

Sophia's Hearth Family Center Web Site

www.sophiashearth.org has an overview of who we are, schedules of upcoming events, and more! Come visit!

Summer Courses: A Look Ahead

For the summer 2004, we will offer three weeks of courses, bringing together a rich and experienced faculty from California, Denmark, and New Hampshire.

June 28 – July 2 with Elisabeth Moeller-Hansen and Nancy Mellon. “*The Development of the Inner Organs of the Child.*”

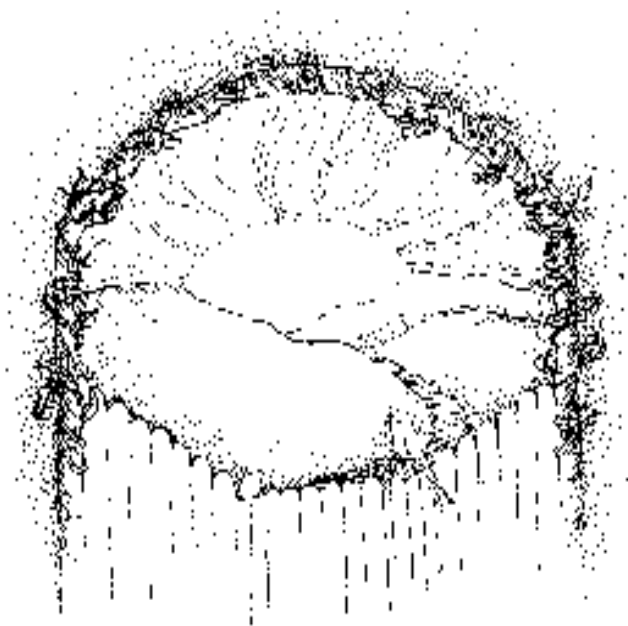
This five-day course will offer an in-depth study of the inner organs and the way they unfold their function and form, with emphasis on the development of the small child. As we know, the activities of the child leave a deep impact on the organs, and so the pedagogical processes in the child's environment have a strong influence as well. Storytelling with Nancy will lead participants into further insights into the gestures and energy patterns of the organs, complementing Elisabeth's presentation and discussion.

June 28 – July 2 with Carol Pinto of RIE (Resources for Infant Educators). This week will focus on RIE's special insights into movement, into the opportunities for respectful human relationships inherent in care-giving and daily life with very young children, and into the social development that is such an important part of the growth of every child and family. Experiential activity, handcrafts, and movement are part of every day's class activities.

July 5 – 9 with Susan Weber and Jane Swain. This final week will focus on Waldorf education's insights into the child's development in the first three years. Emmi Pikler's work will complement this picture as a support for our understandings. Experiential activity, handcrafts, and movement are part of every day's class work.



*It will be a full summer.
Please plan to join us as for a new experience, or as a return visitor.
More details are on our web site, or call us to register at 603-357-3755.*



the Garden Gate

SPRING 2004

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 1

the journal of Sophia's Hearth Family Center

...bringing current child development research and the principles of Waldorf education and other compatible insights to a setting that nurtures family life, creating model programs for very young children and their families, and serving as a research and professional development site.

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Thoughts from the Executive Director

Dear friends,

As I sit down to write for our journal for the first time in a full year, there is much to share and a real joy in bringing you a new issue of the *Garden Gate*. We have carefully shepherded our resources in this past year—both economic and personal—and the *Garden Gate* has taken a necessary rest. And now, full of rich experiences, we are eager to put pen to paper. We have learned that just like the infants who come through our doors, there is a rightful time for each stage of development, and that healthy plants are not created through forced, premature expectations. Organizations have a life of their own, also!

We have become increasingly aware of Sophia's Hearth's uniqueness as it weaves practical work with families to whom we are deeply devoted, together with presentations, training and course work in adult education that share our insights and our experiences with a wider world of professionals and others. This is our mission: To bring health to families and their children, to bring health to caregivers and other professionals, to build health in our organization as well. Through all of this activity we hope to bring new possibilities for well-being and health to the world. One way to look at bringing health is through the concept of *salutogenesis*, a concept finding its way into many spheres of activity today; inviting us to look for the conditions that create well-being, rather than to strive only to prevent illness.

An American physician who also worked extensively in Israel, Aaron Antonovsky, developed the initial work in salutogenesis. Antonovsky wondered why physicians and the world of medicine continued to pursue prevention of illness, rather than to explore what creates health and well-being. He was particularly interested in those situations in which, despite difficult life conditions and experiences, individuals manifested true well-being. His explorations lead to a description of what he observed: the sense of coherence. A sense of coherence (which underlies health) arose when three conditions were met: first, the ability to comprehend the life that comes toward one—that is, being able to perceive the experiences we have; secondly, to be able to cope with these experiences, to manage them—either out of our own resources or with support; and thirdly, belief that our struggles and our experiences have meaning.

