

YOUR THIRD GRADE EURYTHMY EXERCISES

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Notes on the videos

In these lessons I am offering a few eurythmy exercises for you to do with your third grade students. Please begin by watching the Introduction to Eurythmy for Homeschooling Video, to orient yourself to the purpose and scope of this exciting opportunity.

Then, watch the third grade eurythmy video to watch how I do the third grade exercises and how I do them with a child. In the first part of the video, I explain the movements, and in the second half I do some of them with a child.

Third Grade Developmental Overview

The Waldorf curriculum is built on what is called age-appropriate learning, while emphasizing the importance of having a live teacher bringing stories and experiences to the children in a way that will support their development. And of course, different things are expected of the children at each age in their development, in accordance with their physical, psychological and neurological development.

Naturally, the Waldorf curriculum recognizes the individual qualities of each child in this process, but also sees the over-arching arc of development that the child goes through as they come to term with learning to become a person on the earth. Having worked with hundreds or even thousands of children over the years, I have seen how the Waldorf curriculum can generally support a vast spectrum of children, no matter whether they are intellectually gifted or challenged.

Sometime in the course of their third grade, the children generally will become nine years old. This was characterized by Rudolf Steiner—the founder of Waldorf education—as the time of the so-called “crossing of the Rubicon.” (The term “crossing the Rubicon” generally means “reaching a point of no return,” and refers to Julius Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon River in northern Italy in 49BC.)

Until this age, the children were rightly so closely knit to their parents and their environment that they were rightfully quite malleable in their behavior and learning. They still learned best through imitating the examples of the people in their surroundings, and the Waldorf school builds upon this by bringing them

all their lessons—of reading, writing, arithmetic and history—embedded in stories of saints and heroes, of people they can worthily emulate.

In reaching their own so-called Rubicon crossing, the third graders experience how they have become separated from this innocent unity with their family, from selfless identification with their significant others. We can expect that after this point, they will no longer be as unquestioningly at one with their teachers, and this is something that we must learn to welcome and strive to understand how to work with it skillfully.

For many children, this Rubicon crossing will be experienced as a somewhat frightening experience, possibly accompanied by nightmares. It is not uncommon for children at this age to begin to harbor the secret doubt of whether their parents are really their own parents, or whether they had been mixed up with another child at the hospital, or perhaps in truth secretly adopted. One child I know told me “I feel as if I am standing in front of a great door, and I have to go through that door to become who I truly am!”

The Waldorf curriculum meets the third grader first with the stories of the Old Testament. They hear how “God created the heaven and the earth,” and how out of the unity of one creative being the dichotomy of heaven and earth, dark and light, day and night appeared. This corresponds to their own feeling that they have fallen out of oneness and now have to bear the pain of separating from their parents. Of course, we adults know that this pain will continue for the rest of their lives as they learn to individuate and finally to seek healing through building connections of mature love. But can we imagine how the young child feels when the awareness first arises of how those first tender bonds of connection are broken?

The curriculum then goes on to teach the stories of Noah and the arc, and how Noah had to take all of the animals with him as he crossed into new lands. When they hear “God’s promise to Noah,” and how the rainbow is a promise of eternal connection, the children sense that in fact all will be well in the end, even as they continue on to their journey of taking care of the animals and the ecosystems of the earth that we have been given to take care of.

The rest of the Waldorf school curriculum then meets the child with other subjects, including learning how to measure and build things. This includes real-life carpentry skills, as well as planting gardens and baking and cooking. Through these experiences, the so-called wandering child, cast out from paradise in a highly symbolic sense, finds his or her way into earthly civilization.

Up until this age, eurythmy classes were always done with the children standing in a circle. Children were still living in a kind of dream of being in one community. In the beginning of third grade, children begin to work with geometrical forms with their classmates, learning how to create shapes of circles and triangles and squares together. As the year progresses, they will begin to cut their circles and squares in half, bisecting them and experiencing the division of the unity into parts.

Finally, at around the midpoint of the year, when most of them have turned nine, they children are taught to turn forwards and face the blackboard as individuals. This reflects the turning point for them, at which point they will begin to feel what it means to rely on their own individual relationship to spatial orientation.

