

We ask that your child does not bring toys from home to preschool. If they are keen to share something with the group, rather encourage something of interest and beauty for our nature display or story corner.

## **Lost Property**

Please check the lost property items regularly.

## **Communication Book**

When signing your child in and out take a moment to read the communication book that has important notices and information for your attention. You are also invited to write in the book any messages for staff.

## **Parent Library**

Our parent library has many early childhood and Steiner resources available for you to borrow. Please speak to a staff member if you wish to browse the library. Books need to be signed in and out when they are borrowed.

## Screen Time

Periwinkle strongly encourages no 'screen time' for the young child. This includes television, DVDs, iPhones, computer games, children's educational laptops, and any other electronic devices.

Any time your child is engaged in screen time, their imagination is being compromised. From the Rudolf Steiner perspective, this imagination is essential for the young child's brain development:

*"This work of the imagination shapes and builds the forms of the brain. The brain unfolds as the muscles of the hand unfold when they do the work they are suited for."*

Please be mindful of any time your child is exposed to or engaged in screen time. We specifically ask that your child does not have any screen time on the day they come to Periwinkle Preschool.

There is an article that gives more information on the subject of television and its effect on children in the 'Reading' section of this handbook, and more detailed reading is available from the Parent Library.

# THE PROGRAM

## Daily Routine

9.15 am	Breakfast Snack
	Free play, Domestic work, Artistic Activity
11.00 am	Pack up
11.30 am	Morning circle and verse
11.50 am	Lunch
12.20 pm	Free play – indoor/outdoor
1.15 pm	Pack up and songs on the mat
1.30 pm	Story
1.45 pm	Afternoon tea
2.15 pm	Rest time
2.50 pm	Pack away, Games and singing on the mat
3.15 pm	Goodbye

We take our inspiration from Rudolf Steiner’s indications and the cycle of the year. Small children still have an intimate relationship with their surroundings and this is something we cultivate. A lot of our activities are therefore linked with the events of the seasons.

The education of small children is based on rhythm and repetition. We provide a variety of general activities yet adhere to a rhythmic sequence. Children feel very secure when they know what is happening next in the day. It also eliminates the need for constant verbal direction.

We try to make the child’s environment and surroundings a positive encouragement for creative play. Play is the child’s “work” – they learn to solve problems, anticipate difficulties, plan ahead, communicate with others, ask when help is required etc. It is really important therefore to create a space that allows the children to play creatively and imaginatively.

The play is arranged so as to strike a balance between free play, domestic work or artistic activities. The day is rhythmically structured and ordered providing artistic and imaginative activities (washing, sweeping, packing away) so the children can develop an understanding that our preschool stays ordered and cared for.

Another important activity at preschool is storytelling. Through storytelling the children acquire listening skills and also enter imaginatively into the events of the tales, allowing some stories to have a healing effect on certain behaviour problems.

We also offer a variety of artistic activities including painting, modelling with clay and beeswax, crayon drawing and craft. Your child will not always be bringing things home. Most paintings and drawings will be kept in a folder (one for each child) until the end of year.

*'If a child has been able to play, to give up his whole living being to the world around him, he will be able to, in the serious tasks of later life, devote himself with confidence and power to the service of the world.'*

**Rudolf Steiner**

## Festivals and Celebrations

We can also mark the rhythms of the year through the changing seasons and the coming and going of festivals. As the year weaves from one festival to another we are provided with a true reason for preparation and celebration. The children experience meaningful preparations decorating the room, completing craft, baking special treats and learning songs and verses chosen just for that particular festival. The stories that are told give the children a pictorial understanding of the festival and speak very deeply to them without our having to explain anything.

Our seasonal festivals are times when families and friends are invited to share with the children a simple ceremony, songs, stories or games. A lovely sense of community is felt during our festivals and we look forward to sharing them with you. We help develop an understanding of these seasonal festivals through our parent evenings, for it is the celebration of festivals in our community that is one of the most deeply-fulfilling experiences for both young and old.

The room has a nature table which changes with the seasons, bringing into the room a way for the children to note these changes. Autumn brings fruits, nuts, berries, grains and boughs of changing leaves. The Winter garden is bare and simple but probably the most awe provoking. Spring bursts forth with colourful flowers. Children love this table. You might let your child have a small table or display space at home to create his or her own nature table with nature's treasures gathered from walks or outings.

We may also add celebrations that honour the culture or religious traditions of the families in any given year.

## Birthdays

Birthdays are a very important event for the young child and we help share this with music, poems and a simple ceremony. Please provide a plain un-iced cake for this occasion and join us for the celebration. Both parents are welcome to join us at 11 am and to stay for lunch. You will be given the opportunity to share with the children some photos (best if attached to a board) and a little story of your child's life.

# THE PARENT COMMUNITY

## The Role of the Parent

Periwinkle is a community-run preschool that cannot exist without parent involvement. Parents are asked to consider that, when enrolling your child in Periwinkle, you are also committing your time and energy to running and caring for our preschool. It is vital that parents fulfil their obligations throughout the year so staff can focus on providing a safe and stimulating environment for the enjoyment and education of the children. Parent involvement and community care with shared energy is what keeps Periwinkle sailing! The following section explains what we require of our parents.

### Parent Management Committee

We are a non-profit community organisation run by a management committee consisting of parents nominated at the Annual General Meeting. We are an incorporated body and are audited annually.

The preschool committee is responsible to the Department of Education and Communities. The preschool's constitution is available to all parents. The Annual General Meeting is held in February each year, to which all parents are invited and encouraged to attend. There are three executive positions elected annually: President, Secretary and Treasurer. There are other non-executive roles to be filled each year including Caretaker, Fundraising Co-ordinator and Newsletter/Communications Co-ordinator. Meetings are held monthly.

