

find out why you didn't like it". You are gently in charge, supporting and carrying the situation – you are neither authoritarian nor absenting yourself.

Jack Petrash's *Navigating the Terrain of Childhood* is an excellent book on parenting from a Waldorf perspective. *Lifeways* (Voors and Davy) and *More Lifeways* (Smith and Schaefer) are both wonderful, wonderful books drawing on the experiences of parents working out of a Waldorf (anthroposophical) perspective. Lastly, one might want to look into Marshall Rosenberg. While I think many Non-Violent Communication techniques are totally inappropriate with children under 9, one can still take on board much of the *intention* of NVC and begin, as a child approaches and passes her seventh year, to bring some of these methods to one's parenting.

More on discipline and introducing pedagogical stories

When working with questions of discipline with young children, children up to about 9, it is best to focus mainly on the child's environment and the rhythms that form his day. By making sure he is not overstimulated, that he has had enough sleep, that life flows in a predictable and nurturing way, the vast amount of discipline problems never arise.

If we carefully and consciously work with what lives in the child – her powers of imitation and her picture-consciousness (which are starting to fade but are still available to us to work with) – then we can be creative in how we form our daily lives with our children. We do not set up situations where the great and powerful "NO!" is bound to appear – we lay out clothes the night before, we have the oatmeal ready on the table, we always go to the park and *then* have our story. Thus, when conflict does arise – as it inevitably will – it is not just part of a long wearisome continuity. Rather, it is a once in a while thing that we can meet with creativity and warmth instead of exhaustion!

So let's look a bit more closely at imitation and picture-consciousness and see how we can harness these elements of childhood consciousness so as to aid us in a harmonious relationship with our children.

Imitation

Young children imitate everything around them in an unconscious and unquestioning way. They neither discern nor discriminate between what goes in or what comes out. Thus in Waldorf early education, one is very conscious that young children are surrounded by what is good, true and beautiful.

First Graders still live strongly in imitation and it is our starting point when working with them, especially the younger ones. But one of the goals of First and Second Grade is to bring the child into consciousness and to slowly start "waking her up". By age 9 or thereabouts, when there is often a dramatic change in how the child relates to herself and the world, the child should imitate only by conscious choice.