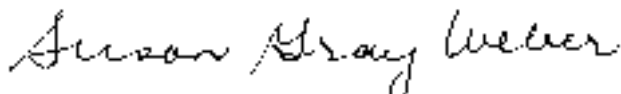
In what ways is Sophia's Hearth offering salutogenic opportunities?

↪ Our playgroups build community. Parents share with one another in ways that build insights. They find support in managing their experiences. And finally, experiences and dialogue lend meaning to daily life and to their larger journeys. For example, the opportunity to explore the feelings and attitudes that we have carried forward from our own childhood bear fruit in bringing forth freely chosen responses to our children and our situations. Looking at the meaning behind our toddlers' behaviors makes fresh responses more possible, especially when we hear of others' trials and see new behaviors directly modeled for us. Tremendous nourishment arises from such possibilities.

↪ Our summer adult courses bring, once again, a sense of well-being that arises out of community: "I have struggled with the lack of respect given to early childhood educators. It has been powerful for me to work this week as many people who do respect this profession and this work. The experience has been affirming," said a summer 2003 course participant.

↪ Our "hoped for" childcare program has tremendous potential in this area of work: through providing highest quality care, our ideal. Those who have followed our work over these past five years know how we have strived to create a sound foundation for each step forward; how we have endeavored throughout to deepen our insights and practical experiences with every aspect of living and working with very young children. It is still our vision to offer a childcare program to our community when it becomes possible for us to do so.

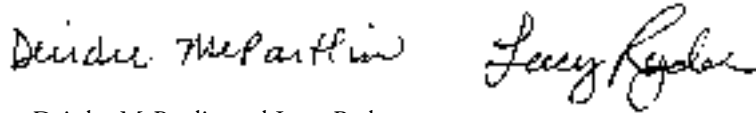
We encourage all our readers to find the time for the reflection that helps bring understanding, manageability, and meaning that lead to a sense of coherence and health.



Susan Weber

Co-President's Message

It is with great excitement that we have accepted the position of co-presidents at Sophia's Hearth Family Center. We have learned much from our former president, Randy Carmel, and will strive to keep the firm foundation he has planted alive in our work. As new co-presidents we are honored to be leading Sophia's Hearth into the future. We look forward to meeting you at our various workshops, classes and events in the coming year.



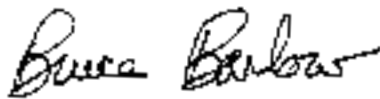
Deirdre McPartlin and Lucy Ryder

Editor's Notes

It's nice to be back in the editorial saddle again. First, I need to offer kudos and thanks to Susan, who, recognizing the need for, and value of, the Garden Gate, went outside normal budgets and raised the money for its publication and mailing. Deep thanks to you, Susan, and to the donors who made this issue possible.

Budgets have been tight for most not-for-profit organizations these days. We are no exception. Some blame it on the economy's health. Some blame it on 9/11, after which donations crashed through the floor. I would encourage you to be generous in support of those organizations in whose work you believe. We hope we earn a share of your generosity, but I'm really after the bigger picture: we're not the only ones we hope you'll support. Americans are notorious for their generosity. We need to live up to it.

Many changes in these parts, and we continue to offer a rich set of classes and workshops. Come see us!



Bruce Barlow

Many of you know of the miraculous generosity of an anonymous donor who has given tremendous financial support to Sophia's Hearth over the past four years, always trusting in our potential to build a healthy initiative. We are now in the second of three years during which our friends are reducing their gifts, while simultaneously challenging us to find new, equivalent sources of support for our work. We want to take this moment to publicly thank them for all they have made possible.

To our anonymous friends,

You have watched, from a distance, as a tiny seed has germinated, put down its roots, and has grown slowly but steadily. You have seen small programs grow a bit larger, joyful families tell of their experiences, teachers share the rejuvenation and fresh beginnings that have arisen from their visits to us. You have seen us become more confident, more clear of our direction. You have watched us move into our first physical home 18 months ago.

None of this would have been possible without your confidence, your putting your trust in us as a young, new, untested initiative. You have been inspired by an idea, a need, a vision for families and very young children, and for those who guide and teach them. Your own deed has inspired us over these past years so greatly, and we take this public opportunity to thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Every board member, every family, every teacher has been graced through your generosity.

With warmest regards, from all of us at Sophia's Hearth

Sprouting Seeds

Coming to Sophia's Hearth is always an entry into a garden where seeds are planted, germinate, bear fruit, reproduce, and enrich the entire world. We would like to share just a few of the germinating seeds of the moment of which we are aware:

↪ Kimberly Walterhouse, a summer 2003 course participant with Helle Heckmann, together with her participant-husband, has begun an outdoor-based home child care program in Nova Scotia out of the substance and inspiration they received in our course.

↪ Birth to Three course participant Karen Weyler has pioneered a parent-infant program at the Toronto Waldorf School in Toronto, Canada.

↪ Dan Foster and Adria Sternstein, participants in "The Child from Birth to Three," have welcomed their first child, Jeremy.