The Parent Management Committee is a rewarding and fun way to get to know the other parents and to also contribute to the ongoing future of Periwinkle as a wonderful place for the children of Byron Bay.

### Parent Information Nights

Each term the Director and staff prepare an informative and fun session for the parents, held on the 5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each term from 7 pm – 8.30 pm. These are important events for parents to attend (without children) as they help to deepen your understanding of the Steiner early childhood program and how to support your child in their development. It is expected that at least one parent from each family will attend each of these evenings.

### Working Bees & Community Care of Periwinkle

Periwinkle requires each family to provide two hours of community care/maintenance time per term. There are many ways in which you may contribute: we have a beautiful garden that needs tending, there are working bees which offer a chance to get together with other parents and share an active day out, building maintenance for those who are handy with tools, and a

wonderful library of books that need an organised mind to catalogue and monitor lending. If you have any other ideas we would love to hear them!

Specific calls for help will be given at times. Those unable to spare their time will be required to pay a maintenance fee of \$50 per term.

Care and involvement from our parents will benefit not only your child but all of our children at Periwinkle. Thank you for your participation.

## **Fundraising**

Periwinkle is a community-based preschool. The operating budget is funded through fees and government funding, while capital works – including enhancements to the buildings and gardens – are paid for through fundraising. Our play equipment, garden and inside centre constantly need attention to keep them beautiful and safe for the children.

There are many ways you can help with fundraising including planning and arranging events; attending or participating in the events; seeking community support, sponsorships, and donations of goods and services for raffles; selling raffle tickets; working on stalls etc. Information about fundraising events will be communicated to you throughout the year.

## **Parent Visits**

Term 1 is very much about the children taking ownership of their preschool and we ask that you settle your child and quietly leave.

From Term 2 onward we welcome you to participate in the first part of our morning routine. As adults we aim to allow children the freedom from adult interaction so they may enter freely into creative play. Children enter more easily into their play when the adult is absorbed in their work. For this reason, we ask that while you are at the preschool you enter fully into a task or work. We have many on-going jobs that need an adult with helping hands to undertake:

- ◆ polishing crayons
- ◆ cutting paper
- ◆ carding wool
- ◆ rolling balls of yarn
- ◆ washing wool
- ◆ washing painting boards
- ◆ cutting fruit.

We can only accommodate one extra adult, so please ask if you would like to participate and we will make a time for you.

## **Keeping in Touch**

We believe that shared two-way communication between the staff and families is extremely important. The Newsletter, Noticeboard, Communication Book, and

Emails all aim to keep you in touch with what is happening at the centre and in the community.

**It is important you make time to read the communication materials so you understand what is happening at the Centre and how best to support your child when he/she attends.**

## What Parents Can Do At Home

*Based on an extract from 'You are your child's first teacher' by Rahima Baldwin*

The rushed lives that most of us live make it difficult to provide children with an ideal world for their early childhood years. Yet there is a great deal parents can do for their children by providing an environment filled with love and warmth. By understanding a young child's development and his complete openness to his surroundings, we can do our best to provide a stable and nurturing environment within our current living situation.

- ◆ Attend to your own life and emotions. The emotional environment you create for your child is far more important than the material environment.
- ◆ Honour the spiritual element in life, especially as it is brought to you by your children.
- ◆ Work toward rhythm in family life that can support you and your children.
- ◆ Remember that imitation and repetition are the keys to the young child's learning and will support positive behaviours.
- ◆ Set limits and consistently enforce them: accept that you are the parent.
- ◆ Allow plenty of time for your child's creative free play as well as musical and artistic play. Include time for just being home and 'doing nothing'.
- ◆ Buy or make childlike toys, ones that encourage imaginative play.
- ◆ Avoid pressuring your child to be an early achiever in academics, sports or the arts.
- ◆ Continue to pay attention to what your child experiences, limiting overstimulation from loud music, movies & television.
- ◆ Avoid concerning your child with adult problems through news broadcasts, conversations and so forth.

# ADMINISTRATION

## Funding and Fees

### Funding

As a community-based preschool, Periwinkle is partly funded by the Department of Education and Communities. This requires that a certain standard of care and management is maintained.

As we receive government funding for only part of our operating costs, fee payments are essential for Periwinkle's viability.

### Fees

For the preschool to run smoothly, fees must be paid by the due dates. Please note fees are payable for all enrolled days, including family holidays taken during term time, sick days and public holidays.

#### Overview of Fees

##### **Standard fees**

Waiting List Fee	\$25 (non-refundable)
Enrolment Fee	\$200 (\$100 administration fee; \$100 refunded mid-year after attending 2 working bees)
Term Fees	\$27.50 or \$41 per day, income based \$43 for un-funded 3-year-olds
Public Holiday Levy	\$13.50 per term. This levy allows your account to be credited if your child was to attend on a public holiday, with this cost shared across all families
Meal Levy	\$4 per day (includes lunch and afternoon tea)
Sleeping Sheet Hire	\$5 per term
Contributions	Items to the value of \$10 or \$15 each term (depending on whether your child attends two or three days per week). Please see the list on the noticeboard for the item you are being asked to contribute (e.g. lavender oil.) If items are not contributed, a fee will be added to the following term's invoice.

##### **Extra fees**

Maintenance Levy	\$50 per term if you don't attend the working bee or make up the hours at another time
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Late Payment Fee	\$100 if fees are not paid in full by the end of Week 6 or a weekly Payment Plan isn't in place
Payment Plan Fee	\$25 administration fee if fees are paid by weekly Payment Plan
Late Pick-Up Fees	\$15 per quarter hour late past 3.15 pm

### *Enrolment Fee*

When a placement is offered and accepted, a \$200 enrolment fee must be paid to secure the place. This includes a \$100 administration fee; the remaining \$100 will be refunded mid-year after attending 2 working bees.

