

mama & papa time

A powerful technique for family life and relationships



Hanka Havlová



Foto: Babysmile

This book can give support to parents and also lecturers, therapists and guides who work with adults and children.

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INTRODUCTION

The third millennium, from the thirteen to the fifteen year. The European Union supports education of adults. Thanks to this fact a group of people from seven different countries could met and explore possibilities how to support parents and functioning of a family. The project was called: Soft skills - Empowerment parents. Soft skills is a business term - skills and habits, that work very effectively for people to understand each other, to find a collective target and the way to its realization. The practical techniques, that can be practised and will work very quickly in real life.

Is possible to bring these techniques to a family life? Can they benefit parents with bringing up their children? And actually, is a technique able to support something so special, as the space of home, full of love, is?

This mini-book is the evidence of life of one technique. It is about the process, where the procedure of several steps is coming alive in real stories. It is, more or less, a subjective record of observation made by myself, several parents, children and other participating people. It is an invitation. It is an offer to try the technique "Special time" and to keep the helpful part of it that you can find during this process.

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE TECHNIQUE

1. Conditions:

- "One to one" = One adult and one child *
- Every day

2. An adult makes an agreement with a child.

3. An adult sets a time period. He sets the time (It is ideal to use a kitchen timer or a mobile phone...)

4. An agreement. An adult to a child: "At this time I will follow you and your wishes."

5. A child chooses an activity, an adult pays his full attention to the child and follows him.

6. After the signal (of the kitchen timer, mobile phone, or alarm clock) the Special time ends.

7. An adult keeps some more time for eventual child's emotion after the end of the technique, however, he never reminds it again.

Notes:

Ad 1) * You can find another variations in the following chapters

Ad 2) Very naturally. For instance: *"We will be having a kind of a magical time, when you can wish to do something you like, and I will do it with you. Of course, if I am able to handle it ."* *"We can have the time like this every day."*

Ad 3) Suitable time is according to my experience from 15 to 20 minutes. The length of time is set by you, as parents, it depends on your ability to maintain really a hundred percent attention on the child. Sometime it can be 5 minutes, another time half an hour.

Ad 5) - A full attention means that you see the child and you are with him. You do not make coffee, do not answer phone calls, and do not think about making dinner. It is not easy. Anytime you realize your attention ran away from your child to a matter, that happened or will happen, to your plans, imaginations, evaluation, etc., you will return it to your child. Watch him or her with interest and with an open mind. With curiosity. Mainly with curiosity.

- Following a child means that you follow him/her, if you are able to do it. The meaning is in watching him, observing... and joining him/her. If a child makes up something beyond the bounds of possibility (see the next chapter), you will set a kind boundary: *"I'm sure it would be really funny to swing with my legs hung on the chandelier, wouldn't it? But I can't do it. However, I will do anything you wish and I am able to do it."*

Ad 6) Children sometimes clamour for a continuation. Very clear boundary of time teaches children to know bounds and it saves experience to their bodily and emotional memory, that everything has an ending, including uncomfortable and painful things. This experience gradually creates the feelings of safety and certainty in the world. (If there should be an ending, and the ending is right now, it is good. It is the sign that things happen in the way we concluded. And I can trust.) Clamouring is testing hardness of bounds. It is testing, that I can really trust. When we feel trust, our whole bodies relax, bodily and emotional tension leaves and our energy can freely flow.

Ad 7) Clamouring for a continuation can have different manifestations - crying, anger, moroseness, extortion... It is important to maintain understanding of the child and his feelings and not to leave him/her at that moment. *"I understand that you would like to continue. And the kitchen timer has already clinked today and it means, that it is the end. And we will have another mama time tomorrow and we will do, whatever you want..."* Kindly and clearly.

SPECIAL TIME

www.handinhandparenting.org

Whatever you want!
... like doing as a child
A challenge to experiment
... a feels-good-thing

*Give yourself as a gift
Warmth, delight, interest
Just follow, let the other lead
Eye contact, physical contact*



Foto: Renata Janášová



Zsuzsi Egry, Tim Hall, Joanna Watters - Embercombe 2014

ORIGINS OF THE TECHNIQUE

The technique "special time" has its origins in times as old as humankind. Even as old as our mammal ancestors. A part of our brain called limbic system is neurobiologically common for us and other mammals ("mammalian brain", we sometimes call it emotional brain because of presence of emotional memory centre, amygdala). Very easily: limbic system creates the need of closeness that is fulfilled with an embrace, touch, kindness in the voice and look. Fulfilling of this need releases hormones of satisfaction and happiness. We are genetically set to expect receiving a hundred percent loving attention. It means seeing us, hearing, understanding and accepting us without conditions, just as we are. Thereafter our life energy can freely flow and we can (and desire) develop ourselves.

