



2007 Update

The Read To Me Program

PO Box 730 Planetarium Station New York, NY 10024

June 2007

We continue to learn from our collaborations. Did you know, for example, that the luggage/shipping tag books can be used entertainingly with 18-36 month-old children? And did you know that 'Yo estoy estudiando español.' gets a nod and a smile? and that focusing on breathing can help a stressed mom? AND that one young father-to-be got down on one knee to propose to his fiancée during the Harlem Children's Zone Baby College graduation ceremony!

•What's Inside

- Prison RTM
- Escalera Head Start RTM
- West Side HS & LYFE RTM
- Yoga & Drama

For newcomers to RTM: we get reading books into the lives of babies and their families For a fuller explanation, video clips, and lists of past programs visit: www.readtomeprogram.org

Susan Straub, Director

Adaptations

CHARLOTTESVILLE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY RTM

RTM with incarcerated men in their transitional year.

Contact: Judy Bauerle

Email: gingeron@earthlink.net

Here's an edited RTM anecdote about book-making from Judy:

As the fellows came in, they looked at the books laid out for sending home and we reminded them about the "book-making only" session. After just a little chatter and some questions, everyone opened his large white envelope of individual supplies, gathered a few more things from the table where the general supplies were arranged, and sat down. The room grew unusually quiet and they got to work!

It's challenging to tell you about the diversity of the books! One daddy is creating a book about the vacation he wants to take with his family when he's released. Pages 1,2,3, and 5 had a short paragraph of text. along with some pictures, stickers, etc. He asked me to look it over and give him feedback. When I asked him about page 4, he said he couldn't think of anything for that one. The other pages talked about planning for the trip, making the trip, having fun at the theme park, and being at home afterwards. So I suggested he consider a "connector" paragraph. A brief discussion resulted in his adding text about stopping for some dinner on the way home. Later I heard him talking with another participant about how you sometimes need a connecting paragraph in a story to make it flow!

Then, there is the 25 year old fellow who has been in prison since he was 12. (maybe in and out of prison, I'm not sure) Although he doesn't have young children, he joined RTM because he wants to have kids and wants to be a good father when he does. He's taken parenting class already! His book so far consists of block letters on each page, done in different colors and text size and style. The pages represent items or ideas that he thinks are important for his child/children to know about. One is about relatives, one about "animals" ; another is about "pets". -Judy Bauerle

Ed.Note

We are so proud of Judy & await her report on the Start Smart Conference!

Collaborations

ESCALERA HEAD START



The families of this Upper West Side Head Start enjoyed a full RTM Program led by 2 mothers: Jane LeCroy and Jessica Cruz. Jane, a trained RTM Leader & performance artist, brought the program to the attention of Directors Carmen Brasuell & Nolan Acosta who participated enthusiastically every week and are developing ways to incorporate the activities into their ongoing curriculum with new families. What a hit!

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

A full RTM Program sponsored by the NYPL has run this spring with students and their babies at the West Side High School LYFE Program. <http://kids.nypl.org>

Thanks especially to Leslie Fass, Katya Mehta, Jill Rothstein of the NYPL and Karen Gurian, Veronica Chopin and Sonia Deane of LYFE. See Deanna's additions to the usual RTM below. Perhaps they will work with your families too.



YOGA AND DRAMA ADDITION NOTES

Deanna Pacelli

In a recent session with teen mothers at West Side High School, Kristen Lynch and I enacted a scene of a mother trying to cook dinner and answer the phone while her 2 year old whined at her feet. After Kristen, playing the toddler, screamed, cried and pulled my leg, I stopped and gave her my full attention.



The mothers found this situation familiar. Many moms described feeling caught and defenseless on such occasions. Kristen, a mother herself, labeled these times as "momma hot flashes." The teen moms listed various times their "hot flashes" occur which ranged from trying to get dressed and out the door, needing to study or sleep and finding their babies wouldn't go to bed. Sometimes it was just getting from point A to point B.

Sometimes taking a reading break just isn't going to do it! Yoga breathing exercises can be a small, simple tool that might provide the grounding needed to cope. Some of the mothers in our group tried them, despite feeling silly, but were able to recognize the effects.

Here are two sample exercises to try:

1-Alternate nostril breathing:

Collapse the pointer finger and middle finger into your palm, spreading the rest of the fingers out to form a wide "V" shape. Then use your thumb to close the right nostril so you inhale and exhale slowly through the left nostril. Once finished with the exhale, use the ring finger and pinky to collapse the left nostril so you can inhale and exhale through the right nostril. Try at least 6 rounds (3x on each side) and you will notice how it relaxes the breath and the mind. It can bring back a clarity and focus lost to the previous emotional state.

2-Yoga Breathing 'Lion's Breath':

This exercise can be done with your child once they are at toddler age. If you find your baby or you are getting agitated by one another, this is a great way of diffusing negative energy. Bend your knees and stick out your bottom, make claws with your hands and take a deep breath in. Exhale by opening your mouth wide and sticking out your tongue creating a soft roar sound. The idea is to expel all the icky, angry feelings. Repeat at least 3 times if not more.

Drama Game: Freeze Game

Start a scene that depicts a frustrated parent with a child and ask participants to tap one of the actors and take over the role. This way participants practice their modes of parenting. They also get to play the role of a child. Everyone experiences alternative ways of dealing with their challenging situations.

Special Mention:

BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY

WE LOVE THE 'BROOKLYN READS TO BABIES' INITIATIVE. NOW BPL HAS OUR BABIES ON THEIR WEBSITE CONTINUING TO ENCOURAGE PARENTS TO SEE HOW BABIES GENUINELY CONNECT WITH BOOKS.
THANKS RACHEL & JUDY.