

Review by Ilse Davids, published June 2020 in Professional daycare magazine 'VROEG'.

Instructive insight into care and play moments in a baby/toddler daycare

This book by Hedie Meyling is inspired by Emmi Pikler's vision and consists of two parts. In the first part, the reader is taken through everything that happens in a day at a baby/toddler group by the fictional intern Hannah. This gives an instructive insight in a pleasant way. The second part is theoretical with a focus on things like settling in, autonomic movement development, meaningful cooperation, and play.

In Emmi Pikler's vision, babies are autonomous and competent ('I have confidence in you and let you try for yourself what you can do independently'). The realistic account of the observation in the first part of 'Guiding Babies and Toddlers at Daycare' gives the reader a clear picture of a daycare group working according to this method. From entry, care moments to meaningful play situations. The motor, cognitive and social development of eight children aged 5 to 23 months is described and followed. Discoveries, experiences and emotions of children, parents and educational staff are described in such a way that, as a reader, you can easily empathise with the various people involved.

The theoretical part elaborates on some topics already covered in the first part. For example, attention is paid to a thorough settling-in period in which parents play an important role. The development of movement receives detailed attention, with the position of children being described along with mobility, i.e., what can a baby do in this position or phase of development? An example: 'in the supine position, a baby can roll his head from left to right, bend sideways and move his chin to his chest'. It then describes conditions that support proper movement development such as a firm surface. Besides learning about babies' motor development this way, as a reader you will automatically start thinking and empathising with the different physical possibilities at each stage.

The book contains beautiful watercolor illustrations that support the story and make clear, for example, what are appropriate play materials during different stages of development. Dr. Judith Falk's development chart is included and clearly explained. There are also occasional questions in the chapters, which stimulate the reader to think further about the information or empathise with experiences of very young children in a group.

In summary, the book gives a wonderful insight into a daycare group with a pleasant atmosphere in which respectful care and Emmi Pikler's vision are central. For childcare workers, in addition to recognition, the book will provide food for thought and perhaps points for change regarding the pedagogical approach, space and materials available.

The detailed description of babies' development, a prerequisite for pedagogical staff to do their job well, also make the book valuable for (expectant) parents. In short: an instructive and inspiring book!

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