

Listening Space Therapy

For younger children

1. Running and stepping backwards;

The children run or skip freely in the room to the sound of the triangle, played as energetically as possible (the equivalent of short, fast notes). The arms are in eurythmic 'laughing merriment'.

When the triangle stops everybody holds hands, standing close to each other in a contracted circle. With the first gong beat everybody goes slowly one step backwards (the equivalent of a long, slow note). The therapist and adults inwardly focus on the backspace during this.

An additional gong beat and step backwards is added every time, while the length of the triangle playing decreases. The gong beats increase up to five.

It has been helpful for the musician to count as follows while playing the triangle:
25 (1 gong beat), 20 (2 gong beats), 14 (3 gong beats), 8 (4 gong beats), 4 (5 gong beats). A bell or chime bar can be used instead of a gong.

After the 5 steps back (5 gong beats), everybody sits down with their backs to the musician and listens to this (or another pentatonic or fifth-based) music played on the lyre:

2. Listening (Lyre):

W. Kuhfuss

The musical score is written in 2/4 time and consists of four staves. The first staff is labeled 'A' and starts at measure 8. The second staff starts at measure 4. The third staff is labeled 'B' and starts at measure 7. The fourth staff starts at measure 11. The music is a pentatonic melody with various note values and rests, including some slurs and ties.

3. Melody (Pitch):

After the listening part everybody stands up and accompanies the pitch of the above music played on a recorder (preferably choroi). Moving and playing part A only (repeated in this case) is often easier to begin with. It can be helpful for the children if the therapist stands and shows the arm movements in front of the group.

Original Listening Space. Part I: Duration

Moving forward and backward to slow (slow) and fast (long) notes

Recorder

Syre (Akte)

poco rit a tempo

rit a tempo

p. rit a tempo

Lothar Reubke

Original music for Listening Space Therapy
part II + III

calm II (for listening)

Lyre (Calto)

L. Reubke

III (pitch of recorder melody)

slowing slow

recorder

Lyre (Calto)

L. Reubke

THE LISTENING-SPACE THERAPY

The following description of therapeutic experiences with the 'Listening-space' therapy, using elements of curative tone-eurythmy (see notes 1), is a result of the work with children with multiple handicaps and impaired hearing.

From Rudolf Steiner's new theory of the senses we know that children who have impaired hearing do not just have one disturbed sense - the sense of hearing - but that this disturbance affects all the senses. Their movements as well as their vision, for instance, show certain defects; the child's overall perception, which is created by the ego, becomes incoherent. Through working with these children we have become aware of a supersensible etheric realm which is the basis for the human ability to listen, the so-called 'Listening-Space'. It became clear, that through the activity of the various senses the general phenomenological space in which we live and perceive is divided into various areas. The child with impaired hearing, in particular, draws our attention to three such areas: the listening-space, the visual space and the movement-space. These areas and their relationship to one another have not always been there, but are developed in the course of early childhood. They may be perceived, when they are created in movement, seeing and hearing by the ego-activity or the intention of the person who is perceiving. Thus it is easy to sense, that active listening helps to form a 'listening-space', in the same way as active movement forms a 'movement-space' by overcoming gravity.

Rudolf Steiner also indicated how the areas of the different senses complement and penetrate one another, but are at the same time inter-dependent. In the threefold experience of listening-, visual-, and movement-space we meet such an inter-dependence very clearly. This interdependence also exists between the higher senses (we could call the listening-space the gateway into these senses), the middle senses (e.g. the sense of sight) and the lower senses (sense of balance and movement), as is described by the anthroposophical theory of the senses. In the practice of curative education and the therapeutic work with children who have central or peripheral hearing impairments it has been observed again and again, that there are also children, who do not have an actual organic hearing-deficiency, and whose physical conditions for perception are alright, yet are diagnosed as having a poor perceptual activity. The 'listening-space' as a basis for a differentiation of experiences has been inadequately established.

What are the symptoms of such a developmental disturbance? The children are generally restless in their movements and the sounds of the spoken word and their moral implications reach them only very insufficiently. These children are obsessed with the world of the senses, especially the visual realm. This realm seems to be limited to certain points in space, from which the children are hardly able to free themselves. We come across similar symptoms in children, who have been damaged by watching television. The movement-organisation forms a compulsive and 'greedy' relationship to the world thus perceived. This shows itself in the tendency which these children have to grab things, without being able to wait. They easily damage objects and as for their relationship to sight they usually show a lack of concentration and of endurance in exploring the visual. Therefore the eye-hand-coordination is often underdeveloped.

