



August 2012

A baby is born with a need to be loved - and never outgrows it.

Frank A
Clark



Art Exhibition & Auction SAVE THE DATE 20TH SEPTEMBER

Our annual art exhibition and Auction is coming up on Thursday the 20th of September, at 7.30 PM at TLC.

This is a social event for our TLC parents and whānau organised by our parent voice committee.

This is an opportunity to present your children's art beautifully and to value their work.

The children will decide how the money raised from the auction will be spent. This is a wonderful opportunity for them to take a leadership role, have their voice heard, and to negotiate with their peers.

This year we will only be actioning off the main group pieces, but will ask

for donations for other pieces and photos.

Did I mention photos? As our infants and toddlers do not 'produce' art in the same way as our downstairs children, we will be doing a photographic exhibition of our He Kākano and Weka children in the creative process. We would really love our parents and whānau of our upstairs children to attend. This is a great opportunity for our upstairs parents to learn how we 'do art' with the younger children. So book your baby sitters now - we would love to see you there!

When you are through changing, you are through

Bruce Barton

it never rains, but it pours so true of our weather, and centre

By Marie Hindle

Well, it has rained, and rained and rained. and we are busy busy busy. I would like to update our community about some things that have happened, and some things that are going to happen.

Looking back. Well, wasn't our **Matariki Fish and chip night** a success again? I would like to thank our wonderful parent committee, and our downstairs teachers for doing such a great job of organising this again!

Recently most of the team at TLC attended lectures by **Alison Gopnik the Author of The Philosophical baby** and were

very very excited when Alison came and visited TLC.

Coming up: We have been notified that our next **ERO review** will be occurring some time in term three. I have written to ERO to ask if that can be in September, as we have other things happening in August.

We started implementing '**continuity of care**' in March 2012. Our next scheduled transition between groups, as cohorts of children and caregivers, was August this year. We have reviewed our current enrolments, looked at continuity of care in practice, and we have decided to try a different arrangement

of age groups (see continuity update).

Coming up in September is our **Art Auction**. This year, we will only actually auction the group canvases, and we are planning on holding the auction on a weekend day, so that the children can come along and see their work beautifully displayed, and valued. More details will be sent out soon.

We have decided to make our newsletter quarterly from now on, I hope you enjoy reading it. As always, all feedback is welcome:

marie@thlearningcentre.conz

Contact stuff	We are currently updating our contact details, you will get a form in your kete bags, please please make sure we have your latest and greatest contact details - so we can get hold of you in an emergency!
financial stuff	TLC will be updating its financial policy with regards to confirmed enrolment start dates. In future TLC will not defer start dates without charge. In order to retain a place, if whaanau wish to defer a start date, they will need to pay normal fees/charges.
parent voice committee stuff	We would like to welcome Sarah Ram to our parent voice committee. And we miss Gabrielle Matches, now that her lovely William has gone off to school. We are still keen to invite any TLC parents to join the committee - have your say!
food stuff	A reminder to all our community, TLC ask you NOT to bring food into TLC. We have children with severe allergies, and we need your help to keep them safe and well.
late snack stuff	Children staying on until 5 O'Clock or 5:30 are often served a 'late snack' of fruit and crackers. In response to feedback from our PVC our downstairs team are instituting a self-review on our late snack - Do children want/expect it? Do whaanau want it? Should it be predictable and served every day? Is fruit and crackers ok, or should it be just fruit and no carbs? What do you think? Let us know.
admin stuff	Just a reminder that you can claim tax credits for your payments for childcare - contact marie@thlearningcentre.co.nz for a statement of your payments for the financial year.

Continuity & Staffing Update change is afoot



When we initially opened TLC, we were structured along the ministry's under two and over two lines, with under twos being upstairs and over twos being downstairs. A while ago, we realised that the two year olds needs were not being met by this arrangement, and we separated out our Mamaku group. As a result of our reflections upon the continuity of care model that we started implementing in March, we have come to the conclusion that 'toddlerhood' is really up to around 30 months (2.5 years) and we have decided to change our age bands/groupings accordingly. We think that keeping children up to 30 months upstairs will be optimum for our continuity of care model.

