

Movement

Movement is a key component in a healthy life – something most adults have discovered the hard way. Movement is how we come to integrate the many, many sensory messages we are receiving moment to moment, bringing them together into a meaningful whole. When we can't do this, we can't tell the dangerous from inconsequential and we feel unsafe; then that fight-flight/freeze cycle kicks in to save us, and learning and joy are not possible.

We must first feel basically – not perfectly, but basically – safe in our bodies; central to this is our ability to accurately interpret the sensory messages flooding us all the time. This is why in Enki, we start every day with attention to bringing the body into a harmonious and energized state.

To make it a dependable part of life, and make sure it includes the kinds of “learning nutrition” the child needs, we must structure movement into the day. So for openers, you need to figure out what type of structure will work best for our group's focused movement work. There are countless ways one might structure this; below we offer three suggestions:. Choose the one that feels most in harmony for your family or class, and then *print that section only* – put it in the binder.

- 1) the enhanced exercise walk (playground time and heavy chores can fit here, too);
- 2) the formal circle; and
- 3) the adventure walk.

Read over the following brief descriptions of each structure with a light touch. Don't worry about perfect, just go with the one that catches your interest, trust that that is a great starting point. You can, and will, fine tune and expand it as you see how things unfold; you may even switch horses – the goal for now is just jumping in, choosing one is all that matters; it is a starting place – it's a date and not a life commitment! Once you choose, go back and look at that one with more care.

In looking at these, it may be helpful to know that in each of the sample structures, we are looking to establish a particular four part sequence, one we have found most beneficial to nurturing, settling, and focusing the children. Each of these can be – and when using Enki more fully, will be – expanded and enriched to further assist the child's physical, neuro-sensory, and cognitive development. The first three are often all part of one activity and endless mixing and matching are possible, but at a ground level these five parts are:

- a) gathering
- a) awakening or engaging the heart and breath (aerobic activity);
- b) midline crossing activities (often a natural part of the above or the below);
- c) base sense integration
- d) movement closing/transition ritual

a) gathering: this is important in all situations, and usually happens after some looser play, whether at home or in a school. It is a simple song and movement sequence that flows through the whole year as an anchor. In some situations, like those beginning with a morning walk, the gathering as a family or class may actually happen at the end of more expanded movement as a closing activity. The important issue is that there is a dependable activity that says, “We are here together” to the children, without concept and in their bodies.

b) awakening or engaging the heart and breath (aerobic activity): this is literally an awakening of the heart and breath as an adult would do with a speed walk or morning run, etc. When we awaken the body this way, biochemicals are released that increase focus and prime us for learning. There are an infinite variety of ways to do this and any are fine, as long as they are done with gusto and for 15 or more minutes; the child’s heart and breathing need to speed up to the point where he is sparkly and there is an increased redness or glow in his cheeks (no matter his skin color), but you do not want him tired out.² We are connecting with our own rhythmic movement, and the health and strength of our bodies here. **As is true for any movement work, it is important to begin slowly and build up so the heart has a chance to get in gear.**

c) midline crossing activities (often a natural part of the above or the below): there are three central midlines in our bodies : left/right; front/back; and up/down. As is described in the Enki Foundation Guides Book III, movement across each of these corresponds to movement or communication between different parts of the brain. The left/right midline corresponds to the two hemispheres of the brain, each with a very different set of skills. The up/down midline corresponds to the forebrain (newer) and hind brain (foundational) communication. And the forward back corresponds to the movement between inside and out, the social plane. Clearly, the ability to move fluidly across all three sets of midlines is critical to navigating life!

The *fluid* crossing of each of the three is important to brain development, higher thinking, and skill development. This ability is developed through movement, and developed slowly between birth and age eight. In the early schooling years, attention to seeing that this is happening and to exercising to strengthen each crossing is an important investment in learning and health. The young child, right through kindergarten, may well not cross any of these yet – and not be aware of it. Just let him do the movement his way and watch how, over time, it will change from inner development and exposure. “Teaching him the right way” actually undermines this developmental process.

d) base sense integration: we all must take in a veritable onslaught of sensory messages and make sense of them, every minute of every day. Without this ability, we cannot distinguish safety from danger or opportunity from threat, and the fight-flight/freeze cycle stays on high alert. At a foundational level our ability to do this happens through of a series of integrating movement patterns that lead to what is called *effective* sensory integration (no one’s is perfect!). The initial movements are what are known as primitive and postural reflexes and the base sense integration; these processes work together. By the time the child is of school age, we hope the reflexes have all integrated and gone dormant, so our focus is on the base senses; remaining challenges at the reflex level will be covered in the remedial section. The base senses are: vestibular, pro-

