

# ***LifeWays North America***

## ***NEWSLETTER***

### ***Spring 2023***

**THEME: *Presenting Words: how do we speak to, around and about the children in our lives?***

### ***Greetings from Cynthia!***



Hello, Dear Friend,

Merry blessed spring! While it is still windy and cold here in Northern California, a dear little volunteer poppy sprang up in my yard from seemingly nowhere to pronounce that our dear Earth is still renewing and offering resurrecting forces to all of us. Our daffodils and tulips did the same thing back in February and March and even our rose bushes are getting in on the affirmation. In this mystical realm of life and death we can thank the *Creator* for such beautiful reminders. If you read my recent

LifeWays blog you know that I was given the blessing of experiencing my mother crossing over the river of eternal being, leaving behind the physical body, and journeying into the ongoing exploration of Spirit in the Heavenly Realms. It was wondrous!

As I consider such phenomenal gifts, I return regularly to the gifts we receive in our earliest years - movement, speech, and thought. It is a privilege to see how these deeds manifest and develop in early years and how in some ways, similar gestures appear in the final transition, as I observed in my mother's last days.

It is challenging for me to express how much gratitude I experienced while reading each article and endearing poetry in this beautiful newsletter on *Presenting Words*. Every single offering is a testament to why and how we are called upon to protect this sacred deed of speech in early development, especially today when the *word* is so often defiled. Many thanks to each author

for such a full range of ideals to consider - from best practices in what and how to speak all the way to the wonder and gift of silence. There are depths and depths to ponder here, so I entreat you to offer yourself the spacious gift of quiet moments in the coming days or weeks to read each of these jewels. And you may want to have paper and pen nearby to take notes as so much wisdom is being shared. Believe me, I am holding myself back from writing paragraphs regarding my favorite parts in each article! Thus I will end my welcome letter here and send you off to your favorite reading spot!

Here is an edited part of the Steiner quote that inspired us to choose the theme for this newsletter:

*"Whoever hears a word today applies it to what it represents in the sense world, and no longer thinks of relating it to the Spiritual World. So it could gradually come about that people will no longer understand the spiritual teachings at all, because everything would at once be applied to the material world. Spiritual knowledge must bring about an actual renewal of language. The words must be given a new stamp; new values must be lent to the words once more. Human beings must once more gain the feeling that there is something inherent in these words, that certain words intend something that points to higher worlds. It is the task of this spiritual movement to carry up into the higher worlds not only deeds, but words."*

Sending each one of you a loving embrace and sweet moments of quiet listening during this sacred Spring season,

**Cynthia**

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***"I found LifeWays to be more relevant to today's world while maintaining the core integrity of Waldorf pedagogy."***

Lista Vergith, Founder & Director of Mountain Bluebells Preschool & Nursery Center in Red Lodge, MT, the LifeWays Representative Program featured in this newsletter, tells her story of *"How Mountain Bluebells Came to Be"*.

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***Contributions from the  
LifeWays Community***



## ***Willow Kits***

A Spring Poem by Pamela C Perkins

Teeny bits of noses,  
Then tiny pairs of paws,  
Two beady eyes each opened  
In wonder at all they saw.

The softest silvery kittens  
Awoke that sunny day  
And in the first spring sunshine  
They longed to romp and play.

The Lady of the Willow  
Beckoned kittens one and all.  
They tumbled to the mossy earth  
In answer to her call.

In between the branches  
That bordered on the brook,  
They raced and chased each other  
'Round every rooted nook.

But when the sun began to yawn  
And nod his sleepy head,  
The Lady called her kits all home  
And tucked them into bed.

Up the stems they clambered,  
Scrambling into leafy nests.  
A gentle night-time wind then  
Rocked the sleepy kits to rest.

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## ***Speaking Mindfully with Young Children***

by Stephen Spitalny



I have long thought it is important that we adults become mindful of the way we speak, and the words we speak. It is easy to experience the effect that someone's tone has on us when we are spoken to. The words can seem innocuous and yet the message is received as scolding or judging.

This is worthy of consideration because the tone we add to our speech is indicative of how we are framing our experience. Hence, the way we think about interactions deserves our attention. In fact, it is all about attention.

When we observe something, and inwardly judge what we have observed, our attention is elsewhere and our habits in thinking have taken over. Do we frame experience in terms of fault and blame? Do we think about what someone 'should have done?' These are thought habits that deserve our attention so that we can begin to transform our thinking, our framing of experience, because that underlies all of our communication.

The words we speak are equally deserving of...[READ MORE](#)

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## ***Nursery Rhymes In a Silent Circle Time***

by, Veronica Oliva-Clour



In my group of preschool-aged children, I generally find that after the bustle of the holidays, it's time for a change in my circle work.

With the return of vitality and more sunlight in our northern wintry climate, I am eager to bring movement and little skits through a collection of nursery rhymes.

Traditional and cultural nursery rhymes are found all over the world. These little singing and touching games create an environment without stress and support brain development.