If you choose not to continue with the enrolment, the remaining \$100 will be refunded only if your child's place is filled by the beginning of term.

### *Term Fees*

Invoices are issued at the beginning of each term. Your invoice will include the Term Fee, Public Holiday Levy, Meal Levy and Sleeping Sheet Hire.

To suit the differing financial situations of parents there are three payment options:

- ◆ 100% payable in Week 2
- ◆ 50% payable in Week 2 and 50% in Week 5
- ◆ a weekly Payment Plan, by arrangement with our office. This plan incurs a \$25 administration fee.

To reduce administration costs we prefer that fees are paid by bank transfer. Please include an email notification of payment to Periwinkle.

The bank details are:

**Account name: Periwinkle Preschool**  
**BSB: 082 489**  
**Account: 570447998**

Cheque payments are also acceptable. No cash payments please.

### **Overdue Fee Policy**

A late fee of \$100 will be charged if fees are not paid by the due date. If you are experiencing financial difficulty please discuss your situation with the Director and Accounts Officer before the due date so a Payment Plan can be agreed upon.

### **Unpaid term fees**

Periwinkle has a debt collection policy in place that will be followed by the office staff should fees not be paid by the end of each term. This includes considering whether your child's place will be offered for the next term.

**Child Care Rebate Receipts**

Receipts will be issued to all families each term. Families need to present the receipt to a Centre link office to claim rebate.

## Health Policies

Periwinkle must comply with State and Federal Government standards applicable to all preschools. It is important that all parents understand and adhere to the Centre's policies. If you have any concerns or questions regarding our policies please speak to the Director.

### Immunisation

The New South Wales Department of Health regulations require a record of immunisation status to be kept for each child attending the centre. Children with medical contraindications or natural immunity which are certified in writing by a General Practitioner will still be exempt from the immunisation requirements.

Vaccination objection Form will also need to be signed by a General Practitioner.

You will need to provide Periwinkle with your child's immunisation history, which will be kept on their file. These forms can be obtained from the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register.

Parent decisions regarding immunisation are respected; however, if there is a case of a vaccine-preventable disease Periwinkle will notify the Lismore Public Health Unit who may direct that all un-immunised children must be excluded.

### Illnesses and Medication

New South Wales Department of Health guidelines stipulate that children with an infectious illness must be kept at home for the regulation time.

Contact your teacher if your child has been in contact with any infectious or contagious disease. If your child is unwell please keep them home until fully recovered to protect the other children at Periwinkle. Please Note: the Director has the discretion to exclude a sick child if it is felt to be in the best interests of the individual child and the other children at the centre.

Children on medication must be well enough to cope. All medication must be accompanied by a letter detailing the child's name, dosage and when the medication is to be administered. All medicines must be handed to the staff on arrival and the medication booklet filled in with instructions on dosage amounts and times. Please label medication clearly.

**Medicines and cough lollies must never be placed in a child's bag.**

### Infectious Conditions

If a child has a suspected infectious condition the Centre will:

- ◆ isolate the child from the other children
- ◆ ensure the child is comfortable and is supervised by a staff member
- ◆ contact the child's parents or, if they are unavailable, the contact person for emergencies as listed on the enrolment form.

- ◆ Inform the parents or contact person of the child's condition, or suspected condition, and ask that the child be collected from the centre as soon as possible.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) sets out the conditions of exclusion for when a child has an infectious condition. Please refer to the publication 'Staying Healthy in Child Care - Preventing infectious diseases in child care - Fourth Edition' on the NHMRC website ([www.nhmrc.gov.au](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au)) for further information; a copy of this publication is also held at Periwinkle.

## Feedback, including Complaints

Periwinkle Preschool values the feedback of educators, staff, families and the wider community as we strive to create a service that complies with regulations while nourishing the minds, bodies and spirits of children enrolled in the program. We actively encourage open communication.

Our goals regarding feedback and complaints are to:

- engage members of the preschool community in consultation, evaluation and review of the service operation and delivery of the education and care program
- enact a fair and transparent process for receiving and responding to complaints
- communicate information about procedures associated with giving feedback or making a complaint
- respond quickly, comprehensively and confidentially to complaints.

As well as welcoming positive feedback, we also have a process for receiving and responding to complaints:

- Please lodge any complaints with the Director, who will manage the matter with strict confidentiality and with due consideration for accountability and quality improvement.
- Educators or other staff members whom a complaint is made against, or who are involved in responding to one, will ensure that information is restricted only to those who genuinely need to be notified.
- If information specific to the complaint needs to be disclosed to others during its resolution, the complainant will be informed.
- The child of any person who makes a formal complaint about any aspect of Periwinkle's service delivery will not be disadvantaged in any way as a result of that complaint.

# RESOURCES

## Blessings

Blessings on the blossoms,  
Blessings on the roots,  
Blessings on the leaves and stems,  
And blessings on our fruit.

Rain falls  
Wind blows  
Sun glows  
Helps the earth  
The seeds to sow  
And together we thank you so.

## After Meal Thank You

Thank you for our happy hearts  
For rain and sunny weather  
Thank you for this lovely meal  
That we have shared together.

## Morning Verses

The sun goes up,  
The sun goes down,  
The world keeps turning round and round.  
I love you,  
And you love me,  
And that's how simple life can be.

