

## Finding Balance Is Really A Lifetime Process

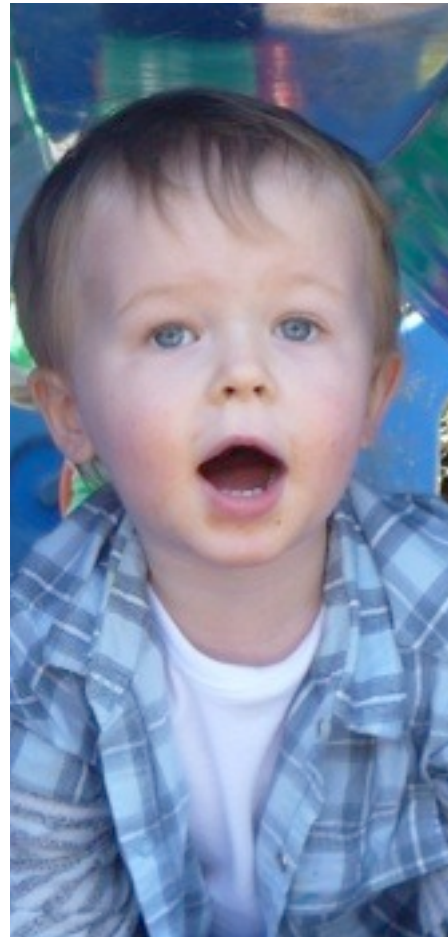
### Magda Gerber

By Josie Lui

Inspired by Magda's words above, I would like to share some of my learning from the Mamaku children and Magda Gerber's Educaring Approach (RIE). To implement RIE in practice, all teachers must take a very important first step to trust babies and little children and allow them the time, chances and challenges to work out their own ways as they try to achieve balance. Teaching the lovely and physical toddlers in the Mamaku room, I can, every day, see how they initiate this learning. For me, it is impossible to understand those little toddlers and appreciate them unless we can really know what significant learning happens in this process and how much courage they have to have to succeed.

The Mamaku children learn about their bodies through constant trying out. At the toddler stage, the children's bodies are driven to move, bounce up and down, run, climb and so on. In a developmental perspective, what the toddlers enjoy very much is to explore the outer limits of their balance (*Davis & Keyser, 1997*). How to avoid slipping over while running down a hill fast, how to move steps on a rope, how to balance on all fours on the spinning board are just a few examples. The Mamaku children set themselves on all sorts of balancing tasks every day and they never stop learning what their bodies can and cannot do, how strong they are and how their bodies work. In addition, they have to get in touch with their bodies to make constant judgements on how comfortable their bodies feel, how much further they can go, how to change positions safely and so on. All this learning teaches them to be genuine and authentic to themselves.

The Mamaku children also learn how to deal with rich but complicated feelings and emotions in this process. If you had a chance to closely observe how a toddler challenges himself/herself to accomplish balance in a task, you would have understood the courage, perseverance, persistence, self-confidence, problem solving skills he/she must have when they overcome the uncertainty, fear and handle upset and frustration. I have seen how a Mamaku child cautiously knelt down on the spinning board and brought his legs forward to balance up into an all four position (The spinning board is designed to spin with centrifugal force, so it is hard to even move a bit on it). He looked into my eyes smiling when finally achieving this move. I could feel the exhilaration, pride and satisfaction in him when hearing his exclamation. It is absolutely amazing to see how very often the children experience emotional highs and lows with great resilience in a short time. Finding balance physically is no easy job because the children are dealing with the outer world and their inner world simultaneously. Thinking about ourselves, could we do better really? Each single child is a hero in the process of finding his/her balance.



**We come into this world head first and go out feet first; in between, it is all a matter of balance.**  
Paul Boese



Following Magda Gerber's Educaring Approach (RIE), TLC teachers are making every effort to create an age appropriate environment in which freedom of movement is encouraged and opportunities for physical play are provided. Going back to the beginning, to help children to gain life competence and confidence through finding balance at the beginning of their lives. What's even more important is to trust children's exploration and have confidence in their emerging ability. As a teacher, I feel fortunate enough to be part of their journey and from the bottom of my heart, appreciate how our children demonstrate many important and valuable personal qualities to our adult world in this process.

*L. Davis & J. Keyser (1997). Becoming the parent you want to be. New York:Broadway.*