Singing, chanting, hand games and tender gestures are shared with the newborn child and beyond. Nursery rhymes offer the following opportunities...[READ MORE](#)

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## ***About Language for LifeWays***

by, Sharifa Oppenheimer



Singing to your toddler can help with language development. This is because typically when language is sung, the melody requires the words be sounded more slowly than in spoken language. This gives the child the opportunity to hear more clearly the consonants, vowels, syllables and subtleties in the words and the sentence structure. In a Waldorf early childhood classroom you may hear the teacher singing

instructions to the children or using transition songs to help the children move through their day. One of the first things I remember, as I became more familiar with the Waldorf system, is the injunction: Sing Your Commands! I made a beautiful sign and posted it above the classroom's kitchen counter, to remind me of this small piece of magic. You too can weave this into your days. The simplest way is to in...[READ MORE](#)

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## ***Diapering for Connection and Communication***

by, Chris Lester



From [LifeWays Practices \(Specific to the Infants\)](#): Clear, articulate, melodic speech is expected of the caregivers when speaking to the infants throughout the day.

"... speaking to the infant throughout the day." Diapering is one such routine repeated throughout the day (and night!) five to seven times daily for two-plus

years— perhaps the most frequent and enduring opportunity for connection and communication between babies and the adults who care for them. The baby's experience of diapering forms a bedrock for relationship-based care. To

view this seemingly mundane and uninspiring task through a fresh lens can be transformational for the caregiver and highly nurturing for babies. How uplifting to realize routine diapering can be mutually enjoyable as the infant-caregiver relationship evolves!

LifeWays Practices promote an understanding that relationships with caregivers and the environment form the two most important aspects through which the baby can experience healthy life rhythms/routines. Being cared for is a newborn's first experience in relationship with the adults in their lives and with the environment the adults create. What babies hear, see, feel, taste and smell actively builds the framework for...[READ MORE](#)

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## ***Embodying Our Sacred Wholeness***

by, Emily Darlington Cooke



When I began working with children, I was also learning how exploring movement with a sense of ease, playfulness and authentic curiosity brought me back into a state of peace and calm and ignited my neuroplasticity.

I was learning how one could use language to transmit this way of moving, and this influenced my daily interactions with children, who had come into this world with these qualities of exploration fully intact. Our culture has unfortunately gone the way of often corroding these evolutionary imperatives (that, when allowed, produce an optimal flow of not just surviving, but thriving).

I found it my deepest yearning to protect the authentic and sacred embodiment of these young beings' wholeness in how I interacted with them, and I came to understand that the more I restored my own awareness and aliveness in my body, the more I could sense in my body when I was being honest and supportive with the children, or when I was passing on ... [READ MORE](#)

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## ***Connecting through Silence***

by Sarah Canga



When I was 21 I went on a 10 day silent meditation retreat with no cell phones, books, or journals. It was a time of simplicity and rhythm and 10 hours a day of contemplation. People often asked me what that experience was like. What was most fascinating to me was at the end of the retreat when we could speak again I already felt like I knew the other participants.

Each day I would observe them as they walked the path from the dorms to the eating hall or meditation hall, I would see how they placed their shoes, how they sat and even how they breathed. Each of these observations allowed me to infer how their day was going. A good day the shoes would be neatly placed side by side or having a hard time someone might flip their shoes off in the middle of

the rug and keep walking. With so much time in silence after my 10 days was over it was easier to actually pause and hear what someone had to say without the need to comment right away when the retreat ended. I also spent a great deal of time watching bugs! I laughed at myself even in those moments, how fascinating the bugs were and so many I had never noticed before and how beautiful they were! What a gift to be able to notice so much!

Those 10 days in many ways feel like the life of a small child. Meals and rest at regular intervals and warm smiles from those taking care of me. When a baby is first born they don't have the capacity for language but oh how well they communicate! We laugh when a baby starts to root and know he is hungry and we soothe knowingly when the rim around her eyes turn a hint of red knowing its time for a nap. Young children aren't beholden to "to do" lists or schedules and have all the time in the world to...[READ MORE](#)

## ***Parenting a Young Child: What my Formal Education Never Taught Me (+25 Positive & Affirming Things to Say to a Child)***

by, Susan R. Johnson MD



As a pediatrician with subspecialty training in child behavior and development, I thought I knew everything there was to know about children and being a parent. Then I became a parent, and I humbly realized that I knew very little about either one.

So here are some parenting experiences (and baby-sitting survival tips) that my education never taught me about raising a young child:

**1) Young children, especially children less than 7 years of age, are just not capable of delaying gratification.** Children live in the present moment, and what children see or hear about, they want now! They don't have the cognitive capacity to resist temptation or delay gratification. For example, I bought a "special" advent calendar for my son, when he was 4 years old. On December 1st, I let him open the first window. I then returned the calendar to a special place in the kitchen and briefly left the room. Well, you guessed it. All 24 days before Christmas were consumed in a matter of minutes. Since this time, I have learned not to verbalize all my ideas and detailed plans, so much, in front of my young child, who would then, subsequently, want to do everything I just mentioned, NOW!