↪ Parent infant playgroup families Kristin, Mark and Hazel Froling; Maurisa, Craig and Stephanie Meyer; Stacey, Craig and Ayla London-Oshkello; Gillian and Dylan Richardson; Jessica Bishoff, Todd and Sam Bauer have all welcomed new babies into their families in the past few months. We send our joyful congratulations to them, and hope that we will see them here soon again!

How is our extended faculty bringing health to the world?

↪ Helle Heckmann has been consulting to teachers around the world, this year focusing upon Italy, together with her deep involvement in preparations for the third international conference speaking to "The Dignity of the Young Child," in Jarna, Sweden.

↪ Jane Swain, co-director of our new training course, has been writing, speaking, and consulting regionally with child care centers and kindergartens, and will present her work on children's movement at the AWSNA (Association of Waldorf Schools of North America) conference in August in Wilton, NH.

↪ Connie Manson, musician and puppeteer, is intimately involved in the creating of the North America Association for the Renewal of Puppetry Arts (NAARPA), bringing forth the impulse of creating peace and healing through the power of puppetry.

↪ In January, Susan Weber traveled to Weimar, Germany to represent North America through her participation in the international working group for the very young child. This visit included observation visits to a model childcare program near Frankfurt, based on the work of Emmi Pikler and Waldorf education.

↪ Susan traveled in April to Toronto, Canada for the tenth annual Gateways early childhood conference designed particularly for parents. Here, 180 parents joined her for a weekend of lectures, workshops, and discussions with the theme "Finding Courage and Confidence in Uncertain Times."

↪ May brought Susan to a lunch presentation and conversation with the pediatrics department at Cheshire Medical Center in Keene about the work of Sophia's Hearth.

↪ In July, Susan will join Helle Heckmann and the international planning group in Sweden, where she will present a workshop during the conference there.

↪ We especially thank Stacey London Oshkello, now on "sabbatical" with her new baby Adyn, for the empowering nutrition workshops offered this fall and winter.

News of Our Activities

New impulses in the world of early childhood are finding their homes at Sophia's Hearth, including:

↪ A national research group met at Sophia's Hearth in January, taking the relationships between Emmi Pikler and Waldorf early childhood education as its starting point. The January meeting was funded by the Norton Foundation (through WECAN), and brought twelve early childhood educators to Keene for an weekend of work guided by Susan Weber and Jane Swain. The group will convene next in January 2005.

↪ Additionally, a WECAN (Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America) task force initiative for parent-child work begun in autumn 2003, with task force members Sarah Baldwin, Nancy Foster, and Susan Weber, will lead to a conference on this work at Camp Glenbrook in Marlborough, NH on November 13 and 14, 2004. Sophia's Hearth will be the host group!



Looking Ahead...

For the spring 2005, we announce a long anticipated and imagined conference on the archetypal feminine, working from the foundations of Waldorf education, anthroposophy, and the rich heritage of stories throughout the ages. This weekend will enable participants to explore the roots of the feminine, its tasks, realities, and opportunities in our time. The weekend event (April 9 and 10) will be lead by Nancy Mellon, well-known storyteller and author from Wilton, NH.

The Child in the First Three Years

July will inaugurate our new 14-month part-time training course. The course presents an opportunity available nowhere else in the United States to study the work of Emmi Pikler, Magda Gerber, and Rudolf Steiner in a formal training program. Our fourteen month, 200 contact hour part-time training will give participants confidence to meet children and families with newly developed personal capacities, practical skills, and knowledge. Each participant will go home with fresh inspiration to offer each child and family respect and nurturing—as a parent, childcare provider, parent-infant, or parent-toddler teacher. The sequential rhythm of our residential modules will build a supportive community for the life and work of each participant, and the course is structured to allow practical life experience to deepen the insights gained from the training modules. The course brochure says that “We recognize that each infant and young child is an embryonic adult, full of mysteries and gifts yet to unfold that arise from an essential spiritual center, deserving of the highest respect and gentlest care.”

Our internationally recognized faculty includes Carol Pinto of RIE, Ute Strub, bringing her work with the Pikler Institute in Budapest, and Nancy Mellon. The course will have an interdisciplinary perspective, integrating experiential learning with cognitive content, artistic expression, and practical skills. The course is a holistic study of the development of the young child and the experience of creating a family.

Monadnock Community Foundation Awards \$5,000 for Development Work

We are delighted to announce the award of a \$5,000 grant from the Monadnock Community Foundation, made from the Henry L. and Patricia J. Nielsen Fund, that will help us sharpen our skills with board development, fund raising, and other organizational capacity-building issues, and to partially fund the purchase of fundraising software. We hope that these funds will help to strengthen Sophia's Hearth as an organization, and to bring us closer to creating a model childcare center in our area. Consultant Kathleen Barger, of Center Harbor, NH, will join us over the coming year for this work.

And... Partings

The grant comes at an ideal time, bringing us confidence and new energy as we say good bye to our founding board member and past president Caro Dellenbaugh, and immediate past president Randall Carmel. Both are moving on to other commitments with family and community involvement. We are so very grateful for all these two have given to Sophia's Hearth, and wish them well. And, we know well that we will see them often!

