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Linger in the back streets of Tallin

When my husband and I made our plans to travel to Estonia something deep within me stirred. I could hardly believe it. My thoughts lingered on the romantic images roaming through my mind. At some point in my life I had heard about this place but it was so remote away in the North eastern corner of Europe on the coast of the Baltic sea. So far away that I never ever dreamed that one day I would visit.

However, impossible thoughts do sometimes come true and there we were staying in an up-to-date modern youth hostel in Tallin at the height of the Northern summer for five whole days. It is becoming a modern city with straight efficient motorways criss crossing it. Modern shopping blocks tower above us and trams take us quickly to where we want to go. Taxis stalk the tourists, keen to take us rapidly to our destinations.

However, the real treasures and secrets of Tallin lie in the old city. The back streets are cobbled and narrow, lined by cluttered shops that spill over onto the edges. The sun struggles to light up the corners for more than a few hours each day. Life moves slowly and every morning the tourists surge in finding the secrets and stories that lie waiting to be discovered. The pace is slow, the distractions constant and the discoveries mind blowing. The risk of becoming lost, disappearing into the search, is great. Other arrangements and plans for the day lose all relevance as one exciting discovery follows another. Things I have never thought of before crowd my imagination. As I linger my mind opens to ideas and new understandings and I explore them in depth.

Alison Gopnik (2009), in her book [The Philosophical Baby](#), describes a baby's brain as similar to a map of Paris with lots of winding, interconnected little streets. She describes in contrast an adult brain as one where the little streets have been replaced by fewer but more efficient boulevards.

A baby's brain, designed to linger, to imagine, to enjoy distraction and to meander through creative explorations is in contrast to the adult brain with minimal neural pathways that meets deadlines and works efficiently.

Gopnik writes, "Children are protected from the usual exigencies of adult life they don't need to hunt deer or ward off sabre tooth tigers, let alone write grant proposals or teach classes, all of that is done for them. All they need to do is learn. When we are children we are devoted to learning about our world and imagining all the other ways the world could be. When we become adults we put all of which we have learned and imagined to use."

Children seem to have qualities that make them especially suited to imagination and learning. Imagining involves considering all possibilities, some will seem wild and outrageous, some will reduce us to laughter and tears. Often we are filled with awe and wonder at the possibilities their minds imagine. Imagination creates an open mind. Gopnik pursues this further when she writes that learning is about staying open to the truth. In fact her study indicates that keeping your mind open may be part of what makes you smarter. In learning you want to remaining open to anything that could turn out to be the truth. Maybe that speck of dust, that splash of water that so captivates a young child holds the secret of the universe

She writes, "New studies, however, demonstrate that babies and very young children know, observe, explore, imagine and learn more than we would ever have thought possible. In some ways, they are smarter than adults."

Robyn Lawrence

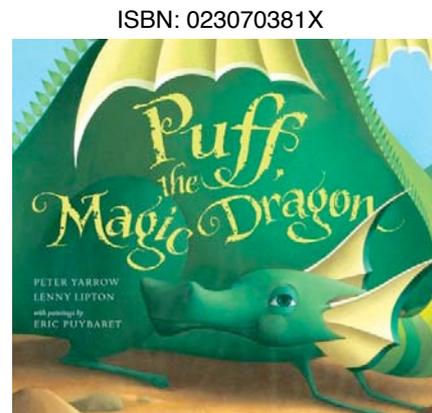




I have been reading... Puff the Magic Dragon by Peter Yarrow and Lenny Lipton, Illustrated by Eric Puybaret

Pipiana's favorite book at the moment is 'Puff the Magic Dragon'. I have read it lots of times and though I was never one for singing along with Peter, Paul and Mary I now find myself singing and knowing all of the words. This book comes with a CD and though Pipiana is quite capable of playing the CD for herself she would much rather have my company, the comfort of my body and the slight off key-ness of my singing. Children offer us many compliments.

