



SEPARATING, TOGETHER

By Suzanne (Marlene)

Last year, when our daughter was 3.5, we decided it was time to start working with her about separating from my partner and me. Since joining our family, she had always been with at least one of us – with visual, and often physical contact. We had recently discovered a parenting resource called “Parenting by Connection” (www.handinhandparenting.org) that really resonated with us and has since proved to be a phenomenal resource for our family. Up until that time, I’d do my best to comfort my daughter when she cried. I’d say things like “it’s okay to cry” while I held her close. Sometimes I sang to her, pointed out things around her she might find interesting, or spoke with her about what was wrong and problem solve ways to fix it. Occasionally, during a particularly intense cry, I’d get concerned something was

physically wrong and start to worry. Overall, I thought I was very patient with her emotions, and was allowing her to fully grieve. How wrong I was!

We had moved to our new home 5 months before we started to work on separation with our daughter. We had frequent contact with our neighbors, and one of them was kind enough to say “yes” when we asked if she’d help us out. We planned to use an approach called “staylistening” – a tool we now go to often from our parenting toolkit, and I’ll talk about in more detail below.

On the day we were going to try it, we told our daughter early in the day that her daddy and I were going to walk to a concert at a local park while she stayed with our neighbor. She had lots of

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HFP is a play-based cooperative preschool that nurtures and supports the individual development of each child with enriching and empowering experiences.

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

By Jeanette (Vega)

Congratulations Hawthorne Family Playschool Parents & Families!

You made it through the beginning of school: making new friends, your child or children starting their first day, you starting your first day, learning new jobs, and laying a strong foundation for your child's confident and enthusiastic relationship with learning. All this while juggling work and family. Amazing. Choosing a coop school certainly takes more time and collaboration than other school options. However, as you know, your hard work

pays off. Your baby's face beams with pride when you bring snack or support Teacher Susan in the classroom. Thanks for your time and energy that each of you contribute to our community and children.

As a transplant to Portland, now with roots eight years deep, I feel as though the HFP community helps round out some of my parenting strengths and supports me through my weaknesses. Even after living in Portland for several years, not having family in town still remains a significant struggle for me and my husband as we parent. This is a tough age; the under-five crowd leans toward demanding. The HFP community has shown that one doesn't need to be a relative in order to support and encourage all of us during hardships and celebrations. I love sharing our highs and lows as parents; drawing from a collective parenting mind-share is priceless. Time and time again this community rallies around families to provide support and encouragement, doing what needs to get done in order to keep our school and families going.



Presidential triumvirate: Two-time former president Carissa Carneiro, current president Jeanette Shupp, and former founder and president Ali King

Again, congratulations and thank you--you are paying it forward to our kids and community!

STARTING (AND RESTARTING) PRESCHOOL

By Jennifer (Asher)

The beginning of the preschool years is such a big step in the life path of a young child. It's often the first time they will be away from their families and placed into the care of another person. We knew right away that we loved Hawthorne Family Playschool and it was our first choice, but we wound up on the wait list. Knowing that preschool was something we really wanted for Asher to experience this year, we continued the search and eventually found a spot at a newer school and signed him up.

When the big day arrived, there was one thing that struck me hard. After so much time planning for and waiting for Asher to start school, so much time spent reassuring him that he would be okay, I found that I was the one having a hard time with the separation! I had totally neglected to acknowledge that he might not be the only one feeling some big emotions about this big change in our lives.

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ON SEPARATION, MORE OR LESS

By Francesca (Sofia)

If you had asked me a year ago to describe my ideal pre-school, I probably would not have included myself, finger-painting with my new (three-year-old) friends, nor my one-year-old son, staggering around the room like a drunken Frankenstein, trying to shove blocks into his mouth. But as it turned out, that's just what our family needed.

The separation anxiety was unexpected. My daughter, who is three, tended to view my comings and goings a bit like the recycling truck: a lot of fun when it came around, but you could find other things to play with when it was gone. But when I tried to leave her at play school, I suddenly became indispensable. It became clear that, though we were ready to paint, and glue, and scissor, and play in the sand box, we were not quite ready to separate. So I have been very grateful for the many supports HFP offers to those of us, whether three or thirty-three, who are working through that difficult transition.

