



Stamp game

## Deep Spontaneous Concentration

In the young child there are observable characteristics of behavior that help us know that a child is following normal development. These characteristics follow: love of order, love of work, deep spontaneous concentration, attachment to reality, love of silence and working alone, sublimation of the possessive instinct, power to act from real choice not just curiosity or impulsivity, trust and obedience, independence and initiative, as well as spontaneous self-discipline. In previous newsletters, we looked at love of order and love of work. Let's look at the development of deep spontaneous concentration.

Children naturally come to an intense self-generated ability to focus attention. It is how we are wired as human beings to learn.

The modern day world offers many distractions and a variety of attractions that didn't exist fifty or sixty years ago. Today, the amount of technological change we see in a year may well be more than many people saw in a lifetime a century ago.

Before I started kindergarten my days were spent at home. The radio created a serene backdrop with quiet music. Television provided a rainy day diversion. My weekly car trip was on Sundays to go to church and drive to visit my grandparents thirty miles away.

The distractions in my life were few and as I developed focus I learned to ignore distractions. As I learned to read, I also learned to tune out the noise from my brothers and sisters. To this day it takes a tap on my

shoulder to get my attention if I'm reading.

My childhood environment made it easy to develop deep self-generated concentration. I was given quiet, uninterrupted time and the objects in my environment were appropriate. The adults in my environment—my parents and grandparents—created structure by keeping regular meal, snack and bedtimes. This protected my time and attention needed to develop concentration.

Our children's brains are seeking opportunities to create this deep concentration by choosing activities that are interesting to them, that they have time to explore and complete, as well as the opportunity to repeat.

When these opportunities are not available to a child (and to adults also) frustration builds. Reactions to not being involved with interesting activities due to environmental and time constraints fall within the spectrum of anger on one end and apathy on the other.

Newly enrolled Jocinta shuffled into her preschool classroom. There was no pep in her step. No enthusiasm in her smile. Jocinta showed little interest in any activity. Even songs like the Hokey Pokey didn't engage her. Jocinta didn't cause any problems. She was quietly unexcited about life. She complained daily about her stomach hurting.

After a couple of weeks trying to engage Jocinta in what are usually irresistible activities for preschoolers, her teacher visited with Jocinta's parents. Asking about what

a typical week looked like for Jocinta, her teacher discovered Jocinta's disjointed days. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays after morning preschool Jocinta went to a babysitter with various caregivers and children. On Tuesdays and Thursdays Jocinta stayed at her grandparents' homes. Dinner was in different restaurants every night. Bedtime and dinner times were based on Jocinta's parents' work schedule.

Her parents viewed Jocinta's personality as reserved and shy. What Jocinta's teacher saw instead was a child who never had the time to learn to focus her attention and create natural spontaneous concentration.

Fortunately, Jocinta's parents were open to the idea of creating a more predictable daily routine for Jocinta. Dinner and bedtimes were scheduled and grandparents volunteered to create a consistent afternoon situation.

Within six weeks Jocinta bounced out of her car in the mornings, ready to get busy with the day's activities. Her eyes sparkled, her cheeks looked round and rosy and she laughed easily as she sang, "If You're Happy and You Know It."

A consistent environment with clear expectations and transparent structure helped Jocinta develop deep spontaneous concentration, a sign of healthy and normal development of the young child.