



A Sense of Wonder

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A Sense of Wonder

"A Child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. It is our misfortune that for most of us that clear-eyed vision, that true instinct for what is beautiful and awe-inspiring, is dimmed and even lost before we reach adulthood.

If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children, I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of strength.)

If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder without any such gift from the fairies, she needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with her the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in."

-- Rachel Carson, A Sense of Wonder

Adult Books:

Jo Carr's Touch the Wind

Rachel Carson's A Sense of Wonder

Joseph Cornell's Sharing Nature With Children

Dorcas Millers' Track Finder

Peterson's First Cloud Book

Stokes' Beginners Guide to Birds

Children's Books:

Who Am I? Insects, Bug Hunt: A Lift-the-Flap Book, The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Owl Babies, It Looks like Spilt Milk, Are You a Butterfly?, Are You a Dragonfly?, The Cloud Book, The Big Bug Search, The Icky Bug Alphabet Book, Owl Moon, What's in the Meadow?, What's in the Pond?, What's under the Log?, Fawn at Woodland Way, Armadillo at Riverside Road, Raccoon at Clear Creek Road, Gray Squirrel at Pacific Avenue, Blessings Everywhere. The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name.

A Sense of Wonder: Ideas for the Classroom

1. Take those babies outside every day. Have quilts on the ground under trees - or under a canopy. Let them watch the wind in the trees. Let them touch stuff. Just watch that they don't eat it. Why not feed them outside?
2. Take those walks - Bye-bye buggies for the babies, sticks for poking and buckets for collecting for Toddlers and Twos. No destination, just wherever you can get to and from in 15 minutes or so. Follow the child's lead. Commentate if you feel like it.
3. For the Threes, take a "Let's Go Find Something Beautiful Walk" and look for wildflowers coming up through a crack in the sidewalk, or a blue jay or a shiny rock. As you do this over and over, you'll begin to learn what your child thinks is beautiful. Add a simple, "thank you, Lord for this pretty flower or tiny ant or pretty leaf" when you find those beautiful things.
4. For Fours and Fives -- The Silent Sharing Walk from Sharing Nature with Children: "Enter into this walk and work toward peace and harmony with nature. Walk in silence, abandoning words and the loud shoes or clothing that make un-nature-like noises. When you spot something beautiful, something alive, something interesting, you tap on your friend's shoulders and point to what has caught your attention."
5. Buy a single stem of a different flower each week. Use it as a centerpiece at the table for snacks or lunch. Talk about it. Have the children examine it - even with the magnifying glass. Have the children smell and feel it. Talk about the fact that it is one of God's gifts.
6. Rain, rain, don't go away . . . Enjoy those storms. Make it exciting. Let them watch at the window. Let them beat on something that "makes thunder." Help them learn the poem "It's not raining rain to me. It's raining daffodils. For every drop of rain that falls, there grows spring flowers on the hills."
7. Have a collection of raingear. Galoshes. Slickers. Umbrellas. (This could be shared by several classes.) And on rainy days that have no lightning, dress for the rain and go outside and experience it. Taste it. Stomp in it. Just walk around for a while getting the feel of it. Dig in the mud. Let them use sticks to knock the water off leaves or stir up the puddles. . . (It would be wonderful to have a box of "getting dirty" clothes on hand.)
8. Get into the clouds! Clouds can be huge. Start with Twos and It Looks Like Spilled Milk. Go out on the playground just to look at the clouds. Talk about where they are moving. Talk about what they look like. Airplanes? Dinosaurs? Bunny rabbits? Extend this for the older children, by having two stacks of construction paper on a table near the windows. One light blue stack; one gray stack. Have a roll of cotton and glue available as well as white chalk. What can they come up with? If you're in to helping them learn some names, make up songs for Cumulus, cumulonimbus, cirrus - just the common ones.
9. Adopt a tree. Make it your class tree. Name it. Watch it and talk about it all year. Touch it. Lay under it. Check out what happens to it during a storm. Talk about what he's wearing - how his clothes change colors in the fall, fall off in the winter, and then come back so brightly in the spring. Any nests? Any pine cones or gum balls? Sap? Keep a journal on that tree's changes during the school year. Take pictures or draw pictures.
10. Hang a bird feeder near a window where you see it often. Whisper when you see them. Make it special. Make some bird feeders of your own from pinecones.

11. Wind chimes!
12. Get out and go Buggin'. On your playground or in an empty lot. Take magnifying glasses, magnifying boxes and a bug box. Catch bugs, observe them for a while - and then let them "go back to their mommies." You might let a back of lady bugs loose near plants outside.
13. Bird Bingo. Bug Bingo. Wildflower Bingo. Fabulous ways to passed down a love of birds and sharpen a child's eye. (Whole Earth Provisions or www.lucygingogames.com)
14. FIND YOUR LILYPAD. Have each child find his "spot" on the playground. A crack. A dent in the dirt. Something they can remember is their very own. Their spot! Then tell them to, "soar like an eagle" and encourage them to run all around the playground for about a minute. Then yell, "FIND. YOUR. LILYPAD." And get them back on their spot. Next, "Hop like a bunny. . . Slither like a snake . . . Run like a cheetah. . . Act like a monkey . . . etc. You might choose the best monkey to name the next animal or bird!
15. Younger children will enjoy a game where they just get to become *a bird* that changes into *a frog*, that changes into *a spider*, that changes into *a snake*, that changes into *a butterfly*. . . etc. etc.
16. Make a nature collage. Use clear contact paper. Tape it, sticky side out, to a cabinet or low on a door. Let your child use pine needles, blades of grass, flower petals, leaves, etc to make a picture. It can be rearranged several times - or it can be "sealed forever" by covering it with another piece of clear contact paper to be hung on the fridge.
17. Collect toys that will encourage and interest in nature. i.e. lady bug ball, and bug jug for the infant room; tree with birds and/or animal Beanie Babies for the toddler room; stuffed birds and puzzles for Twos; forest animal or frog/turtle tubes for the Threes; finger puppets; stickers, bug-find activity books, Bird Bingo for the older kids.
18. Gather a collection of books that tell about the natural world and extend the child's experience.
19. Make nature baskets with books about animals and stuffed animals to match them so that the children can re-enact the stories. (You could use Toob animals here.)
20. Gather materials for investigations: buckets for collecting; a bug box; a bug watch; magnifying bug cases; a magnifying glass; binoculars; a pocket microscope, (Paper Source or mpw-usa.com). Make a shelf for "treasures from nature."
21. Plant some petunias in a pot near your play area. Let the children water that plant with a small watering can. Watch the plant grow. Talk about it.
22. Create a pot garden right there on your playground. Lemon and orange trees grow great in a pot. Buchanan's Nursery (in the Heights) has blueberry bushes that can be grown in pots. And then there is the Topsy Turvey - (that hanging basket that grows upside down tomato plants.)
23. What about a campout on your playground for the threes and fours and fives and parents?
24. Always, always be watching out for the interests of the children in your class. Go with it wherever you can. If that toddler likes ducks, go watch ducks. Buy a duck book. Learn types of ducks. If she likes turtles, learn about turtles.
25. Often, bring the child's wonder to the Wonder-Maker Himself, helping children see that each beautiful, wondrous thing is, indeed, God's very gift to them. Alleluia!