From the 13th of August our infant room was renamed **He Kākano** group and will include children from 3 months to around 18 months. Amy will be the key caregiver for the younger infants from August, and Josie will remain in the room with her cohort of children. Ania will support and mentor the upstairs teachers.

Our current toddler room will be renamed the **Weka** group and will be for around 19 month olds to around 30 month olds. The group size will remain 8, and this means that Guida and Tamaki and their key children will stay in this room in August.

Our Mamaku group will be renamed the **Kea** group and will join, and be integrated into our larger downstairs community, and downstairs will become a single environment again. In future children will transition to this group when they are

Continuity gives us roots; change gives us branches, letting us stretch and grow and reach new heights.

Pauline R. Kezer

(depending upon readiness) 2.5 years of age. In terms of environment, we have a single entrance at the front of the building again downstairs for all downstairs children and whānau. We are working on ways to cordon off the top 'secret' garden for use by our He Kākano and Weka children for part of every day, while still ensuring that we can keep these children safe from harm and protect the children's play/work space.

We are excited about these changes, and that it will allow us to increase the number of spaces available downstairs. Please let us know if you know of anyone who are looking for care for over 2.5 year olds.

Robyn has asked to have a day in the office to work on her mentoring responsibilities for our provisionally registered teachers, as well as her management responsibilities. To support this, I have asked Sanna if she would work with our Tui group on Thursdays, and Robyn's day off on Fridays.

I have discussed these changes with our parent committee, and we would welcome your feedback and questions.

Mignon McLaughlin

What you have become is the price you paid to get what you used to want.



The nature of consciousness And yes, it IS different for children

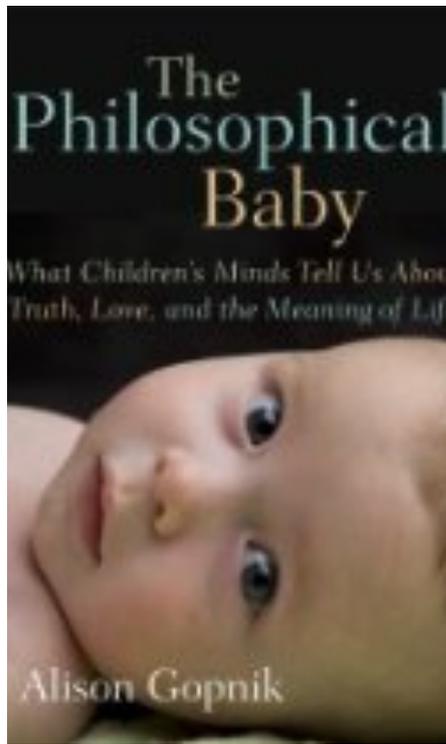
By Marie Hindle

I was lucky enough to attend this years Resources for Infant Educators (RIE) Conference in Los Angeles in April. The keynote speaker was Alison Gopnik, author of *The Philosophical Baby* and *The Scientist in the Crib*, and *How Babies Think: The Science of Childhood*.

Alison is a professor of psychology and affiliate professor of Philosophy at the University of California at Berkeley. She is an internationally recognised leader in the study of children's learning and development.

In May 2012 Alison gave a series of three lectures at Auckland University and a lot of the team at TLC attended.

I have to say it was wonderful! One of my big 'take aways' from these lectures, was that children (well actually those under 26 years of age) have a different quality of consciousness ... in summary (and I hope that I get this right) she argues that there is an evolutionary imperative for our human young to learn as much as quickly as possible, and that to do this they pay attention to everything, particularly new, information rich events, rather



What's it like to be a baby? It's like being in love in Paris for the first time after you've had three double espressos."

Alison Gopnik

than just paying attention to what is immediately useful or relevant.