This beautifully illustrated book brings from folk tradition a story about an imaginary world of friends who, even though different and from different worlds, can come together, be friends and love each other. I would recommend this book to children, parents and teachers as a wonderful resource. The cover is especially inviting when children are looking to choose a book of interest here. Eric Puybaret has illustrated other books and I think these are well worth checking out too.



As I read this book to Pipiana she kept pointing to Puff's eyes. I noticed her fascination as she stroked his eyes on every page. I said, "Here, Nana's eye too," and stroked my eye. She pointed to her eye and said 'eye'. I held her little finger and brushed it on my eyelashes. She laughed. It tickled both of us and we giggled again. I brushed her eyelashes very gently and then she stroked her own. What a discovery - eyelashes. She went back to look at Puff and in her own questioning way looked for Puff's eyelashes. Does Puff has eyelashes? Do dragons have eyelashes? We looked and looked, she ran her finger over the illustration and studied his eyes very closely. To my amazement she decided there were some eyelashes on Puff. They were the ever so feint strokes of the illustrator's pen that her imagination made in to eyelashes. She smiled up at me with the satisfaction of her discovery and question answered - Yes! Puff has eyelashes.

That quick little finger then came back to my eyes, searching out eyelashes again. As that pointed finger missed my eyelashes and made contact with my eyeball I flinched and drew back from her finger. Quick as a wink that finger found her own eye and with a feigned poke - she flinched and looked back with a sad look on her face too. Mirroring my face and emotion she reached for my face and stroked it ever so softly. An act of kindness and empathy. Who would have believed this is possible from an 18-month-old baby? As I watch infants and toddlers closely I see it more and more.



Pipiana's mum, Louise, tells me Pipiana has continued her interest in eyes and eyelashes. She has been observing Louise putting on her mascara and now insists on doing some for herself. Goodness me.

Kathryn Delany

Upcoming Events

May - July 2011

10.05.2011

Lecture Series Auckland
Kathryn Delany: The Why's and How's of Waking Up the third Teacher

14.05.2011

Under Two's Inspiration Day
Queenstown

17.05.2011

Lecture Series Hamilton
Kathryn Delany: The Why's and How's of Waking Up the third Teacher

07.06.2011

Lecture Series Auckland
Jo Colbert and Marianne McPherson: Take Two: A Second Look at Building Learning Power

14.06.2011

Lecture Series Hamilton
Jo Colbert and Marianne McPherson: Take Two: A Second Look at Building Learning Power

12.07.2011

Lecture Series Auckland
Robyn Lawrence: Discussing the Notion of Literacy Progress in the Early Years

19.07.2011

Lecture Series Hamilton
Robyn Lawrence: Discussing the Notion of Literacy Progress in the Early Years

**The lowdown on Digital Camera selection**

I am often asked, as I go to different centres, which is the best camera to buy and to some degree this depends on the purpose you have in mind:

- Is the camera you are buying for personal use or is it for use in your early childhood setting?
- Are children going to use it or is it for teacher's only?

The answers to these questions will certainly help refine the selection process.

Megapixels (tiny squares that look like dots, 1 megapixel equals 1 million dots) have sky rocketed in recent times and it is now possible to get up to 16 megapixels and beyond. While the quality of the photo is going to improve the higher the megapixel, anything over 7 megapixel is going to be way better than the traditional film camera. Ultimately it does depend on the camera operator as to the quality of the photo; some photographers can get amazing photos on their 8 megapixel camera and it does depend on the 'eye' that is viewing the image to be photographed as well as a steady hand!



If you want to enlarge your photos then, again, anything over 7 megapixel will be adequate. The higher the megapixel, the larger the photo, therefore the more space will be taken up on your computer. Of course you can change the photo size in your settings on your camera and not take photos on the highest quality. Currently my camera is set at 8 megapixel and I can go up or down depending on the purpose I have in mind for my photos.



