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## **LifeWays Early Childhood Fundamentals Course** ***Inspiration and Support for Working with Young Children***

### **The Pinch Hitter**

*She had always loved baseball. Somehow miraculously she was hired onto the team! Sitting in the dugout, she was so inspired and amazed to find herself there! Then all of a sudden, the batter was injured and she was called up. It was then that she realized she really didn't know how to swing a bat and was unsure of the basic rules of the game. She was being initiated into the world of "pinch hitter" and really understood that feeling of being in a pinch!*

*Congratulations! You have been hired to work in a Waldorf or LifeWays early childhood program that you have admired for some time. Or you now find yourself ready to open your own program. Perhaps you are a new assistant or extended care provider, a new co-teacher or regular substitute. Yet you have no training or background in the work. Or perhaps you have been out of the field for awhile and could use a refresher. We want to help you find the ground beneath your feet so that you can grow in confidence.*

*It may be a little while before you can enroll in a regular training program. If so, this Early Childhood Fundamentals course is for you. Your teachers, both on-site and online, are long-time early childhood teachers in Waldorf and/or LifeWays programs. We look forward to offering you support and inspiration. **If you decide to enroll later in the full LifeWays Early Childhood Certification Training, your ENTIRE TUITION PAID FOR THIS EARLY CHILDHOOD FUNDAMENTALS COURSE WILL BE APPLIED TO YOUR LIFEWAYS CERTIFICATION TRAINING TUITION!***

### **Components of LifeWays Early Childhood Fundamentals include:**

- **Feet on the Ground** – We'll start off with a *five-day in-person retreat* to fill your toolkit with basics of care and education.
- **Fire in the Belly** – On retreat, you'll enjoy delicious organic food
- **Heart in Hands** – You'll also learn simple and meaningful handwork projects
- **Head in the Clouds** – We will continue our course with fifty hours of online, mentor-supported content and discussion throughout the school year. This will include content from "The Living Arts – Cornerstones of Care", "Discipline with Loving Awareness" and "Building a Strong Foundation: Care of the Young Child's Senses", along with five scheduled video conference sessions for Q&A on specific topics. (This online content plus five Zoom sessions add up to a \$650 value alone!)

**In-person Retreat Curriculum may include (may be some variance according to the faculty carrying the retreat):**

#### **The mood in the early childhood classroom or care setting**

As teachers and caregivers, we can best support the mood in our classrooms and care environments through the attention, love, warmth and security we provide, a mood that nurtures the children's senses as well as being rhythmic, timeless, and joyful. In his book *The Essentials of Education*, Rudolf Steiner says, "For the small child before the change of teeth, the most important thing in education is the teacher's own being." In our being, we strive to be worthy of imitation, even in our thoughts. To be fully present we need to leave all our concerns, sorrows and baggage at the door and strive to protect the dreaminess of the young children in

our care. This can be supported through the attention that we give to our purposeful work. When we are peacefully engaged in our work, the children will imitate this mood of activity and they in turn will be interested and engaged in their work, which is play! We will explore the general atmosphere, pacing and content that best brings all of this into the classroom and child care experience.

### **Supporting the work of the classroom or care setting**

Not only the mood, but also the human and physical environment play a large role in how the days with young children unfold. We will consider how to develop and sustain collegial relationships to include best practices for seeking clarity, asking for what you need, and looking for ways to be supportive of the lead teacher and other colleagues. Lead and assistant roles and responsibilities should be discussed before working together as a team; then, with time spent working together, an understanding of what is needed at each part of the day grows and develops. Time must be set aside to communicate on a weekly basis. Having a plan for communicating supports the work between teachers and among colleagues. It is important that the children see both lead and assistant teachers working and communicating well with each other. It is equally important that each supports the other's work, responsibilities, and authority.

### **Transitions**

For the young child, and even sometimes for adults, changing from one activity to another can be challenging. Inviting the young child into a joyful experience during transitions is more effective than giving instructions especially when a child is demonstrating a reluctance to do what is being asked of her/him. To begin, we as adults need to invite joy, love, and imaginative images when guiding children through transitions. This is key! We can make transition experiences alive in pictorial ways. Also, using words such as "we" and "our" connects the young child to us and us to them, and in this way we can unite with them in the experience of the transition. We will offer ways through song, gesture, pacing and scheduling to support smooth and gentle transitions for all.

### **Rhythms of the Day**

Introduction to the basics of a healthy schedule for young children to include the qualities of in-breath and out-breath, active and restful, self-directed play and focused group activity, rhythms of eating and sleeping, qualities of morning and afternoon.

### **Twelve Senses and Four Foundational Senses**

An introduction to the twelve senses introduced by Rudolf Steiner. Focusing on the essential need to create healthy life rhythms and human relationships that support the four foundational senses of *touch, life, self-movement and balance*.

### **Mantles of care for the young child**

An introduction to the foundations of movement, speech and thinking in the first three years of the young child and the mantles of warmth that support these three developmental principles throughout early childhood.

### **The Living Arts**

An introduction to the understanding that *life is the curriculum* by offering experiences in the four living arts:

- Practical life activities
- Nurturing bodily care
- Creative exploration and skills
- Social ability and play

### **Nap time and the importance of sleep or rest**

Adequate sleep is vitally important for young children. Naptime provides an opportunity for children to rest and recharge. Students will learn how to design a strong, healthy rhythm and routine for naptime. They will learn how a calm, quiet environment promotes a smooth transition from wakefulness to deep sleep.