Clara had a somewhat difficult time with separation, and for the whole two years Ezra and I stayed with her until the end of circle time, and sometimes a bit beyond that. During the 2009-2010 school year, when Clara had started kindergarten, we occasionally came to HFP for lunchbunch – partly for Clara to maintain connections with HFP, but also so that Ezra would not lose the familiarity and comfort he had established while Clara attended... I think he feels safe because even when he was just the little brother he was treated as an important part of the HFP community, by the kids, the parents, and of course by Teacher Susan, who always made sure Ezra felt welcomed and loved.

- Rachel (Ezra)

First of all, it was reassuring to see that I was not the first or only parent who stayed all day. In the first few weeks, there were three moms, three grandmas, and one aunt who came to stay, or just to visit. Often parents and younger siblings will postpone their good-byes until after Circle Time, the half-hour of singing/story



reading/thought-sharing. When I look around the circle, I might see Jackson (Vega's brother) playing with the train set, Simon (Sofia's brother) trying to eat the cork collection, or Connell (Kadin's brother) peeking out from the Ergo. It's more like a family reunion than the beginning of a day at pre-school. And of course, there's Lunch Bunch. Having a time when

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OFF TO THE FARM WE GO!

Josiah enjoyed the hay ride so much that he grabbed the first (tiny) pumpkin that he could find and then parked himself in the front of the



great - I remember Farmer Don commenting on how amazing it was that these kids at 3 and 4 knew the names of more vegetables than most grownups! Our group guessed artichoke, beet, and I think, dill, when he held them up.

Jarrett (Justine)

Overheard, at the snack table: As Oliver nibbled a frozen blueberry he said, "It tastes like Antarctica."

After a morning packed full of activity, Susan sits down with a group of children for snack. "It's good to be here with all of you at snack," she smiles. While Susan lets the group know she likes them and is glad to be with them, Ava takes Susan's comment literally, responding: "Well except Izzy." Ava's aware that Isabel is home sick. What a sweet acknowledgement that each person in the group matters. Ava's aware that "all of you" are not present; Isabel's at home resting.

wagon so that he could have a prime spot on the way back. He sat there for at least 10 minutes before the other kids returned, but he wasn't interested in getting down.

Melissa (Josiah)

We went to Kruger Farm with our daughter Justine. It was



My eldest child has always been comfortable with people, even those he didn't know well. Separation was not an issue when he began preschool at the age of 4.5. It was a smooth transition for him, but his younger brother sometimes had a difficult time leaving him at school. We decided to return to HFP partially because it

was familiar to Dane and that, as a younger sibling, he often wanted to stay and play. As we were talking about going to school, it became clear that my usually confident child was a little unsure of a school that was already familiar to him, and I was genuinely surprised. Once we were at the school and he was welcomed into familiar surroundings, Dane quickly gained his confidence and was willing to interact with classmates and parents independently.

Starting preschool for the first time has also coincided with a change in daycare arrangements where the transition has not been as smooth. I am grateful that he is at a school where he is comfortable and confident so he's not emotional every time I leave him there.

THE AUCTION DANCE PARTY IS COMING!

By *Jenny (Arrow) & Elise (Olive and Maple)*

Please save the date for Saturday, April 16th! Our **Annual Auction Dance Party** will be at Oaks Park Dance Pavilion from 4-7 pm. Costumes and dancing shoes are encouraged! This is a great excuse to invite your out of town family and friends to visit. We're pleased to announce that both Mudeye Puppet and Greasy Kid Stuff with Belinda and Hova (you can check them out on Saturdays at 8 am on 94.7 FM) will be performing. Great food, activities for the kids, beer and wine available, plus fantastic deals on local goods! Join us for our community's big party of the year on April 16th!

Our Chinook Book fundraiser was a wonderful success! Collectively we sold 130 books and



raised \$1300.00 for HFP. What a great way to start the year! Thank you to all of our families for making our first fundraiser a successful one!

KEEPING HEALTHY

By *Ali, ND (Leo)*

I came across an interesting study recently showing that using a multi-strain probiotic (with *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *Bifidobacterium* species) by mouth in children twice a day for 6 winter months reduced :

- Use of antibiotics by 84%;
- Absenteeism from child care due to respiratory infection by 28%; and
- Symptoms of cough, fever, and rhinorrhea by 28% to 60%

A similar immune benefit can be reaped in adults.

Things to look for in a good quality probiotic are preferably one that is enteric-coated, is refrigerated or doesn't need it, and is from a reputable company that has good quality standards and independent quality assessment.