I generally bring this to the children by first having each of them stand in a star shape in their own body. I have them put their attention on their head, and then let an imaginary line of light travel to their right foot. As I say that, we take a small step to the right. From there, the line travels to the left arm, and we extend the left arm out to the side, holding it at heart-level. Then a line travels to the right arm (we hold the right arm out), then down to the left foot (and we take a step to the right), and finally back to the head. As we discover this wonderful symmetry, we allow ourselves to shine inwardly, with a glow of completion. Please

notice how this simple exercises gives us so many challenges, as we must learn to cross multiple inner midlines, both vertical and horizontal.

The next step involves a large shift in consciousness, as we must learn to put this vertical star into the horizontal plane. I allow one willing volunteer to stand in the middle of the room and tell how they are to imagine that there was once a star in the sky (they themselves!) who looked down upon the earth and was so curious about what it saw that it fell to the earth, and was knocked out cold. When it came to its senses, it found five other friends who stood around it and reminded it that it was a star. These friends then gather around the child on the floor and place themselves at the star points, one-by-one reminding the fallen star of the rotation from head to foot to arm to arm to foot. Then, the star child stands up and places herself at the point of the head. Now she must walk from the head to the foot to the arm, to the other arm, the foot and back to the head, *all the time facing forward*. In this way, the child now learns to feel the multi-dimensionality of space and that they can walk in all directions without turning around, without using their eyes. This is a huge step in self-perception and self-mastery, and its accomplishment is part of the child's process of crossing the Rubicon and beginning to pilot his or her own life. I recommend to each adult who watches reads this to try it for themselves, and see whether they can learn to move in space with equal ease in all directions. The ability to do so is one of the many great gifts of eurythmy!

Now is a great time to begin working more intensely with rod exercises with the children. The rod challenges will increase year by year, as the children develop skills and agility in their body and in how they move in space.

Beginning in the third grade, the eurythmyonline curriculum focuses on geometrical forms and rod exercises. The forms can be the beginning of simple choreographic exercises that the homeschool teacher can bring to children for their poetry and music. However, to learn these in a living way, we are offering live workshops to communities. Please contact me at info@eurythmyonline.com to set up a homeschool eurythmy workshop for your region!

General third grade movement exercises

The eurythmy curriculum is built on a tremendous insightful understanding of the sequential development of movement skills. As I have emphasized before, by this age children should be able to know right from left effortlessly. They should be able to skip with agility, balance well, jump rope. These are all necessary skills that lay a good foundation in the body---and in the brain---for learning to think, read, calculate, etc.

Little children move through space quite unconsciously. Third graders, however, pass through a very important movement threshold. After their "nine-year-old change," they become much more individuated. They feel themselves more independent, more separate from the world. We can now, for the first time, ask the children to orient themselves in space differently. They can now *face forward* for all of their eurythmy exercises, and move in different directions without using their physical eyes to guide them. They can begin to move forwards, backwards, right, left and on diagonals and not have to turn around and look.

In my long experience working with adults, I find that this is a very important skill that all of us need to develop. From third grade on, we will always emphasize this capacity in our eurythmy curriculum.

If your child has not reached certain movement benchmarks, which lay the foundation for being able to stand tall, sit quietly, and move freely in all directions, they are probably having difficulties with the

senses of movement and self-perception. These are very often the foundation for a host of other troubles, including what are called ADD, ADHD, and also problems with reading, writing, mental imagine, and math skills. If you are concerned about these things, I strongly encourage you to consult the website of developmental pediatrician Dr. Susan Johnson, at youandyourchildshealth.org.

How do I prepare myself?

In eurythmy terms, everything in the first three grades will be done in the mood of “B.” This sound denotes a mood of wrapping protection and love around another person. You will be wrapping your mood of protection around the child as you work with them. I warmly encourage you to go to my website eurythmyonline.com and find your way to my Freebie lessons. Download the lesson called “B, the Consonant of Boundaries,” and use the instructions to learn how to change your own energy field and offer an atmosphere of peace and protection to your young child.

How do I learn the exercises?

It is very important that you begin by learning the exercises yourself. Consider it your own path of eurythmy, your own journey for self-development! (After all, as a homeschooling parent, you get to work on your own skills as well as on your child’s!)

