

Little known kids' secret: Children love the quiet

Somehow between Madison Avenue and Hollywood, and all the places where kiddie culture is fed, we're given the view that children are rowdy and eternally needing to be entertained.

Picture a scene of children getting out from school. What do you imagine? More than likely it's children shouting and running from the school building.

Though the movies would have us believe otherwise, children actually love quiet.

The portrayal of children in our popular culture tends to overemphasize hyperactivity and hyper-noise. Children require movement and appropriate, yet creative, methods to express themselves, which unfortunately, are not readily given. If we, as adults,

had to do what some children must everyday, we'd be portrayed as run-



ning out of buildings screaming at the top of our lungs.

Our world is a noisy place and most of us haven't learned how to move softly through space. Years ago after a function in our church fellowship hall, the volunteer clean up crew began to drag chairs and tables across the room in order to place them in storage racks. The rumble deafened. Screeching metal legs against the linoleum made chalkboards and fingernails seem melodic.

My daughters covered their ears, wondering out loud, "Why don't they carry the chairs quietly?"

"Because," I said, "I don't think anybody's shown them how."

My daughters looked at each other quizzically. As if on cue they each picked up an end of a table and carried it across the room. As they moved across the floor, the noisy volunteers stopped to see youngsters carrying a six-foot table, quietly. Very quietly indeed.

Our children love quiet, but as the church volunteers demonstrated, we neglect to show them how to move quietly, how to appreciate the quiet, and how to listen.

Children enjoy a listening game where everyone gets quiet for about two minutes, which is a very long time for three and four-year-olds, and for some 34-year-olds, too. I'd set an hourglass type egg timer in the middle of our group to give the children a focal point and concept of how much longer they should sit and listen. In the quiet the children heard each other sigh, squirm, and change positions. In short the children became aware of how a simple movement dis-



Maren Schmidt

Kids Talk™

rupts the mood of the group. At the end of the two-minute period I would go around the group and ask each child what they heard as they listened.

Without exception, the children were amazed what they could hear. Birds outside even though all the doors and windows were shut. Cars at the stop sign a block away. A fire truck leaving the station a mile away. The rumble of a train. The neighbor's tractor or leaf blower. The refrigerator. The heat clicking on. The air going through their noses. The clock ticking in the adjoining room. The faucet dripping in the bathroom. In the quiet the children listened.

After this five to ten minute listening exercise the children appeared more confident and controlled in their actions, left the group lesson with a tranquil smile, and worked rest of the morning with deeper concentration than before the lesson.

Children love quiet. All they need is to learn how to listen and to be heard. Just like the rest of us.

Kids Talk™ is an award-winning column dealing with childhood development issues written by Maren Stark Schmidt, M.Ed. She has more than 25 years experience working with young children and is the author of Understanding Montessori: A Guide for Parents. Contact her via e-mail at maren@kidstalknews.

**HEATHER A. BACON, PH.D. &
JENNIFER K. COOPER, PSY.D.**

Licensed Clinical Psychologists



Helping parents discover new ways to shape behavior and reconnect with children.

Currently accepting new patients.
Most insurance and private pay accepted.

860 W. Elm Ave., Suite 204, Hermiston, OR 97838
541-289-7777 • hermistonpsych.com