This has real implications for how they go about 'learning' and our (i.e. us adults over 26) expectations of their learning. At the RIE conference, in the question and answer section, Alison argued that the child directed learning approach of early childhood is more aligned to children's actual, natural way of learning, than the 'academic' adult directed 'teaching' model that most education systems around the world, and most parents, assume is the 'right way', or even 'the only way' for children to learn. Alison quipped that that narrow academic approach might be just about appropriate for university age learners, but maybe not even then!

There was some baffling (for me anyway) talk about brain functioning (I do remember that

the prefrontal cortex, referred to executive control, dominates the consciousness of adults, but not of children.

In fact, it is not just children who benefit from this awareness of the extra information available in the environment but it seems that adults who are creative or good problem solvers do as well.

"Creative people remain in contact with the extra information constantly streaming from the environment," confirmed Jordan Peterson at the University of Toronto.

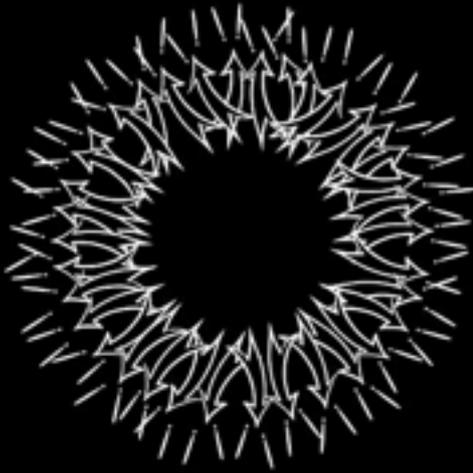
Shelly Carson, at Harvard University, believes high achievers are less likely to disregard seemingly irrelevant information. That allows them to be more open to novel ideas and strategies.

source: (Daydreaming is good - try not to think about it)

TLC recommends:

http://www.ted.com/talks/alison_gopnik_what_do_babies_think.html?quote=1106

The Infant Lantern



The Adult Spotlight



Consciousness narrows as a function of age.

As we know more, we see less.

- Alison Gopnik & Alvy Ray Smith

Source:

<http://alisongopnik.com/>



Naughty?

by Ania Wajcikowski

Kākano
means
"seed".

The concept of He Kākano conveys growth, development, and expansion. Even before a seed is planted or nourished, it has inherent promise — the capability to take root, develop, grow, and blossom. A person, like a seed, is inextricably linked to generations who have gone and are yet to come. He Kākano comes from somewhere, it belongs to someone or something, and it cannot be isolated or detached from those connections. It has both history and potential. He Kākano reminds us of the opportunity we have in schools to make new beginnings, to plant, to nurture, to cherish, to realise potential, to grow and enhance that which is. He Kākano is a symbol of productivity and the promise of success through learning and achievement.

Recently I was talking with a friend and I asked her how her nearly one year old nephew was, she said he was doing good but that he was really 'naughty'. She went on to explain that he was pulling children's hair at playgroup. I really don't like the idea of placing labels on children, I wouldn't use that word with any age child as it can become a self fulfilling prophecy with the child living up to the label placed on them. I was even more surprised to hear it used to describe an infant. As babies move into toddlerhood, they are becoming aware of themselves as a separate person, with their own will. They continue to explore cause and effect using objects, but they also explore cause and effect with people – like *if I pull this babies hair, the baby screams*. There is a lot of experimentation with peoples reactions to certain actions, testing and re-testing. **"Toddlers are gaining control of their world by checking out limits, causes, and effects. Often testing boundaries over and over again. Wanting to see the reaction from an adult"**. (Te Whariki)

It can provide a challenge to the adults in a toddlers life as toddlers exert their will,

"Expect difficult behaviour. Resistance to activities (wandering off in the middle of a song), rejection ("NO!"), and crying when they say goodbye to parents are all good behaviours - that's what toddlers should be doing" (Janet Gonzalez-Mena, *Toddlers: (What to Expect)*). It can help to recognize this behaviour as a natural part of development and the struggle going on within the child, **"Toddlers are struggling to evolve a sense of self and to achieve independence from the adults to whom they are emotionally attached while at the same time needing continuing emotional support. Their desire for independence, knowledge, and increasing control over everyday life is often in conflict with their ongoing dependence on caregivers to make things happen"**. (Te Whariki)

One behavior that sometimes arises that can be particularly difficult for adults to cope with is biting. **"For most of us, biting is more upsetting than almost any other behaviour our toddlers can try out. There's something animal-like about the idea of our toddlers chomping on**





Love is,
above all,
the gift of
oneself.