Then, once you are confident that you can model the exercises, turn off the video, and teach the child out of your own experience. **It is important not to let the child watch the videos!**

And remember: don’t let the child speak while moving. And remember: don’t let the child speak while moving. **You** should speak, and the child should pour all of their “consciousness”, their etheric presence, into their movements.

We are thereby truly encouraging mindful movements.

How do I teach my child?

When you practice with your child, stand in front of him or her, about 3 feet away. Speak gently, expect participation, and work with a light touch. Be sure that you do the exercises correctly, but don’t correct the child. A standard guideline in eurythmy is that you should only correct 1 in 9 mistakes. Don’t hesitate to repeat each exercise up to 7 times, but never pedantically.

Don’t expect your child to be able to master everything at once. Build skills sequentially, starting with the easier exercises in the first weeks of eurythmy. Practice each one about 20 times (that number is flexible), with good will and fun. Add verses or poems if you can, to make the movements more engaging.

Once an exercise can be done smoothly, only do it about seven times, and then move on to the next exercise. Encourage engagement, but avoid boredom!

How long should we do eurythmy?

This exercise sequence takes about 15 minutes to accomplish. As with all of my grade sequences, you can do it every week, all year long, or you can alternate it with other opening series. In that case, I would recommend doing it for 8 weeks in the autumn, 8 weeks in the winter, and 6 weeks in the spring.

By third grade, the eurythmy curriculum becomes more nuanced than in second grade. You may well find it good to wait until spring to move the triangle form, or to do the poem I teach you below in its more complicated form, on a five pointed star.

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The third grade eurythmy exercises

Your curriculum includes pdfs describing the reason behind learning to move in space fluidly (“How to move in etheric space”) and how we use rod exercises (“About Copper Rods”), as well as General Guidelines for how to do eurythmy at home.

The following exercises are specific for the lower grades.

Exercise #1: IAO (ee-ah-oh) This exercise is a standard exercise given for children and adults to stimulate and balance energy in the head, legs and arms---in thinking, willing and feeling. You will say these words as you move, but your child will not say any words with you. We will repeat this in the same form we did it in second grade.

1. Put your feet together. Drop the head, and then straighten very deliberately. Hidden in this experience is the eurythmy sound I (ee), which is the sound of uprightness. Speak to the child **“Straight as a spear I stand.”**
2. Then jump the legs apart. Speak **“Strength pours into my legs.”** Underlying this is the sound Ah, which we are doing with the legs. The Ah is the sound of openness, and when we do it with the legs we are grounding ourselves.
3. And then round the arms into a big circle. Speak **Warm is my heart with love.**“ What you are looking for here is a beautiful round circle. The fingers should not overlap. The circle should be harmonious and proportionate. The back should be straight, the head upright. There should be balanced energy in head, feet and arms. What is hidden here is the sound Oh, the sound of the loving soul.
4. Then drop the arms, then jump the feet together, and then bow the head slightly.
5. Repeat this sequence several times. As the child becomes skillful, become fast with each repetition.

Exercise #2: AEA-IIA (ah-ā-ah, ee-ee-ah) Working with right/left, up/down and crossing midlines

The next exercise is very good for helping the child to experience and exercise feeling the right and the left sides, and crossing both the vertical and horizontal midlines. This builds upon skills developed by in first and second grade.

To begin, it is good to review our learnings with sounds:

Ah is a sound of wonder and reverence, and is created by opening the arms in a wide open angle.

E (ā) is a more complicated soul mood, created by crossing the right and left arms or legs and feeling strong focus and boundaries.

I (ee) is yet more complicated, forms by extending one limb in one direction and the other in the opposite, and experience being stretched between polarities and the power of being able to hold the balance between the two.

In this classical exercise, we begin by practicing Ah-E-Ah. To maximize the challenge, we work with not only the vertical but also the horizontal midline. We do the first Ah above, feeling openness to the sky. We do the E by crossing our right and left arms in the middle, feeling strong boundaries. Then we do the second Ah below, feeling openness to the earth.

We begin slowly, then accelerate until we can move freely.

