

A Circle for Spring

— Laura Donkel

With today's child, I believe it is of utmost importance to fully move in the morning circle. How else can one find one's limbs and feel one's muscles and joints and experience the wonderful curves and lines that make up the body?

Science, math, and literacy—the foundational studies that many parents are seeking for their child—are all found in morning circle. As early childhood educators, it is paramount that we embrace this delightful time of structured movement, of exploration and self-discovery. Hopping in the linear vertical plane, a child faces gravity; rolling around on the ground, the child massages the vestibular system and experiences her own sensory self in connection with the earth; crawling on the floor and then going into a standing position, a child feels the horizontal shift to upright-ness and experiences the adjustment. This delicate balance of back and forth, up and down, in and out, resonates throughout the day. The breath is called to task.

Finding one's way back to circle in relation to the whole class gives an experience of point and periphery—geometry. And then come the words: articulated clearly, balancing vowels with consonants. Poetry. Song. Verse. Language. And finally, the spiritual realm: we enter together into this magical place called circle, inviting each and every child to imbue the healthy imagination. In harmony with the seasons, we speak with reverence to the child's oneness with nature. All in a simple circle.

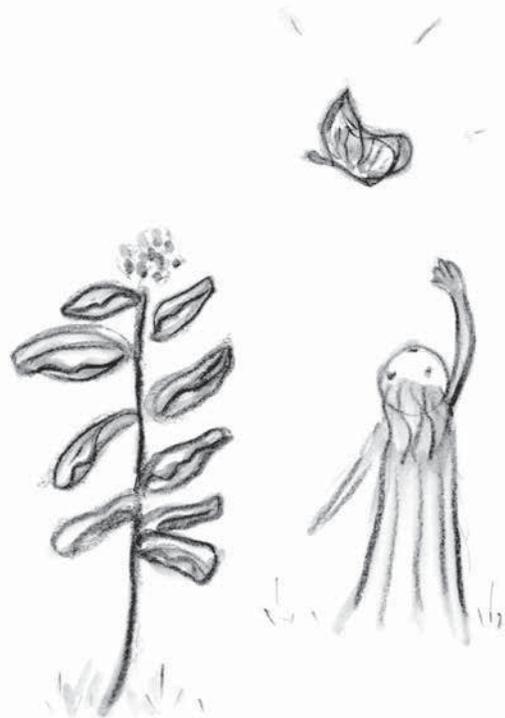
Beginning the day with intentional movement is a real gift to the child—and indeed, it also awakens and refines our own sensorial make-up. Enjoy.

This circle includes Mother Goose rhymes, songs and poems passed down from teachers and friends as well as verses from *Spindrift* and *Spring* from the Wynstones series. My daughter, Annie, taught me the Spring Birdies' Ball, which she learned when she was six years old. It's a favorite of both of ours. ♦

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NOTE: This circle needs a bit of set-up before beginning. You will need a green cotton play cloth suspended between two child-sized wooden chairs. I used play clips to hold the cloth in place. Drape it like a bridge for you and the children to crawl under. I set it up about two feet from where we do our morning circle.



Drawing by Jo Valens from Tell Me a Story

Spring Circle

Can you catch a rabbit with ears so very long?

He'll hop and hop and hop about on legs so very strong.
He'll nibble, nibble carrots for dinner every day

And when he's had just enough he'll scamper off away.

A caterpillar climbed to the top of a tree

I think I'll take a nap said he.
Under a leaf he began to creep.

Sing:

E' D' B E' D' B E' D' B-A G G B D'
I'm creeping, I'm creeping, I'm creeping under a leaf.

E' D' B E' D' B E' D' B A G B D
I'm creeping, I'm creeping and soon I will go to sleep.

He spun a silk bed and fell fast asleep.

Springtime came tiptoeing over the lea
And found caterpillar sleeping so peacefully

Wake up, wake up, wake up sleepyhead.
Wake up, wake up, it's time to get out of bed.

The caterpillar woke up that fine springtime day
And saw he was a butterfly. Off he flew away.

Sing (song adapted from L. Henning):

D' B D' E' D' B D' B A B E' D' B
Lovely little butterfly, flying high, butterfly.

B A G E D E G-A
Spread your painted wings so fair,

B A G E D E G-A
Blossoms sailing through the air

D' B D' E' D' B D' B A B E' D' B
Lovely little butterfly, flying high butterfly.

*Standing on both feet, hold arms straight up over head,
hands bent at wrists to mimic floppy bunny ears*

*Begin hopping around the circle, arms up over head
Stop and bend knees, bring fisted hands by your
mouth and pretend to munch across knuckles
Return to rabbit position and hop some more*

*Repeat above section. Then, in standing position, keep
arms above head from previous verse. Now bend legs
down while your arms are up. When you straighten
your legs bring your arms down so that your hands are
about shoulder height. The movement mimics how a
caterpillar crawls.*

*Crawl on ground around in circle and then under a
green play cloth suspended between two chairs*

About the musical notation:

*C, D, E and so on represent middle C and the
notes in the octave just above. C', D', E'
etc. are notes in the next octave above that.
Songs may be sung in a free rhythm, one
note per syllable, unless indicated otherwise.*

*Crawl under the green cloth, do a log roll across the
room and then crawl back to the circle and sit with
head down and arms wrapped around bent knees.*

*Optional: tiptoeing around in a circle once. I prefer to
stay in the chrysalis imagination.*

Begin to knock on the floor with one hand

*Slowly uncurl from position, stand up, stretch arms
and begin to move like a butterfly*

*Moving arms forward and backward like a butterfly,
dip up and down and circle around the room as you
sing.*

He flew to the woods and with his ears did hear sing
The fairies gathered around in their fairy ring.
This is the fairies' washing day.