² Details on the neurological impact of aerobic activity and its importance for learning can be found under “body/sensory integration” in the Integration of Body, Speech, and Mind section of the Foundation Guides.

proprioceptive, and tactile. The vestibular is primarily in our ear canals and gives us balance; the proprioceptive, is in our muscles and joints and it tells us about force and speed, and the tactile is over our entire skin as well as at our finger tips, and it tells us about the boundary between ourselves and the world. Each of the base senses must be nourished and integrated in itself and then with the other two for us to navigate the world and learn effectively.

e) movement closing/transition ritual the closing ritual is part of establishing a rhythm to the day that allows the child to release his alarm cycle (fight-flight/freeze) and relax into learning.

GLOBAL LANGUAGES: If you are able to offer a non-native language experience, we recommend that as much of the movement work as possible happen in the non-native language – this is detailed in the Foundation Guides Book III, but for now, giving *all* commands that call for a physical or kinesthetic response in the non-native language, throughout the day is plenty. Also including active circle games and activities in the movement work in the foreign language will help the child get a base in the language.

CAUTION: if a child is irritated by or resistant to a particular type of movement, it is important to simplify or back off. Try a few simpler things and if these are still irritating to her, read about sensory and reflex integration in the Foundation Guides Book III, and if you need more help, talk with the core faculty member on your guidance call or check out the consultation options on the website. Pushing a child when his nervous system is not ready is a sure way to ignite the fight-flight/freeze cycle and then no growth is possible. On the other hand, if the child is struggling here in an engaged manner, it is important to support him and not just skip over the difficulty – **all learning and growth depend on our ability to correctly interpret and apply sensory messages.** There is extensive information about this in the Foundation Guides Book III, and in the remedial screening section of the Teacher’s Workbook.

In leading movement activities we are calling on and strengthening the child’s natural capacity for being imprinted – what is often called imitation. This **open reception of the world is the starting point for all learning, and movement is an excellent activity through which to strengthen it.** Whether you are going on an enhanced walk, an adventure walk, or doing a formal circle, simply begin the circle with an opening song or activity done once. Do all other circle activities about three times, and end with a closing, done once. Throughout, it is a matter of inviting the children into the movement through modeling.

Whatever form the adult is using for movement work, she leads the child(ren) through 20 to 30 minutes to engage their muscles, heart, breath, and blood, and onto the more specific sensory integration work. The goal is to take the children into a rhythmic, relaxed and alert, physical and psychological harmony within themselves, and as a group or family. By the final activities the children should be sufficiently at rest as individuals and as a group or family to fully enter the next activity – whatever it may be. The point of this work is to move into a deep rhythmic harmony in the body, *not to entertain.*

In each of the approaches to movement described here, no matter how perfectly chosen or executed, there will be times when the child resists. We recommend continuing in a matter of fact manner as you would with anything you felt was important for the child. If the resistance

continues for weeks, you may want to look more closely at the child's needs and at where you are missing the mark, and shift accordingly. Shifting and changing is part of the process, but we do not want to be jumping around on a whim – his or ours!

All three of the suggested movement sequences offered in the following pages are different expressions of the same vision: helping the child to activate and integrate in his body to prime him for learning and joy. Overtime, this depth of engagement with movement will be a very important ground for the child and the family, but, in considering all the realities of our lives, we must remember that where the child *is right now* is of central importance, actually, it is the only starting point! So if the child is not familiar with following while you model, you may have to build up to this full program a little at a time. Maybe for a start, no matter which movement sequence you think will be best in the end, you just sing a relevant nature song while you go for a morning walk or bike ride or have playtime outside, and at the end of that, you do a closing while the child watches and joins in as he is ready. A little at a time you build up to a more deeply nourishing kinesthetic program.

By the same token, remember that structured movement will likely be a new addition to life for all, especially in the homeschool. Don't ask the child to be comfortable right off. Just jump in and do what you have chosen, embodying it as completely as you can, and ignore the child as long as he is not hurting someone else. In the school you can have a couple of "watching chairs" where children can sit until they are ready to join – not as a punishment, but as a chance to watch while you wholeheartedly share this new culture.

To make it easier for you to begin to structure movement into your life, each of the sequences in the next pages is followed by the sheet music or written verses that are used in that sequence (even if they are a repeat from an earlier one); they are listed in the order suggested. Make a choice and then *print only those pages* and put them in your binder.