



**SIMPLE TEACHING RESOURCES BASED THE WAL-  
DORF PEDAGOGY**

### ABSTRACT

The present text aims to bring reference guidelines to those who may not be able to follow a plan during longer periods of time, which happens for instance with volunteers working with refugees at the borders between countries or even with teachers who deal during a longer period of time with children and teens who have lost their homes, their country or someone important, for instance, the adult of reference. All exercises have been prepared to support human beings who have suffered great losses. They were planned having in mind that the actions involved should be as affordable as possible. These are simple actions, but very effective, all based on Sensory Integration, on Special Resources, and on Waldorf Pedagogy.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

We want to color people's souls where there is only grey to be seen. Give lightness, optimism and well-being to communities and peoples going through difficult times. We call it hygienic therapy when we don't treat illnesses, but rather strive to attain balance in thought, feeling, and will. This is usually done in short-term, brief experiences, when the care of a medical doctor is not available.

The present text aims to bring reference guidelines to those who may not be able to follow a plan during longer periods of time, which happens for instance with volunteers working with refugees at the borders between countries or even with teachers who deal during a longer period of time with children and teens who have lost their homes, their country or someone important, for instance, the adult of reference. All exercises have been prepared to support human beings who have suffered great losses. They were planned having in mind that the actions involved should be as affordable as possible. These are simple actions, but very effective, all based on **Sensory Integration**, on **Special Resources**, and on **Waldorf Pedagogy**.

Our first concern should be with the body of someone experiencing physical or psychological difficulties, while keeping in mind that our guidelines are directed to teachers and others, but not to health professionals.

Imbalances caused by losses or lack of healthy living conditions may reflect themselves on mental processes which affect learning abilities, such as memory and concentration. In the realm of feelings, it may cause extreme sensitivity or coldness, respiratory problems, sleep issues or speech problems. Motricity may present either paralysis or hyperactivity; some people may feel they are prisoners of their body while others do not want to address their body, the seat of their suffering. The help that the teacher may offer to these persons should be immediate. The intention is not to cure the suffering; this is not something one can do as parents, volunteers, educators, or caretakers, yet we may support the children and teenagers' own strengths. We stimulate and support these strengths to avoid or to minimize a pathology.

Story telling is an excellent resource to support thinking in victims who have repetitive thoughts, flashbacks or amnesia. Fairy tales may be an inspiration for the imagination where beautiful images support memories of peaceful things that made sense. The child with recurring thoughts must have at least an impression of something she understands and that makes sense. The heroes in these stories develop inwardly by accomplishing their tasks and adventures.

Painful changes may cause brain hemispheres to disconnect but rhythmical exercises crossing the body (up and down, left and right) improve coordination and cerebral functioning. Exercises with music may be very beneficial: round dances, cross touching hands and feet, and visual field concentration games such as marbles, games of sticks may be of great help in connecting cerebral hemispheres and to prepare the child to receive other kinds of care that she might not have been able to receive before as for example, exercises that stimulate the touch sense; this is due to the fact that a majority of painful experiences make it impossible to even touch the body.

"To feel the circle on the plane surface or on a sphere in space is to feel oneself", according to Rudolf Steiner. Have children or teenagers in circles is a way to start integration in the physiological and social sense. Games throwing balls, to play with marbles, bubbles or simple little dirt balls, the size of a kid's palm, are an opportunity to feel oneself. The circle can be used to dance around it, and the game of chairs may become erasable circles on the floor to indicate participants' spots and the loss of them by erasing.

There are many possibilities to play with movement and balance as the walk on a low rope or a wood plank, and rope jumping. All these activities are in direct relationship with the rhythm of heart and respiratory system and therefore help with the balance of emotions.

Games of sticks, memory games, and pass the ring improve concentration, memory, and observation abilities, while developing fine motor skills. Memory games may be drawn by the children themselves, in pairs. It is a great activity to do together. Games with fingers like string figure, and also knitting, crochet, weaving, embroidery and sewing are curative activities for the brain. They stimulate visual and hearing perceptions and support neurotransmission in reading, writing, and speech.

Very small children and infants can play with inexpensive things as a small piece of red fabric with white dots (35 x 35 cm, or about 14 inches square), that an adult may use to hide and seek, tied around their wrist it may become a little animal that goes up the infant's body; it may become a cape or "long hair" and it may also be offered to the child to see what she will want to do. Ideally the adult will not direct the play too much, but they may begin to play in this way, as a "Red is a naturally stimulating color for children who are too lonely and listless. The white dots invite the child to focus their sight" Patricia Averbach.