With acorn caps for wash tubs
And tiny leaves for wash boards
Each fairy scrubs and scrubs
Their tiny sheets so fine and clean.

Upon the grass they're lying.

A spider weaves a little line to hang their clothes for
drying.

Sing to traditional tune:

*The itsy bitsy spider went up the waterspout
Down came the rain and washed the spider out.
Out came the sun
And washed away the rain
And the itsy, bitsy spider went up the spout again.*

The great, big hairy spider went up the waterspout

Down came the rain and washed the spider out.

Out came the sun and dried up all the rain.

*And the great big hairy spider crawled up the spout
again.*

And who has come this fine spring day?
Why, butterfly's friend, Larky Lee, and here's what she
has to say.

Larky, larky, larky lee
Who will fly up to heaven with me?
Never a lad who lies in bed
Or a sulky girl who hangs her head.
Up into the air go we, tahee, tahee, tahee.

What does Larky have in her beak?
An invite for birds, butterflies and bees
An invite for everyone, one and all
To the Birdies' Springtime Ball.

*Return to circle and come to a stance with one hand
to the ear as though listening.
Go on tummy, legs straight behind, resting on elbows
and forearms with palms face down on ground.*

*Connect pointer finger with thumb, one hand at a time.
Connect middle finger with thumb one hand at a time.
Rub first two fingers of right hand upon first two fin-
gers on left hand then switch (palms facing)*

*Rub floor with palms while staying on tummy and
keeping legs straight and still*

*First finger on one hand touches thumb on oth-
er hand, then first finger on other hand reaches for
thumb of other hand and so on climbing upward.*

Repeat hands climbing gesture

*Stand on knees and lift arms above head to form circle
Cross arms in front and out
Resume finger movement as above*

*Stand up, arms straight out to the sides. Reach out-
stretched right hand to touch left sole then return to
position. Repeat with left outstretched arm touching
hand to right foot sole.*

*Lift arms above head and gesture rain pouring to
knees and clap hands to knees.
Standing gesture arms above head round like the sun*

*Repeat outstretched arms to midline crossing and
touch opposite foot or do back crawl around in circle*

*Standing in circle, link your thumbs together, fingers
spread apart gesturing from right hip across midline
to above head and then repeat gesturing from left
hip across midline to above head.*

*Gesture a sleeping head on hands
Bend head down at neck and swing head left to right
Repeat linking thumbs up in air*

*Hands together palm to palm
Open palms up and reach out
Hold hands with partners on right and left side and
wait for teacher to pair up children*

Sing:

D' G' D' D' D' D' E' B B
The spring bird said to the nightingale

B A A D D G G G
We need to give the birds a ball

D' G' D' D' D' E' B B
So birdies great and birdies small

A A D' D' D' G G G G
All must come to the little bird's ball

D' D' G' G' E' B B B A A B B G
Tra la la la la la la la. Tra la la la la.

D' D' G' G' E' B B B A A B B G
Tra la la la la la la la. Tra la la la la.

The wren and the cuckoo danced with delight
The raven stood by the yellow bird's side.
The awkward owl and the bashful jay.
Bid each other a very fine day.
Tra la la la la la la la. Tra la la la la.
Tra la la la la la la la. Tra la la la la.

They danced and they sang
Till the sun went low
The mother birds then prepared to go
And birdies great and birdies small
All flew home to the little bird's ball.
Tra la la la la la la la. Tra la la la la.
Tra la la la la la la la. Tra la la la la.

And off they flew to the meadow to sleep
Near the shepherd who cares for his dear little sheep
And the birds and the butterflies joined in for a rest
Huddled and cuddled in their cozy little nests.

Sing:

D G G E D G G E
Little boy blue, come blow your horn,

D D G A B A G B A G D'
The sheep's in the meadow, the cow's in the corn.

D G G E D G G E
Where is the boy who tends the sheep?

D D G B D'-B G E-A B G
He's under the haystack fast asleep.

Children dance either together in a ring or with one partner, skipping around together to "tra la la" sections. Gestures for each verse invite large and small movements, up and down movements and side-to-side gestures always ending in the skipping dance

Bow to the right and then left.

Large eurythmy "bah" and small "bah"

Standing up make gesture of beak with straight arms, then scoot low and make beak with hands
Stand up and face partner holding hands to dance around

Repeat same tune for next two verses

Partners hold hands
Partners stand close beside each other
Put right palm on right cheek, then left palm on left cheek

Return to circle, make round gesture above head
Move round circle from above head to below
Gesture arms like wings
Make large then small beak with arms and hands
Fly together in circle
End with partner dance

Fly to ground and fold wings around front

Come to a sitting position to rest with palms together and head leaning against side of closed palms

Children might lie down on their tummies and rest or rest in a sitting position. Both are lovely.