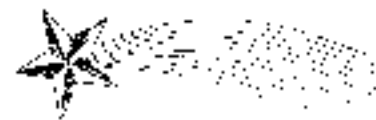
Caro was part of the very first group of women who envisioned the possibilities for Sophia's Hearth. She has offered her strong, focused counsel and wisdom over these past six years in every possible way. Whether it be with paintbrush in hand, or calculator, or joining in a play group with her professional insights, Caro has been here throughout these formative early years. She has carried our organizational biography at her fingertips, illuminating many conversations. All those who have served on the board with her, who have enjoyed her warm hospitality during a course or conference, who have met her in any number of Sophia's Hearth contexts, know how grateful we are and how deeply she will be missed.

Randy held the role of organizational initiator, securing our first physical home here on Carpenter Street, down to the deed of helping to trade old glass bricks for light-filled air-offering new windows. He, too, will be missed.

In addition, he imagined and created our very first community social event, our Valentine's Day Dance with local band *Tattoo*. And, we earned \$1200 toward program support! The dance was a fantastic success with great music, great dancing, and fabulous desserts created by parent Ann-Michele Andrews of Walpole. Ann-Michele is a pastry chef extraordinaire who outdid herself with chocolate mousse parfaits, cream puffs, passion fruit and strawberry parfaits, delectable heart-shaped cookies of all descriptions... Don't you wish you had been there? Many, many thanks to Ann-Michele and Randy, along with all the dance committee. We hope this will become a tradition!

Goodbyes are a part of the journey of every family who comes to our playgroups, and this spring we will say goodbye to families who have been with us for two and a half full years. We wish them all the best in their next steps, and thank them for all they have brought through their presence.

A special thank you goes out to those moms who organized a fund raising project to provide a new carpet for our playroom. Thanks to them, the entire playroom floor is now warm all winter, and provides soft landings for all the inevitable tumbles that are part of growing up. To Kate Reiminas we send our deepest gratitude.



And... Welcomes

Along with goodbyes come warm welcomes. And this is the moment to announce the election of new co-presidents Lucy Ryder and Deirdre McPartlin. Both bring a love for our vision and mission, experience on our board of directors, and a devotion to young children. Lucy participated in our *Joyful Beginnings* playgroups with her now four-year-old daughter Lauren. She teaches at Keene State College in the Safety Department. Deirdre brings a lifelong career in work with young children including the local Harrisville Children's Center as well as the Child Development Center at Keene State College, where she is presently a faculty member.

Awakening and Re-awakening to our Senses

Jane Swain

How can we as adults imagine what it is like for a newborn infant to come into relationship with the sensory world? We normally can't imagine it. But here is a story, which may help us get a feel for this tremendous undertaking of the newborn.

Last year, two high school seniors spent two weeks living in the woods with very minimal equipment. This adventure was of their own initiative in order to fulfill a "senior project" requirement. They took no tent, no food, no matches, and no change of clothing. They used the survival skills that they had learned in an outdoor science class. I heard these two boys speak about their time in the woods afterwards in a presentation. It was an extraordinary experience for them.

They both said, again and again, that their senses became extremely heightened. They became acutely aware of the sights, sounds, and smells around them. They noticed variations in the sounds of the wind that they had never heard before. The fall colors were vibrant and alive. They noticed nuances in the feel of the air. On the very last day, when their teacher came to bring them back to school, they presented the teacher with a pear. The teacher ate it and thought it was rather bland. The students had been eating pears, which they had found ripening the autumn weather, and to them these pears were exquisitely delicious. The world was full of so many more sensory impressions than they had ever imagined possible, and the natural world seemed to reveal itself through these sense impressions.

When they came back into civilization, it was quite an adjustment. They suffered sensory overload, for one student more than for the other. One boy played a soccer game the next day, and he said that it was as if the game was in fast-forward. It was "way too fast" for him, and his teammates were afraid he would get hurt. The other boy said that he really had to ease back into life at school gradually. The food was too spicy. The lunchroom was too loud. The lights were too bright.

When I was in my twenties, I took several rough two-week camping trips with my cousin who was a national park ranger. I remember having similar sensory experiences as these two boys. When I think of a newborn infant, whose senses are not yet developed, I am in awe of the sheer amount of sensory processing which lies before her. A newborn infant has never felt clothing on her skin, or tasted milk or food. Because the amniotic fluid has surrounded her, she essentially hasn't experienced gravity. The list goes on and on. In a way, her senses are in a pure state.

In our modern world where sensory bombardment is the norm, our infants and young children benefit greatly from sensory protection. There is great joy for the infant to simply lie on her back in a horizontal position, perhaps moving her arms and legs, or perhaps not. Perhaps listening to someone talking, or looking at her hand, or feeling the supporting surface underneath her body. It may not seem as if the infant is "doing anything at all." In actuality, a tremendous amount of sensory motor development is unfolding!

