



## Keep Warm! Keep Well!

By Zoe Powell

Life is not merely to be alive, but to be well.

Marcus Valerius Martial

Lately as Autumn starts to share its glorious chilly mornings with us I have been thinking... Am I warm enough? Through out my childhood I had that mother who constantly fussed "Put another layer on, you can always take it off but if you don't take it with you you will regret it..." (in that I know what I'm talking about tone). Learning from her parenting skills I often hear myself with the children "More layers outside please" (I am the warmth police admittedly). Usually to their dismay and much discussion and negotiation, finally they return with another layer and later I hear the "Zoe feel my hands I am warm now" with that little empowered sparkle in their eye. It is hard work though, trying to convince a child to keep warm, they are all always so busy here at TLC it is quite honestly a feat getting everyone dresses appropriately but one that I truly feel passionate to ensure. This passion and commitment was planted by further reading about the importance of warmth. Children do often feel warm unless they are on the verge of hypothermia because they have an accelerated metabolic rate. If we don't provide them with the

layers of cotton and wool to insulate their bodies, then they must use some of their potential "growth" energy to heat their bodies. This same energy would be better utilized in further developing their brain, heart, liver, lungs etc.

*"Waldorf teachers and Anthroposophic physicians have been talking about the importance of warmth for almost 100 years, out of the understanding that fostering physical warmth helps a child better integrate on physical, developmental, emotional and spiritual levels"*

# Keep Warm! Keep Well! Continued.

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In addition, being cold decreases our immunity. We are all more susceptible to the germs and viruses that are always around us when we are wet and cold. When our body has to use extra energy to keep warm then less energy is available to "fight" off infections.

So why do children rarely complain that they are cold? Children often are not connected with their bodies before the age of 7 to even acknowledge or communicate that they are cold. They live in the moment and are so excited and stimulated by all that they see that they don't have the capacity to sense the coldness of their body. This is why children often will play in a swimming pool or ocean until they are literally "blue" denying that they are cold or that they need to come out of the water. So as teachers and parents, we have to help our children develop their sense of warmth. By helping them develop this sense of warmth, we are actually strengthening their immunity and laying the foundation for healthy bodies and healthy organs in their adult life. You don't want your child to overheat, but a baby or child's hands should be warm to the touch. Their lips should be pink and healthy looking. If your child's core (the center of his or her body) is warm, and the hands and feet are warm, your child is OK.

So the question becomes, how do we get our children to wear jackets? Try telling the child that they

will actually run faster and have much more energy to play if they wear a coat. If they don't wear a coat then their body has to use up a lot of energy just warming up, and they will have less energy to build muscles and less energy to play. Often in the Tui group we talk about putting petrol in a car to make it go, we relate this to food giving energy to our bodies, just as food gives us energy so to does being warm.

The flip side, children can often over heat. We also need to monitor their bodies on a hot day as an overheated body can cause children to feel irritable and grumpy. This may take some skill on our behalf as adults when a child is wearing a new hoody and just love it so much that they refuse to take it off. However, helping them to see how the new hoody is overheating their body can free them from added frustration and irritability.

A warm child is a healthy, happy child who is growing strong and has plenty of energy to learn. Warmth is probably one of the greatest gifts we can give our children.

Written by Zoe with much appreciated support from Robyn.

*References [http://www.whywaldorffworks.org/03\\_NewsEvents/documents/](http://www.whywaldorffworks.org/03_NewsEvents/documents/)*

*WhydoesWaldorffeducationtalkaboutwarmthsomuch.pdf*

**When the bold branches bid farewell to rainbow leaves - welcome wool sweaters.**

~B. Cybrill