Leyer GJ, Li S, Mubasher ME, et al. Probiotic effects on cold and influenza-like symptom incidence and duration in children. *Pediatrics*. 2009;124:e172-e179

Winkler P, de Vrese M, Laue C, Schrezenmeier J. Effect of a dietary supplement containing probiotic bacteria plus vitamins and minerals on common cold infections and cellular immune parameters. *Int J Clin Pharmacol Ther*. 2005;43:318-326.

When do you keep your child home?

For 24 hours after a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea, or if they exhibit signs that you know mean illness in your child, such as:

- Loss of appetite
- Unusually fussy
- Flushed cheeks
- Lethargy without a cause
- Excessively sneezy/coughy/boogery
- Unexplained rash

Wash those hands!

- Don't use hand sanitizers
- Warm water, soap, and lengthy hand washing is best
- Dry well

RECOMMENDED READING

By *Teacher Susan*

Exceptional children's picture books can playfully address serious issues in visually satisfying ways. The two following books deal with the critical emotional experiences of connecting and separating. Each author masterfully uses rhythm, rhyme and simple (yet brilliant) cartoon illustrations to address these universal human experiences with sensitivity and humor. These books are pictorial treasures to boot.

Jake Starts School, by Michael Wright

On his first day of school, Jake is not ready to be on his own, so his parents stay with him. The off-beat cartoons immediately draw readers in, representing the familiar scene of a young child clinging to the safety of his parents. The use of exaggeration assists readers to identify with the range of Jake's experience as he slowly progresses from resistance to comfort and confidence through the school day. We get to release separation anxiety with laughter as Jake peeks over his parents' shoulders in class, while the three of them are crammed into a child's sized desk, all three are piled onto a single tricycle or stacked on top of the jungle gym.



Widening a child's trust beyond parents to include a teacher is a necessary step in a child's development. When Jake first encounters the apple-clad Mrs. Moore, "Jake screamed and then he fled." But after some time checking out the play options at school, with the comfort of his parents by his side, Jake slowly warms up. At the end of this poignant story, the teacher invites Jake to hold a book for her, while she reads out loud to the class. Jake leaves his parents' side and steps up in front of his class. Jake becomes central to the activity, rather than merely observing it, while the "whole class sat and smiled at him. And inside, Jake felt good." Wright understands that shared experiences and the bond of a caregiver is critical to a child's sense of safety. Jake is pleased with his involvement and as "the closing bell rang out," Jake gives Mrs. Moore "his last cookie" – a gesture of gratitude and connection. With the help of his parents and his new teacher, Jake is well on his way to a trusting relationship with Mrs. Moore and his new school.

Oh No! Time to Go!: A Book of Goodbyes, by Rebecca Doughty

In her picture book, Doughty illustrates myriad connections and eventual partings with cadence and whimsical drawings. Throughout the book, a precious young boy says goodbye in a variety of ways to his dog, neighbor, uncle, cousin, aunt, grandma and friends. Loving, close relationships are depicted page after page. Doughty depicts tender relationships between people of varying ages, races, and gender. Further, she honors that animals hold a special place in a person's heart.



With each satisfying interaction, the boy confronts leaving – a temporary separation from the person and play he has been enjoying. In each case, saying goodbye evokes a feeling of loss. Doughty cleverly uses the boy's dog to mirror his expression and experience, so young viewers get double the visual cues of how he is feeling. The boy laments, "There's a million ways of saying words that mean you won't be staying. But couldn't we just skip the bye-ing? We could stay and keep on hi-ing!" Doughty clearly understands the importance and challenge of saying goodbye.. This book gives us exposure to the big emotions that surround goodbyes. And it offers us some hope in its closing, "but for each goodbye, there's a new hello."

STARTING PRESCHOOL

As I was processing my feelings about this change, we also began realize that the preschool setting we had chosen was not a good match for our son. As I began to reassess our options, I made one last call to HFP on the off chance that something had changed and they might have a spot available. Since I'm now writing an article for their newsletter, you can probably guess what happened. In just a few short days we were slated to start preschool again, this time at HFP.

As we gathered another set of supplies and filled out another set of paperwork, I began to have those same first day questions. However this time they were compounded with the transition away from one school's routines and friends to another. Would Asher be fully welcomed into his new school or had the children there already formed their alliances? What about the parents? Would they be up for getting to know yet another family? Were we truly doing the right thing by pulling him out of one school in favor of another? What if this school didn't work out either?