Some cameras have a wide angle lens which can be very useful when you want to get a wide view without having to stand way back from what you are taking the photo of. I could have used that today when I was trying to get a photo of some mosaic tiling on a wall and I would have had to stand so far back that the detail of the tiling would have been lost.

Some cameras have an excellent macro function for when you want to take that extra close shot, some of my colleagues and family have one of the Panasonic cameras which has wide angle and a brilliant macro, so you get the best of both worlds. This is not a camera for an early childhood centre though, rather, for personal use because of the cost.

Do you want to take movies on your digital still camera? Most cameras have this function these days but not all will record in High Definition, so if this is a priority for you, you might want to consider a HD pocket video camera (Kodak and Flip currently have good HD models, although as I write this Cisco the makers of the Flip camera have just announced they are no longer going to be producing this popular camera, so if you want one of these, get in quick).



My advice if you are looking to buy a camera for your centre is to shop around. There have been some fantastic cameras on special lately. I saw a Canon PowerShot for just over \$100.00 and this would be the budget if I was buying a camera for use in an ECE centre. Instead of buying one camera for \$400.00 - \$500.00, you might be able to buy three or four cameras, at the cheaper end of the scale so that each teacher has a camera to use.

Finally, buy a camera that fits a universal SD card and, again, shop around for one that is at least 4 gigabytes, that way you can take movies on your camera too.

Jo Colbert

Self Review, Staff Appraisal, Teachers' Registration Criteria and thoughtfully written Learning Stories: What do they have in common?

What do you call the time you spend working separate from children? Is it non-contact or child free? These terms have always seemed strange to us. Just in the same way 'supervisor' conjured up a negative connotation. How did we ever saddle ourselves with that? I've got a feeling it was imposed upon 'early childhood workers' back when we were not seen on a parallel with kindergarten, primary or secondary teachers. Those days have gone! Early childhood teachers have professionalised our community, the lowering of the 100 % qualified staffing ratios notwithstanding. We are teachers and this means we sit alongside every other sector and we work in the same thoughtful, engaged way to make a difference to learning for each and every child in our settings. The new Teachers' Registration Criteria testify to this as these criteria are the same for every teacher across every sector.



So in this era, do the terms non-contact and child free represent what happens? At Greerton Early Childhood Centre (my other home, next to ELP) the teachers refer to this time as TRT. We figure that what you focus on, is what you get. 'Teacher Research Time' seemed to the team to reflect the kind of work teachers did. In fact, it just fitted so well with our image of children and ourselves. We love research. We think it is all about tackling a thread of inquiry with emotional connection. This enables teachers to follow their hearts as they thoughtfully consider how we grow opportunities for our whole community of learners, to learn. Essentially, when we think of children and teachers as researchers, we keep this notion of 'loving to learn' more than just alive, we keep it thriving in a rich, vibrant learning community. That's our intention. Intentional teachers listening to children's interests and supporting these to grow in an intertwined 'skillbased dispositional' way. Oh my goodness, this is the first time I've ever put those two words together like that! It was Guy Claxton, last year at Waikato University's 25th research celebration who made us start thinking about split screen teaching. We are not losing sight of increased skill development as we focus on dispositions. But we are not teaching skills in isolation, for that is what kills learning to love to learn. We are using the dispositions that drive children's desire (adults' for that matter too) to find out more, practice and strive with effort to attain their interests. We do this by offering provocations that meaningfully widen and deepen children's learning and we document both the increased skills in traditional curriculum areas like mathematics and literacy, as well as bring to the fore aspects of courage, diligence, leadership, effort, friendship and teamwork. In this way we stay true to the Principles of Te Whāriki. What a wise curriculum document, what a treasure it is to us! So we stay true to those principles AND we also answer the questions this government is so keenly focussed on in national standards but we do it in a way that honours how children learn and respects the myriad of pathways they choose.