Once this is established, we work with IIA. We begin with right arm up, left down, feeling the double-midlines of right-left and up-down. Then we complement that with left up, right down. Finally, we do an Ah below, feeling right and left opening harmoniously to the earth.

The arms must learn to move freely and harmoniously through all six positions.

Next, we learn the same sounds with the legs: Ah-E-Ah, I (left leg), I (left) Ah.

And finally, we combine arms and legs.

Exercise #3: Foot agility and balance

The next exercise is still a carry-over from the lower grades, but it is so great for developing some fun foot agility that you can bring it back *occasionally* in third grade, for a “fond memory” of previous accomplishments.

I begin with the feet together, and then begin these words:

“Open the front door” (heels together, toes apart as if you are opening a little door (ah with the feet))

Repeat several times if you like. Then, unexpectedly:

“Open the back door “ (toes together, heels apart (ah with the feet backwards)

Again, repeat as you like. Then, alternate front and back.

“Open the curtain wide” (jump the feet wide apart—Ah with the legs)

“Close the curtains side by side” (jump the feet together---U with the legs)

Repeat a few times, then

“Open the curtains” (jump the feet wide apart)

“Criss-cross-applesauce” (Jump and cross the legs 3 times---E (ā with the legs)

“Open the curtains “ (jump the feet apart)

“And put them side by side.” (jump them together)

“Put your feet together and go up, up up to look out the attic window,
What do I see? I see a little bird looking at me.”

(Go up onto your toes with great control)

“Go down, down, down to the ground,

Look around, what have we found?

We have found where the squirrels (or cats, or mice, etc.) are running around.”

(Staying on your toes, squat down, without using hands or knees to touch the ground)

“And stand straight and tall.”

Exercise sequence #4: Rod exercises

We do many copper rod exercises at all ages in eurythmy. These can be introduced sequentially to children through the grades. Your third graders can do the very simple exercises described here.

For this you will need to purchase a child-size eurythmy rod, which is a piece of ½ inch copper plumbing pipe. You can purchase this at the hardware store, and have the clerks cut you a piece 24 inches long. If you can, buy rubber caps to put on the ends.

However, if your child is already sprouting up, you might be ready to get an adult size rod, which is 33 inches long.

You will use the special video sequence that shows you how we do rod exercises as adults. When you do these with children, use a light and playful touch, but strive to teach the child precision, agility and skill.

I will begin by repeating the exercises I do with first and second grade children. If you have already done these with your children in previous years, then go back to them *occasionally* for “fun,” and to keep building up skills, but don’t linger on them.

1. Little birds, or “qui-qui”

We hold the rod horizontal at shoulder height, and I make a little story to tell that a family of birds has flown to my tree branch. I “dance” the fingers of my right hand on the rod, with the intention of seeing that every finger touches the rod separately. Then, the friends of that bird family fly to join them, and I dance the fingers of my left hand on the rod. Then I dance the fingers of both hands on the rod. The birds initially dance on top of the branch, then below, then above and below, merrily moving up and down.

Then the birds “fly away.”

2. Squirrels

My tree branch then turns into a tree trunk, and I hold it straight upright. Two little squirrels run up the trunk of the tree: I climb my hands up the tree, hand over hand. Each squirrel touches, or “tags” the other as they run up, which requires that the child places her hands very carefully on the rod, and focuses on holding the tree straight.

3. Jumping squirrels

The squirrels then run to a tree branch. Hold the rod horizontally again. Two squirrels (“Timmy and Tommy”) are playing together. The right hand squirrel (Timmy) jumps over the left hand (Tommy), and you cross your arms. This doesn’t please Tommy, so he jumps over Tommy, and you cross your arms the other way. Tommy jumps over Timmy, Timmy over Tommy, and so one, back and forth.

At length, Tommy decides to jump under the rod, and you cross your arm below the rod. Then Timmy jumps below to cross under him. Back and forth and back and forth they jump.

Finally, Tommy jumps on top of the rod and crosses Timmy, then Timmy jumps over the top of Tommy. Tommy then jumps and crosses below, and Timmy follows. Back and forth they go.

Then they take a little rest, and watch two rabbits on the ground playing their own game. Billy hops in front of Bobby, then Bobby in front of Billy. This goes on for a while, and then they do the same backwards.