I have learnt this technique **from Zsuzsi Egry (Hungary) and Anna Cole (UK)**, the lecturers at **"The Parenting by Connection Approach" school**.

As a source of inspiration I met the technique "special time" for the first time **at a stage in Embercome, at the family summer camp**. It was a clear pre-cultural area with more than 50 adults and children. The vision of the camp was an idea, that children are the only ones who carry the light of the future. That the responsibility of us, adults, is to direct our decisions with regard to the question: How can my decision influence the future of children (ours or any others)? We can find in this thought not only fulfilling of our personal wish, that our children had happy lives, but also ecological exceeding and the idea of sustainability of life on our planet at all.

In a five-day sequence every child had one adult (a parent or an assistant) for 30 minutes a day as a guide for his/ her game. What happened in front of my eyes led me to desire for exploration if it was a chance or a rule. To go through the relaxation of the children, the connection between families, something that seemed to be a directed scene of an optimistic film... day after day.

After coming back to the Czech Republic I immediately dealt with my colleagues about my experience and I started to pass the technique on to the other lecturers at workshops and lectures, including individual lessons for parents. And it worked. I organized two large family camps "The Kingdom" inspired by the vision of ancient Indian traditions and original cultures: *"Children are the only ones who carry the light of the future"*.

You can read about the success, as well as difficulties, in the next chapters.

"The Parenting by Connection Approach" uses the term of **Special time**. In Czech conditions I and other workshop participants sought a term that would be close and suitable for children. We used "a magical time", "special time", and finally the most successful term came from families: **mama time** and **papa time**... and its next original or personal variations (bro and sis time,...).



Special time - Embercombe 2014
"First I will swing and then you."

THE DIRECT EXPERIENCE OF THE USE OF "MAMA & PAPA TIME"

The first year, from the study in Embercombe until the summer camps The Kingdom of the Bell and The Kingdom of Soul Area, I learnt the technique at courses and lectures and I shared it with individuals - and I did not have a possibility to directly observe how people can handle the technique and what is happening. Only within earshot it appeared to be "good".

A mother of 7 years old twins: The children immediately liked it. They are happy, I every day belong only to them for a period of time. They appreciate they can make up what they want and that somebody "must" do it. Even they set a regular "bro time" and "sis time", when they play together. At the moment, when I pay an exclusive attention to one of them, the other patiently waits, because he knows, that it will not take long time and then his time will come.

How to offer the technique

Ideally - through a personal experience. More than telling the story works an authentic experience. **The best opportunity appears at a workshop for adults (parents, lecturers), explaining the principles of the technique and giving couples a time to try it. From 15 to 20 minutes.**

I went through this experience under the tutelage of **Zsuzsi Egry and Anna Cole in Embercome**. It was a broad spectrum experience. Terrible and beautiful at once.

Fiona and me. In the first part I was a child and Fiona was a parent. I do not know, what I want. I am quite shy. Maybe... at first.... I only want to lean back. To sit down and lean back. The body immediately starts to react. It is relaxing. An impulse is born from relaxing. Liveliness. The desire to experience. "Will we go outside?" I need space in front of me and Fiona behind me. So many fragrances. The wind. I deeply breathe in, I feel happiness. Delight. A feeling after feeling - it flows like a river. I only watch and follow it. Suddenly, I have a desire to share it. I reach for Fiona. She is there. I lead her, I explore the wild roses. There appears a stranger behind the fence. I impulsively hide behind Fiona and I cuddle up to her. I observe my surprise of my reaction. Fiona friendly speaks with the stranger. And a curiosity again rises in my body.... I peep out...

The first time ends. I am surprised by impulses coming from my body, by the fact how quickly my child reactions and experience wake up. The theme of safety. When I am filled up with closeness and I feel safe, an impulse comes from inside of my body and the desire to start running and explore the world.