Jean Anouilh

one another. But it's normal for most toddlers to bite at one time or another" (1,2,3.. *The Toddler years*). Whether your child bites or not is not a reflection of your parenting, as Janis explains. **"Those of us who happen to have children who don't bite may be tempted to feel somewhat virtuous: 'If those parents were only more like me, their child wouldn't bite.' But that's not the way it works. It's usually just the luck of the draw."** (*Becoming the parent you want to be*).

It is our job as the adults to set clear boundaries and limits of acceptable behavior. Toddlers are learning social rules, not only by what we say but also by what we do, so we want to make sure we respond in a way that we would like the child to respond in. If we don't want the children to be aggressive or to yell or to hit then we need to make sure this is not our response when we see a behaviour we want to stop. We can respond calmly and reinforce a boundary. The important thing to

remember is that there is no quick fix, that toddlers are learning by doing all the time. So they may want to try a particular behaviour over and over again to check that our response will remain the same. Sometimes a toddler will use a specific behaviour to get a reaction, testing and seeing how to get a strong reaction.

"Because toddlers are eagerly trying to learn about feelings, they take every opportunity to explore yours.." Patrick, the father of two-year old Ryan put it this way: **"Their job is to push you as hard as you go to see where you snap, so they can see what happens when you snap."** (*Becoming the parent you want to be*). It is important we don't label our children and that we send the message that they will learn what is ok and what isn't (because they will!), it just might take a LOT of repetition. It is an exciting stage with so much learning that we can embrace and enjoy.



Weka are significant to some Māori iwi who admire their curiosity and feisty, bold personality, traits which have led to them being relatively easy to catch. The weka is a large, brown flightless bird that has a famously feisty and curious personality



Saying Goodbye

By Sanna Cooke

Many of us don't have to imagine this - it is an everyday occurrence: You're late for work. You quickly buckle your child into their car seat, speed to TLC and pray for a smooth drop-off. You open the front door to the centre and your child clings to you, begging you not to go. You try to calm them to no avail. You try distracting them - this doesn't work either. By the time you REALLY need to leave to get to work, your child is worked up into a state and you feel guilty for leaving them. So not wanting to leave them, you come back into the room again to try again to calm them...

Sound a little familiar? Even the most settled of children find it a challenge to leave their parents for a day at the centre. Having assisted with literally thousands (10's of thousands?!) of drop-offs between us, the teachers have a few ideas about how to help you manage a smooth transition for your child from home-life to centre-life in the morning.

The roots of a smooth transition sprout even before you all get into the car in the morning. Children don't like being taken away from a favourite activity at home. Are they doing something they love right before you put them in the car? As

an adult I find it hard to be taken away from an activity that I love doing. For a child, I can imagine this would be most distressing especially if they are not told why or where they are going. Consider your morning routine - is there another thing your child could be doing in the morning that won't cause too much stress if they are taken away from it?

Children (as we all know) are creatures of habit. They like to know what to expect. They like boundaries. They have a right to know about what each day will bring. On the way here in the car, consider telling them things about what they might do here. Prime them for a day of fun and let them know what they can expect. Model for them how much you enjoy going to your job, maybe demonstrate a bit of excitement about your day. Or maybe you aren't enjoying your job. Authentic parenting is about being honest - it is completely ok to say "I'm really going to miss you today. I feel sad when I leave you too".

Children who have any understanding of their morning drop-off routine are better equipped to deal with their parents saying goodbye. Establishing a morning drop-off



The only man I know who behaves sensibly is my tailor; he takes my measurements anew each time he sees me. The rest go on with their old measurements and expect me to fit them.