Good morning Dear Earth,  
Good morning Dear Sun,  
Good morning Dear Stone,  
Dear Plants, Flowers, Everyone.  
Good morning Dear Animals,  
And the little Birds in the Tree,  
Good morning to You,  
And Good morning to Me.

## Prayers

### A prayer at bedtime

*To say a short prayer at bedtime gives a great deal. The child carries it into their sleep in the form of pictures, which arise in their soul. This is real soul nourishment and can be a tremendous help to a wakeful restless child. The prayer is best said by candlelight after the bedtime story in an atmosphere of calm and reverence. The prayer should not be taught to the child; if parents say it each night, the child will soon learn it and then all can say it together.*

*This following prayer is suitable for very young children:*

As I go to sleep each night  
An Angel watches o'er me  
And fills my soul with flooding light  
And guides me to the stars so bright  
And blesses me each morning.

*And for the older child whose soul can accommodate more than one picture:*

Peeping out of heaven's height  
Like glowing candles burning bright  
The stars look down from heaven  
And guarding Angels there I see  
Making music joyously  
Always watching over me  
And sending their blessing.

# Recipes

## **Brown Rice and Buckwheat Pikelets**

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup brown rice flour

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup buckwheat flour

1.5 tsp baking powder

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup coconut milk

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup oat/rice/almond milk + a little extra to thin to right consistency

1 tsp vanilla essence

2 large eggs, beaten

Cold-pressed coconut oil for frying

To serve:

Natural yoghurt with a swirl of pure maple syrup

Fruit (such as fresh berries in the warmer months and poached fruit in the cooler months)

- Sift the flours and baking powder into a mixing bowl.
- In a separate bowl, whisk the oat/rice milk, coconut milk, eggs and vanilla essence. Pour into the flour mixture and stir to combine, adding a little extra oat/rice milk to achieve a pouring consistency.
- Heat a small frying pan over medium heat and smear with coconut oil. Pour in tablespoons of pancake mixture. Tilt the pan to spread the mixture a little.
- When bubbling, flip the pikelets and cook the other side.
- Repeat with the remaining mixture.

*For children who cannot eat dairy, these can be served with macadamia butter.*

*This recipe is very flexible. The brown rice flour can be replaced with wholemeal spelt (or any other) flour; the oat/rice milk and coconut milk can be replaced with regular full-cream milk.*

## Apple Oat Slice

2 cups oats

2 cups water

½ cup spelt flour

1 cup sultanas

2 cups apples cut into small pieces

½ cup sunflower seeds or desiccated coconut

- Mix all ingredients together.
- Bake in a shallow tray in a moderate oven until brown and firm – about 45 minutes.

## Labneh (Yoghurt Cheese)

Labneh is made by simply straining natural yoghurt through cheesecloth overnight to make a soft cheese. You might like to serve it drizzled with extra-virgin olive oil.

1 large tub natural yoghurt

- Sit a strainer over the top of a deep bowl. Line the strainer with a couple of layers of cheesecloth.
- Pour the yoghurt into the centre of the cheesecloth. Gather up the sides of the cheesecloth and fold them over the top (so the yoghurt is covered), then place the bowl and strainer in the fridge overnight.
- The next morning, the labneh will sit in the cheesecloth and the whey will be caught in the bowl. Transfer the labneh to a clean container and store, covered, in the fridge. It will keep for several weeks (depending on the expiry of the yoghurt).

*The whey can be discarded or used for soaking grains/legumes and lacto-fermentation, as described in 'Nourishing Traditions' (Sally Fallon and Mary Enig, NewTrends Publishing, 1991).*

## Hommus

1 cup chickpeas, soaked overnight in 4–6 cups water with 1 Tbsp yoghurt, whey or lemon juice

⅓ cup tahini

Lemon juice

Sea salt

Filtered water

- Drain the chickpeas, then rinse and drain again.
- Place in a large saucepan and fill with water. Bring to the boil and simmer for 30 minutes or until soft. Drain and rinse.
- Blend the chickpeas in a food processor with the tahini, lemon juice, sea salt and enough water to achieve a smooth consistency.

*Variations: You might like to add some extra-virgin olive oil, organic garlic, or ground cumin to your hommus.*

## Spelt and Sesame Crackers

¾ cup wholemeal spelt flour

¾ cup white spelt flour

½ cup sesame seeds

½ teaspoon salt (optional)

1 teaspoon tamari

1.5 Tablespoons cold-pressed oil

½ cup cold water

- Preheat the oven to 180 °C.
- Mix the flours, sesame seeds and salt in a bowl.
- Add the tamari & oil, then the water, to make a dough mixture.
- Dust the dough lightly with flour and roll it out with a rolling pin until very thin.
- Cut into squares or any other shape, and then place on a baking tray lined with baking paper.
- Bake for 10-15 minutes or until just turning golden.

*Based on a recipe from 'The Food Coach' website:*

*<http://www.thefoodcoach.com.au/recipes/?RecipeID=582>.*

# READING

## The Essentials of Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood Education

*Adapted by Ellen Gold for Periwinkle Preschool from an article by Susan Howard. Susan's article was published in Gateways, the newsletter of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America, 2006, and is an abridged version of a chapter in Mentoring in Waldorf Early Childhood Education, published by WECAN.*

Rudolf Steiner spoke about the experiences that are essential for the healthy development of the young child. These include:

- love and warmth
- an environment that nourishes the senses
- creative and artistic experiences
- meaningful adult activity to be imitated
- self-initiated free, imaginative play
- protection of the forces of childhood
- gratitude, reverence, and wonder
- joy, humour, and happiness
- early childhood educators on a path of inner development.