So, we are back to Teacher Research Time, for that is what we are doing as we think deeply and then document our findings for our community to consider what valued learning looks like from our perspective. As every teacher does this and we include families' and children's perspectives, we get the validity research insists on. I'm not talking about Learning Stories tossed off as part of accountability issues as children 'get' one to fill a monthly quota. Now that's a recipe for killing emotional connection! I am talking about teachers who have strong relationships with children, who know them and their families well and who write about learning that shows progress over time. The magic of it, the drama, the invested emotional input that sees children working for hours, days, months to perfect their skills. These children keep putting themselves at the edge of learning, striving to go further, deeper. What fabulous things to write about. This writing must be timely and clearly signal to families that teachers know their children well, have thoughtfully analysed and then imaginatively, creatively considered how to support their child to grow their learning further.

This is the connection with Self Review, Staff Appraisal and Teachers Registration Criteria. When we write like this, everything about us as teachers is revealed. We don't have to write tedious reflective accounts where we drag ourselves to do this because the dreaded accountability sanction is foisted on us. We make accountability work for us as we write about the things we love to do. In this writing, our teaching practice is embedded and evident for others to see. Certainly, we strive to make these stories connected to the audience they are directed to (families and children) but we also have a duty to draw our community into understanding what we view as valued learning. That's what children experience each day in our settings. Enabling families to gain a greater insight into how we go about this, what we think is important and the theory and research driving us, is another aspect of democracy, of shared understanding and widened meaning. So we all get to sit alongside each other, companionably understanding each another. One thoughtfully written learning story analysed well, written from a dispositional frame with skills woven into the fabric of the story has a multiple of purposes. Primarily is it for children's assessment folders but because it is so revealing of teacher vision and practice, it can then be photocopied for your self review, your staff appraisal and your teachers registration. In this kind of documentation you are truly honouring the richness of children's learning, drawing your families into a greater understanding of learning and teaching and fulfilling your professional practice requirements. You are working in an holistic, engaging way that has a 360 dimensional aspect to it as you embed your reflections into the context of children's learning. Over time, what better way to reveal your self as a thoughtful, engaged teacher fulfilling every conceivable professional criteria, working smarter, not harder, working with passion, commitment and courage.

The following story, written by Melissa Osmond, is an example of what I mean, and as you read consider how this might contribute to rich discussion about wise teaching practice, your centre culture of learning and teaching and teachers' registration criteria. Most importantly, consider how this grows a positive image of a child as a highly engaged learner who is invested in the process of being a life long learner.

Lorraine Sands



HUGO'S STORIES CONTINUE



"Once upon a time
there was Turtles".

Turtles die in the mud - By Hugo McCarroll

A few weeks ago I wrote a story about Hugo's fabulous story telling afternoon where he showed his growing ability to understand and create imaginary story lines. Most days, since then, Hugo has come to me and announced that he has another story to tell. On the first occasion, I had been the narrator of the story until Hugo passionately took over that role as his confidence grew. Since then Hugo has wanted me to tell the story again, and while I have done this, I

have also been encouraging him to create a story on his own. Hugo had been unsure of this, so we just left the opportunity floating out there in space, until he was ready for the challenge.

Imagine my delight then, as Hugo announced that today he had a story to tell! He found a clip board, paper and pen for me, then drew me back to our original 'story space' on the blue mats.

First Hugo dictated the story to me and I re-read his words at every opportunity, ensuring that I had the story documented as he intended it. I could see that Hugo was itching to bring the story to life, so when he had finished constructing it, I became the narrator and Hugo the actor.

So, here it is! Hugo's very fine story...

"Turtles die in the mud".

