

## Rhythms and Schedules

*The goal of education is not the pursuit of happiness or a career with a big salary; rather, it is the development of an inner stamina and flexibility that will allow children to approach and respond to life. This goal has to be achieved in the most realistic way that's practical and with the broadest possible curriculum. In the Waldorf schools the sciences, arts, and humanities all play a part. We are firmly committed to the idea of the liberal arts, and we try to integrate all subjects so that no one class is taught in a vacuum, without correspondence to other subjects. By teaching all subjects and relating them to other areas, we prepare children to answer gradually the crucial questions of life.*

*Rene Querido, Creativity in Education*

In *The Modern Art of Education*, Rudolf Steiner spends a lot of time addressing the question of the need to bring a rhythmic, creative approach to teaching. He speaks of the need for the teacher to actually have a musical quality in himself. He sees the rhythmic system – the respiratory and circulatory systems – as the foundation for all artistic activities as it never grows tired. We never stop breathing and our heart never stops beating as long as we are alive.

Activities of thought and will, however, induce fatigue. In the realm of thought, early intellectualism, and in the realm of will, doing things which are not rhythmic, use up forces needed to support the healthy growth of the child. He says: “If we can imbue our whole teaching with an artistic quality, we influence the rhythmic system of the child. Such lessons actually make the child’s breathing and circulation more healthy.”

In order to bring healthy rhythms to our child, it might help to think in terms of “breathing in and breathing out”. Breathing in means peaceful, centered, quiet times, times to take in a story, to have a rest, to do contemplative work such as wet-on-wet watercolor painting or form drawing. Breathing out times are more active, more lively – more *outward*. Creative play, movement, singing and clapping games are more outward activities. Each lesson, each day, each week, every season should be formed with this simple image of creating balance between breathing in and breathing out in mind.

So when you’re planning your blocks or your individual lessons, ask yourself, “When do we breathe in and when do we breathe out?” Is there a balance between book work and movement, indoor and outdoor time, making things and taking in stories or information? Think about mood and how this can enhance or be enhanced by rhythm: loud boisterous songs are good for some times, peaceful quiet songs are right for other times.

A larger rhythm which moves through childhood and which is intimately bound up with the pedagogy within Waldorf education, is the image of hands, hearts and heads. We can look at the three stages of childhood (0–7, 7–14, 14–21) and see how the first is concerned mainly with the hands, with activity and will; the second seven years is when the artistic/feeling life predominates and which features most clearly in how the curriculum, for example, is designed; and in the last seven years, the child enters his