Crafty adults can sculpt little animals in branches or make knitting and crochet needles out of bamboo. One can make bamboo spoons for immediate use in camps or to be used by the smaller children in doll play. Good quality dirt, that is not too sandy, can be formed in little pots and trays. Toddlers love to make piles of pots or put one bowl into another, and to pour sand from one bowl into another.

These are healing activities for the little ones who are not yet able to talk and to express their pain. Depending on where they are, one can create a little farm with bones, fruit pits, or corn cobs.

Hand clapping games are very old but still popular, and they address the crossing of the median body barriers.

**Jumping with rubber bands:** it's not too expensive and helps with gross motor coordination and hand-eye coordination.

**Hopscotch** is another old and efficient play of crossing the median body barriers.

**Doll house/play cooking** is an ancestral play which appears virtually throughout the world. It is very important to cultivate it. If there are leftovers from a building site one can sand down chards of tile or smooth out pieces of brick so they become little pots, or they can be piled to become a little house or a tower. These are very beneficial images to take into sleep by a child who has just experienced pain or trauma. To play with doll houses or high towers can be greatly soothing and alleviate the pain of many children. Besides that, these are very cheap games for which material may be found in any refugee supporting center or even in a town with very few resources. On the riverbanks one can find smooth little stones with which to build excellent doll houses; on the beach one can find shells for the same purpose.

## 2. CREATING A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

It is possible to decorate the environment according to the festivals and the seasons with the gathering of natural items. A nature and local festival table creates welcoming coziness while learning about and experiencing for example, plants, stones, leaves, and flowers in their different seasons.

### 3. BASIC LATERALITY AND COORDINATION EXERCISES

Corporal geography exercises are a great help in becoming aware of the body and develop focus, rhythm, laterality, and motor skills.

In the following are some suggestions which can and should be adapted to the group you are working with. The best way to carry them out is to use them as games to engage children, teens, and even adults. These activities were developed in the extra lesson method.

They may be more or less difficult according to the target age and to the degree of difficulties experienced by the group. They are most suitable for anyone over the age of seven and can be used for adults as well.

Instructions may be marked by a sound, as for instance, snapping fingers.

Exercises should be explained first, without demonstration. This is important to reinforce listening and hearing abilities, creating focus and attention.

1. Right side. Tell them to touch different parts of the right side of the body, such as: touch your nose, belly, knee with your right hand. Don't cross over to the other side.
2. Do the same with the left side. No crossing over as before.
3. Tell them to use the right hand and the left hand. Pay attention so no crossing occurs.
4. With children over eight order sequences of two or three instructions. Speak faster to support focus.
5. Crossing the body is permissible for ages over nine. For instance: right hand on left knee. Give them sequences of instructions.

For pre-teens: starting at age 11 the educator instructs without demonstrations. The student or students may close their eyes, increasing the ability to listen, and it helps also with balance. It is not mandatory to do the exercises with closed eyes, though; this is just an increase of the difficulty.

Give simultaneous instructions, as for example, put your right hand on your left knee, and your left hand on your nose.

These physical exercises are easy to do and help very much with body awareness. They also help expand the vocabulary of body parts.



#### 4. RHYTHM EXERCISES



Walking forwards and backwards. Say a verse while walking or clap your hands.

You may extend a rope on the floor. The children have to walk on the rope, balancing forwards and backwards. The verse may be recited while clapping hands to create a rhythm.

Put little bean bags on the floor and have the children walk as if they were crossing a river. Seeds may be strewn on the side as if they were little fish. The children pick them up going forwards and have to return them when crossing back. It helps with crossing the upper and lower median. One can have them count the fish.

Different sequences may be created, but in each one of them hands/feet have to come together. It is important to first feel the environment.

Children sit clapping hands or feet. Pair them one in front of the other.

Clap hands or feet.

Clap only right hands or feet. And then do the opposite.

One can come up with fun and dynamic sequences.

Wooden or bamboo plank/a ribbon/rope - walk over it with a little bean bag on the head. Forwards and backwards. One can add verses, hand clapping, foot stomping in a given rhythms.

One can also ask the child to walk starting with the toes and then with the heel. Rope jumping with a song which introduces the rhythm. For smaller children the rope may lay on the floor and the child jumps over it.