By Hugo Mc Carroll

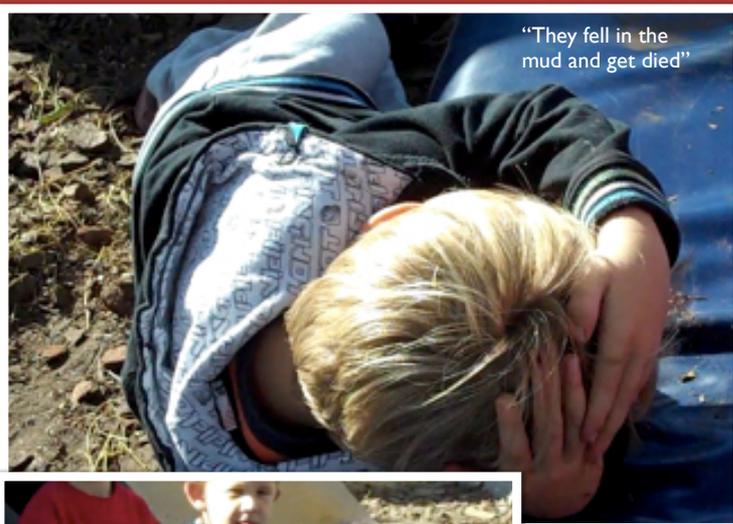
Once upon a time there was turtles. They fell in the mud and get died. Then they just got out, then they looked for some food. They found salad and fruit. They ate too much salad and they ate too much carrots and they fell in the mud and they couldn't get up again.

They died again.

The end.



HUGO'S STORIES CONTINUE



"They fell in the mud and get died"



"Then they just got out, then they looked for some food."



"They found salad and fruit. They ate too much salad and they ate too much carrots and they fell in the mud and they couldn't get up again".



"They died again."

Wow, I'm so excited about how Hugo's interest in story telling is progressing. Each day his confidence grows along with his willingness to step out of his comfort zone and create stories on his own. Creating a story takes a lot of concentration, effort and practice. I feel that Hugo's stories are going to become longer and more complex the more he practices. I hope to continue documenting all his stories on video so we can collect a montage and look back to see his progression in the months to come. Encouraging Hugo to create story-lines at home would be another way to empower him in this process. If this is something you would like to try, Cindy and Brady then I would love to read and collect these stories too.

Arohanui, Melissa

12/5/10



Risk and Challenge: Are We Making Progress?

The following is an article published in the British newspaper 'The Telegraph' in 2009. I think it is worth reproducing as it talks about many of the issues we have been discussing with teachers throughout New Zealand. I am sure when you read it, it will give rise to considerable ideas for debate and discussion in your early childhood setting, with both teachers and parents. This month the team from Roskill South Kindergarten is presenting their work around the development of Bush Kindergarten, again raising these very same issues. As teachers we need courage to ensure that children have wonderful opportunities to learn in the outdoors, and not find ourselves locked down because of some perceived view of what we think is allowed or not allowed. Thoughtful, reflective and courageous teachers will ensure that children of all ages are given opportunities for appropriate risk and to solve real problems in challenging environments.

Wendy Lee

Harry de Quetteville: **Swap the cotton wool for a mud pie**

Parents should stop being paranoid about their children's safety and embrace risk



Who would be a parent? You want to let your children race about outside – run, hide, fall over, scream, snivel (and then get up to go on the rampage again) – but if you do, there's always the chance that their cuts and bruises could graduate to gashes, fractures and worse.

So you have to feel for poor Julie Sutton, whose eight-year-old son Timothy was killed by a falling tree on a family walk through a National Trust property on New Year's Day 2005. It would have been much easier – and ultimately safer – for Mrs Sutton to remain, like many of us on that day, embalmed in a post-party haze, slumped in front of a terrible movie, eating leftovers, with the children plugged into the Nintendo.

But the fact that she has since tried to prosecute the NT for Timothy's death is a most unwelcome sign of a US-style litigious society where there is no such thing as an accident, only insufficiently thorough searches for someone to blame. So it is heartening that the case has now been dismissed by the Health and Safety Executive.

That decision, however, is more than just a legal ruling. It is also a triumph for risk over repression, for those who – like Mrs Sutton – have the energy and enthusiasm to rise up from the sofa and get out there, but are – unlike her – willing to accept the dangers of doing so.