**2) If we are confused about a limit or boundary, then our child will be confused, too.** Children push until they find our boundary. I never had any arguments about wearing seat belts in the car, though I frequently had arguments about going to bed. My son quickly learned that he could continually ask for water at bedtime (How could I deprive a thirsty child!), ask for a snack after he was in bed (How could I send him to bed hungry!), ask lots of questions about everything in the whole wide world (How could I not satisfy his intellectual curiosity!), and the list went on and on. I am still learning this lesson. Somehow my learning doesn't seem to always transfer from one situation to another. It takes me a long time to sort out and prioritize my own values and thoughts, so I can present clearer boundaries to him.

**3) Young Children, especially less than 7 years of age, really can read our thoughts and are barometers for our own soul moods...** [READ MORE](#)



## ***First Tales -A new evolution toward more healing Nursery Rhyme understanding***

by Suzanne Down



There is a sweet and gentle evolution toward the relationship between language arising in children and story. It starts with Mama humming, surrounding the child with soul music that envelops the young child. Then comes lullabies, crooning, comforting songs sometimes just soundings such as luuly, luulay...bringing soft consonants in a rhythmic sing-song.

This then took on more language form, adding a wee story: Rock-a-bye baby in the tree top, When the wind blows the cradle

will rock, When the bough breaks the cradle will fall, And down will come baby cradle and all. This was a movement play with Mama holding the baby, rocking and carrying the baby down safely in her arms. The rhythms of speech/song, added to the movements in play delighted timeless children and will forever more.

You can hear the flow of the phrases in the singing of the verse, how simple it is then to keep the rhythmic phrase when we start to speak the verse, using a softer, lovely speech that is something of a bridge between song and prose speaking as we use in traditional storytelling. It is a magical language that these old verse offer us, having been spoken into the world for so so long.

As the intellect took hold of humanity, this more spirit-filled rhythmic speech became too grounded for the young child, which we can hear in the 'beat' speech often spoken for these wondrous nursery verse, where each syllable is spoken in a harder beat, losing the flow of the phrase, giving us chopped up words, each syllable with a strong, equal emphasis. 'Rock/a/bye/ba/by/in/the/tree/top...[READ MORE](#)

## ***Speaking Our Children Into Being***

by, Sharon Lacay



Every time that we interact with a child is an opportunity to imbue their soul with a conditioning that has the possibility to nourish their mental and social health for a lifetime.

It sounds like a big responsibility because it is. Children look to those who care for them for the answers on how to live and thrive. Speaking with them on the surface is essential for language acquisition but what it also does is set the stage for how they will learn all about the world and more importantly, how they see themselves.

Too often when we speak to children we seemingly forget how much their tiny bodies and hearts are capable of. We can communicate with them in ways that encourage their

capacities to understand, build confidence and grow.

We won't always get it perfect. Sometimes adults misspeak and it can cause us to worry that we may hinder our little ones. Likely it won't and what you can do to rectify those difficult feelings is to observe your own intuitive reactions



and also notice how your child may have taken your words and actions into their being- their facial expression, demeanor, verbal response or physical reaction. From there, you can always learn and ... [READ MORE](#)

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## ***Featured LifeWays Representative***

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### **Mountain Bluebells Preschool & Nursery Center**

Red Lodge, MT



## **How Mountain Bluebells Came to Be**

by, Lista Vergith

It was the summer of 2005. I was 27 years old and a single mother of three beautiful and amazing children. My children were aged 8, 3 and 1 ½ so I'd already spent my short stint in "adulthood" as a caregiver. I had worked in daycare centers, participated in cooperative preschools and I had volunteered in the local elementary school. I was also in my second year of college working on a bachelor's degree in business/ information systems.



Raising three children on one's own is no easy feat, especially with no family support and a lifetime of family trauma and hardship that I was personally trying to overcome. I had a fierce determination though – a deep love for my children and a passionate drive to make sure they had the best possible life. I felt the need to prove the stereotypes wrong – how dare society judge me or my children as lower-class citizens just because we were a one parent family. I made it my mission to ensure that my children didn't ever feel this societal limitation and that they had every opportunity to thrive.

And so, in this summer when I started hearing the buzz about a new little preschool opening up I was intrigued and I sought to learn more. What I learned changed my parenting path forever and set me on the road to where I am today. This little school, it turned out, was a huge effort by a small group of passionate families who wanted something different for their children. And after researching different pedagogies, they collectively decided that Waldorf education was right for them.

My own childhood and parent experience left a lot to be desired so I didn't have much to draw from there. I spent a lot of time questioning my decisions and wondering if I was doing things right. I second guessed everything, while simultaneously knowing that I had a natural instinct – an inner knowing of how to do this parenting thing – if only I could really see it clearly and actually trust it...[READ MORE](#)









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LifeWays graduate, Class of 2000



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