Life at Sophia's Heart

Donna Coty

This June, my son, and I, his mom, will "graduate" from Sophia's Hearth. These past two and a half years have been a time of incredible change. Our weekly visits to Sophia's Hearth started when Jamison was just over two months old. The babies there were so young and small, yet so consuming. Even though I had my husband, family, and friends—all wonderful and helpful—one really knew what I was experiencing. Then I found Sophia's Hearth with other moms and babies, and their joys and challenges. It was heartwarming to walk in and see other tiny babies and their not-so-rested moms. It was all so new; you can only read so many books and listen to so many stories and advice from moms with older children. They would say, "Oh, you'll get through it. You forget about the sleepless nights." I thought: "I will never forget, nor do I want to." Yes, we all get through it, but it is transforming. You become someone else. I needed to be with other women through this "transformation".

And then there was Susan Weber, our teacher. She was so warm, quiet, and peaceful. She created an oasis of support for us all. We brought ourselves, our children, our questions and our successes to Sophia's Hearth. We talked and learned about sleep, food, health, illness, and the importance of warmth, rhythm, and respect. I think most importantly, we have learned the art of observation. How to see, interpret, and appreciate their every movement and understand the impact one movement has in building others. We had weekly readings that provide lively discussions. That is, when anyone could remember what they had read!

Susan taught us songs, and as the children grew, finger plays and circle games. And the children did grow—right before our eyes! They went from lying on their sheepskins to rolling off them (yikes!). They all stretched, rolled, squirmed and moved in their own beautiful, unique and individual ways. We learned to celebrate this individuality—even though at times it may have been difficult.

Every week brought new developments, more questions, some answers, and unending challenges. Moms and children were supported by Susan and by each other. There were phone calls to each other outside of class, and days we got together at each other's homes to play, drink tea, eat comforting food, and continue our talks and questioning. What we learned every week, we brought home and shared with our families. This made it more real. Sophia's Hearth was not just a parent child class. It laid the foundation for love, respect, observation, communication and language, and movement and play: all very important aspects in the life of an infant, toddler, and parent. So we took what we have learned from Susan, our readings, each other, and of course, these children, and went out into the world with warmth, love and respect for all.



“Dandelion, dandelion, tra la la la la la la”

Meeting a new field of dandelions where there had previously been only grass, one of our playgroup two-year-olds was distressed by the change. His mother met the moment by singing the dandelion song we had shared in the playgroup over the previous two weeks. With this familiar song and the images it had created renewed for him, the unfamiliar became familiar, and his fear was allayed. What a powerful moment this is, when an adult can bridge a child's experience through poetic language and song!

“Buzzy, buzzy bee...”

A large bumblebee seemed just frightening enough to a just-three-year-old, that his only response was discomfort. But after hearing a song about the “busy little bee, busy little bee, visiting the flowers, in the sunny hours” sung many gentle times, he then initiated an interest in visiting the flowering shrub once again, to see whether “Buzzy Bee” was there once again. As adults, we have a tremendous potential for inspiring our children with images that are welcoming and build bridges into the world.

The Health Giving Effect of True Imagination

Ursula Grahl

(Shared with us by Connie Manson)

Abstract thoughts by themselves have no strength, but every abstract concept can be turned into a picture. When we behold a picture, our feeling too is engaged—and if the picture is a true one, it has a harmonizing influence on the body—it makes us well. When we merely turn our gaze inward and ponder over our troubles and difficulties, these tend to grow insurmountable, and we become more and more entangled in them. But when we behold them reflected in outward pictures and can look at them objectively, then we can inwardly free ourselves from them and find strength to overcome them.

Indeed, there are few difficulties with which man is faced, but there are fairy stories which offer a healing remedy.

Fairy tales bestow upon us another precious gift—and that is the unshakable faith in the power of metamorphosis. Nothing is so hopelessly bewitched, wither in fairy tale or in human life, but that somewhere there is a healing magic that can release it.

Working for Mommy

Adriana Troxell Elliot

Since I started working for money I have hardly been writing at all. When I was at home all of the time I had to write in order to survive. Writing was the way I found my way back to myself, each time I got lost within the echoing chambers of solitary motherhood. But after my third child—and only daughter—was born, something changed. Her big round eyes gazed up at me and I realized that she was looking at me to model WOMAN for her. She needed me to show her what and who and how I am as woman, mother, human female on the earth.

Having boys didn't affect me that way. I wanted to be perfect for my boys; I wanted to serve them, tend them, nurture and protect them. Somehow the politics of gender seemed entirely insignificant in comparison to their tender fingers and infinite hearts. My daughter though, kindled different fires in me.

Writing bottled messages from my island home was no longer enough. I wanted to follow the truth out into the world and engage with my whole being: body, mind, and spirit. I desperately needed meaningful engagement in the world outside my home.

Up until then I had believed that the "need" to work outside the home was an illusion. I thought that mothers who were compelled to work were just caught up in the collective materialistic madness, buying into the belief that economic returns are what determine the value of a person's efforts. It IS collective madness, but it is a very powerful illusion, and I am living in the madness. I could no longer pretend that the madness didn't also inhabit my pores, my bones, my dreams. For the sake of my daughter's all-seeing soul, I needed to seek satisfaction for my own soul. Making space for myself away from home seemed a necessary component in my version of satisfaction.

