

Elevator Rides Help Children Learn Focusing - Part 2

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From an early age children are attracted to the captivating power of a good story. At any age, this intrinsic mysterious quality of Story holds us and touches places deep inside, where we connect to what it is that makes us human. It is not difficult for children to make the transition from stories in the outer dimension of their lives to the ones that live inside their bodies. It is of course helpful if their experience has consistently been the joy of weaving their threads into a personal story of precious value.

In the last issue of the newsletter, I shared how I prepare children for doing Focusing elevator rides. Below are the instructions for the Elevator Ride. This might be done right after the children have just savoured a story from the outer dimension or perhaps to prepare for a writing lesson or to resolve some tensions or difficulties in the classroom. Doing Focusing in this way, before a lesson, can enhance concentration and learning.

Focusing Elevator Rides With Primary School Children

Boys and girls do you remember a few days ago when we did a little pretend game in which we took an elevator ride inside our bodies? Who remembers what their elevator looked like. (allow some sharing)

1. Let's take a moment to be comfortable and if you wish close your eyes and see if you can find the elevator waiting for you. Please be very still so we don't disturb each other. Whenever you are ready, push the button that opens the door and I invite you to step inside.
2. Now when you are ready, push the buttons you need to have a little visit in different parts of you to see how they are feeling today. Perhaps we could start by going down to your toes and saying hello to them. They may even like it if you stepped out of the elevator and had a real visit with them. (allow some time)
3. Now that you had some visits here and there, do you recall that we left an empty space on your control panel for a very special button? It is a very important button because when this button is pushed the elevator gets to go wherever it wants to go. This is your STORY button. The elevator will take you to a place inside your body that holds a story and you may not even yet know where that is and

what it is about. Do you remember how we talked about stories that live inside our bodies?

4. (optional) Today we are going to do some story writing. We will use the Elevator Ride to help us. Please remember that you have a STOP button in case you feel the need to stop along the way. Also remember that you are in charge of your elevator. Whenever you are ready to push that special STORY button please do so. Notice where the elevator takes you now. Perhaps you want to stay in the elevator and see your story from there. Maybe you could have the door open. How does it feel? How does it look? Do you wish to step out and explore into your story? Who else is there? What is happening? (allow some time and observe the group closely) It is not unusual to see some tears, squirming or distractions happening. I use my own felt sense to guide me here as to timing.)
5. Boys and girls if you come to a hard place or a scary part will you remember to be gentle with that part of the story? Will you pretend it is like a puppy or a kitten that needs you to give it a hug and to look after it?
6. Boys and girls I'm going to ask you to find a way to say goodbye to your story and let it know somehow that you will come back to it another time. Please remember to be very quiet and respect all the other children who are leaving their stories. When everyone has opened their eyes, we will move very quietly to our desks and begin writing our stories. (or mandalas, or share our stories orally, or paint or make a collage etc.)

There are two important parts of doing Elevator rides with children. One is the Elevator Ride itself. The other is the follow up activity. As I pursue this work with children in a tutorial setting, I continue to acknowledge the importance of control. Children love to design and describe their own elevators. Details about size, colour, carpet, windows etc. are shared with pleasure and they become quite elaborate. They love having buttons with which they control their very own elevator. They have buttons that allow the door to open or close, buttons that say up, down, left and right. Some even have spin buttons. However all children realize that the button that says STORY ON IT IS DIFFERENT. They know and appreciate that this button when pushed, no longer gives them control. They realize when the STORY button is pushed, the Elevator takes them to that place in their body that holds their "story" that day. Often it is a surprise. Some children walk out of the "door" and into their story. Others may just stand in the doorway or watch from the window. Still others like to have a special person in the elevator with them. The safety and the control are the two most important features for the children.

The second part of the process is the opportunity to symbolize the experience of the Elevator Ride. A choice of paints, pastels, markers, clay, journal writing, collage or mandalas allows the process to continue to unfold and is valued and respected by the children.

Elevator Rides is not necessary to teach children this process called Focusing or to offer the experience in any way. However the children who do get introduced to Focusing in this way need to have elevators as an important part of their life experience, as is the case for urban children. I started Focusing with my granddaughter long before she even knew about an elevator. The crucial task is that we gift children with this tool called Focusing! I invite all those who value Focusing in their own lives to risk sharing it with a child.