### **Wet on Wet Painting**

The young child finds great joy in the painting process and experience. From helping with setting up painting boards, brushes and water jars to painting and ending with cleaning up, it is an experience in which young children eagerly participate. When guided through the painting experience, they will watch and closely follow the sequence that we carefully demonstrate. Through observation and imitation, the experience of painting will go deeper, and this experience will serve the young child in a much greater way than if we, as the adult, use words to explain each step. We will learn best practices for setting up and involving young children in wet on wet watercolor painting in age appropriate ways – to include what ages of children benefit most from painting, how to include them in setting up and cleaning up and how to leave them free in their explorations of color.

“What the adult knows as logic is always the inner result of a purposeful sequence of steps which the small child is able to take in from his environment through imitation. ... Painting includes processes such as being careful, paying attention, waiting, following the course of the work, experiencing the laws of color mixing, and applying color in varying strengths. All of these activities give ever-renewed stimulus to the gradually awakening soul of the child, helping him to grasp his physical body and make his sense organization and his limbs ever more responsive.” Freya Jaffke

### **Outside playtime**

This is an essential part of childhood that is often undervalued. The children’s imaginations are ignited when they are free to roam in outdoor spaces in which to work and play. Students will learn how The Four Lower Senses should guide what is included in the plan for an outdoor space. They will also learn how taking special care in dressing the children appropriately for the weather allows them to safely remain outdoors for long periods of time.

### **Snack time**

Children in half day programs should be offered a mid-morning snack, while those in full day programs should be offered both a mid-morning and afternoon snack. Students will explore what constitutes healthy snacks that are easy to prepare and serve, and provide just enough fuel to carry the children through their activities, until to their next full meal. Students will participate in snack preparation during the course.

### **Lunch time**

Lunch time provides important opportunities for children to learn and be active participants. They can be involved in setting and clearing the table; taking turns talking to and listening to their peers; exploring their likes and dislikes and learning about themselves. Students will learn how to arrange a family-style eating environment, where even the youngest infant has a place at the table. Students will participate in a lunch time routine that is suitable for young children.

### **Nutrition and Cooking with and for young children**

Students will learn why a diet that consists primarily of fresh, organic or pesticide-free whole food is essential to the proper growth and development of the young child. Students will participate in food preparation and cooking, as well as how to safely involve children in these activities.

## Seasonal Offerings:

- **Practical use of therapeutic oils and seasonal teas in early childhood programs:**  
One session on cleaning and caring of the environment using therapeutic oils. Possible activities may include: making non-toxic spray cleaners for the home including Thieves' Blend and other antivirals like lavender oil. Also included could be making a polish for wood furniture, toys and cutting boards.
- **Experiencing, learning about and making seasonal teas:**  
One session on making seasonal teas with bulk, organic ingredients. Recipes for teas with local ingredients will be shared and a sample of teas will be made in class.
- **Sewing and felting seasonal crafts:**  
Students will do simple projects that may include: sew a napkin using a hemming stitch, make finger puppets using the blanket stitch (that can then be used with nursery rhymes and puppetry), wet felt around a flat stone to make a treasure pouch and hand sew a child size, warm wooly vest from recycled wool sweaters. The projects may vary depending upon the handwork teacher.

## The Nature Table

Discussion and practical activity about how to create a simple, authentic Nature Table and how these bring a feeling of nature to an indoor space. Students will have the opportunity to create a Nature Table together using things found on walks, dyed silks and other items.

## Coloring/drawing for the young child

Brief introduction to understanding how children draw and why it is important to give time and freedom of exploration without interruption or guidance from adults. Importance of quality supplies when possible.

## In-person retreat schedule

8:30-9:00	Opening Verse - Morning Songs - Singing games
9:00-10:00	Lecture/discussion
10:00-10:30	Snack time
10:30-12:00	Lecture/discussion continues
12:00- 1:30	Lunch and Cleaning Up together as an experience of being in the early childhood classroom
1:30- 2:00	Meditative walk and inner digestion of morning content
2:00- 3:00	Movement
3:00- 3:15	Short snack break
3:15- 3:45	Living Arts in practice (applicable to specific jobs the participants hold in their schools)
3:45- 5:45	Making seasonal crafts; food prep; cooking and nutrition for the young child

## Online Curriculum

Participants will join their fellow LifeWays Early Childhood Fundamentals students across North America to explore:

### **Discipline with Loving Awareness** online course

The time-tested tools available in this course have served as inspiration to parents, caregivers and early childhood teachers for two decades. Topics include: Listening, Laughter, Order, Objectivity, Versatility, Vulnerability, Energy, and Enthusiasm in this delightful course taught by LifeWays' founder and executive director Cynthia Aldinger.

**The Living Arts – Cornerstones of Care** online course

Transform your work with young children through LifeWays' practical approach of the Living Arts, creating "home away from home" in early childhood settings.

**Building a Strong Foundation: Care of the Young Child's Senses** online course

Rudolf Steiner identified a framework of 12 senses that educators and parents can work with to support children's development. The first four of these are called the Foundational Senses, and by supporting the healthy development of these senses in the early years from birth to age seven, we can help our young children build a strong foundation for life.

**Five Q &A videoconference sessions** spread over the school year on specific topics from the online content (and with time for other discussion if needed).