### **Love and Warmth**

*“Children who live in an atmosphere of love and warmth, and who have around them truly good examples to imitate, are living in their proper element.”*

— Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child*

Love and emotional warmth create the basis for the child's healthy development. These qualities should live between the adult caregiver and the child, in the children's behavior toward one another, and among the adults in the early childhood center. Children are also served if this love and warmth exist in the relationships between the educators and the parents, between the early childhood educators and in the surrounding community.

### **An Environment that Nourishes the Senses**

*“The essential task of the early childhood educator is to create the proper physical environment around the children.*

*‘Physical environment’ must be understood in the widest sense imaginable. It includes not just what happens around the children in the material sense, but everything that occurs in their environment, everything that can be perceived by their senses, that can work on the inner powers of the children from the surrounding physical space.”*

— Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child*

Early learning is profoundly connected to the child’s own physical body and sensory experience. Everything the young child sees, hears, and touches has an effect. Thus a clean, orderly, beautiful, quiet setting is essential. The physical environment, both indoors and outdoors, should provide varied and nourishing opportunities for self-education—experiences in touch, balance, lively and joyful movement, and also inward listening. The children should experience large-group, small-group, and solitary activities. The educators, in integrating diverse elements into a harmonious and meaningful environment, provide surroundings that are accessible to the child’s understanding, feeling, and active will. The care, love, and intention expressed through the outer materials and furnishings of the environment are experienced unconsciously by the child. The child experiences the immediate environment as ensouled and nurturing. The adult shapes the temporal environment as well as the spatial. Through a rhythmic schedule, in which the same thing happens at the same time on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis, the child gains a sense of security and confidence in the world. Also, the different activities of the day should take place in a comfortable flow with smooth transitions.

The physical

The adult shapes the

### **Creative and Artistic Experience**

*“In order to become true educators, we must be able to see the truly aesthetic element in the work, to bring an artistic quality into our tasks. . . . If we bring this aesthetic element, then we begin to come closer to what the child wills out of its own nature.”*

— Rudolf Steiner, *A Modern Art of Education*

In the early childhood class, the art of education is the art of living. The teacher is an artist in how she perceives and relates to the children and to the activities of daily life. She orchestrates and choreographs the rhythms of each day, each week, and each season in such a way that the children can breathe freely in a living structure. experiences in singing and music, in movement and gesture—through eurythmy

In addition, the te

and rhythmic games—and in creative speech and language—through verses, poetry, and stories. The children model with beeswax, draw, and do watercolor painting. Puppet and marionette shows put on by the teacher are an important element in the life of the kindergarten.

### **Meaningful Adult Activity to be Imitated**

*“The task of the early childhood educator is to adapt the practical activities of daily life so that they are suitable for the child’s imitation through play. . . . The activities of children in early childhood must be derived directly from life itself rather than being “thought out” by the intellectualized culture of adults. . . . The most important thing is to give children the opportunity to directly imitate life itself.”*

— Rudolf Steiner, *The Child’s Changing Consciousness*

*“Children do not learn through instruction or admonition but through imitation. Good sight will develop if the environment has the proper conditions of light and color, while in the brain and blood circulation, the physical foundations will be laid for a healthy sense of morality if children witness moral actions in their surroundings.”*

— Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child*

Real, meaningful work with a purpose, adjusted to the needs of the child, is in accordance with the child’s natural and inborn need for movement, and is an enormously significant educational activity. The teacher focuses on the meaningful activities that nurture life in the preschool “home”, such as cooking and baking, gardening, doing laundry and cleaning, creating and caring for the materials in the immediate environment, and taking care of the bodily needs of the children.

This directed attention of the atmosphere of freedom in which the individuality of each child can be active. It is not intended just that the children copy the outer movements and actions of the adult, but that they experience also the inner attitude—the devotion, care, sense of purpose, focus, and creative spirit of the adult.

### **Self-Initiated Free, Imaginative Play**

*“In the child’s play activity, we can only provide the conditions for education. What is gained through play, through everything that cannot be determined by*

*fixed rules, stems fundamentally from the self-activity of the child, the real educational value of play lives in the fact that we ignore our rules and regulations, our educational theory, and allow the child free rein.”*

— Rudolf Steiner, *Self Education in the Light of Anthroposophy*

In a seemingly contradictory indication, Rudolf Steiner also said:

*“Giving direction and guidance to play is one of the essential tasks of sensible education, which is to say an art of education that is right for humanity. . . .*

*The early childhood educator must school her observation in order to develop an artistic eye, to detect the individual quality of each child’s play.”*

— Rudolf Steiner, Lecture of February 24, 1921 in Utrecht,

The Netherlands

Little children learn through play. They approach play in an entirely individual way, out of their entirely individual ways, out of their unique configuration of soul and spirit, and out of their unique experiences of the world in which they live. The manner in which a child plays may offer a picture of how they will take up their destiny as an adult.

The task of the teacher

supports the possibility of healthy play. This environment includes the physical surroundings, furnishings, and play materials; the social environment of activities and social interactions; and the inner/spiritual environment of thoughts, intentions, and imaginations held by the adults.

## Protection of the Forces of Childhood

*“Although it is highly necessary that each person should be fully awake in later life, the child must be allowed to remain as long as possible in the peaceful, dreamlike condition of pictorial imagination in which his early years of life are passed. For if we allow his organism to grow strong in this nonintellectual way, he will rightly develop in later life the intellectuality needed in the world today.”*

— Rudolf Steiner, *A Modern Art of Education*

The lively, waking dream of the little child’s consciousness must be allowed to thrive in the early childhood group. This means that the educators refrains as much as possible from verbal instruction. Instead, her gestures and actions provide a model for the child’s imitation. Familiar daily rhythms and activities provide a context where the need for verbal instruction is reduced. Simple, archetypal imagery in stories, songs, and games provides experiences that the children can internalise but that do not require intellectual or critical reflection or explanation.

