



# The Wonderful Busy Ones

## Children Who are Six to Eighteen Months of Age

a newsletter for people who care about self-esteem  
Issue 60 - Volume 10, Number 6 - November, December, 1990

Dear Readers,

Welcome to this **WE** in which we *explore* the importance of *exploration*. You will find ideas for helping children initiate and explore and for increasing your own ability to see things in new ways.

Some of you may already be using the audio cassette tape, "The Wonderful Busy Ones," a day in the lives of Andrew and Annie. In this **WE** you will find suggested ways to use the tape as an aid to explorers of all ages. There is a transcript of the tape's letter which you are invited to copy and share as a handout sheet.

So explore,

*Jan Hilday Clarke*

## The Joy of Exploration

For the true explorer life is never boring. Tiring maybe, but never boring. True exploration is a position of observation and interaction that makes any person, situation, circumstance, or object worthy of being perceived in a new way. One need not go on an African safari with a

native guide to be an explorer — one need only recapture the alertness of the toddler, that busy child who is somewhere between six and eighteen months old.

Start by thinking about these affirmations:

### Affirmations for Doing

- You can explore and experiment and I will support and protect you.
- You can use all of your senses when you explore.
- You can do things as many times as you need to.
- You can know what you know.
- You can be interested in everything.
- I like to watch you initiate and grow and learn.
- I love you when you are active and when you are quiet.

Think of these affirmations as they apply to a toddler, as they echo the beliefs the toddler needs to incorporate in order to grasp the capacity for alertness and observation with which he is gifted. Think of them for yourself. How would each help you do your job better, be a more supportive family member, be more creative, be a happier, more alive person? Choose the one that is especially meaningful to you and say it to yourself five times. Now go ahead and explore the information and activities suggested in this issue. You can use them to help you perceive in a new, more alert way.

I love you  
when you are  
active  
and when  
you are  
quiet.

# The Wonderful Busy Ones

## Children Who are Six to Eighteen Months of Age

by Jean Illsley Clarke

Hi. My name is Andrew. I don't know exactly how old I am. My mom says I am at the wonderful age of exploring. My aunt wants me to hold up one finger when she asks how old I am, but I can't. I'm too busy doing things.

Today I picked lint out of the rug, dumped the basket of magic markers, poured milk out of a cup, rubbed cheese in my hair, took the pots and pans out of the cupboard, pulled a duckie up and down the hall, looked at his bottom to see what makes him quack, and tasted him in the mirror.

I splashed water in the kitty dish every time I went by, and in the toilet stool every time someone left the bathroom door open. I got under the table, and I stuck my fingers in the little holes under there.



I heard a pretty sound and my mom said "bells." That wasn't what I wanted her to say. A bell is something that mostly sits on a mantle and doesn't say anything.

Do you know the word I wanted my Mom to say? "Ring-ring."

I like lots of things. I like to mish in mashed potatoes. I like a clump of yarn to drag along. I love anything with hinges. I like to crawl down the stairs as fast as I can. Mom says the stairs are not steep, and now that I have learned how to go down as well as up, I am safe on them.

I like to cuddle when I want to cuddle. It feels so yummmmm! I cuddled with my dad last night. Ummmmmmmm. But I just hate it when someone grabs me for a cuddle when I am busy. I was on my way to the window to feel it and stick my tongue on it, and my mom wanted to cuddle. She is stronger than I am so we cuddled, but it didn't feel good. I don't like it when she stops me like that.

But it really feels good if she gives me a pat or a kiss on the head while I am on my way to whatever I am doing. My mom lets me connect my nose to hers with a strip of masking tape. Then we giggle and hug. I feel good! That warm feeling stays in me for a long time.

When my mother takes me to Mrs. Rockwell's house for the day, Mrs. Rockwell says, "Oh, here comes wonderful Andrew!" I usually scream quite a lot. Kids my age often do that because when mothers leave us, we aren't sure that they will come back. So I yell, and Mrs. Rockwell holds me and she talks nice to me, and she rattles a toy or puts a fuzzy flower under my nose, or just lets me explore her buttons or touch her eyelashes.

My mom says I used to explore her a lot when I was six or seven months old. After I got real sure about her, I started to explore some other things — a ball, a pan, a wooden spoon. A shoe took quite a while. I had to poke things through those little holes, and put my arm inside of it, bite the shoelace, taste the sole, smell the top and the bottom, lick the shiny part and drop it to hear how it sounds. That was when I was littler. But now I don't spend so much time with just an old shoe; I have to cover the whole room.

But I got distracted from telling you about Mrs. Rockwell. That happens to us explorers a lot you know; we get distracted easily because we are developing our curiosity. When we are older and in school, a strong curiosity will help us so we are busy developing it now, but it does make for slow story telling.