Asher's first day at HFP was perfect. Teacher Susan reassured me that he would be welcomed and included with open hearts and he was. He made friends with Lucian right away and the two played with each other beautifully as they bonded over construction trucks in the sandbox. As a parent there to observe and support my child I felt the warmth from the other parent helpers there, from Teacher Susan, and from the kids themselves. I couldn't put my finger on it but this just felt right.

A few weeks later as our family attended HFP's annual Harvest Picnic, I looked around and it struck me why this preschool felt so right for us. As all the families of current students and alumni alike gathered to share a meal on this beautiful sunny evening, I saw that there is a tangible sense of community at this school. When people arrived and spread out their



Pumpkins--and a frog!--in the pumpkin patch

picnic blankets, everyone naturally gravitated towards each other in one big cluster with each family's blanket being close enough to lean over and share a friendly conversation with the folks next to them on any side. Kids of all ages, current HFP students, alumni, and kids new to the school all played together with giggles on the play structures and delighted in painting preschooler-sized pumpkins.

When my oldest daughter, Rayley, was new to HFP in the fall of 2008, lunch bunch was crucial. It was the part of the experience that made it clear to my thoughtful, nervous child that this new school was not an experience she would have alone - it was a family endeavor. We were in it together, and these new friends of hers were new friends of mine as well.

Jenny (Arrow)

The sense of community at HFP is so strong that the network of families extends far past the current enrollees and touches many in the larger community of Portland. To me this is the beauty of co-op preschools and it is so wonderfully demonstrated at HFP. And in the smaller community of our own family it means that the uneasiness of separation that we or our child might experience as we leave each other for the school day is not felt. Rather we know that we are simply leaving our child with an extended family of caring and dedicated people who have his best interests at heart, just like we do.

SEPARATING, TOGETHER (CONTINUED)

questions like "why?", "where will you be?", "where will I be?" and "what are you going to do?". We answered all her questions -- many of them repeatedly. Our neighbor was prepared to stay with our daughter, but we made sure to tell her that if our daughter cried when it was time for us to go, we wouldn't leave, but would instead start staylistening. If our daughter went happily with her, great - we'd enjoy some dancing at the park. If our daughter began to cry, great -we'd help her let go of some big fears in a loving way.

Leading up to when it was time for us to go, my partner and I interacted closely with our daughter - we giggled, and hugged and chased and played. We felt a close connection with each other. We were outside playing, and our neighbor had joined us. We told our daughter it was time for us to go and that we would be back before it was time for dinner. We hugged, kissed, she went to hold hands with our neighbor, we started to walk away, and she started to tremble and cry.

We walked right back over to her, and I held her in my lap while my partner kneeled next to us. Our neighbor left. I held her in a slight reclining position so we could see each other. She sobbed - intensely. We listened. Occasionally I said things like "you don't want me and daddy to go" "you feel scared" and "you feel sad". When her crying would start to subside, I'd say "daddy and I are going to go on a walk" prompting more intense cries again. After about an hour of this, she stopped crying. We told her we would be staying with her that day and someday soon we would go on that walk while she stayed with our neighbor.

The next week we tried again. This time our neighbor and her family came over to our house to play with her in familiar surroundings. We had done much of the same "prep work" as before (talking with her about what was going to happen and playing and connecting prior to

the time we would leave). Again, as we were leaving, our daughter began to cry and we returned and held her as she grieved. This time our neighbor and her family stayed. After about 30 minutes of intense crying, our daughter was ready to stop. We then took turns role-playing leaving and coming back. I went outside while my partner and our neighbors stayed with our daughter. After a short while, I came back and we hugged. Next, my partner left while I stayed with the inside group. He came back and we all hugged. Then, my daughter and I went for a walk outside. When we went back, we hugged daddy. We asked our daughter what should happen next, and at her suggestion, she and her daddy went outside and then came back and hugged me. We were then ready for my partner and me to go outside while our daughter stayed inside with our neighbors. She said she wanted us to go out to the tree that's in front of our home, dance a little bit, then come back inside. We happily obliged as she stayed inside with our neighbors, all the while peering out the window at us. She eagerly hugged us upon our quick return. We cheered! She did it! We role-played some more, eventually without her peering out the window.