George Bernard Shaw

routine that is the same every single day is the best way to prepare them for their day. Encourage your child to walk in to their environment themselves instead of carrying them (if they can walk!). This helps them to feel a sense of independence, and makes disconnecting from you much easier for them if they are already physically disconnected. Imagine it for yourself - if a lovely giant carried you lovingly into a new space, wouldn't you find it hard to get down and explore the new space? I'd cling to the giant for sure because it's so great being up high! But maybe if I held the hand of the lovely giant, or better still walked beside the lovely giant, I might be more ready to let go when the time came to join my friends.

We notice that children who have a morning routine that is the same every day are better equipped to say goodbye to their giant. So, consider a routine that will work for you and your child. Come in the room, let the teachers know any important information about your child that will help them for the day, read a book with your child, say good bye, then leave. If you are leaving, let them know you are leaving, then leave. Saying goodbye is important and after a short time young children gain an understanding of what goodbye means. It can be tempting to disappear because you don't want to upset your child but imagine someone you love leaving to go somewhere without saying goodbye - for me, that would be more distressing once I realise they've gone! Saying goodbye is a clear way of saying you are going, so when you return to the room several times to try to 'settle'

your child or for "one more cuddle", they can become distressed and confused, and what you are potentially doing is simply delaying the inevitable - that they may cry if you leave, but they'll still cry when you go to leave the second, third and 4th time, only they will have had more time to get upset! Sometimes I imagine a child's inner dialogue when parents haven't set clear ideas about their movements - "Didn't you just say you were leaving? You're back again. Does this mean I'm going home now? I was calming down but you're coming back and forth and it's really confusing me. I would like to be able to settle into an activity but I can't when you're here because I just want to be held by you for a while." Teachers here at The Learning Centre are well-equipped to help your child begin to manage their emotions, and we have good arms for cuddling too. The tears never last long - we promise!

When I drop my daughter off and she cries, of course I feel like I should be the one to try to calm her, but what I've noticed is that if I leave her with a teacher, they do a far better job of helping her deal with her emotions and the quicker I say goodbye, the easier it seems to be for her to manage her own drop-off. I know it gives her confidence to be able to say goodbye and settle in to her 'work' when I give her the clear message that I'm leaving and that she is staying by herself.

If you would like some assistance in establishing a routine with your child, just let us know. It will take some practice, but it will be worth it!

STRUGGLE IS TO LEARNING

By Nikki Grazier



Education comes from within; you get it by struggle and effort and thought.

Napoleon Hill

When I was the editor for the newsletter at Daisies (in Wellington) I would check in with the best early childhood centre newsletter that I knew of - that of TLC, for formatting and great quotes. Once when checking back issues (June 2009) I came across a piece that Marie had written after attending a RIE conference in San Francisco. I have included some of the original article below.

For me, the highlight of the conference was attending Janis Keyser's (co-author of 'Becoming the Parent You Want To Be') workshop 'The Role of Struggle'. Janis started her workshop with an exercise where we had to fill in the gaps to create our own metaphor:

Struggle is to learning

as _____

is to _____

Try this at home. At the workshop, the answers everyone came up with were both inspiring and illuminating

What it showed me was that fundamentally, I believe that struggle is an essential part of learning - no struggle, no learning

Janet also asked us, "If you stay your whole life in your comfort zone, what does that mean?" As parents and educators though, we are profoundly uncomfortable seeing our children 'struggle', in our

love for them, we wish to see them suffer no 'discomfort'.

Magda Gerber was profound observer of children. She noticed that babies are drawn to struggle. The continually challenge themselves. Yes they express frustration and may look to us for help, and yet they actually, and naturally have great persistence. They might 'give up' for a little while, to let the frustration subside, but then they return and keep trying different and creative solutions.

'Struggle' has a lot to offer children:

- Persistence
- Knowledge and skill
- Accomplishment
- Optimism
- Competence
- Focus
- Flexibility
- Creative and innovative thinking
- A sense of themselves as a resourceful learner.

A lot of the above is about building up a sense of themselves.

Conversely, if we interrupt a child's struggle, to 'make it go away', what does this teach a child? We may intend it to be 'you are loved and we are here for you if you need us'. However, if we are not careful it could also be 'struggle is scary', 'it is too hard for you'.