For these days, the pressure to keep the little monsters at home, and keep them under control, is not just self-inflicted. New poll results show that many other adults regard children as fearsome, "feral" creatures, and want you to do it, too. The latest Good Pub Guide is riddled with complaints about "baby lager louts" running riot.

But then, just as dutiful parents start placing their offspring under lock and key, along comes nurture expert Frank Furedi, writing in this newspaper, telling us that children are out of control precisely because they're over-protected. Damned if you do...

Pity the tots, says Furedi. They aren't allowed out of their parents' sight these days. Their music teachers can't touch them during the obligatory piano lessons, and they can't even get a consoling cuddle if they fall over and start bawling at nursery. His message: let the devils off the leash – contemporary dangers and health and safety regulations be damned – and then they might not be so devilish. Across the country, that is beginning to strike a chord.

From playgrounds in Perthshire to secret dens in Devon, and even in city classrooms, children are being freed from the tyranny of a no-risk upbringing and told to get outside and play. In this insurgency against a regime of institutional regulation and paranoid parenting, pointy sticks are welcome. So are saws, hammers and penknives. Mud-pie-making, stream-splashing, tree-climbing, fire-lighting, and general mucking about are heartily encouraged, too.

The rebellion is being led by parents and teachers who believe that rules and regulations are sucking the joy out of



childhood. They are seeking a healthier balance between an adventurous upbringing and what some call the "cotton wool culture". "There is a movement against this risk-averse culture," says Claire Warden, who heads an educational consultancy called [Mindstretchers](#), and also runs two outdoor nurseries in Scotland. "To focus too much on risk is itself a risk, because it prevents learning."

"We have got to a stage where local education authorities are afraid of US-style litigation, and some demand that if children are going to play conkers, they have to wear goggles. Parents don't want that kind of life for their children and, in our experience, it is they who are driving this change."

Among the parents who have joined the uprising is 35-year-old Sarah MacKintosh. She – like every parent – has keenly weighed the pros and cons of how far to let her brood of four go. "Health and safety rules have gone nuts in schools at the moment. Of course, you have to be protective. But you have to keep things in perspective," she says.

Keen for her children to experience the outdoor upbringing that she enjoyed as a girl in Cornwall, Mrs MacKintosh sends her daughter Scarlett to Whistlebrae Nature Kindergarten, which Mindstretchers opened in Braco, Scotland, at the beginning of last year. Scarlett, now five, loves it.

"Children are very good self-assessors when it comes to risk," says Niki Buchan, who runs the kindergarten. "Coming down trees, some children are happy to jump big distances, while others feel it's better to climb all the way down."

Mindstretchers works with councils across the country to help implement its philosophy, even in the most urban of classrooms. "We also work in inner-city areas where you would think it would be impossible to bring the outside in, but we can do it," says Claire Warden. Barnet council is among those involved. Inevitably, though, it is areas with direct access to the countryside that are driving the movement. On the edge of Dartmoor, St Andrews primary school has decided to acquaint pupils with the great outdoors' most mesmerising material: mud. "We have a muddy, wet, rough outside area that is ideal for children exploring and playing and running about," says deputy head Tailyour, who came up with the idea of Muddy Days. "The aim is to be physically active and outgoing, to solve problems independently. There is a stream, so they all inevitably get muddy."

All 90 children have at least one "Muddy Day" a week. Julie Tailyour insists that Muddy Days are "completely safe" and says that the school had a "risk assessment" carried out. But she acknowledges that "you can help children take appropriate risks. It's good for their development to take 'healthy risks'."

For Furedi, famous for his book *Paranoid Parenting*, such moves mark the "beginning of a reaction against over-protection". But he insists there is further to go. "When I was a kid, I would head off on my own with friends, build camps, disappear for long parts of the day at a time. Now there is a Disneyfication of adventure. It creates a world where everything is measured and secured."

He is calling on parents to be more vocal about their worries that an increasingly risk-averse society is smothering children. If adults let up, children will quickly join them in the bargain, swapping computer-generated exploration for the real thing. "All the trends are against adventure, but if their parents are relaxed, children will still aspire to discover and explore on their own."