## Gratitude, Reverence, and Wonder

*“An atmosphere of gratitude should grow naturally in children through merely witnessing the gratitude the adults feel as they receive what is freely given by others, and in how they express this gratitude. If a child says ‘thank you’ very naturally—not in response to the urging of others, but simply through imitating— something has been done that will greatly benefit the child’s whole life. Out of this an all-embracing gratitude will develop toward the whole world.*

*This cultivation of gratitude is of paramount importance.”*

— Rudolf Steiner, *The Child’s Changing Consciousness*

*“Out of these early, all-pervading experiences of gratitude, the first tender capacity for love, which is deeply embeddedn each and every child, begins to sprout in earthly life.*

*If, during the first*

*atmosphere of gratitude around the children, then out of this gratitude toward the world, toward the entire universe, and also out of thankfulness for being able to be in this world, a profound and warm sense of devotion will arise . . . upright, honest, and true.”*

—Rudolf Steiner, *The Child’s Changing Consciousness*

This is the basis for what will become a capacity for deep, intimate love and commitment in later life, for dedication and loyalty, for true admiration of others, for fervent spiritual or religious devotion, and for placing oneself wholeheartedly in the service of the world.

### **Joy, Humour, and Happiness**

*“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 educators who 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 out’ the forms of the physical organs.”*

— Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child*

*“If you make a surly face so that a child gets the impression you are a grumpy person, this harms the child for the rest of his life. What kind of school plan you make is neither here nor there; what matters is what sort of person you are.”*

— Rudolf Steiner, *The Kingdom of Childhood*

The teacher’s earnestness about her work and her serious striving must be balanced with humour and a demeanour that bespeaks happiness. There must be moments of humour and delight in the preschool every day.

### **Early Childhood Educators on a Path of Inner Development**

*“For the small child before the change of teeth, the most important thing in education is the teacher’s own being.”*

— Rudolf Steiner, *Essentials of Education*

*“Just think what feelings arise in the soul of the early childhood educator who realizes: What I accomplish with this child, I accomplish for the grown-up person in his twenties. What matters is not so much a knowledge of abstract educational principles or pedagogical rules. . . . [W]hat does matter is that a*

*deep sense of responsibility develops in [the educator's heart and mind] and that this affects her or his worldview and the way she or he stands in life."*  
— Rudolf Steiner, 'Education in the Face of the Present-Day World Situation',  
Lecture of June 10, 1920

Here we come to the spiritual environment of the early childhood setting: the thoughts, attitudes, and imaginations living in the adult who cares for the children. This invisible realm that lies behind the outer actions of the teacher has a profound influence on the child's development.

The spiritual environment

includes recognition of the child as a threefold being—of body, soul, and spirit—on a path of evolutionary development. This recognition provides a foundation for the daily activities in the kindergarten, and for the relationship between adult and child.

Such an understanding

out of the inner life of the adult, the life of the individual Ego. This is a realm that is largely hidden, and hence is difficult to observe directly and to evaluate objectively. Yet ultimately this realm may affect the development of the children most profoundly. It is not merely our outer activity that influences the growing child. What lies behind and is expressed through this outer activity also is crucial. Ultimately, the most profound influence on the child is who we are as human beings—and who we are becoming and how.

Rudolf Steiner's advice to the first early childhood educator Elizabeth Grunelius, in the early 1920s, can be paraphrased as follows: *Observe the children. Actively meditate. Follow your intuitions. Work so that all your actions are worthy of imitation.* Today, those of us who work with young children are challenged to engage in a constant process of renewal. We must actively observe the children in our care, carry them in our meditations, and seek to work consciously and artistically to create the experiences that will serve their development. Our devotion to this task awakens us to the importance of self-education and transformation in the context of community. Our ongoing study of child and human development, our own artistic and meditative practices, and our work with Anthroposophy, independently and together with others, become essential elements for the practice of early childhood education. Here we can come to experience that we are not alone on this journey. We are supported through our encounters with one another and with our sharing of insights, experience and knowledge. We are helped also by those beings spiritual beings who are committed to our continued development and to the renewal of culture that Steiner Education seeks to serve.

The Essentials of Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood Education provides a deeper understanding of the philosophy of Periwinkle Preschool and provides the platform from which we embrace and link our daily practices to the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care.

## Toys

*Extracts from articles by Carla de Jong. Carla's website has many examples of the types of positive toys she refers to: [www.dejong.id.au/carladejong-toys](http://www.dejong.id.au/carladejong-toys).*

Before we can have a closer look at toys, as such, we should really ask ourselves first: "What is playing?"

A child plays through imitation; he replays scenes from daily life; he absorbs everything around him so we should realise that in the presence of children, we should behave in a manner worthy of imitation. This means not only on the outside, it has to be real – a child senses immediately when we just pretend and we do not really support our actions.

Learning for a child is a reverse action. We (mostly) think before we do, but a child does first and might think about it later. Therefore, we do not give children lengthy explanations, but show them, do it. Explaining is purely theoretical: a child cannot understand this unless you awaken his abstract thinking forces. If we explain everything to a child (and this is very often the case in our society – people feel they owe an explanation to everything), then we make the child more conscious, which is hardening his thinking processes and works against his life forces. When the intellect is appealed to too early, children are hindered in the development of their social abilities. Heidi Britz Crecelius says in 'Children at Play': "It will not be the intellectual abilities but the social faculties of human beings that will on the whole make it possible to live on this earth in the future; one should keep this in mind where young people are growing up. Computers can do calculations of every kind for us, but social imagination, moral imagination – these our technical slaves will never develop – these we ourselves have to develop."