As a teacher of two year olds in the Kea group and a parent I often refer back to this

this metaphor - struggle is to learning...

Two year olds are often in such an incredible state of developing their separateness and independence, their 'will', while at times still being very dependent on the adults around them. Due to the fact that they can move rapidly from the cortex (thinking, logical brain) to their limbic brain (emotion, sensory brain), and struggle can rapidly move from a thinking process to an emotional one.

Sometimes I have to literally sit on my hands to stop myself from intervening - to allow the children the opportunity to solve it themselves. Sometimes it is my focussed presence that seems to show them that I trust that they can do it themselves.

With my son it is interesting for me to reflect on which things I personally struggle when I see him struggle with - jigsaws and putting lego together. My hands are literally itching to help, whereas with self help skills I am happy to watch the struggle and provide encouragement.

If this resonates with your own parenting journey, my advice is if you see your child struggling, just watch quietly. If they seek your help to help them move closer and narrate what you see. "I see you are trying to take off they doll's top." and then wait again. If you are seeing

that they are getting frustrated - calmly narrate that too. There are many options of things you can say to empower them to keep trying if they want to. It is OK if they leave it without having succeeded, most likely if it is something they are really interested in they will come back to it. After a while if you really feel like you want to help, try doing the smallest possible thing and then stopping again, "Maybe if I undo that button it will be easier", "I am going to turn over this piece of puzzle".

Struggle is to learning....

For me, my completion to the above statement is "As sleep is to growth", absolutely crucial.

Persistence, resilience, curiosity, creativity are all learning dispositions. Ways of being that will help children become life-long learners able to overcome the challenges they will face throughout life into a fast-paced future that none of us can predict.

Helping them learn that struggling and practice is important for learning and growth is a precious gift.

Nikki



If there is no struggle, there is no progress.

Frederick Douglas

Cat Tales

By Sally Buxton



In the last few weeks the Kowhai and Tui children have been receiving regular visits from two local residents. These have been in the form of two very adorable, almost identical, playful cats. Originally, we all thought it was just one cat but a talk with another local, a man we met on a visit to the park, informed us that there are in fact two cats. We have never seen the two out together, however and continue to wonder if there are actual two but apparently one cat has a collar and the other doesn't and has slightly different markings.

The cats arrival have triggered the children's interest in cats and this has been displayed in many different areas. It is an interest we have been trying to develop in our planning.

The appearance of one of the cats in the garden usually results in a flurry of interest with children actively stalking the cat and trying to catch it or engage it in play. Individual children have built quite a bond with them and seem to take comfort from their appearance. The cats are very cooperative and initially endured screams, pulling and sometimes quite rough treatment from the children but even after they had been rescued by a teacher and placed back into the park they would always come back again for more attention. We responded by encouraging discussion about what behavior the children felt was appropriate and respectful when interacting with our furry friends. and as a consequence a few simple rules have been developed.

The cats have really taken on the role of a class pet bringing with them some of the educational benefits associated with keeping a class pet. In their guide 'Caring for Animals,' the Ministry of Education claim that if children are encouraged under guidance to study, handle and look

after animals they should develop a positive, concerned attitude towards animals. Other benefits cited include opportunities to observe animal behavior and growth, contribution to social education by providing an appreciation of the material and social needs of animals, stimulation to do creative work and a contribution to personal development by children sharing the responsibility for animal welfare. The benefits of a class pet have even prompted some countries to offer schools a special grant to help pay for the costs incurred in buying aquariums, hutches etc. I however have a concern for the welfare of animals kept in a classroom environment and wonder about the stresses they have to endure.

The arrival of the cats has resulted in creative responses. The requests for face paints have become more frequent with cat faces and whiskers being carefully painted. The most overwhelming response however has been in imaginative play. The family play area has been overrun by children taking on the role of cats although someone is usually assigned the responsibility of being the owner of the often wayward cats. Tea cups have been used for water bowls and collars and leads have been fashioned from material.