When my daughter was a year old I was blessed with flexible part-time employment, which enabled me to work around the needs of home and family. At that time my husband continued to work long hours at his job, and I continued to carry most of the needs of the family, from meal preparation to oil changes to diaper changes. A few hours a week I hired a sitter while I snuck away from home to savor the secret pleasure of adult company and intellectual stimulation at work.

Our youngest child is now two and a half, and the hours I work away from home have slowly increased since those first stolen moments. Meanwhile, my husband made a career change as well, and currently we both work part-time outside the home. At the moment, I work more paid hours than he does. I am no longer "just" at home, and he is home much more than he used to be. We share housework, meal preparation, and time with the children.

Is it ideal? No. We still struggle, we still wonder if there might be a better way, still feel isolated by the confines of the nuclear

family. And I have a whole new range of doubts and fears—I now get to wonder if the children are getting enough of me, if later in life I'll regret having spent this much time away from their growing selves. I wonder if my daughter will feel I abandoned her; after all, I was home full time with her brothers until they were both over three years old, and I started leaving her when she had just learned to walk. She would cry sometimes back then, I won't deny it. She'd hold onto me and scream for me to stay.

It hurt every time I left my crying baby. Five minutes down the block, though, I felt like I was flying. A tremendous weight had lifted off of my shoulders, and I was free to move uninhibited. There was guilt—layers and layers of it—in the recognition of the freedom and joy I felt at being away from my children. However, there was also a growing sense that feeling free sometimes was an essential element of being a whole human being. Having time away from my children gave me a sense of separateness that connected me to my capacity for freedom.

In addition to feeling my separateness, I now have colleagues in the task of raising these children. I am still their only mother, but I am part of a network of support for them that includes other adults as well. By allowing the children the opportunity to connect with and form trusting bonds with other adults, I have given up the exclusive corner on the market I used to have. Sometimes I feel sad about the loss of that primacy. I have also felt tremendous relief, gratitude, and joy. This is an abundance model, in which my children are loved and cherished by many more capable hands, as opposed to the scarcity model, which says that they are deprived by every moment that they don't spend with me.

So far, my children seem to be doing very well. They continue to shine, scream, wiggle, giggle and explore. I still know their names, their dietary preferences, their favorite shirts. And I am now freed from the paralysis of trying to be the perfect mom for them, as I instead direct my focus on who I am for me. Being a mother is a huge part of who I am, but it is not the whole enchilada. As I experiment with a wider variety of ingredients, I ultimately feel that I have a better dish to offer all of us. I now feel like a human being who is also a mother, instead of a mother who dreams of being human.

For me, working for money has been a central component of an independent experience of myself, though I'm not entirely sure why. I don't believe that working for money should be a necessary component of independence. I don't believe that women should have to work outside the home in order to be worthwhile, contributing members of society. I do continue to be amazed by the intoxicating beauty of motherhood, and to value the work of being a parent as one of the highest arts. I also continue to lament the way that we collectively fail to acknowledge, support, and celebrate the tremendous work that parents do.

I used to feel that my dedication to at-home mothering was the best kind of activism I could perform. For the sake of children

and parents everywhere, I wanted to elevate the work of raising children by immersing myself in it fully, and then rise out singing. The problem was, I wasn't always singing. I got tired. I felt depressed. I wanted more. I wanted to be fed, inspired, nurtured, challenged, and recognized. I didn't know how to get those things within the context of my life as an at-home mom.

I'm not sure I won't go back, though. There are no simple solutions, and there are many pieces of the ever-evolving puzzle of family life. For the moment, I am grateful to have the room to explore my gifts and limitations in a wider context, and to have a partner who is dedicated to finding a way of living that serves all the members of our family.

The Eye of the Needle

Mary Triulzi

The following is shared by Ari, a mother for whom I've provided family consulting. Ari is a mother of two children, Emrys, age two and a half, and Amelia, who was 7 weeks old at the time of this story. Recently Ari called me and said, "Mary, Emrys and his Dad are away. I have these next three days to help Amelia learn how to sleep more during the day. Are you available?" Ari, in her wisdom, gathered the needed support around her and began the journey of going through yet another "eye of the needle" experience, one of those that are forever offered on the path of a parent. Here is Ari's story:

"After six weeks my infant became more and more dependent on being nursed to sleep, and would wake frequently during her naps to be nursed back to sleep again. Sometimes she was so sleep-deprived that it would make her hyper, and she would be awake for eight hours straight during the day. I read books, spoke with a consultant, and developed a clear vision of how I was going to help my baby find a sleep rhythm. I began to picture the healthy infant learning to put herself to sleep instead of always needing an external source of calming. I realized that I needed to learn to let go and get out of the way of her sleeping process, instead of smothering Amelia with my sympathetic projection that her crying was solely a sign of pain and trauma. I began to understand crying as a means of expression, communication, and stress release; and as a means to discovering self-soothing. With this altered perspective, I was more able to relax with my infant's crying and focus on being "with her" mindfully.