Anyway, I explore Mrs. Rockwell, just like I used to explore my Mom, only it is different. Mom is very nice and smooth and round and you can feel her bones underneath. Mrs. Rockwell is very nice and smooth and soft with no bones. Especially in front. I poke her and pat her for a while, and then I bump my head against her front for a while. That feels really good. Mrs. Rockwell tells me she will stay right here. We play peek-a-boo, and I don't feel so scared that when adults get out of sight they might not come back.

I take off to see what is on the floor. There are lots of little things that I can pick up and drop and feel of and bite and put in little boxes and rattle and pour out and stack and nest. There are some other kids there too. Some of the older ones try to play with me, and sometimes I do that just because they insist, but I'd much rather do what I want to do right there in the room with the other kids. Sometimes I crawl all over the other kids. They are soft and warm and wiggly. My mom and dad and my big brother Tom let me crawl over them at home, but they are lumpy with cold corners on their belt buckles.

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Grady helps Mrs. Rockwell take care of us. Grady tries to figure out what I like and make me do it. I dump the magic markers to see the colors fly and hear the noise and get that funny rolling feeling on my knees when I



crawl over them. When I do that, Grady tries to make me color on a paper, but Mrs. Rockwell stops her.

She says, "Grady, leave Andrew alone. Explorers know what they need to do. We don't have to tell them. Our job is to keep them safe and cuddle them, or play when they want to; otherwise we just provide a rich environment and let them explore." Grady says, "These plastic dishes and wooden spoons and old egg cartons don't look very rich to me." And Mrs. Rockwell says, "Well they are rich for Andrew because they let him test his senses. They are colorful and have different shapes and textures."

When Grady says, "Oh, Andrew, you are playing house so well!", Mrs. Rockwell says, "Grady, I prefer that you say, 'Andrew, I see you are under the table.' Let him explore being under the table any way he wants to. Don't you make it into a house for him. He may not be playing house at all. More likely he is practicing his prepositions. Explorers need to experiment with things like *up* and *down* and *under* and *over* and *off* and *on* and *through* and *behind*."

In fact, I was. I was under the table looking *out*, then *up*, then looking for holes to stick my fingers *into*, but there weren't any in that table, just some sharp screws. So I rubbed my fingers across them until my skin was sore, and then I went to look for Mrs. Rockwell.

Most of the time I go, go, go, but when I get tired I want a soft pillow or a nice blanket or a lap to cuddle on. Mrs. Rockwell has some pillows I can use anytime. Some are soft and fuzzy and some are cool and taste slippery.

I taste everything. Stacey's sweater is awful, but her cheek is nice. I like crackers and Cheerios and cheese and eggs and my thumb and bananas and peas. I like foods that I can pick up with my fingers. I like to eat food. I also like to rub and squish it and drop it. You might say I like to *experience* food. Mrs. Rockwell has us eat in the kitchen where she doesn't mind if we drop food on the floor, and she puts a bib over our clothes.

I don't care much about clothes. Especially if they are tight. Then they really bother me. I don't have to pretend I like things to please Mrs. Rockwell. She likes me just the way I am. Some adults sigh and say, "Oh, Andrew, you get into everything." Mrs. Rockwell says, "Andrew, I am proud of you. You are getting into everything today! Your curiosity is wonderful."

Mrs. Rockwell says it is my job to test out my senses — to find out how things *taste* and *feel* and *smell* and *sound* and *look*.

She says if adults provide me with with love, nurturing, and a rich environment of safe things, that my own developmental clock will push me to explore. She says **this exploration is the beginning of my independence and sets the stage for good learning skills in school, for motivation and self-starting and for responsible behavior later on.**

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She says having to learn not to touch vases and things comes in my next stage and shouldn't be allowed to take precious energy from my exploration tasks now. She says that **six to eighteen month old kids are learning to be smart — learning to trust their senses, to explore their environment and to learn about cause and effect and about options.** She says they will need those skills all of their lives.

When Grady grumbles that explorers are tiring and a lot of work, Mrs. Rockwell says, "Grady, think of your time as a rich investment, as the greatest gift you can give this child. And learn from him — try to see the world as he does, and you will never be bored or in a rut." Then she sends Grady off to take a short walk, or call a friend, or spend some quiet time alone before she gets tired. She says Grady must learn to take care of herself, too.

