



Engagement Play

A Child's Work

Introduction

I will be exploring what I call "Engagement Learning" and "Engagement Play." When young children are fully absorbed, either in an observation of something - an ant on the path and so on or in their imaginary play, they are "engaged" in the activity – their senses open and committed, their interest complete.

A great deal of material and study is now devoted to the observation that children are more and more in a state of alienation - from the world around them, their families, other children in school, from learning, from a sense of interest, enthusiasm and so on.

Along with the list of pressures affecting childhood we find in work like "Toxic Childhood" and "Last Child in the Woods" there is another aspect to the problem I have come to recognise: Children appear to be losing the ability to interact with the world and people around them which we normally consider "natural." It often goes un-noticed because of the pace of our lifestyles and the escalating business of children's activities.

We consider this ability to be natural because it has to do with play. But children are losing the ability to play in the way we feel they should. The reasons are many, but the fact that they are less able to be fully "engaged" at any time means that we not only have hosts of children with so-called concentration difficulties, but we also have children growing up with an increasingly intellectual connection to life and far less of the heart connection we would normally expect.