We are swapping the roles. Fiona immediately wants to go outside. Barefoot. Regardless of starting rain. I immediately recognize the feelings of an adult parent: "Oh, God! It is crazy. Where does she run?!!! I do not feel like getting wet. My leg hurts." I observe if it is a degree of discomfort that I am able to step over or if it is really over my limits. Hmm, I can overcome myself... I run to reach her. She is happy and it makes me cheerful. "It is gorgeously crazy to run among little fields under the rain, down the hill." Fiona: "We will gather these beautiful yellow flowers for all." "So many flowers? Why does she gather so many flowers?" If it happened years ago with my own child, I would surely direct him that a few flowers were enough. That it would be better to leave them grow. Does it object to anything? There are so many flowers around. I gather them with Fiona. She is really happy and she runs with an armful

of yellow flowers back to the hall. She gives one to everybody. Everything lights up, everybody smiles. Actually, it is touching....

We share it for a long time. Me and Fiona and then with the whole group. We begin to realize the depth of the technique.



Special time - Embercombe 2014

"... and you will climb the boat...."

HOW PARENTS ACCEPT THE TECHNIQUE

How the full attention and acceptance and absence of direction or instructions can lead to renewal of activity in body, to delight and feelings of togetherness, self-confidence and happiness.

Approximately sixty to forty. 60 percent of parents are interested and motivated to go and try it. 40 percent of them start to think over the difficulties and they have **objections**:

- *"I don't have enough time in that merry-go-round of every day."* Time is the most valuable thing we can offer. Nobody of us has an endless time. It is interesting to have a look at things I dedicate my time to. What is more important than my closest people at this time? We can always find five minutes a day. Or on the contrary - I do not believe that we cannot find 5 minutes a day that we loaf around or that we dedicate to something that does not matter.
- *"I am not systematic and I don't keep order. It's hard to find the time."* The word discipline comes from Latin language and it means : "To be a pupil yourself". How I feel with the fact, that I cannot keep order for myself? Do I wish my child these feelings? Or I wish he or she learnt to organize his or her time? Then 5 common minutes daily will be wonderful exercise for both of us. A set kitchen timer has one great quality: it rings. The time of training is not unlimited - it is as long as we define it.
- *"I have three children and I devote a lot of time to being with them. I help them with homework three hours a day."* Mama time is about a child being able to choose what he or she would like to do and to experience the time of freedom and his/her own will and relax. The child learns he/she can ask for something he/she needs and that his/her wish is answered. How many of us had this wonderful experience?
- *"It is horrible to set a kitchen timer for the common time. I like to dedicate my time to my child and I do it often and I myself wouldn't bear to have my time limited by ringing."* This is an often repeated remark of parents whose personalities keep very strong defence mechanisms against limits, suppression and tying down. Parents like these project their experience into their children. Limiting of mama time brings paradoxically much more advantages than losses:
Children learn to respect the bounds, to handle their immediate need and to put it off. (By the way, this is one of very important indicators of developed emotional intelligence - How we can manage to go through short-term discomfort with the knowledge of a profit on the long-term horizon).
On the long-term horizon the children will learn to trust the common agreements. They will relax. They will calm down. They will stop testing us. They will learn to handle their impulsive energies.
And it is great relief even for us. We have an obvious time when we are able to maintain the hundred percent attention. We do not nip out. We know, that strange activities, in which we have to overcome ourselves, will also have their end.
Special time does not mean that you do not devote your time to your child any more. We can be outside with them, cook, do homework and watch fairy tales... Special time is really special with the thing, that a child gets our uninterrupted attention. It is very nourishing experience for him. Calming. The child will experience certainty. The certainty that he does not have to worry or to be alert to our call-out (by partner, another sibling, phone call...) and the certainty that even though it will end, it is going to come again.
This is hard to believe for the parents who have a bigger degree of disbelief in the world and suspicion - because they have not experience this kind of relax and safety. In most cases the personal experience is sufficient, that the full attention can work and it brings a lot of inner calm.
- *"OK, I get it. She will want me to go swimming into the small lake. But I really hate it. I have an allergy to that water."* This is only an example where I can think it over, if it is only my "adult" disinclination, that I can overcome in fact, or really a boundary that I do not want, cannot or am worried to cross. Then I say: "You would really like me to be in the lake with you, wouldn't you? What would we do there?" And I share it with the child for a while in our imaginations. "It could be interesting. But I can't go to the water, because (I have an allergy, I really have an aversion to it, I really don't want...). But I will go with you to that lake and I will be there the whole time with you. I will be watching you and we will be there together." And then I really the whole time pay attention to my child. With curiosity about his/her every movement, word, gesture, I do not speak with any other present person. Just these twenty minutes are the sacred time for me and my child. And I am the guard of this time...



