
Raising Happy Healthy Children: Why Mothering Matters

by Sally Goddard Blythe

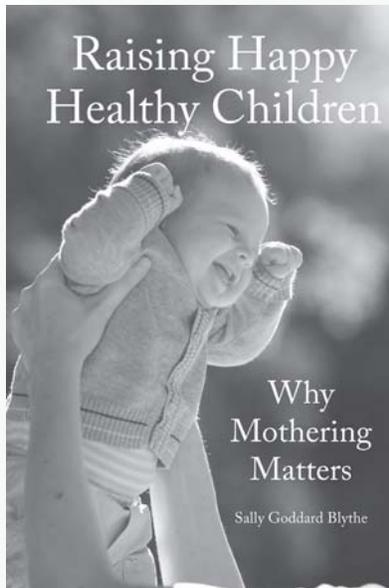
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Reviewed by Nancy Blanning

The works of Sally Goddard Blythe are a great support to our understanding of the importance of healthy sensory development. Her classic, *The Well-Balanced Child* (Hawthorn Press 2005), is a boon to Waldorf early childhood teachers. She provides a Waldorf-compatible picture of how essential healthy development of balance and self-movement are to security in bodily orientation and success in later academic life. *The Well-Balanced Child* is a good resource for our own understanding and is also well worth recommending to parents.

Goddard Blythe's new volume, *Raising Happy Healthy Children*, takes a giant step in detailing the vast range of influences and supports that encourage healthy growth and development in our times.

Raising Happy Healthy Children was previously published under the title *What Babies and Children Really Need* (Hawthorn Press 2008). This revised and expanded edition is filled with current research that makes undeniably clear that each step of child development relies on the strength of what came before. The best arrangement for ensuring close attention and protection to these early years comes from the mother (and probably with support of other consistent "mothering" caregivers). Goddard Blythe emphasizes that the act and art of mothering is undervalued and under-supported in our materialistic and money-driven times and needs more recognition and support.



She offers well-stated advice to parents that echoes Waldorf-oriented parenting guidelines. For example, she states that "Discipline surrounds a child with safe boundaries, helping them to learn to regulate their behavior, develop good habits, learn from mistakes, and to take other people into account. The aim of effective discipline is to teach ... Children learn best when expectations and adult behavior are consistent ... Children benefit from routine ...

Children need the real company of others ... Play is an essential part of learning" (p. 225).

For the educator, this book extends beyond the introductory description of development. Regarding movement and language, for example, the author details the intricate steps and stages the child passes through developmentally to achieve health and maturity in these realms. It is important for early childhood educators to be aware of what the child needs to grow well so we can intentionally encourage and offer enrichment to these experiences in our classrooms.

Studying this book will also supply us with mainstream vocabulary so we can speak to other professionals and to parents in a common language. Every time we can do this, our stature as education professionals rises among mainstream therapists and educators.

This book is not light reading, but it is well worth the effort. Its neurological perspective is a supportive companion to what anthroposophy and Waldorf education help us understand from a spiritual perspective. It benefits the growing child when we see child development from both perspectives. ♦