

## *Working with the Dead*

*Meditations and spiritual content for the teacher from the work of Rudolf Steiner.*

Volume 2 in the Little Series. Helmut von Kügelgen, Editor. Reviewed by Beth Knox. Published by WECAN, 2003.

There is much death and violence in the news that cannot escape our children. Where can one turn to find some deeper understanding surrounding such acts? Yes, those people all died, but then what? Very few individuals or institutions offer us insights into the journey beyond the last breath. And none have offered advice regarding how we can continue a relationship with those who have crossed over into death.

Rudolf Steiner wrote and lectured extensively on this subject. He is a breath of fresh air in contrast to the prevailing worldview of “dead and gone forever.” His insights on our life between death and birth give hope to the grieving. However, there has been a need for a small, digestible means of accessing these insights and moving toward a new relationship with our departed. The Waldorf Early Childhood Association’s recently published *Working with the Dead* is an answer to this need.

In *Working with the Dead*, some light is shed on the darkness and mystery surrounding death. What happens immediately after death? Where does our soul or etheric body go? Is there a difference between the death of a child and that of an adult? Is there anything we can do for those we love after they have died? These questions and others are answered in this small booklet. If we

can begin to understand the landscape beyond our sight, then perhaps we can offer comfort to our children. Children were born to earthly life more recently than we were, and so can grasp the invisible with their imaginations easily, if we but remind them.

My one concern with *Working with the Dead*, are the various references to the Christ and the Christ deed. My wish is that the understanding it offers could be universal in scope, and I fear offense for those of different spiritual persuasions. That said, *Working with the Dead* is a wonderful place to begin one’s studies of the vast realm of life after death or to remind us in a succinct manner of what we have read elsewhere. It might also lend support toward understanding and accepting the heartbreak of a loss in a community. Doing so for the sake of our children will not be the first time their needs have led us to greater wisdom.

Beth Knox is founder and Executive Director of Crossings: Caring for Our Own at Death, a national, educational, non-profit resource center for home funeral care. Crossings offers workshops across the country on caring for our own departed. For more information contact: Crossings: Caring for Our Own at Death, P.O. Box 721, Silver Spring, MD 2090, 301-593-5451, [www.crossings.net](http://www.crossings.net).

## *Dignity of the Young Child*

*Dignity of the Young Child: Care and Training for the First Three Years of Life* is published by the Medical Section at the Goetheanum and the International Waldorf Kindergarten Association and is now available through the Waldorf Early Childhood Association.

Caring for the very young child, in a home program or a childcare center, is a humble yet spiritually profound task—a task that challenges us to develop a culture of love. Developing this culture of love begins with nurturing and cultivating our own inner life and powers of observation, and extends to the building of new forms of community

with children, families and colleagues. This book offers a wealth of resources for those who take up this task. Its contents arose from the sharing of experience and collegiality among five hundred childcare providers at an international gathering at the Goetheanum in 1999. *The Dignity of the Young Child* also serves as an excellent preparation for the upcoming international Birth to Three/Child Care conference which will take place in July 2004, in Järna, Sweden. Retail price: \$30, plus \$5 shipping and handling. To order call the Waldorf Early Childhood Association, 845-352-1690, or Sunbridge College Bookstore, 845-425-0983.

## *Set Free Childhood*

By Martin Large, published by Hawthorn Press,  
227 pages. Reviewed by Stephen Spitalny.

The double meanings of the title set the stage for this wonderful book. It is an excellent resource for families and for teachers trying to offer suggestions to parents.

This important book describes both the limiting effects of screen experiences on the child, backed up by recent research, as well as attempting to encourage parents to make a difference in their children's lives by protecting them from the "corporate media machine." Martin Large wants to encourage parents to reclaim childhood for the children, and he offers many concrete suggestions, and even some constructive ways of coping. This book presents aspects of the "dismemberment" of childhood, as well as suggestions for the "re-membering" of a holistic, humanistic vision of childhood. As Mr. Large says about the book, "This is a book for dipping into, as and when needed."

On page 11, some of the central questions of the book are listed. They include: \*How do happy, healthy and confident children develop? \*How can we make informed decisions based on research about what is right for our own child in terms of TV watching and computer use? \*How can families furnish a creative, enjoyable and richly nourishing life together?

The chapters have intriguing titles to entice the reader into the contents. They include: "Disturbing Observations;" "Watching Your Child Watch-

ing the Television;" "The Secrets of Childhood;" "Physical Hazards of Screen Culture;" "Social Hazards of Screen Culture;" and "Reclaiming Childhood for Children." Another wonderful aspect of this book is the Appendix, which includes a section of "Tips for Computer Use."

This small book covers a wide range of topics from neurological effects to movement injuries, from addiction to advertising, from social effects to cognitive and learning effects and ideas for limiting electronic media and coping strategies for families. This short review can hardly do justice to this book that protectors of childhood have been waiting for. I wholeheartedly recommend *Set Free Childhood* for all parents, parent libraries and schools as a foundation and resource in the work of protecting childhood. Buy some to give to grandparents as well.

Thanks to Martin Large for his work toward reducing or eliminating screen culture from children's lives and challenging the mighty forces of corporate media in their attempts to create a future consumers. Thanks also to Hawthorn Press for publishing another title in their *Early Years* series that supports the work of early childhood educators and the development of children everywhere.

Stephen Spitalny is a teacher at the Santa Cruz Waldorf School and a board member of WECAN.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

## *Calendar of Events*

Jan. 10, 2004. **A Winter Felting Festival** sponsored by Juniper Tree Puppets in Boulder, CO. Create hand felted winter seasonal pocket story landscapes and story helpers. Contact Suzanne Down at 303-776-0937 or [suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com](mailto:suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com).

January 11-12, 2004. **Lifeways Mentor Training** with Cynthia Aldinger and Rosario Villasana-Ruiz at Rudolf Steiner College. This event is for individuals interested in becoming LifeWays mentors, consultants or trainers. Contact Rosario Villasana-Ruiz 415-587-0802, email [rosariovillasana@hotmail.com](mailto:rosariovillasana@hotmail.com) or Cynthia Aldinger 405-447-2365, email [caldinger669@cs.com](mailto:caldinger669@cs.com).