"I created the loving support around me that enable me to stand in my conviction that Amelia needed to learn to self-soothe and "go through the eye of the needle." I experienced some very painful moments in which I felt a strong pull to "rescue" my baby, but with perseverance and patience for the life lesson Amelia was learning, I began to perceive how valuable this learning process was for both of us. I held on, and in the next few moments the crying would cease and Amelia would be sound asleep.

"In two days Amelia was calmly putting herself to sleep and sleeping much more soundly, for greater and greater stretches of time. Within days she was nursing less often, but nursing significantly longer at each feeding. With this strengthening in her nursing she quickly gained weight. On awakening she was rosy-cheeked and smiling! The change had led to a much more rhythmic and harmonious day.

"I am now able to listen and respond when Amelia is telling me she is hungry or tired. I feel more connected with my infant and see her as a much more complicated, sensitive and expressive being."

It was a couple of weeks later when Ari and I checked in to see how everything was progressing. I was moved by what she had learned about herself through this experience. Ari said that not only had Amelia needed to learn self-soothing in order to find her way to healthy sleep, but that Ari herself needed to learn self-soothing in order to stay present, and able to support Amelia in learning the life skill of sleeping.

The Dads' Corner:

Paying the Price (A Melancholic's View)

Bruce Barlow

When I taught fourth grade in a Waldorf school, I told the story in Norse mythology of Mimir's Well, where Odin, chief of the gods, plucked out his eye as the price he paid for drinking from the well and gaining the wisdom of the world.

"But why did Odin have to pluck out his eye?" asked one of my girls, "He was Chief God and could have just taken what he wanted." The rest of the class chimed in, agreeing.

There are times when a tickle runs up the back of your neck and you know that you have to set aside your plans and let things take their course. I felt the tickle. After a long and fascinating discussion that I merely listened to, our resident sage, a boy, summed up the class consensus: "Odin felt that the wisdom he would get from drinking at the well was so valuable that even he should pay a heavy price." Wow, was I proud of them. They were 9 and 10 years old.

"Paying the Price" became the recurring theme of the class. Gifts, as we discovered, always seemed to come with a commensurate price (they also later concluded, when studying animals, that the price humans pay for the gifts of their thumbs and big brains was an obligation for stewardship of the Earth. Go class!). We may not always recognize the price in the excitement of getting the gift. And if the price seems high, maybe we've overlooked something in the gift. Sometimes prices can seem to be gifts in themselves, if we look at them in a certain way.

So what is the price of being a parent? All the things that first come to mind have been trivial to me: loss of freedom, loss of time to one's self, sleepless nights, and so on. I once rebutted an

aging refugee from the 1960s by saying that a more sophisticated notion of freedom is that it gives us the right to choose what other freedoms we will give up gladly in service to something greater. The idea was lost on him at the time, and probably still is.

I think the real price parents pay is that our children grow up, that we have them as children for so short a time. That each age is so special in its own way, and so fleeting. That it keeps getting better as Evan gets older (he just became a Teenager!), but I still wish that he were three again. Or five. Or seven. Or just born, learning to suck my pinkie while Mommy was made ready to give him his first snack (I was a good teacher in that case, too: the nurses later nicknamed him “Jaws” and would hum the theme from the movie when they brought him to her from under the lights that were cooking out a little jaundice. Victoria would hear them coming and groan.)

For me, the sense of loss is palpable. It's so much fun and so deeply joyful (the two are not the same) to have him in my life that I never want it to end. Or even change. In his novel *Einstein's Dreams*, Alan Lightman writes a chapter about how Einstein might have dreamed about a place where the closer one got to a certain point, the slower time passed. Closest to the point, where time passed the slowest, one would find new lovers, and parents with their children. Yup, I want to take Evan there and park it forever. But at what age?

I can't do that, though. And even if I could, I'd miss that part of the gift that is seeing him grow up and become a curious, engaged, thoughtful, warm, intelligent and funny human being (his mother is responsible for that).

So, it is painfully bittersweet, and the sense of loss grows with each passing day. It is a heavy price. Is the price a gift, too, in some way?

Maybe. The time will pass whether I want it to or not, and he will grow up despite all efforts to prevent it. So I can make the most of it. If I can be present, observant, and fully conscious of him every moment I'm with him, then at least I'm stacking up rich memories that are timeless. If I get out of my chair and play catch, or shoot baskets, or go to an air show to see the Blue Angels; in other words, do things, it helps me cope with the price. It's a tall order to be that attentive all the time, and I'll never wholly succeed. But it's a good goal. The problem is that it makes me feel the price—the bittersweetness and the loss—that much more. It would be easier to sleepwalk through life, as I seem to see many do.

Feeling the heavy price, on the other hand, makes sure that I never overlook the value of the gift. We pay the price, but the return on that price is the sometimes irrational exuberance that comes when one is a parent.