Grady is young and she doesn't know a lot about kids, but Mrs. Rockwell says Grady is learning fast. She is already saying two *yeses* for every *no*. When she first came she was saying "No, no, don't do this, you can't do that, no, no, no," all of the time. Now she is saying *no* only to things that are not safe or that she really doesn't want you to do, and she is saying lots of *yeses*. When she stops me from pulling the lamp down she says, "No, Andrew, you are not to pull down the lamp. You can have this egg carton or this jump rope." I push away the carton. Then she jiggles the jump rope, and I go off to catch it.

If I get hurt, Grady looks at me very carefully to see if I am all right. Then she comforts me if I want her to.

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When my mom comes to get me, I scream to let her know how scared I was when she left me. She holds me, and Mrs. Rockwell tells mom that I have been a wonderful busy one.

Mom says the room is a mess and Mrs. Rockwell says that, when there are explorers around, messy is beautiful and it won't take long to pick up.

Mom asks Mrs. Rockwell where she learned so much about kids my age, and Mrs. Rockwell says she has a letter written by an explorer just like me. Then she says to my mom, "Don't forget to bring Andrew back again — he is a wonderful busy one." That's my Mrs. Rockwell. She is pretty wonderful herself.

Here is a copy of her letter. You can read it, but I can't stay to listen. I have some important exploring to do. (The letter is on page 4.)



# A Wonderful Busy One\*

Dear Child Care Provider,

Please *expect me to be busy*. That is my developmental job. Please remember that *I don't need to do things well, I just need to do them*. I like it when you tell me what I am doing, not how well or how poorly I am doing it. If you keep telling me that I do things well, that I am *smart* or *cute* or *brave* or *spunky*, I get mixed up, and I think I have to act those special ways to please you. When you tell me what I am doing, when you say, "Andrew is climbing on the sofa," I feel loved for being who I am and the age I am.

Please say two *yeses* for every *no* or two things I can do for everything I can't.

Please *have lots of small objects with different textures* for me to rattle and drop and bang and throw and taste and stack and nest and a container for me to drop them in and pour them out of. This will help me avoid confusion about relationships of sizes, shapes and positions when I am grown up.

I don't need commercial toys, and *I do need the objects to be too large for me to swallow*.

Set a few limits for my safety and your comfort. *Be consistent*. Please remember to *accident proof the kitchen and the bathroom*. I taste everything I can find and cleansers and bleaches are poison in little bodies.

Please *remember not to force teach me*. Don't read me a story when I don't want to listen. If the book is stiff, I would usually rather play with the book and open and close the pages like doors than listen to you read.

Please find a way to *block off a space* so sometimes the bigger kids can play without me crawling through their projects and *so I can still have room to explore*.

Please *don't hurry me*. I will walk or throw away my bottle when I am ready. Us kids have our individual time tables, you know. Please remember that when I get stuck doing something, *it is more helpful to me if you help me do it myself than if you do it for me*. Please remember that *punishment or performance* such as tricks and toilet training *interferes with my development in this stage*.

*If you need to put me in a play pen for my safety, please remember not to leave me there for more than ten minutes*. I can't do the kind of exploring I need to do when I am restricted.

Please *expect me to check in with you*. I say a few words like "up" or "milk", but I may tug at your clothes or grunt or holler instead. I may not stay long, but I need to know that you are near and are willing to look at me and give me a pat or a word or a smile.

Please remember that *I am too young to understand sharing*. I don't even understand owning yet, how could I understand sharing?

Please remember that *exploring, self-feeding* (after 8 or 9 months), *messiness and curiosity are healthy behaviors in kids my age*.

And please *love me and hold me when I want to be held*.

*I love you,  
A Wonderful Busy One*

\*To order THE WONDERFUL BUSY ONES audio cassette tape, send \$6.00 per tape plus \$2.50 shipping and handling to: Daisy Tapes, 16535 9th Avenue N., Minneapolis, MN 55447, or call during business hours (612) 473-1840. Minnesota residents please add 6% tax. The tape has a male voice, Andrew, on one side and a female voice, Annie, on the other.

Other tapes available from Jean Illsley Clarke are *The Important Infants* (Birth to 6 months) and *The Terrific Twos* (eighteen months to three years). The set of three tapes is \$15.00, (with transcripts, \$19.50), plus \$4.00 shipping and handling.

To order from Canada you may write or call Ev Goodall, 3335 Upton Place NW, Calgary, Alberta T2N 4G9, (403) 282-2200. The tapes are \$5.00 each or the set of three for \$14.00 Canadian plus shipping and handling.

You  
can be  
interested  
in  
every-  
thing.

I like to  
watch you  
initiate  
and grow  
and learn.



# Suggested Activities

## To Use the Wonderful Busy Ones Tape in Groups

Read the article or listen to the tape and hand out copies of the "Dear Child Care Provider" letter (on page 4) and the list of the Affirmations for Doing (on page 1). If you are working with a group that is not primarily child care providers, change the greeting to Dear Mom, or Dear Dad, or Dear Foster Parent, or Dear Babysitter, or whatever is appropriate for your group.