Walk blindfolded in pairs. One sees and the other is blindfolded. The seeing one guides the other to pick up something: a seed, a flower... and then switch.

Make a five-point star with small bean bags. Start with the head of the star and walk towards the right foot jumping over a bag each time. Then go from the head to the left foot...

## 5. ZOO EXERCISES

These exercises are really therapeutic. Health professionals use them, but they are also accessible to teachers and other workers. When there is little time to spend with children or when applying first aid to persons in situations of extreme vulnerability, we may use them without correcting or trying too hard to do the right thing because the key to them is the rhythmical repetition, preferably on a daily basis, after making a circle and singing a song which will mark the beginning of the day.

**Depending of the number of people present divide them in groups of threes, with a reasonable distance between them.**

The animals of the zoo series reproduce the whole process of neo-natal reflexes, and this is a very important detail. An increasing number of children worldwide present serious motor impediments and attention deficit due to not overcoming these reflexes, keeping them in the body senses, in the emotions, and in their cognition ability!! Many of the learning problems result from not overcoming neo-natal reflexes, which are primitive reflexes in nature and are connected with a very early phase in life for self-preservation. If they are kept in that way, they will hinder later reflexes to come about. These later reflexes do not relate any more to the preservation of the infant's life, but to appreciation and learning about the surrounding world. Later still they will have a connection to all forms of learning and relationships.

Instructions start with the **rolling of the seal**. The child may keep arms up or down beside their body and roll up to a certain point. It does not have to be too far; 3 or 4 meters are very good. The whole group may roll up to the other side of the place and return with another animal. If the room is too small one or three children at a time may roll as seals forwards and then back.

The second instruction is to **slither like a gecko**. Children try to imitate the slithering using their arms and legs to move forwards.

The third one is to **crawl like a bear**. This movement should be made with stretched out arms and legs, like a bear. They walk in this position for the same length of the other exercises.

After these three key movements of the zoo series one can allow the children to decide on other, very healthy ones, as the jumping frog, chicken scratching the ground and pecking, the galloping horse, the monkey jumping from branch to branch. This would be a lot of fun, however it is never good to lose control, depending on the size of the class. The game can be a very pleasurable one.

These are the zoo games. Do not correct. Repeat and repeat. You will have to demonstrate. You may say a verse or sing a song while they are having these experiences. The usual sequence is that they pretend that they went to the zoo and now they will become a crocodile, a seal, or others. The most important thing is the rhythm. One can clap hands while doing the exercises in order to keep the beat, because some will want to do it whichever way. Use this chance to educate them in breathing. Did they forget to breathe?

When in indigenous cultural environment one may use local instruments like drums or rattles.

A large piece of cardboard may be used to slither on.

Exercise 1 - Greeting the day - excellent for the morning

Stretch out arms at shoulder height. Turn 3 times in one direction. Close the eyes and return arms down along the body. Turn 3 times to the other side. Close the eyes and return arms down along the body.

Exercise 2 - Waking up fingers and toes.

Lie down with the palms down. Stretch fingers and toes separating them as far as possible and keeping during 2 or 3 seconds. Repeat 3 to 5 times.

After that contract fingers and toes during about 2 or 3 seconds. Repeat 3 to 5 times.

Exercise 3 - starting the crocodile/Cayman series

Lie down with the belly side down. Arms along the body. Closed eyes. The crocodile heard a sound and with the eyes closed it lifts up its head during 3 to 5 seconds. Rest. Repeat another 3 times.

Repeat the same exercise but this time moving the head to the right and to the left with open eyes. Repeat 3 times.

Exercise 4 - crocodile/cayman

Same position as before

Lift up the head and rest forearms on the floor. From the hands to the elbow.

Repeat 3 times.

Repeat the same exercise above and this time the right leg is flexing towards the arm. Alternate legs. At the same place.

Exercise 5

This is a development of the previous exercise. The crocodile/Cayman will walk moving arms and legs with a lifted head. Observe if there is crossing.

Exercise 6 - Little cat, little dog

Crawl with the elbows on the floor. Observe if there is crossing. Forwards and backwards movement are allowed.

Exercise 7 - little monkey

Walk with the hands on the ground like a little monkey.

One can tell stories which can add to the fun. One can make crocodile or puppy races.

## ART SECTION



### 6. FORM DRAWING

Form drawings are most advisable to bring harmony to children, teens, adults, and seniors.