Observing the often argumentative and disjointed interactions that occur in this form of play the different learning and involved might not always be apparent.

Pretend play requires the ability to transform objects and actions symbolically. It encourages social dialogue and negotiation and it involves role taking, script knowledge and improvisation. Several cognitive strategies are also demonstrated during pretend play, joint planning, negotiation, problem solving and goal setting. (Bergen, 2002)



Change may come to you in trinkets and I hope it adorns your life gracefully.
DODINSKY

Several theorists and researcher have identified the values of imaginative play as a vital to the normal development of a child in particular because the development of pretense , receptive and expressive language, and mental representation all begin at approximately the same age (between the ages of 1-2) It is possible that a child's experience with pretense could have a causal effect on the development of language and cognitive abilities.

Research has shown that pretend play increases language usage including

subjunctives, future tenses and adjectives. 'The theory of mind,' an awareness that one's thoughts may differ from those of other persons and that there are a variety of perspectives of which each of us is capable is also related to pretend play (Jenkins & Astington, 2000; Leslie, 1987; Singer & Singer, 1990; Singer & Singer, 2005) Another important benefit of early pretend play may also be its enhancement of the child's cognitive flexibility and in turn creativity. Research with creative individuals have shown that pretend play and make-believe worlds were more frequent in their early childhood than in a control group.

We have been supporting the children's interest by providing books about cats and reading stories with cat themes. This has helped foster more complex role play . The children often adopt the names of the cat characters from the books we have shared with them. The story of Fifi La Bell (author Lucy Davey) became a class favorite for several weeks.



To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly.

Henri Bergson

We have also learnt new songs and rhymes about cats . We were able to incorporate dramatic play when we acted out the song 'Pussy cat, pussy cat , where have you been ?' during our group times

A visit from Eloise's cat , Buster provided another opportunity for the children to interact with a cat, Buster was a very cooperative cat , despite initially heading straight for the doors(which luckily had been securely shut) he consented to being mobbed and stroked by our curious children. Buster's visit in addition to supporting the cat interest strengthened both Eloise's and the whole group's sense of belonging. It also prompted other children to ask if they could bring their pets in to TLC too and a few days

later Toby arrived proudly carrying in his pet mouse. I am happy to to announce that it's arrival ddd not coincide with any other visiting cats and the mouse survived the day.

We are planning a visit to a local vet will help the children to make connections with the wider world and build on their growing knowledge and understanding of cats and the work of vets.



“I am doing perseverance!” A closer look at the disposition of perseverance

By Robyn Powell

As we recall the delightful exclamation from Goldwyn “I am doing perseverance” Zoe and I smile. All of his concentration was focused on his piece of wood in the vice and the saw in his hand. His face revealed his determination to succeed at making that cut in the wood. He was right, he was ‘doing perseverance’, sawing does not come easy when you are learning (especially if the wood is too hard and the saw a bit blunt!!...), it does take perseverance, he was aware of his huge effort. Yet this seemed like a pleasure to him. Why did he stay with the task and not give up? Others do. Somehow, inside this



Japanese Proverb

The bamboo that bends is stronger than the oak that resists.

four year old boy was an internal drive to persevere with a difficult task. His viewed himself as a competent learner, he could do it, and he could persevere. On other occasions Goldwyn set himself a goal to wind up the outside blinds until they reached the top, another difficult task that required practice and perseverance.

Many Tui children are currently interested in recognising and writing the Casey shapes within the words they wish to write. Possum tails, as in the letter ‘g’ can end up going the wrong way before a child perceives the difference. When the error was pointed out to Luca his reply was “That’s ok, I’ll do it right next time” And he did. What a marvellous attitude. He already sees that making mistakes is part of learning.

Jacob tells us he doesn’t want to do it because he might make a mistake and get it wrong and people might laugh at him. He is not alone in his thinking, other children have voiced the same feeling. It seems too risky to have a go. Does he see himself as a competent learner? We can see that he is very competent in many areas. To him it is safer to watch. How can we help him to see that errors are a part of learning, that it is ok to make a mistake?

