



Infant and Toddler Practice

The infant and toddler programme at Inspiring Minds is inspired by the practice of Emmi Pikler and Magda Gerber. This practice is based on respect. We allow children the time, space, freedom, and support to be themselves and discover the world in their own way. Relationships are the foundation of all that we do at Inspiring Minds. We use a Primary Care system where one teacher takes sole responsibility for a child to help them settle into their new environment and to establish a relationship with that child and their whanau. This system of primary care builds a strong relationship between child and teacher adding to the security a child feels within this environment. When a child feels secure they feel confident to play and learn.

Infant and toddler teachers work closely together, openly communicating with each other to develop a consistent routine for each child. This consistency from a primary and secondary caregiver, builds a child's trust that their needs will be met as they require, which helps the child to feel safe to explore.

Care moments are special moments that a child has one on one with their primary caregiver. This includes; changing nappies, having bottles, eating times, and dressing children. During these times teachers focus fully on the child and engage them in the routine by talking about what is happening. This means they will not engage in conversation with anyone else during

this time. Cooperation is encouraged so children become active participants in the process. Active participation makes the process enjoyable for both teacher and child.

Free Movement is an important aspect of our practice. Every average, healthy child learns to roll, sit, crawl, stand, and walk. It is unimportant when a child reaches each developmental milestone. We respect and trust infants to develop skills at their own pace. Children are not placed into a position that they cannot get in or out of on their own. "Babies who are given freedom to move and develop in their own way gain a self-knowledge that keeps them safer. Their inner sense of balance and judgment intact, movements are carefully calculated and they tend to make fewer reckless moves" (Magda Gerber).

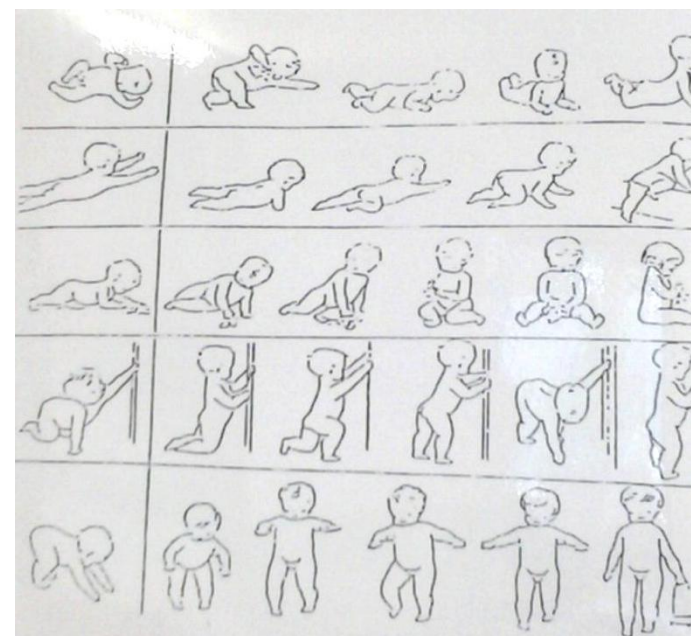


Diagram of the *natural* stages of movement (Dr Emmi Pikler and illustrations by Klara Pap).

We believe that each child is an initiator, an explorer and a self-learner. We ensure that the environment is physically safe, cognitively challenging, and emotionally nurturing. Teachers take care to set up appropriate play objects in aesthetically pleasing ways taking into account each child's age, developmental stage, and personal interests. Play for an infant means being free to move in their body. Play also means being free to choose what to play with and to play with it for as little or as long as they want. Uninterrupted play promotes concentration and a long attention span. When we interrupt a child, we stop what they are doing, whatever process they may be in the middle of, as they focus on us. Our interruptions, no matter how well intended, become distractions.

Infants and toddlers are curious and love to interact with each other. This is very much encouraged with a teacher always close by. The open plan outdoor environment means children of all ages can interact freely. Our infants and toddlers all have very special relationships with each other and teachers support strategies for these interactions.

Magda Gerber's famous quote is "Observe More, Do Less". From our observations come answers. No one knows for certain what a baby is thinking or feeling, but observing is the best way to tune into a child. At Inspiring Minds the teachers spend a lot of time sitting back and observing our children explore and discover the world around them. By observing we gather information about the child which aids us in understanding their needs, and interests, helping us to better plan for them.

Another important moment between teachers and children is mealtimes. Mealtimes are flexible; children can come to the table when they are hungry and ready to eat. All children are entrusted to use real bowls, plates, and glasses. We give children the opportunity to make choices and be actively involved to make mealtimes pleasurable.

Children sit at a low table where their feet can touch the floor. Children are only sat at the table when they are able to get into the chairs themselves. Until this time infants are held on their primary caregivers lap for

mealtimes. Bottles are also always given to children on their primary caregivers lap. The flexibility, choice, and responsibility that children experience during mealtimes helps to create a very meaningful learning opportunity and positive attitude towards food.

The teachers at Inspiring Minds believe wholeheartedly in this style of teaching practice and are very passionate about sharing this information with the community.

Additional Information about this style of practice:

We have the following books available at Inspiring Minds:

"Your self-confident baby," by Magda Gerber

"Dance with me in the heart," by Penny Brownlee

"Dear Parent: Caring for Infants with respect," by Magda Gerber

Facebook page: Janet Lansbury - Elevating Childcare