In Praise of Crawling

Susan Weber and Jane Swain

The authors wish to acknowledge and thank our two physical therapist colleagues, Barbara DeMatteo of Pathways Pediatric Therapy in Keene and Rachel Madsen of Marlborough, NH, who added their rich experience and study of the development of the very young child to this article.

There are so many magical moments that greet us as we watch our babies grow and develop! At birth, greeting one another with our eyes is a profound moment. Some weeks later, our child's first smile brings us great joy and reinvigorates us to continue the long sleepless nights.

Day by day, week-by-week, new capacities unfold and we are continually awe-struck at the miracles of our children's development. Our babies discover their hands, they wiggle their legs, they roll from back to front and front to back. Why, then, choose crawling as such a moment for celebration? Watch babies crawl! They are so joyful, up on all fours, free from the gravity of the earth just a bit more, traveling to new corners. Crawling is a very special capacity, brilliantly designed by its creator to strengthen our babies in many important ways, and laying a firm foundation for the developmental stages that follow.

What skills does a baby need before she can crawl? She must have strong muscles all along her back, sides, and tummy, so that she can lift her trunk off the ground. For example, it takes several months before the baby, while lying on her back, has enough strength, coordination and body awareness to lift her bottom off the floor and put her foot into her mouth. If we remember back to those earlier days, not so long ago, when we carefully supported the baby's head whenever we picked her up, we realize how far she has come, and how much effort it has taken to build up those now-strong muscles! And then, balance... Raising her head as she lies on her tummy, lying on her side, rolling from side to side all are small but mighty steps in learning to balance herself, and they all build the skills for crawling.

We know from the scientific research of the last decade that the baby's brain grows greatly in the first two years. So we know at the same time that much must be happening in these precious 24 months. And it is true. Each different movement—rolling, balancing on the side, pulling themselves along with their arms, lifting their heads—each movement and all its variations creates new and more complex roadways in the baby's brain. And as anyone knows who has needed to negotiate city traffic, the more different roadways we know, the more success we will have in reaching our destination, especially if traffic is heavy. The brain is no different and it, too, greatly appreciates the diversity of its roadways.

For the baby, each new movement is an adventure in brain creation, in building an increasingly complex repertoire of life strategies that will later be used for academic learning, social problem solving, and creativity.

To praise crawling is to recognize that this complex skill has given the baby a new freedom. She is learning how to learn, and this carries her through her entire life. Try, fail, try again, persist, try again, make a tiny, almost unnoticed bit of progress, and finally integrating so many little elements we cannot imagine, to succeed!

Not only the joyfulness of crawling is a gift. There is much within the activity of crawling that is important for later learning. Crawling is very important for eye focusing and tracking (following an object with your eyes). It lays one of the foundation stones for reading and also for working with our hands, guided by what our eyes see. Crawling helps to integrate the upper and lower body, the right and left sides of the body, and exercises the trunk in increasingly more sophisticated ways. And the transitional movements from crawling to sitting further develop balance!

The baby's hand, at birth just a curled fist like a spring fiddlehead fern, has a long journey to take to be able to hold a pencil and crayon, to tie a shoe, to butter toast, to use a saw or screwdriver. How does the hand learn to do all these wonderful things? Interestingly, crawling is very important in the development of the hand. The weight that passes through the hand as we are up on all fours serves to 'wake up' the muscles of the hand, to stretch out the tendons of the wrist and fingers, and to develop the arches of the hand. (Did you know that we have arches not only in our feet but also in our hands?) Crawling also helps to integrate primitive movement patterns so that the hand can move on to more sophisticated, coordinated, and complex movements.

And if your baby hasn't crawled, but has scooted past this wonderful and important stage of development? Actually, this is an increasingly common occurrence. In fact, today kindergarten and nursery school teachers commonly encourage crawling in a variety of ways in their classrooms in order to help children who have skipped or spent limited time crawling. As parents, we can get down on the floor and play crawling games with our children for example, playing "London Bridge" by having children crawl through an arch instead of walk through.

We can encourage activities like drawing with chalk on the driveway or driving little cars and trucks on roadways on the floor, where children will be on their hands and knees and will crawl as part of the activity. We can also create spaces that children will naturally want to crawl through; for example, tunnels with sofa cushions and blankets or crawling spaces through the forsythia bushes or in the snow banks. When the child is still an infant, we can provide an inviting, clean and safe area on the floor, and we can allow the child to spend sufficient time in this environment so that crawling has the possibility to unfold.

Crawling is an important part of the infant's development in the first year of life. It is a rich activity and provides the infant with many foundation stones for later life; this movement in particular has tremendous bang for the buck! It is important to note, however, that there are children who develop perfectly well who skip crawling, as there are other avenues that can provide the child with the same important capacities that crawling does.

For example, cross-country skiing and climbing up trees and on playground equipment provide some of the same components that crawling does. However, crawling is a wonderful, natural movement activity for the baby. No other activity is so all encompassing in providing all of the aspects mentioned above.