Experience with these children has also shown that the symptoms here described may occur in any degree of severity, from a minor acoustic inattentiveness to severe conditions of restlessness and excitability, resulting from an undeveloped listening-space.

In our work with these children we have learned the diagnostic and therapeutic importance of finding out the objectives in sense-perception, through which the various 'sense-related areas' in the child's development are established. Only by the ability to perceive, created and formed by the ego, can a free metamorphosis of the various sense-related areas come about, in relation to each other, as well as in the child's thinking, feeling and willing. When perceiving something, the dynamic creation of forms in the etheric organisation obviously acts as an 'awakening' to the world of the senses. When looking at the phenomena of the 'listening-space' from the point of view of spiritual science, it is clear that the way in which the child is able to take control of his movements plays a decisive part in the formation of this space. The realm of hearing -if perceived actively- encourages the activity of the will inherent in movement to change its direction towards listening. The German language has some expressions characteristic of this, i.e. 'aufmerken' (to notice), 'zu-hören' (to listen to, but also 'auf-hören' (to stop, but which also means to divert the attention, which was directed to movement, towards that which is being heard.) This process becomes understandable, if one remembers that Rudolf Steiner indicated that the realm of hearing is in fact closely connected with our movements and especially with our muscles.

In the activity of listening the astral body and the ego are lifted out of the peripheral movement, i.e. their activity in gravity, into the 'levity' of the 'listening-space' through the active holding back of movement. So there is a correspondence of the listening-space to the 'movement-space' through an active, be it unconscious reversal of the will.

What here appears in the function of listening and the building of a 'listening-space', previously appeared in the embryonic formation of the organ of hearing. This is formed as a kind of 'counter-space' to the realm of gravity in a counter-movement to the development of the limbs, which is subject to gravity. When the 'listening-space' is fully developed there is within it a change of direction from one's own movement towards listening.

We become all the more aware of the significance of this process in child-development, when observing children, who can only achieve this transformation in their intentions insufficiently, i.e. establish an inadequate 'listening-space'. It becomes clear, that the listening-space is a kind of gateway for the other person's spoken word, allowing the child, while listening actively, to perceive the moral intentions in what is spoken by others. The will to listen is influenced by the morality inherent in what is heard. In the Curative Course (GA 317), Rudolf Steiner in fact points to similar conditions when describing moral blindness.

In the children we have discussed we see the appearance of these symptoms as a result of a disturbed polarity or resonance between the activity of movement and that of hearing. In such a constellation of the senses the visual realm cannot be transformed freely into the activity of thinking. The child becomes a slave to the movement-patterns and outer rhythms of the visual world. He is unable to distance himself from the objects he perceives. While treating these children we have increasingly gained the impression that we are here dealing with a problem related to civilisation. The growing child is as it were overwhelmed by visual and acoustic impressions. He is unable to meet these with movements which he himself has been able to transform actively.

The Therapy

The aim of the therapy is to bring a new order into the relationship between listening and movement as a kind of resonance and to enable the child to learn to build a listening space so that the visual space is relieved or rather organised independently. In this process we have found the elements of tone-eurythmy of great help, as will be described here.

Tone-eurythmy, as developed by Rudolf Steiner, enables the movement-organisation to tune in to musical elements and thus in turn to gain an enhanced awareness of what is heard. The spatial directions in the movements of tone eurythmy may be transformed into 'directions' in the realm of hearing, (i.e. forwards - backwards, upwards - downwards, right-left), which help to form the 'listening-space'. Here it is of paramount importance that the child regains the experience of a changing direction in space from forwards to backwards. This change has to be achieved within the will-organism. In the long beat in tone-eurythmy the child enters into the space behind. This 'listening-space', in contrast to the visual space, is experienced as being behind us. The child learns to grasp this again in the gesture of listening. In this way the patient learns, via movement, to have an experience of the forces of the periphery rather than of points, as was described earlier. When expressing a short beat in eurythmy the spatial experience is one of narrowing down, aiming towards a point; when expressing a long beat it is a widening out backwards, connecting oneself to the forces of the periphery.

The therapy, which will now be described, was developed in Brachenreutte over the last couple of years as the 'Listening-space' therapy. The elements used had to be as simple as possible, in order to make this therapy accessible to any child in need of it. The therapy is done in the morning before school with small groups of six to seven children. Each child usually needs to be guided by a helper, depending on the severity of its disability.

