

EURYTHMY EXERCISES FOR THE HOMESCHOOLING COMMUNITY

Eurythmy is a artistic path of mindful movement developed by Rudolf Steiner, the developer of the Waldorf School movement. It was inaugurated in 1912, and first developed as a stage art, in which poetry, story and music are made visible by the performers, either as soloists in or ensembles, in gestures and choreographed form that correspond exactly to the music or the spoken word. Eurythmy draws upon the essential understanding that the human being as well as the natural world have been created out of the same movements, dynamics and wisdom that live in the word and in music. Eurythmy is thus, above all, a path that teaches us how to listen deeply, align ourselves with our source, and express this in movement.

In this sense, Eurythmy is not only an art form, but also a path for personal practice, a therapeutic art and an educational modality.

What does it have to do with the Waldorf School movement? As soon as the Waldorf school movement began, Rudolf Steiner asked that every child have eurythmy has part of the core curriculum. An accredited Waldorf school aspires to have one to two eurythmy classes every week for all of its students, beginning in kindergarten.

What does it take to become a eurythmist or eurythmy teacher? A fully trained eurythmist has studied for well over four years to master the technicalities, the understanding and the artistry of eurythmy. There are usually not enough trained eurythmists to fill all the job needs.

Have you heard it said that only eurythmists can teach eurythmy? In essence, this is true. Eurythmists are so at home with eurythmy in their movements, their imaginations, the feelings that the teaching of eurythmy is completely natural to them. And just as you wouldn't expect an inexperienced ballet teacher or beginning karate teacher to be able to teach your children, so you also can't expect that someone who isn't well trained in eurythmy can lead a class. However, anyone can do eurythmy at home for their own personal growth, grace and spiritual deepening. And I believe that if you, as a homeschooling parent, have discovered the fun of the eurythmy discipline (sound like a contradiction? It isn't!), then you will be able to integrate eurythmy exercises into your homeschooling curriculum. This is why we are now forging new ground by showing our homeschooling community how they can integrate at least some of our eurythmy exercises into their curriculum. In these offerings, there are certain guidelines to follow.

Guidelines

1. The parent or teacher who leads the exercises must have practiced the exercises long enough in preparation that they understand how to do them and why, and can do them with beauty, grace and style. (This has the additional benefit of helping you, as the parent or teacher, to become a more well- rounded, grounded and graceful person. It can help you develop lively thinking and a sense that you are connected in to spiritual sources.)

2. Although adult lessons are taught as a path and practice of mindfulness, the parent or teacher who wants to teach Eurythmy to children needs to understand that we teach them with a completely different mood. The child needs to be taught in the spirit of adventure, challenge, joy and fun, while also aspiring to beauty and precision. The teacher needs to be creative and lively.

3. The parent or teacher needs to understand that there is a grade-specific curriculum designed for eurythmy that offers the children specific movement challenges at each grade, geared to their evolving mental, emotional, and physical development. The eurythmy curriculum offers a scaffolding of skills that are built upon, year by year, until the upper grade students can do quite complicated work. Thus, the younger children should only learn the simplest exercises whereas the older children can start with the early grade exercises and add the advanced exercises to them.

4. Please remember that this is no substitute for become a qualified eurythmy teacher in other more public settings. What I am offering you here are exercises that you could do with one child, or with up to five children in an intimate setting.

5. The first curriculum lessons we will offer here will focus on the eurythmy rod exercises and geometric forms. These are beginners' exercises, teaching skills such as coordination, spatial orientation, agility, focus, coordination, mindfulness, and the like.

How do I get started?

1. You will begin by using your eurythmyonline password to sign in to watch the videos that you have purchased online. You can watch them an unlimited number of times.

2. The idea of doing eurythmy is to *wean you away from the computer*. So, begin by watching the video you on the screen. You can start the first several times by copying what you are seeing on the screen. Then, however, as soon as possible, INTERNALIZE THE LESSON, TURN OFF THE COMPUTER, AND MOVE WITHOUT THE SCREEN. You might need to turn it back on again to see

if you got it right. You will only be really able to be mindful in yourself, harmonizing body, soul and spirit, when you can work in your own stillness.

