

# Why are we not going to our garden of children?



In our Early Childhood classes, we work and play together joyfully and with a deep understanding that the world is ultimately a good place. This feeling of trust and the sense that all is well creates security. We all wish we were in our garden of children! But right now, we cannot return to this familiar and reassuring place where we always met our friends. It is hard to comprehend what is happening in the world during this pandemic for us adults. How do we speak to our young children about this?

Intellectual concepts such as virus, pandemic, illness, and emergency are beyond the young child's nature and will be overwhelming. A simple rhythm at home

creates a safe space where love and everyday tasks can fill our changed days with meaning. Humor and joy are two essential elements in our repertoire as authors of our “family story.”



When talking to our young children about the changes in our routine and environment it is always a good starting point to receive their questions with an open heart and mind. We want to shield them from the excess of information that is coming toward us. We are our children’s shield and filter, even more so in these challenging times. And at the same time, we cannot pretend that nothing is happening. We want to continue to be truthful. For our young children that means speaking in images. Be creative and find pictures representing what you wish to share with them. You may for example say: “Our good earth is not feeling well right now and we all need to stay home and rest so it can heal. You remember when you had a cough and fever last month and you stayed home in bed under your warm blanket? This is why we also cannot go to your garden of children right now and play with your friends.”

If your child observes changes in the environment, like people wearing masks, acknowledge your child’s observation and validate it. “Yes, I see the woman wearing a mask.” Often a simple comment like this is sufficient for your youngster to move on. You can repeat the same validation or pictorial explanation over and over again. If your child specifically asks questions about the virus, use simple and imaginative language. Your children wish for you to help them regain a solid orientation in this changed world. They wish to feel safe.

We all wish to feel safe and it is our task to create this feeling for the children. Providing them with rhythm and an orderly home is only one aspect of our work. We need to also attend to our inner landscape to maintain a calm, joyful and courageous attitude. Our children are perceiving this vividly.

*Small things matter. What may look like a small act of courage is courage nevertheless. The important thing is to be willing to take a step forward.*

*(Daisaku Ikeda)*



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