The therapy mainly consists of three phases, in which elements of tone-eurythmy are applied in a specific way:

In the first phase the child accompanies a musical composition with shorts and longs (fast and slow notes) in tone-eurythmy. The state of soul stimulated by the outer world is expressed in running forwards to the short beats, whereas the longs, which are walked backwards express the turning from visual activity to the attitude of listening. As a reaction to this reversal of the will, brought about therapeutically, the children usually quite soon show signs of relaxation right into the muscles, as well as a deepening in the rhythm of their breathing. The alternating shorts and longs direct the feeling to the space behind the child, enabling him to gradually free himself from his one-sided attachment to the visual realm. The structure of this exercise in the first phase corresponds to a principle which is generally applied in curative education, i.e. to start a therapy from the child's present condition. Therefore the exercises begin with shorts, expressing the stimulation by the outer world, and then proceed slowly to the longs, until finally the longs are in the majority in the first phase of the exercise. So this phase begins pre-dominantly with shorts (run forwards), gradually proceeding exclusively to longs (walked backwards).

This process is confirmed by Rudolf Steiner's indication (in 'Eurythmy as visible music', GA 278), that the shorts in tone-eurythmy are performed in connection with looking ahead, and the longs with looking away. It is important in this exercise that the polarity of short-long is composed in such a way, that it breathes as artistically and musically as possible. This will enable the children to gradually grow into the relationship between the realm of listening and that of movement via the rhythmic system. One can also describe this phase as a loosening or freeing from the visual realm which had been working too strongly. The children have now become sufficiently receptive to be able to sit and listen to a piece of lyre-music consisting mainly of fifths in a freely swinging rhythm. The child now puts into practice a newly gained readiness to listen, which is called up as soon as the movements of the limbs are beginning to be more coordinated and come to rest. The feeling then orientates itself to pitch, the element in music which brings order into thinking. Also this experience can soon become a decisively new one for the child, when he feels that movement is freed from its obsessive fascination for the visual realm and he is able to find his way into the process of the formation of tones in the listening-space.

Thus in the third phase of the therapy the child's limbs as organs for the perception of music become active. The children now stand up and move their arms eurythmically to the pitch of a simple melody. The conscious experience of mastering his own movements is the child's decisive discovery in this third and final phase. This mastery arises out of the act of listening. In his subconscious life of soul the child becomes aware of the relationship between what he hears and the formative forces of his limbs. When the limbs are ready to give a faithful expression of what is heard, the inner reality of the origin of the German word 'Gehorsam' (obedient to that which is heard) will be enhanced in its moral will-character. Often the child is able to experience for the first time a connection or resonance between the movements of his limbs and the time-structure of a melody which is heard. Between listening and movement he begins to feel that he is 'himself'.

In everyday life any observant person may detect a clearly perceptible polarity between hearing and movement. When listening one has to decrease the outer movements of the limbs, be attentive when listening and at the same time free oneself a little from the visual realm. True listening therefore does not mean something passive, but rather the transformation of the impulses of movement into the activity of listening. Conversation, in the wider sense of the word-as opposed to a mere taking in of information- can only come about when the ego learns to establish the rhythm between the activity of perception and that of movement in the etheric organisation. This gives rise to the harmony of the soul in the rhythmic system, the forming of which is helped along by the therapy described above. If this treatment is continued long enough its curative influence on these children will also result in a greater faculty for understanding. This confirms the fact, investigated by Rudolf Steiner in 'Meditatively acquired knowledge of man', that this faculty in the middle rhythmic system, harmonizing the processes of hearing and of seeing is the foundation for any form of understanding. This connection becomes apparent only if one works with these indications by Rudolf Steiner in the light of spiritual science, but we cannot go into this any further here.

In the therapy the musical element is used in the movements of tone-eurythmy. The essential characteristic of eurythmic movement is that it harmonizes the polarity of movement and listening. The rhythmical movements follow etheric laws, which enable an immediate orientation to the listening space, which is of an etheric nature. In the therapy it is possible to free the child's soul from its fascination for the laws of visual space and teach him to orientate his imprisoned movements towards their 'counter-space' in the realm of hearing.

As opposed to the intrusive experience of the visual, in which movement is directed outwards, listening is established within the organism of the senses through the musical element. At the same time the inner experience of movement is called upon. The astral body in particular is 're-formed', because its desires and formative tendencies are influenced by the perception of a world which is moral and shaped by music. It is especially via the realm of hearing that the child, already in the first years of his life, while still enveloped in his mother's sheath, is able to experience the world as one penetrated by spirit and by the word.