Raw camp 2014

"We are going to the swimming pool....."

HOW CHILDREN ACCEPT THE TECHNIQUE MAMA & PAPA TIME

Lovely. In Embercombe all children at the end of the camp declared their wish to have a special time at home every day.

What happens in first days:

- Children do not know what to wish:

It is new experience for them, that nobody organizes and limits their time. Sometimes we, adults, are too fast. It is a big training to manage yourself, to wait. For instance we can say: It doesn't matter if you don't know right now, we can wait. When you make something up, I will do it with you, in your way. The art of being together - in silence, calm and love... is one of the greatest human arts. I haven't ever seen any child, who would spend 20 minutes sitting. The life is wise and wants to live, the energy from inside always wakes up. Just sometimes it takes some time. "Special time".

- Children testing their parents:

"Superb, at last let's go to Høice to buy Lego." And a wise father fortunately answers: "You know what, papa time isn't like buying you anything you want. It is about you having a possibility to wish something that you want us to do together, and I - if I am able to do it - will do it with you."

"Let's go to the small lake."

- If there is more siblings for one parent, it can take some time, before they make sure, that time is fairly divided to one and then the other. In the beginning children can have mistrust that when they should be the second in the order, that they will be forgotten. Parent's patience can cover former feelings of injustice and teach a child to trust and be able to wait. And to believe in happy end.

It is good to begin with a short time for each child to have quick experience that his time will come. For the oldest sibling it is a blissful time, because he/she has a parent at last only for himself/herself. For the younger one it can be new experience. An exclusive attention only for me. To fulfil the need of "not having to share somebody" is often enough surprisingly little attention (full attention) from the parent. Then the will to cooperate, share and create together instinctively wakes up.

What assistants said about the technique

Inspired by the summer camp in Embercombe I called in assistants to support families at Kingdom family camps. They participated in mama & papa time as adults when a family had more children than parents.

How did the young women feel the technique while they are just waiting for their maternity?

- What did it bring you?

The Special time brings me liveliness, variety, creativity, presence, a hundred percent presence of a person - one to one, feeling of my own value (more in the role of a child in Special time).

- How did the children feel?

It seemed to me, that at the first moment children couldn't believe that they can themselves decide what to do and some of them went to their activities with wariness - if they really could say what they want (after fulfilling the first wish/activity they weren't so hesitant).

Enthusiasm of a parent doing what they want. Children enjoyed the feelings that the roles were swapped - it depended on the child's age.

- Wherein do you see the benefit?

In tuning a parent and a child to the "same level". The child in that moment grows into the role of a responsible person, he/she creates the common time screenplay and decides how to use Special time with his adult. The adult leaves initiative up to the child, he realizes that the child can make the program itself, without a necessity to challenge a in at some moments the adult returns to their child's age and they can refill their need of playfulness and joy.

The adult can see in Special time his own development, while the child takes us to his/her environment unlimited with bounds in the sense of creativity. In this presence we can see extension of our options in personal life. Developing of our own child's world, thanks to invitation to observe this diversity, is a benefit too.

- What can be a possible barrier?

I don't think that there can be some barrier on children's side - it can be more difficult with parents. It is good to emphasize the importance of benefits for parents, if they remain with Special time for instance three times a week (Monday to Friday). What needs are fulfilled during Special time - a hundred percent attention, an eye contact, safety, sharing, adrenaline, positive experiences, delight, love, relax, acceptance, communication, listening, conscious touch, bounds set in advance - all these are happening during a short period very clearly.

- How was your first encounter with this technique?

Me - in the role of a child - to go and do silly things was nice. My aim wasn't to push the other one doing something he wouldn't manage, but I felt like doing childish things, that produce so much fun - rolling down a hill, laughing, relaxing, feeling dizzy, great emotions and joy

Me - in a role of a parent - wariness and perceptiveness towards child's desire, be surprised by myself and watching myself not to give offers and leave a space for the child.