And to end, the arms and the legs play their games together: Tommy and Billy jump together, and Timmy and Bobby jump together.

4. Rod rolling

I make a story about the squirrels then discovering some branches that they can slide down. Alternately, I tell the children that we have come to a sledding hill, and they get to slide down the hill and run up to the top again.

Extend the arms in front of you, palms up, and place the rod on your shoulders. Carefully let the rod roll down the length of your arms to your fingertips, and then let it roll back up again. Strive for beautiful form!

Then, turn your palms over, and let the rod roll down and up again.

When you are nimble, you can start with the palms one way, and then, when the rod is at your fingertips, flip it lightly in the air, turn your hands the other way around, and catch the rod—either on the backs or the fronts of your fingertips.

Then put one of your rods away and stand closely in front of your child, with fingertips touching. You have the rod on your shoulder, and let it slide down to your fingertips, across to your child, and up his arms. Then he lets it slide back to you. This is a wonderful cooperative exercise that really helps children to make connections with you or with others.

5. Jack be nimble

Place the rod on the ground in front of you.

“Jack be nimble” Tap the ground in front of the rod with the right foot. (I (ee) with the left foot)

“Jack be quick” Tap the ground with the left foot (I (ee) with the left foot)

“Jack jump over” Put both legs together and jump over the rod (U with the legs)

“The candlestick” Jump back over the rod again.

The same exercise can be done backwards: begin standing in front of the rod, and tap backwards.

Moving on to the third grade rod exercises: Your curriculum package includes videos and pdfs the new exercise, the Seven-fold rod exercise.

Exercise Sequence #5: Learning to move in space

Until the child is in third grade, we always teach a class of children in a circle. We don’t ask them to consciously master space by moving in difference directions. By 3rd grade, however, or when they pass through the “9-year old change,” they become more independent. This is reflected in their readiness to conquer space in a new way. Now we ask them to move in different directions with skill and awareness. You will discover for yourself that you are most used to walking forwards. Here is a skill you will have to work on yourself before or as you pass it on to your child-student.

Your curriculum package includes a series of different spatial movement challenges. Begin by reading “Moving in etheric space.”

Then you are ready to move on to the curriculum elements:

1. Moving straight lines and crosses
2. Moving triangles and six pointed stars
3. Moving a pentagram

I suggest you learn them in the sequence in which I have listed them.

Exercise #7: Prayer of St. Francis

You are now ready to learn a poem “God’s Promise to Noah: for third grade, which matches the Old Testament curriculum.

“While earth remaineth,
Seed time and harvest,
Cold and heat,
Winter and summer,
Dark and light,
Day and night
Shall never cease.”

The third grade eurythmy instruction video teaches you how to do the appropriate eurythmy sound gestures for this lovely piece.

Remember, you alone will speak this piece: your child will move their arms with you but not speak it.

To close your session:

At the end of every eurythmy experience, stand very quietly for 15-30 seconds or longer. I always say “no wiggling, no jiggling, no squiggling, no giggling,” in a firm but friendly voice.

Watching the child doing eurythmy

I close the video by showing myself working with a boy named Zachary, who has done eurythmy therapy with me periodically for the last two years. In the movements you will see that not all the exercises are easy for him: he gets his right and left sides confused sometimes, and has a hard time coordinating his feet.

As you watch him, see how his movements gradually progress. Notice that he is able to end in a wonderful way, standing straight, tall, and quietly, and, we sense, feeling at ease in his body and good about himself.

What is Essential?

To be a eurythmy teacher, we have to learn to pay attention to what is essential. The *learning process itself* is more important than immediate success. It is fine to make mistakes in the beginning, as the child learns to coordinate the unruly limbs, and to move smoothly with beauty, grace and style. Confidently, firmly but gently repeat the exercises often enough (perhaps 20 times when learning, and then 7 times once learned), until the child has “mastered” them and can do them well.

Remember, we are *building etheric strength through repetition!* Practicing the integrative movements of eurythmy is analogous to playing a piano: one has to repeat things often enough until the body can do them skillfully. Thereafter, the soul can build upon the foundations to *feel* and *bring self-perception* to them.

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