The following week, our daughter was ready to go with our neighbor. When it was time for us to leave, she held on tight to our neighbor with one hand and waved with the other. She stayed and played, while my partner and I took a somewhat nervous walk to the park to play a little frisbee and then go back. We were greeted with big hugs and a huge smile.

A couple weeks later, our daughter started what she proudly called "school" - a 3 hour playtime with this neighbor and 2 other children in our neighborhood. She skipped to "class" and later that morning, when they visited a neighborhood honey extracting party that I was attending, she chose to stick close to her "teacher" and waved and smiled at me from across the room.

SEPARATING, TOGETHER (*CONTINUED*)

A little more about staylistening:

- Staylistening is when an adult calmly stays close to a child who is expressing strong emotions through crying, tantrums or trembling and raging.
- It is common to spend thirty minutes to an hour staylistening.
- Most children say things like “I’m thirsty” or “I feel cold” or even “Let go of me” and “I hate you” during staylistening. There are ways to respond to these comments while keeping the focus on the expression of emotions.
- When we use staylistening, we hold our daughter in our lap where she can look at us, rather than up tight against our body where we can’t make eye contact. Depending on the child, the situation, and their relationship with the adult, it can also work to sit near them or even in the same room as them.
- During staylistening, we state out loud what our daughter is feeling, saying things like “you feel scared/sad/angry/frustrated” or the more general “you have strong feelings” (when we’re not so sure what’s going on).
- We follow that up with messages of support, such as “you are safe” or “I’m going to stay with you while you feel this way”.
- As our daughter’s crying lessens, we calmly tell her again about whatever triggered her emotional response, saying things like “It’s time for us to go now” or “you don’t want to stay here without me”. This usually prompts some more intense expression of emotion.

Staylistening can be an effective response to a wide range of feelings. Along with addressing separation anxiety, it can also be used to help a child face their fears or the hurt that may lead to withdrawn or aggressive behaviors. I believe that underneath a child’s whining, clinging, bullying, or tantruming is often the desire to connect and be heard. If any of you are interested in learning more about staylistening and “Parenting by Connection” I highly recommend their website. During our journey with it, I’ve also found it invaluable to talk with other parents who are using this approach, and I’d be happy to talk with any of you, share more details and answer any questions you might have.

ON SEPARATION (*CONTINUED*)

parents and kids can get to know each other on the playground lets the kids involve their parents a bit more in their school day, and allows parents to model for their little ones the process of reaching out and making connections.

This doesn’t mean that leaving is always easy—some of us won’t be leaving for a while. But it does mean that we are all aware of the loving environment that exists, which makes the separation process much easier. Or so I hear.

For those parents lucky enough to be returning with a younger sibling, the consensus seems to be that the separation process is much easier

the second time around. Most of the younger siblings have spent so much time at HFP that they are already familiar with the space and have played (or tasted) most of the toys. And because so many of HFP’s activities involve the whole family (playdate at Teacher Susan’s house, Kruger farm, the Harvest Picnic, Lunch Bunch) these children are familiar with many of the other parents as well. Of course, each child is different, and some younger siblings do take more reassurance. But when I watched my one-year-old perpetual motion machine gaze raptly at Teacher Susan for the length of an entire book, I was filled with a sense of relief. Next time will be much easier.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

A **special thank you** to Bonnie Pritchard, a neighbor of HFP who was instrumental in informing the neighborhood of our wish to build a rain shelter and garnering neighborhood support. We're very excited to expand our rainy-day play options! Thank you, Bonnie!

Also thanks to:

- ★ Jenny (Arrow) and Erin (Harvey) for spearheading the Harvest Picnic
- ★ Shayne (Henry) for taking the class and individual photos
- ★ Kim (Arrow's grandfather) for building us storage shelves in the loft room
- ★ Jenny (Arrow) for sewing curtains for the new storage shelving area



Alumni love at the Harvest Picnic



Fall 2010 HFP Dates

November 17

Community Meeting (6:30-8:30)

November 23/24

Thanksgiving Rainbow Fruit Platter

November 25-26

Thanksgiving; no school

November 30

Board Meeting

December 1

Board Meeting (6:30-8:30)

December 4 or 11

Winter Family Potluck

OPEN HOUSE!

The next HFP Open House will be February 12th. Mark your calendars!

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HawthorneFamilyPlayschool.org

For membership information, contact Shannon Rhoads at 503-332-6530.

HFP is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and donations (which are tax deductible) are gratefully accepted.



Please share this newsletter!