The therapy which is being described here has consciously taken the simplest elements as its basis, so that it may be used in any educational and curative educational context. It is usually done as a group-therapy, but may also be done with individual children. It is important that the music is created artistically. Anyone who would like to apply this therapy is advised to consult a musician who is able to compose and at the same time is interested in therapy. The lyre and the recorder have proved to be extremely valuable as instruments.

As was mentioned earlier the therapy may be done with a large number of children with sensory disturbances. From a diagnostic point of view we are here mainly dealing with children who have been hospitalised at an early age, with maladjusted or deprived children, children with an autistic development and children who have acoustic and speech-

disturbances. Many of these children who have been in our care over the years also show a tendency to small-headedness.

Today the afore-mentioned symptoms already occur in many pre-school children, who show problems in concentration and the ability to listen for a length of time, with the danger of the onset of 'soul-deafness', as was previously described. These disturbances usually become apparent in the very early development of the child. It is important to recognize and treat them when the child is still a toddler or of nursery-class age. For this reason we have also developed a modified form of the therapy for pre-school children. It is being done in some kindergartens at the beginning of the morning as a kind of 'tuning-in'.

In the Curative Course, but also at other occasions, Rudolf Steiner pointed to an important fact, which has here already been mentioned several times, namely that the world of the senses, which is revealed to the incarnating spiritual-soul being of the child, is a thoroughly moral world. Within it spiritual beings are at work which have been guiding and caring for the child already in his life before birth. In the sheath of the etheric realm, they lead the child, by means of earthly sense-perceptions, out of the super-sensible world into the earthly world.

In the maturation of the senses in the first seven years of life this process, which cannot be described here, can be seen in detail. For the child's destiny much depends on whether he is able to achieve this process of growing out of a still supersensible world into the physical reality of earth the way a human being should, for in any sensory process, also in the case of adults, spiritual beings are at work.

Rudolf Steiner has drawn our attention to this in a concrete way by describing the influence of the supersensible processes in our sense of hearing as follows: "Man (in the realm of the sense of hearing, S. Müller Wiedemann) has nothing which would enable him to develop out of himself a sense still higher than the sense of warmth. If at this moment he would not be penetrated by something, which he is not able to achieve out of himself, a higher sense could not be developed at all. It is for this reason that higher beings have to permeate him. The Angeloi, the Angels, let their own astral substance stream into man. They endow man with their own substance and enable him to radiate what he is incapable of radiating out of himself. It is a primarily foreign astral substance which permeates and works in man. He makes it his own and lets it stream out. Here beings are at work, which already experienced their human stage of development in the past: the Angels. Their astral substance permeates us and streams through the ear towards that which is carried by the sound. On the wings of these beings we enter into the inner reality, into the soul of the things, so that we can get to know them. Here beings are at work which are higher than the human being, but are of a similar nature with their own astral substance"(GA 115)

We can see this expressed in Rembrandt's painting of the evangelist Matthew. He turns in a listening attitude towards the angel who is standing behind him. His gaze is turned inward, a posture expressing his attempt to let a spiritual message flow into his earthly activity. In order to make this possible an active force of antipathy has to arise within the etheric organisation by a holding back of movement. This force of antipathy within his etheric organisation enables the child to pay sufficient attention to what he hears. In this process the beings, mentioned by Rudolf Steiner in the above quotation, are at work.

The children for whom our therapy has been developed seem cut off from their angels. This divining, which may increasingly turn into knowledge, gives the curative teacher the power of intuition for his therapy. Experiences and insights, which we gain now and again, are mainly based on one specific condition: to experience and take part in the destiny of the child with compassion. The curative teacher may get the impression that the child shows in an almost sacrificial way a situation widespread in mankind today. Out of this impression an

attitude may grow leading to a specific therapy. These children who exhibit in extremes the harm done by present day civilisation are severed too soon from the protective sheath of the spiritual world. Their future life, which should only germinate slowly in the darkness of the limb-organisation, becomes fettered too early to earthly conditions. Due to this poor development of the listening space also the feeling for time remains un-developed. These children are unable to wait. The aim of the Angel's message to listening man is above all to bring light into the darkness of the listening space and to take the element of fear out of it, like the night sky which seems to be lit up and spiritually permeated by the stars.

Listening, in the way we would like to resurrect it therapeutically, contains a reference, only accessible to human beings, to a super-sensible, spiritual past before birth. Therefore man can know the time destined for him to incarnate according to his previous biography. Due to the spiritual beings working in it, man's hearing is able to serve a truly human development of the ego, by establishing the 'space' for perception of the spoken word.

Translation: Edeline Lefevre, 1996

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