

## **Getting Some Respect on the Playground!** **Suggestions by Else Göttgens – March 2005**

Else remembers a school where the quality of play on the playground was a real issue:

### **What she Observed:**

It was unsafe for her to cross between buildings during her visits: children raced perilously close in their un-interrupted games, and balls barely missed her as she cautiously tried to cross open spaces with the use of her walker...

The children were generally wild; some were aggressive and disrespectful. Structured games could hardly be attempted as rules were continually broken; injuries of all kind were common. Instead of the children coming in from recess refreshed and happy, many invariably brought unresolved conflicts back to class.

To address such anti-social playground dynamics, more supervisors had been added and more rules implemented. This often does not have the desired effect.

### **What she Thinks:**

More rules and more “police” are band-aid solutions at best because they do not recognize or address the root-cause of the bad behavior.

Inappropriately rough, loud and potentially dangerous play among children is usually caused by their lack of awareness for the individuals who surround them.

When we truly experience (become aware of) others, we need very little additional guidance to know what behavior is appropriate: which words are right, what actions are needed. This simple fact is often forgotten. Long-winded lectures on “respect” and “proper behavior” are not necessary!

### **What she Recommended:**

Action, not words! In this case, she recommended that the teachers play all kind of “Blindfolded” games with their children:

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These types of exercises teach us to listen intently, to properly identify, and to move with care – they train us to become aware of others! This is the first step to becoming respectful...

### **The Outcome:**

The next time Else visited the school mentioned above, she had hardly taken her first step to cross between buildings when a child yelled “Freeze!” The ball was immediately caught and held by one student while two others came to offer their assistance. The game resumed as if uninterrupted after Else had passed. No adult had intervened in any way!

For additional “Else’s Gems” for teachers, visit [www.waldorfinpractice.com](http://www.waldorfinpractice.com)