(Aneta)

- I enjoyed a lot the assistant's role at camp. I was totally amazed how families in a few days blossomed out, mommies to gorgeous fairies, daddies to funny friends and children to fearless elves. With children I felt the biggest change. Those children, who at first didn't want to manifest itself in the collective and they were staying aside, showed in a few days the will to participate in everything. They even appeared by their own decision in front of all parents and made a performance. I saw how miracles happened with the little ones and adults alike, under the patient care and thanks to the really devoted attention.

I definitely would come and work as an assistant again, because it was wonderful experience for me. I would recommend the presence to every family, because they will spend a very valuable time at the camp, together as a family and as an individual alike.

(Bára)



MAMA & PAPA TIME IN A FAMILY LIFE

Stories - The report of families one to two months after the camps:

- A benefit? Happy and self-confident child, who is able to share his feelings with his/her parents, willingly and with trust.
(Iva)
- The first time I have heard about Special time was at your course Personality development for parents. My both daughters were interested in the technique, they liked that I dedicate a special period of time only to one of them and I do, what they want. But we didn't keep it long. We practiced it day by day during the week at Kingdom of a bell camp. The most surprising was for me the thing, what my daughters wanted to do, I wouldn't guess they would appreciate some of those activities. After coming back to our daily routine we stopped again. However - in one respect it led to bigger mutual satisfying in activities in relation between a parent and a child. For instance at the playground - if I am asked to play football with them, I go and play without feeling embarrassed. At the same time they know, that I need to take my time and leave me "in peace" for some time. I try more to accept their desires, even though I don't feel like doing it. They reward me for my concentrated attention in a way they are calmer and don't argue.
(Zdenka)
- The first time we have experienced Special time was at Kingdom of a bell with Zuza:
Zuza was amazed from the first moment and insisted on it every day;
 - at the beginning she was a little unsure
 - the first day she was careful, not to be refused by me - we exercised yoga, then we walked in the fountain for a while
 - the second day she was more courageous - she wanted straight to the water, there I dealt with her a little bit about the conditions
 - the third day we enjoyed most - the fountain wasn't suddenly needed, a trampoline was good enough and rolling the ball too
 - we had space to talk about other mattersAfter the holiday I offered Special time to both my children when they are at my home (it means only 5 times so far). Zuza knew it and immediately leapt at the chance. Paja isn't against it. It looked several times, that it is difficult to decide between me and the computer :) But she has never refused so far.
To conclude:
 - I think that Zuza, and gradually also Paja, look forward Special time.
 - We are getting to activities, that we haven't practiced for some time.
 - We naturally discuss other themes - girls' troubles, things they don't understand, what happened at school/nursery, Zuza solves relations among friends, etc.
(Radek)

- We adjusted the name mama-time according to a person, who sets the rules and whose will determines the things during this time - in our case it is mainly a Simon-time. These Simon times are mostly in my husband's direction because I often "fly around", I clean, cook, do the laundry, organize, and when I have time for Simon, we shop for shoes, go shopping and do similar "interesting" things, which in no way reminds Simon-time... But the boys enjoy it.

(Lenka)

- Because I'm not systematic and I can't set some regular rhythm, we don't continue with mama time. Only Simon, when he needs closeness, sometimes remembers, asks me for mama time and cuddles up to me.

(Dada)

- Mama time is amazing entering to our lives. Although I constantly struggle with time, I find at least 20 minutes every day for Special time. Nico began to join our books and both my sons joined our new guitar. I gently spread Mama time forward, in fact, it makes sense, finds fulfillment and unites the family a lot. We have made a Spanish version of the name and we call it "el Tiempo de mamá". If there isn't enough time, we compensate it the following day :) It became a regular part of our days. The boys prefer el Tiempo de mamá even to fairy tales.

(Kamila)



And in closing a song made by an author team of a talented daughter and her mommy:

*Look, feel and listen
and play with me
in time that is only ours
you don't hurry at all
I really like
your attention
I love you
being my friend
You listen to me and I know
that I'm not afraid anymore.
Every day I look forward
when that time will come.
Mama time, papa time... (whispering)
We will know each other better now
Mama time, papa time....
(Danielka and Dana)*



Foto: Jana Máěková

He and She 2015

"And so we were eating violets and lying in the meadow... a then we got married."