During the first 6 to 7 years a child is totally open to all experiences in his surroundings. All impressions are absorbed deeply. The formation of the organs is inwardly completed under the imprinting influence of outer experiences. Therefore, we want to surround the child with colours, sounds and toys, and in an environment that helps him develop in a healthy and balanced way. A child needs a human environment to find his way into human society and to be able to grow into it through play and imitation.

Now, after exploring the play of children, we can ask the question: What sort of toys will help the child in his development?

Great toys for children are the "ready-made toys" we find in nature: seeds, sticks, stones, mud, soil water etc. It would take us too far to go in depth into this, suffice to say that it is good for children who are as such already so close to nature to play with nature's products.

Also playing with the four elements is something children have always done, and always will do: flying a kite on a windy day, blowing feathers, chasing falling autumn leaves. With the fire we can roast potatoes, marshmallows, we can build a campfire. Games with and in the water, playing with the hose in the garden on a

hot day or with the water in the bath. Then the earth: playing with mud, digging in the soil, building sandcastles etc.

It is important for children to have toys with ample scope for imagination, beautiful but simple, so the child can fill in whatever his imagination creates.

Toys we make or buy for children should ideally be made out of natural materials. As the physical experiences of the child are built into his/her personality later on, the child's feeling in later life is developed through his physical feeling when he is young. When the child touches natural material, he experiences a reality – synthetic material is dead matter scientifically put together. A child is constantly touching everything, he is feeling his way into the world: with natural materials we let children feel quality and reality, there is real interaction, while plastic and other synthetic toys put a barrier between the child and the toy – there is no living interaction.

It is also important that toys should be well made. Toys that are not made to last are not worth caring for, not worth looking after. When we give the child good toys, he can show care and respect which later in life will enable him to show care and respect in his relationships.

### **The Doll: One of the most important toys**

When selecting toys, the most important consideration is that they should stimulate the child's imagination and provide images of a living, natural kind (hence sections of branches rather than mathematically structured building blocks). These considerations apply especially to dolls. A doll is an image of a human being and is therefore the toy most suited to develop and enliven the self image of the growing child. This has two consequences. Firstly, it would be a mistake to prevent small boys from playing with dolls and to restrict such play to girls under the erroneous impression that it is a "motherly activity". Such discrimination between the sexes is pedagogically meaningless and ignores what is actually important for his age. Secondly, from this point of view, it would be the worst possible thing to give the child a doll complete in all anatomical details, technically so perfect that it can open and close its eyes, can be fed, can wet its diapers and so forth.

The child would then have little use for the power of imagination. This power needs to be used, however, and often atrophies only because it finds insufficient opportunity to be used and strengthened. Just as human muscles are strengthened by regular use, so does the child's imagination need to be used in order to grow. In view of the manufacturer's effort to produce even more detailed dolls, it is not surprising that children appear to become increasingly demanding. The novelty soon wears off, however, the tricks needed to activate the technical arrangements, such a "speaking" soon become boring. The permanent frozen smile on the mask like features, the grotesque position of the fingers of the average so-called beautiful doll, need hardly be mentioned. The simple knotted doll cannot be bettered, for children bring to it the inexhaustible profusion of their own imaginings. Indeed, it is only through fantasy that the knotted doll becomes a doll at all, and thus a living image of the human being.

Such a simple doll enables the child through the power of imagination to embody every possible view of the human being in a perpetually changing, mobile, living way.

Today there are many children whose imagination is so stunted that they do not know what to do with a simple knot doll and must rely on an adult's suggestions. It is often surprising how rapidly this loss of a child's natural gift can be made good if the necessary means are given to the child. However, after the age of five this is only possible to a limited degree. If the parents can find a relationship to the knotted doll, then the child can imitate this. If this is not possible, and there are many understandable reasons for this, it would be preferable for the parent to make a plain stuffed rag doll with simple little clothes rather than to buy a manufactured doll from the toy store.

*Carla acknowledges the following sources for her articles:*

- ◆ *Heidi Britz-Crecelius: Children at Play, Preparation for Life.*
- ◆ *A.C. Harwood: The Way of a Child*
- ◆ *Caroline von Heydebrand: Childhood, A Study of the Growing Soul*
- ◆ *Freya Jaffke: Toymaking with Children*
- ◆ *Karl Konig: The First Three Years of the Child*
- ◆ *Marion Millet: Working Wooden Toys*
- ◆ *Karin Neuschutz: The Doll Book*
- ◆ *Joan Salter: The Incarnating Child*
- ◆ *Rudolf Steiner: The Kingdom of Childhood*
- ◆ *And the lectures of Susan Harris on the Young Child.*

## What about TV?

*Extract from an article by Kim Preston*

Children learn about the world through imitating and doing. During this highly active time they are preparing foundations upon which all later logical thought processes, noble attitudes, good moral behaviours and healthy bodies can be built.

To read just one page from any of the growing numbers of books about television, available from libraries and bookshops, quickly confirms the instinctive knowledge most parents feel: that TV viewing is an addictive habit and possibly detrimental to the child's well-being.

To begin with, TV interferes with the child's wish to play and robs him of the concentration to do so. Play is the realm of the young child, and their ability to become absorbed in creative free-play is directly linked to their later abilities in social, emotional and intellectual areas.

Albert Einstein said that imagination is more important than knowledge. But TV, by feeding the viewer continuous fast moving and often stereotyped images, inhibits imagination. Indeed, there is no desire to be active or play creatively, and against their will, they are left with their heads full of vivid images that remain with them into their nightly dreams.