How do our children become listed among those who persevere with a difficulty long enough to learn a new skill? Is it an internal drive or is it something we must ‘teach’? How do we help those children who are afraid of making a mistake or shy away from anything that is difficult and requires practice and perseverance? Most of us don’t like the persevering part too much, me included. Our Tui children seem intrigued that Zoe and I need to practice and persevere with things that we are learning to do. I decided that I would be a real

‘Nana’ and knit a wee jacket for my grand-daughter who is to be born in July. It is many a year since I knitted and it certainly shows, I am disappointed that I am so slow and have become tired of unpicking my mistakes, and a bit anxious that it wouldn’t be completed in time. The hood has been knitted by my kind friend. It’s ok to enlist help isn’t it? I like to think she has supported my efforts rather than rescued me! I tell the Tui children that I am still persevering; it’s not finished yet. This experience led me to think about how children might feel if they have taken on a challenge that makes them feel overwhelmed. We all need encouragement and support when the task seems too hard for us. It helps to know you can go to an expert when you need help. Once a child has mastered a skill we are delighted to see them encourage and help other children who are still learning.

Lucia, has had a very different view of herself and frequently we hear “I can’t, it’s too hard” Why does she seem so reluctant to try? Is there no interest, therefore no motivation to succeed with the task? Or has she formed the belief that everything should come easy and gives up if it doesn’t work the first time? Has she become powerless because others, older children or adults have inadvertently stolen her motivation to have a go, to problem solve herself by doing it for her or by having unrealistic goals? Last week Lucia unravelled half a ball of string as part of her game. When it was time to tidy up she began to wind the string, “it’s taking a long time” followed by groaning. I thought, “*there is no way she will stick with this*” but after showing her a faster technique to wind, I left her to it. Sometime later I heard an excited “I did it” as she held up the ball of string. “So you did” I replied and as



Those who expect moments of change to be comfortable and free of conflict have not learned their history.

Joan Wallach Scott



as I turned away to continue with my task I realised what a monumental moment this was for her. I turned back and caught her eye “Lucia, you persevered! Well done” I can still see the smile on her face. She was proud of herself. I think she is beginning to feel the joy of completing a task that was difficult. Perhaps her belief in herself has taken a leap. The truth is success breeds success. What will I see her persevere with next?

In Margaret Carr’s book about Learning Stories she discusses Carol Dweck’s research work that spanned more than two decades in the USA identifying the influence of what they call ‘learned helplessness’, observing children’s reactions to failure and classifying them as ‘helpless’ or ‘mastery-orientated’. Dweck described children as having an orientation towards ‘performance goals’ or ‘learning goals’. Carol argues that “when children are oriented towards learning goals, they strive to increase their competence, to understand or master something new. When they are oriented towards performance goals, they strive to either gain favourable judgements or to avoid negative judgements of their competence.” “learning goal children experienced the same roadblocks to task solutions as Performance goal children, and some of the Learning goal group lacked confidence in their future success. Nevertheless, as a group the learning goal children remained focused on strategy and maintained

an even emotional keel during the task; they evaluated their skills positively and persistently after failure: (Smiley and Dweck, 1994, p.1739)

Carole Ames comments on her similar observations of children, “The impact of social comparison on children when they compare unfavourably can be seen in their ability, avoidance of risk taking, use of less effective or superficial learning strategies, and negative affect directed toward the self” (1992, p 264)

Therefore, in my opinion it is the task of us, the child’s educators at home and at TLC to foster the child’s view of themselves as a competent learner. In sharing our own journey as lifelong learners who encounter difficulties that require our perseverance we establish a community of learners where it is safe to make mistakes and where we all strive to increase our competence and master something new. We are committed to supporting our children in their search for strategies that promote success. Just a little note about encouragement. Commending children for their effort supports their belief in themselves to persevere with difficulty. Focusing on how clever they are may reinforce the belief that because I am clever I will just be able to do it without the need to try. We can role model positive ways to evaluate our skills and persist with difficulty. In this way we can nurture our Community of Learners, a community that encourages and supports one another.