SPECIAL TIME IN A RELATIONSHIP

Of course, the theme of unfulfilled basic developmental needs of parents appeared very soon. The fact how we keep our wounds and non-fulfillment from the childhood to our adult relations. And how they influence our bringing up. And so we tried Special time in pairs at a Course for life partners. As adults we have much more barriers to speak about our desires. A lot of experience with refusing, putting down, ridiculing. We often stay away. We don't find the courage. We finish at half a way ("as a matter of fact, it is good, it's enough...").

It indicates, that if we give a partner what we learn to give children - space, sufficient time, kindness - we will learn to express our complete desires and to respect our needs and differences.

Stories:

He

My special time:

I knew I wanted to walk, so we went for a walk to the park. I didn't want to do anything that would be uncomfortable for my partner, but I thought up nothing. I don't have many emotions there, it was kind of calm and easy.

Her special time:

It was clear, that she would want me to get out of my comfort zone, which she managed

I had to lie on the grass and eat violets. But finally it was very nice, a conclusion for me is that I can hardly get myself out of my comfort zone, or rather I don't want and usually nothing pushes me there, but when I get out, I realize that I like it.

Special time for me is a way to try something new that I wouldn't take the plunge to do it or in a very long period of time.

She

His special time

I waited for my partner's choice, what he wants to do. As soon as we had a plan to walk, I realized after few seconds that I have a tendency to determine the way and I had to control myself the whole time, to give him the possibility to choose his way or not to change his way to my "better" way.

My special time

I felt childish joy to do silly things and, what's more, when I knew that my boyfriend will do them with me. I didn't want to do anything to spite him, anything uncomfortable, but I was pleased, that he wouldn't refuse my silly thoughts. And so we ate violets and lay in the meadow and we laughed a lot.

On a visit:

I am telling my friend about Special time for partners. She says: "I know right away what he would like.".... "But what I would like, I really don't know. I am satisfied. I don't have any special desire.... I don't."

The partner is coming. She welcomes him. They exchange a few sentences. He eats. He walks across the room several times. She: "Well, actually, I know it. I would like him to speak with me for a quarter of an hour and meanwhile not to look at the computer"



Zsuzsi is dancing with her little daughter in the waves.... France 2014

A HEALING ASPECT

"The egg needs time"

Zsuzsi is a mother of three children. She is a long-time lecturer of Hand in hand parenting, who lives with her children in the way she teaches.

We are going by car together and we are talking:

We had a period with one of my daughters, when Special time was starting:

"So, what would you like to do today?"

"We will play The egg."

"Aha. And how can we play it?"

She sits down, shuts her eyes and mouth. She doesn't move. I takes long time.

"What is the egg doing?"

"The egg needs time."

She sits. Quiet without a movement. It starts to be a little boring from outside. Ideas are running through my head, how to put it in motion. But I wait with her. After some time the egg makes *Crrrrrraaack!*, she opens her eyes and laughs... and then she makes another game up.

It took several weeks, day by day. After a few days I felt it like strange. Boring. I didn't understand. But I remained in it.

"Would the egg like anything?"

"Nothing. The egg needs time."

After some time, I realized, how her birth looked like. One and a half month before the term of birth my cervix began to open and there was a danger that I will lose her. It seems that experience saved in bodily and emotional memory leads the child to create similar situations and to go through this experience again and relax it.

Playing The egg finished a few weeks later, from day to day. She has never returned to it. God know, what all was remedied in that common silent time.

A therapeutic video of Maggie Kline

The story about The egg made us both shiver. In a moment I think of my recent workshop Somatic experience[™] with Maggie Kline, a world expert on healing children's traumas, and I tell Zsuzsi about some videos Maggie showed us from her practice. While guiding an autistic boy around 9 years old, a situation happened, when the boy wanted to create space for fighting. Maggie gently assisted him with passing objects and with questions. The boy chose an armchair for his fight, that one he could slip under. He covered the space with pillows and asked Maggie for defending the exit and he had to fight his way through the thick pillow wall. When he punched a hole, he happily relaxed and laughed. His mother filmed the whole process (after a previous agreement). Suddenly the boy in ecstatic laugh quickly reached for a camera cable and twisted it around his neck. Maggie gently helped him to loosen it with the boy's knowing. His mother later said: *"I was shocked. When I saw him fighting in the tunnel under the armchair, I knew that was a reaction to his difficult birth. But I completely forgot that he suffocated on an umbilical cord."* The boy took the whole situation as a well done game. The symptoms, that led him and his mother to the counselling, disappeared...



