



## What do you do?

By Ania Wojcikowski

“The onserver, when he seems to himself to be observing a stone, is really, if physics is to be believed, observing the effects of the stone upon himself”

Bertrand Russell

**We have had prospective parents ask, "what activities do you do with the infants" or "what do the children do all day?"** As you will have noticed we offer the children simple objects that they use how they choose to. We also give the infants our undivided attention during care moments so they can feel ready to play and explore when they are on the floor, **"...Only after he gets "refueled" during the unhurried times he spends with his carer will he be willing to let go of the carer and explore his environment"** (*What is appropriate "curriculum" for infants and toddlers?* By Magda Gerber in *The RIE manual*). To play contentedly alone the child needs interaction with a trusted caregiver to meet the need for human contact.

We provide ‘passive’ objects so the child can be active and can choose how to play with the objects we provide, ***"We offer possibilities; the child makes the choice. For example, it is our task to provide, but we never put any toy into the infant's hand"*** (*Play as curriculum in the caregivers companion by Anna Tardos*). We want the children to be self motivated and focused in their play to maximize their learning. The children are the ones in charge of their play and learning. I have seen infants at other centers interrupted from what they are doing to be plonked into a chair and given paint or another messy substance to explore - only to then get interrupted again to be cleaned up as soon as the adult has finished taking some photos.

# What do you do? cont.

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I find these scenarios to be more about the adult and them showcasing their “teaching” rather than about what infants are genuinely learning. And I also wonder what impact all these interruptions have on a developing attention span?

One other important learning opportunity your infant encounters at some point during their time at TLC, is to explore and interact with other infants. Our early childhood curriculum promotes infant- infant interactions, ***"The programme enables infants to be safely in the company of other children or older children" (p.71, Te Whariki).*** From a very young age infants can and do enjoy each others company, ***"This age group (6-12 months) is not characterized by a large number of conflicts; the social interrelation of the children seems to offer considerable more pleasure than discontent..." (The Loczy model of infant care by Magda Gerber in The RIE manual).*** Although, conflicts can occur, for example, if one child wants to explore another ones hair and they accidentally pull too hard (or sometimes intentionally to see what the reaction might be..)

I would also like to take this opportunity to farewell Guida and wish her all the best for the toddler room! It is sad to say goodbye!

At the same time I am very excited to welcome Josie into the infant room, I feel we are already getting into a so called ‘groove’ of working together.

Without undermining the AMAZING work Guida does with our infants I do want to say I feel lucky to work somewhere that has such an awesome group of teachers to work with! That we can swap and work with different teachers as our philosophies are so aligned.

***"When we allow babies the freedom to interact, there are going to be minor bumps and upsets. Babies learn from these, too. We can't have the wonderful, spontaneous moments if we are constantly intervening" (Janet Lansbury's website).*** We don't interrupt the interactions unless someone is getting hurt or scared or uncomfortable. Sometimes you will see infants take toys from each other, a toy that is in someones hand and moving is much more attractive than the one lying still on the floor. In these situations we don't interrupt the interaction, often you can see the other infant doesn't

actually mind. If it looks like conflict may arise then we move close and make sure we are available to the children. When we do intervene we do so in a calm and reassuring manner, we move close and model by touching both children gently in the spot where the child was hurt. We don't want to imply that one child is a bully and the other one the victim. We want to facilitate the interaction and provide strategies without placing labels on anyone. Janet Lansbury advises ***“..minimal interruption. Stay in responsive mode. Intervene calmly and gently when babies are hurt (or better — about to be hurt)..”*** (from her website). We are definitely available but at the same time allowing the children to do as much for themselves as they can.