3. When you are doing the movements, you won't speak. You will let your mind be very quiet but very focused on what you are doing, you will let your heart feel your body and what it is doing, and you will let your intention flow into your limbs. You will harmonize body, soul and spirit.

4. If you have purchased the Parent's Support Package, you will find several exercises that are specifically geared for adults. These are meant to give you a mindful movement practice that will help you enormously as a daily movement practice. They will help your breathing, your heart, your confidence. They will help you to "open your back-space" so that you will be able to feel that you can touch into inspiration whenever you need it from "unseen sources."

5. If you have purchased a curriculum package, you will find exercises chosen for the grade level you have purchased. As a teacher, you will learn the exercise yourself by practicing it on your own for several weeks until you can do it without the screen. Then you will do it with the child, and they will *imitate* you. Don't show the children the screen: they have to imitate a real person (you!)

6. Be sure to download the pdf that accompanies every single exercise!

Where should we do eurythmy? What time of the day? Do I need special clothes?

1. It is much better to do eurythmy inside than outside. When you do it inside, your space is held and protected, and you and the child can focus on what you are doing. If you do it outside, your attention (and your chi body) are so easily distracted by the environment and the weather.

2. For the little lessons we are doing here, we don't need a very large space at all. Simply find a place in your home where you and your child or children can stand together and can move at least 6 steps in each direction. If you have several children to work with at the same time, you should have a space large enough to make a little circle. You don't need a special floor for this work. I suggest that you work in stocking feet, or in eurythmy slippers (gymnastic shoes) if you have them.

3. A good time to do these little eurythmy exercises is when you are doing your morning circle. Alternately, you could do them when you have just finished a spell of desk work, and want to get up and do some structured movement.

4. You will need to purchase a copper rod for the rod exercises. They are easy to purchase at any

hardware store: please read my pdf about rod exercises for details.

Do I need music? Will I be talking while I teach? What will I say? Will I also be moving?

1. Eurythmy is usually done in a classroom situation accompanied by live (never recorded) music, or by poems. That is, someone plays an instrument while the children move, giving the children a sense of structure in rhythm, beat and pitch. When we work with poetry, you, as teacher, recite a small poem as you do your movements, and the children move (without speaking) in the directions moved. Both the content and the structure of the poem are important.

2. If you don't have an instrument at your disposal, you can make up a little story to engage your children in the exercise. You will speak the story as you and the child move together, and the child will imitate your movements (which is why you will need to have internalized the movements first). The child, however, will not speak with you: they will move in silence and pour their energy into their limbs. (Likewise, when you are learning the exercises by yourself, you won't speak them either, but will move in silence.) Later on, it can be helpful for the child to try things on their own, with you watching them and supportively coaching them and appreciating their efforts as they master the exercises.

What about eurythmy with speech? Can I do that too?

1. Eurythmy becomes most powerful for you and for the children when you begin doing speech eurythmy. You learn how to make your language visible by embodying the gestures for each sound and then using these gestures and form choreography to make poetry and story come alive. You can do poems, fairy tales, class plays, legends with the beautiful movements of eurythmy.

2. Doing the sounds of eurythmy has untold benefits. It enlivens your imagination, helping you to visualize the things you are thinking about instead of just experiencing them as intellectual facts. It coordinates arms, legs, body; thinking feeling, willing; body, soul, spirit; spatial movements, right- left, above-below, front-back coordination. (Just think what that does for neural development!) It helps the child get "into their body," and use their whole self to think. And on a more subtle level, it also helps the physiological growth of the body, by supporting the healthy growth of the organs. If you want to learn how to take this next step in eurythmy with your child, please travel over to my website, eurythmyonline.com. There you can find the learning modules for The Heart of Eurythmy, Part 1—The Vowels, and The Heart of Eurythmy, Part 2—The Consonants. I will offer a 25% discount if you enter the code *Homeschooling* for these two modules.

The Eurythmy Online project was with the homeschooling parent in mind. I hope that this will

bring much joy and inspiration to you. Please contact me at info@eurythmyonline.com for more information, or to schedule a consultation with me.