Devi Althaus and "playing space" - going through the tunnel

"Playing space" of Devi Althaus

Another small fragment of the mosaic, how healing range can have the offer of clear, kindly playing space and the present attention, was an encounter with Devi Althaus. At the summer camp she offered parents of 4 to 6 years old children tasting of so called playing space. In the hall she prepared foam mats for parents, into the circle shape. In the middle she prepared space made of many things, that are possible to creatively play with - balloons, pillows, paper, coloured pencils, crawling tunnel made of cloth, folding mats, cubes... In front of the entry to the hall she instructed parents that their task was only to calmly, quietly sit and if their baby would reach them to cuddle, they would offer him/her their arms. No advising children, no determining them, no thinking up activities, no comments, no evaluation. The children heard: *"I have prepared a magic space for you, full of interesting things you can play with. Parents will sit there with us and only watch, and when you want to cuddle for a while, you can approach them. When you want to ask about something, to discuss something, to help, I will be there with you."*

The whole process took about one hour. **The next day** parents met Devi and they shared their observation. There were so many things, that talking could take several days. A big study about the fact, that each of us is different, needs something different and when we get a good time and support, our unique talents wake up inside us. What impressions appeared most: Surprise what is my child like. Discovering. The circle of parents as a parallel of soft and strong wall of the womb that maintains safety. The uniqueness of each child. The desire to cooperate, create and help each other. And many moments when children build "prenatal houses", attention on softness, cosiness and safety. The greatest magnet was the crawling tunnel. And sharing with moms was bringing one "aha moment" after another - the children in the tunnel had a tendency to surprisingly exactly copy the process of birth - including tangling, a desire to return to the beginning, giving up, fighting. They helped each other to go through. And sometime Devi helped them only with gentle entering: "We will find the way, you will see...." Starting panic dissolves, a child calms down and step by step moves to the exit. And he happily smiles and jumps there.

All this experience and observation lead us to trust and shows that it is worth devoting time each other. The time, when I let the other one follow himself and I am with him. That wisdom of the life is more powerful than our logic. That we can trust the wisdom of our bodies and their ability to renew health. That nature inside us knows which way it should grow and it looks her way to the light. That we do not need to study theory. Moments of playfulness, relax, observing, curiosity and acceptance of things how they are, are enough.

Energy flows, where attention goes

It is whole about the thing, that it is school for us, adults. Something what we have not experienced in our childhood and so we have not learnt it. The University of giving space to the other person. To be in full presence with him. To give him kind attention and interest. To put off our ideas that we know what is happening, that we understand how it is with the other one. In that space the life energy starts to flow. Empathy wakes up. The will of being together. Delight. Creativity. In the space behind our intellects and thoughts this life power sets things in order. Things that have not happen right in the past. Like a river flows in balance, it renews harmony. It washes pains away, brings love and deep inner trust in yourself and in life.

Between you and me - this feeling I would wish my children.



THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON

Special time for yourself? Five minutes of curiosity, what is happening inside, what I need and how I can follow it. Five minutes of playful following your impulses. The curiosity of who I really am...

How would it be to have 5 minutes every day with a hundred percent attention on yourself? Just now and here. Do I have any time? What all is more important in my life than me?

Children who go through experience in their childhood, that someone fully sees them and accepts them how they are, know this feeling. The feeling of your own value. Of authenticity. They can distinguish what is good for them and what to avoid. They have inner guidance.

If we being children were evaluated, influenced and directed, we got used to giving others' desires bigger importance than ours. To lean our feeling of value on opinions of others.

In Thai Buddhist temples they have made programs for schools and for society with the vision of peace all around the world. They say: If a man has peace and calm inside his body, he carries it forward. To his family. To his relations. And those people carry it forward too...

To devote loving attention to yourself - not because someone likes me and fancies me. Not because I accomplished something. But simply because it is the fastest way to feel the love. And also because I have an immediate feedback. Does it work? No. Aha, so I do it the wrong way. It works. Aha, so this is the way how I shall give my attention to the people around me...



The Kingdom of the Bell 2015 - Special time with a goat

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Sources and inspiration:

www.handinhandparenting.org

www.somatic-experiencing.cz, www.somaticexperiencing.com

Devi Althaus - <http://www.maitrea.cz/devi-althaus>

www.zen-sen.org

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"Less words, more meaning" says one of my teachers. And so more music, theatre, pictures, nature, silence... and heart comes back to our lives