### Ask people to:

- Identify which words and behaviors described in the tape offered each affirmation from the list of the Affirmations for Doing.  
Mark each item on the letter with a W, "This I do well" or with a B, "This I could do better." Ask people, in pairs, to celebrate what they "do well" and give each other suggestions for the "how to do better" items.
- Identify specific behaviors that the adults used in reference to each item in the letter. For each item, identify an alternative behavior to the one used that would also be helpful.
- Identify common behaviors of toddlers. Safe behaviors can be reported. The child should be distracted from unsafe behaviors. List each under "Report" or "Distract." Under each "Report" item list specific ways you could let the toddler know that you notice that behavior. Under each "Distract" item list specific ways you could do that.
- Do the suggested activities described under "To Use the Wonderful Busy Ones Tape in Your Family — Adults and Teenagers."

## To Use the Wonderful Busy Ones Tape in Your Family

### For Older Children

#### To Help Older Children Understand the Toddler

Ask older siblings and their playmates to listen to the tape:

- To learn about the job of a toddler.
- To learn not to take the toddler's activities and interruptions personally.
- To remember that, in a healthy toddler, this stage will only last a short time if she gets good love and care from the family.

#### To Help Older Children Strengthen Their Own Sense of Exploration

Make the tape available for older children to play whenever they want to.

It is important to remember that if any of us didn't complete a developmental task the first time around, we always have another chance. Older children can listen to the tape to help them accept that they were lovable toddlers like Annie and Andrew and that they did have or deserved to have wonderful care.

## For Adults and Teenagers

Listen to the tape with the other adults or teenagers who care for your children.

- Each person list what you know or guess about how your parents responded to you as a toddler.
- Notice that each item on your list describes a way that you will probably respond to a toddler unless you have intentionally decided to respond differently.
- Read the Affirmations for Doing (on page 1) to each other. Discuss ways you can offer them to the toddler and to each other.
- One of the toddler's tasks is to learn to trust his senses. Discuss how well each of you uses your senses.
- Sharpen your senses by listening to the tape while pretending you are a toddler and crawling about just as Andrew and Annie do.
- Another way to sharpen your senses is to put 12 common objects on a tray. Make up 20 uses for each object—uses as serious, frivolous or fanciful as you like.

## To Use the Wonderful Busy Ones Tape For Your Personal Growth

### Parenting Skills — Listen and Learn

To improve your parenting skills, listen to the tape or read the article early in the morning. Identify with the care givers. Remember that the story includes a mom, a dad and a child care provider because those are the people who provide most of the child care. You can think of each of them as a loving adult and you can learn from each of them how to offer love and care.

Listen every morning for three weeks or until you are aware that you are providing love and care that works, and that you are proud of. Don't worry about feeling comfortable or natural and don't worry about spoiling your toddler. Children who are loved a lot as toddlers grow up to be curious, inquisitive people who do put things away and who do finish what they start. Refer back to the article or tape whenever you need a boost. Post the Affirmations for Doing and say, read or sing them to your toddler every day.

### Personal Growth — Program Dream Time

To improve your ability to accept and love your own **doing, exploring** part of you, listen to the tape or read the article just before you go to sleep. Identify with the child. In this way you program your natural dreaming-healing time to incorporate the loving, supportive messages within yourself.

Continue this activity for two or three weeks or until you feel yourself being more alert and creative. If you didn't get some of these messages the first time around, find someone to help you grieve those losses so you can be more open to taking in these health-giving messages now. After you stop listening to the tape, say the Affirmations for Doing to yourself every night. Return to the story for a boost whenever you need it.

\*Thanks to Gail Nordeman for suggesting these personal growth activities.



## Opening Activity

### About the Joy of Exploring

Hand out name tags.

- Choose a partner.
- Make a name tag for her and ask her to tell you about some place, idea or activity that she likes to or would like to explore.
- Introduce your partner and tell the group about her exploration if she is willing for you to share that information.

## Closing Activity

### About Supporting Exploration

At the end of the meeting, briefly review the activities of the meeting.

- Ask several people to share what they think is the single most important way they can encourage themselves to keep an attitude of wonder and exploration.
- Ask for resentments. Listen to resentments, do not defend or explain.
- Ask for appreciations.
- Ask the group to read the following affirmation to themselves and then to join you in reading it aloud if they want to:

"When we were little we needed adults to protect us while we explored our environments. As adults we create safe ways to explore ideas, activities and our physical environment, and we also help others to explore safely."

EXPLORING

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