Preparing for form drawing:

Feet on the ground. If the child does not reach it, one can bring in a little stool for the feet. Arms and elbows should comfortably placed on the table.

Encourage breathing. A good exercise: turn palm upwards and recite the following verse: when I breathe in, I breathe in love. Close palms. When I breathe out, I breathe out peace. Open palms.

Materials: I like thick colored crayons

Paper: whatever you have on hand, simple. Ideally the size is A3 (11.69 x 16.54").  
Tape the paper to the table or ask to hold the paper with the non-dominant hand.



If none of this is available, one can use a sand box and have them draw with their fingers. Practice on the black board is also possible.

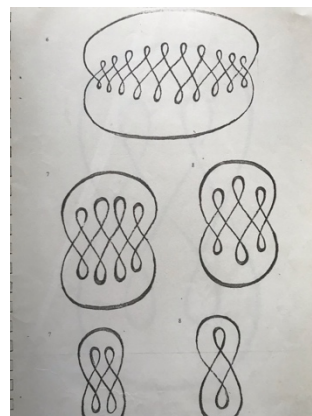
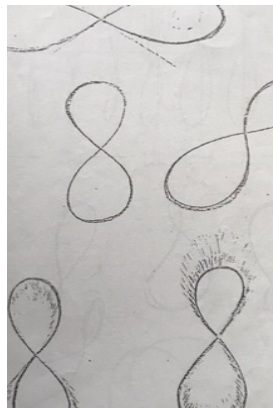
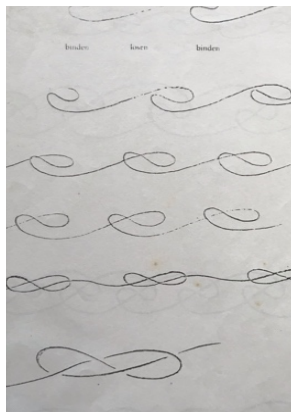
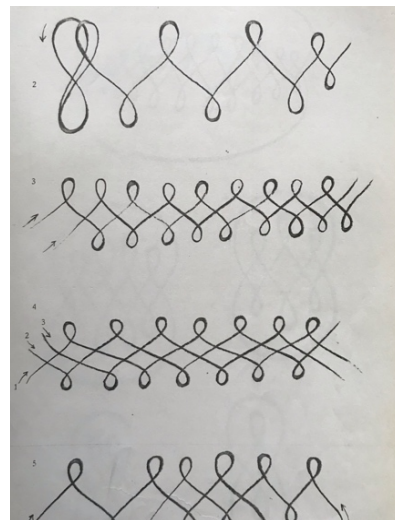
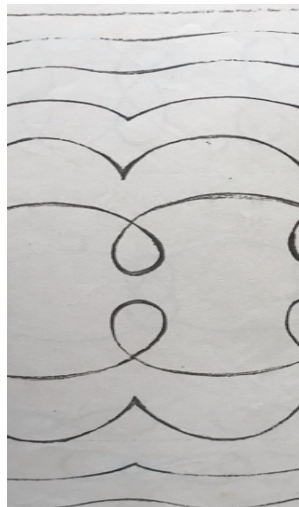
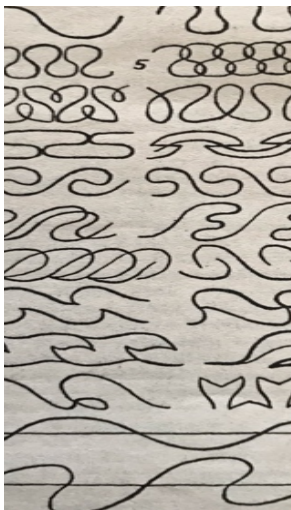
Exercises of vertical lines from the top to the bottom are a good start. You may tell a little story, as the king in the woods, or the tallest tree to the smallest.

After practicing with straight lines one can make curves. The snake that moves. The snail that moves very slowly.

Forms may be drawn with the feet on the paper, in the sandbox or whatever is available.

The important thing is to have these two experiences of straight and curved lines.

Lemniskate, similar to the figures below, the symbol for the infinite. Drawing in the vertical and in the horizontal. It is a form for harmony and integration.



These are examples of form drawing.  
One can tell a very brief little story about them.

Free style drawing with a story or a theme for the times of the year. The drawings may be used to decorate the room, or they may be taken home.