Sarah MacKintosh knows that children can never be totally protected from some terrible fate. Just down the road from the Braco kindergarten is the town of Dunblane. That is not her only reminder of the perils of parenting. "My younger son Rory was born on the day Maddie [Madeleine McCann] disappeared," she says. "I think of that around his birthday, and can't imagine the pain her parents went through."

"But sometimes bad things are just down to bad luck. I just can't be there around Rory the whole time either. He loves to climb trees, but in the end he's going to have to fall and hurt himself to learn his limits. You can't live your life in paranoia. That's no life at all."

Article and image accessed through: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/4690916/Swap-the-cotton-wool-for-a-mud-pie.html>



Carol Dweck Mindset Rule #3

Wendy Lee

This is the final part of the “Carol Dweck Mindset” series I started 2 newsletters ago in relation to the Carol Dweck Conference the ELP team attended in 2010.

Let’s now look at Rule #3. At the conference, Carol explained that this rule states that “in the face of setbacks in the fixed mindset, setbacks, failures or even mistakes, reflect on your underlying competence, so the rule is to hide that mistake and conceal those deficiencies, they are permanent. But in a growth mindset the rule is, because these can be remedied, capitalise on your mistakes and confront your deficiencies.”

Carol stated that in dozens and dozens of studies they found that a fixed mindset did not give children a good way to recover from setbacks. They witnessed children giving up and retreating to a comfort zone. They saw this with a lot of children, many as young as three. For example they gave them puzzles, some of which they could finish, some of which they could not, they deliberately set it up that way. Then when the children had the set amount of time, they then said, “OK, we have some extra time now, which of you would like to work on some more?” The children with more of a fixed mindset picked the one they had already completed. And then they said, “Well, suppose we had even more time, what would you want to work on?” And again, they pick the one they have already completed. Whereas the children with more of a growth mindset, they want to try puzzles they haven’t finished and say if we had more time they want to do a different puzzle. Carol Dweck described that at this young age of three they are already seeing children retreating to a comfort zone, blaming others or, in fact, trying to feel superior in a different way. She described how when working with a group of very young children who were having some difficulty with the task they tried to change the subject and one little girl said, “Did I tell you that I am soon to be an heiress?!” As Carol described, “Instead of becoming more tenacious with the task, they try to feel good about themselves and make themselves look good to you in other ways.” So, a fixed mindset leads you to give up or find ways of salvaging your self esteem, whereas a growth mindset leads you to find ways of remedying your deficiencies.

Mindset Rule #3

In the face of setbacks...

Fixed Mindset:

- Hide Mistakes
- Conceal Deficiencies

Growth Mindset:

- Capitalize on Mistakes
- Confront Deficiencies

Conclusion

A growth mindset allows children to:

- Embrace learning and growth
- Understand the role of effort in creating talent
- Maintain confidence and effectiveness in the face of challenges and setbacks

...and it can be taught.

What Carol concluded is that a growth mindset allows children to embrace learning and growth instead of worrying about how clever or smart they are. It allows them to understand the role of effort and creating talent instead of believing that if you have talent you shouldn’t need effort. It allows children to maintain confidence and effectiveness in the face of setbacks instead of running for cover or concealing themselves. And a growth mindset can be taught!

And as Carol Dweck so eloquently concludes “A growth mindset educator is someone who portrays skills to the children as acquirable, is someone who values passion, effort, improvement, not just natural talent. They are people who present themselves as mentors and collaborators with their children and not someone who judges who are the clever ones and who are not”. This work has the power to transform children’s and adults lives if they choose the pathway of building and developing a GROWTH MINDSET. As a teacher you will see every engagement with a child as an opportunity to strengthen and build their learning power.

A growth mindset teacher

- Portrays skills as acquirable
- Values passion, effort, improvement over natural talent
- Presents self as mentor/collaborator vs. judge