Some children emerge from viewing with distressing, yet well documented behaviours such as hyperactivity, aggression and nervousness.

Often parents exclaim, "If only there were decent programs for my toddler/child!" Yet what the young child needs is a human environment to help him find his way in our human environment. To learn about being human, the child must see, feel, hear, smell, talk with and 'sense' other people.

Even animal documentaries are unsuitable, because they can only amuse and pass on a few dry intellectual facts. A young child can only come to understand this glorious world and know about tiny insects, 100 year old trees and such by actually experiencing them through his whole self. The TV cannot duplicate nor replace the experience of total joy felt by a child as he glimpses a wild rabbit scurry across a bush track, or the humorous task of bathing a dog, or the wonder of the laughing kookaburra. Older children and adults can gain an intellectual appreciation of such scenes on the screen, but the young child is entirely sense organ and his whole development depends on the way in which his senses nourish his body, mind and soul.

A trial of 3 to 4 weeks of 100% no TV will certainly convince the adults that the extra effort to help children come through the initial withdrawal period is worthwhile.

Children will suddenly be interested in what's going on in the family and be free to play as only children know how to! The TV can be left unplugged with a safety socket in the wall, a cloth draped over the set and news or sports programs can

be recorded for later viewing when the children are in bed. Weekend mornings may have to be more adult centred to begin with as children will really feel at a loss when there are no cartoons to watch. Family walks, household tasks, car washing, bread making or reading aloud in the parents' bed are some proven replacement activities.

Children are born into this world with an innate trust that we will love and nourish them.

To be worthy of a child's trust and dependence requires awareness and effort. We must find out all we can about what our children are absorbing, whether it be sugar, food additives, pesticides, U.V. or T.V. If there is cause for concern, it is our responsibility to act.

It's OK to say "No" to TV, just as we say "No" to outdoor play without sunhats in Summer. It's not being extreme, but being aware, conscious and active in giving your child the best help for a healthy and happy future.

*Sources:*

*Jerry Mander: Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television. William Morrow, 1978*

*Martin Large: Who's Bringing Them Up? Hawthorne Press, 1990*

*Neil Postman: The Disappearance of Childhood. Dell, 1982*

*Marie Winn: The Plug-in Drug. Penguin, 1986*

# Thinking about Clothes

*Extract from an article by Margaret Meyerkort*

The human being is born without physical protection, so he begins his earthly path in a most vulnerable condition, depending on the caring concern of others. In nature we see everywhere that enveloping sheaths are needed so that life can unfold: the seed of the plant requires the warm soil and the bird's egg needs the shell. So the human being too has to be protected from wind and weather and from the pollution of an industrialised world.

For some time and for varying reasons it has been fashionable to expose young children to a lot of light and air and it has been a policy generally to toughen them up at a very early stage in life. Such a practice forgets that the human being has to build up his own warmth organism largely independent of nature. Directly the child raises himself into the upright posture, he lifts himself above the realm of the mineral, plant and animal and follows his own individual path which is no longer that of the species.

In fact, the human being is above all a creature of warmth. His warmth organism is most finely differentiated in that it continuously balances heat and cold. Thus he maintains definite temperature in spite of the variations of temperature in his surroundings.

In man we find neither excessive cold or heat, the former with its contracting, the latter with its dissolving tendency, but a middle region of temperature. The human being needs this balance to be active.

The faculty of balancing the opposing forces of heat and cold is acquired gradually during the first years of the child's life. Moreover, the balancing of these two forces is an ongoing process which has to do with the fact that man's body, soul and spirit remain in a continually varying relationship to one another throughout life. When we are not quite "here" we feel cold, at some other moments, burning hot. Man has to re-establish his specifically human warmth at each stage in his life if he is to be a happy and healthy person.

So it is important for parents and educators to establish and refine the warmth organism of the growing child. Mostly it is a question of protection. Young children wearing trousers are unable to keep them up because the waist has not yet formed. It begins to develop around the seventh year.

The liver and kidney regions, which need warmth most, will have lost warmth before the children pull up their trousers, that is, if they can do it by themselves. Braces or straps on the trousers are preferable to a firm elastic around the waist which impedes the circulation. The tummy will then be kept warm and the child will be more comfortable in his play.

Nowadays, more and more women are recognising the difference between synthetic and organic fibres. The skin is a tender organ, the outer boundary of the body; it excretes and breathes. So it continuously creates and recreates a

relationship between the body and its surroundings. Inorganic fibres in clothing can curtail the functions of the skin and even a healthy skin may get irritated.

The colour of the child's clothing plays a part when we consider his age and the need to harmonise his temperament and his character traits. Clothing that is chosen because it is fashionable can be impersonal and therefore educationally unhelpful. People's characters and instincts find expression in their outer activities and behaviour, including their choice of colour. There lies a challenge for parents and educators to try and understand the growing personality of their child.

In accordance with the stages of his incarnation, the young sensitive child is more related to the seven colours of the rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, light blue, dark blue, violet). Just as at the beginning of the day pink is the colour of the sky, so the human soul feels pink at the dawn of life.

I have found that a print on a child's clothing matters too. In fact, when he wears a plain coloured short or dress he tends to be more harmonious within himself and more concentrated: the eye drinks in, as it were, the one colour and does not have to hop about from one small impression to another.

A growing child's clothes need to be rather on the loose side. The skin, as a breathing organism, can fulfil its functions better, the movements of the limbs will be freer, more agile and so the child can enjoy his activities more, an important point for any parent.

Lastly, 'we do not go into battle unarmed', which means that our clothing should suit the occasion. All these considerations don't make it easier to choose clothes, but it can be immensely satisfying and rewarding to have arrived at a really suitable choice.