## 7. PAINTING

Watercolor techniques are ideal because of the transparency effect. However, gouache may also be a good option. Finger paint can be a lot of fun for smaller children.

It is very good to work with different colors of dirt. One can sift the dirt and then add glue. It is a quick method and people can produce their own paint.

### WATERCOLOR/GOUACHE METHOD

Use two sizes of flat brushes: a number 18 and a number 12. This way the surface is experienced avoiding contouring.

A basic palette with the 6 basic colors is used: lemon yellow, vermillion, carmine, ultramarine, and Prussian blue. Look for similar colors if these specific colors are not available, but it is important to have yellow, red, and blue. Don't use black or white.

### Wet on wet technique

This is easy and usually produces a nice result. Avoid creating forms too quickly and promote a much freer experience of color. This helps breathing.

The format A3 is ideal (11.69 x 16.54") for a heavier Canson type of paper, but newspaper or even cardboard may be used when it has been previously given a layer of white paint.

First wet the side of the paper that will not be used and then the side which will be painted. Water excess should be removed with a very soft sponge. One may alternatively dip the paper in a basin full of water and after removing the paper from it, blot the water excess with a sponge, making sure there are no bubbles left.



Exercises:

1. Conversation with colors

Let's start experiencing colors one at a time.

What are the qualities of the colors? Today we will be painting the blues. What do you think of blue? Where do you see blue?

We will do the same with the yellows and the reds.

After that we will work in pairs of colors. This conversation will produce another color.

Create a little story for the colors.

A very vain red, a very calm blue. We can create an atmosphere, a story, before starting to paint.

Then we add 3 colors; continue telling stories. At this point all colors can appear and we can paint the rainbow.

We can work quite intensely with the rainbow. There are many legends that mention it and it is a theme that can last timewise.

It is very good to paint illustrating stories and tales, however pay attention to the content and if it is suitable for the age group.



Sometimes an image may be helpful in the artistic creation.



### 8. MODELING AND CRAFTS

Start always with a ball that the hand can hold. Experience the sphere, the all, the cosmos. One can make forest animals or together in a group, create a forest with mountains, plants, and animals. Legends, fairy tales and stories about the Curupira and the Saci are excellent themes. Group work may also produce a city and other environments.



#### Crafts

Papier maché is a good option for low cost materials, as are recycled stuff like old paper.

A very simple craft is to make wool pom-pom balls.

take two pieces of cardboard, put them together, cut out two small circles, and then cut a small hole in the center of each. Lay a piece of yarn between the two matching circles. wrap yarn around the circle, into the middle of the circle, until you have covered the circles. Now carefully slide a pair of scissors between the two circles, you will have to cut some of the yarn on the edge of the circle to do this, and then cut the yarn loops.

now slide the piece of yarn which you laid between the circles, bring the 2 ends together and knot as tight as you can. slip the cardboard circles off the yarn, and trim and fluff.



It's very important that crafts projects be quick, that is, the experience of their beginning, middle and end should be possible, so they should not take longer than a week.

Other suggestions of crafts:

Finger knitting and origami. They are quick and the results are very beautiful.

Star dolls can be made for small children.

This doll can be made just with tying knots in small squares of fabric. You might add a little cotton filling for the head and maybe for little feet and hands.

Here is how to make them: take a square piece of fabric. In the middle goes a little ball of cotton or other soft material - it becomes the head. The four corners become the hands and feet.

The star doll may be carried while walking on a pentagram on the floor.



Puppet theater ideas

Branches, fabric remnants, paper and cardboard make beautiful wooden dolls and puppets.

Talk about the qualities of horses, cats and birds. What would you like to be?

All of these animals can be made and painted on cardboard and then cut out. A toothpick or a twig may be glued on the back. Dirt figures can be made in wet sand or make papier-mâché.

Gestures become animals. They can be made with your hands or with a little piece of fabric in which you tied some knots.

A whole zoo can be made this way.

### **10. STORY TELLING**

Expose the children and teenagers to literature and stories where the contents are about good values.

For ages up to 8-year-old: fairy tales, Grimm tales.

Ages 8 - 9: Fables, folklore tales. Do not say what lesson the story contains but ask what they think it is.

Cinderella is a good example of a Grimm fairy tale.

### **Reference:**

The Extra Lesson. Movement, Drawing and Painting Exercises to Help Children with Difficulties in Writing, Reading and Arithmetic by Audrey E. McAllen