



## **Froebel Trust Podcast Transcript : Episode 10 April 2024**

00:00:00:00 - 00:00:29:07

Colin

Welcome to a special edition of the Froebel Trust Podcast. After one year, three series, nine episodes and 23 individual guests. We felt it was time to recap some extracts from the podcast so far. A chance to relive some of the conversations that have had the biggest impact since we began publishing the Froebel Trust podcast back in February 2023.

00:00:29:09 - 00:00:54:22

Colin

And if you are one of our new listeners, just discovering the podcast and wondering where to start, this extracts episode will fill you in on some of what you've missed and point you towards particular episodes that might be of interest. My name is Colin Kelly and it's been a fascinating journey for me. Learning about what a Froebelian approach to early childhood education is and how it can make a difference for educators, young children and families.

00:00:54:24 - 00:01:20:07

Colin

It's been really rewarding hearing from some of our podcast listeners who've shared how they've enjoyed hearing from other educators with similar experiences and using the podcasts to reflect on their own practice. The Froebelian approach is often most associated with children's experiences, but many practitioners will tell you it has much to offer adult educators, too. Let's go back to where we began the series in episode one.

00:01:20:09 - 00:01:45:15

Colin

My guests in this episode were Dr Stella Louis, lead tutor for the Froebel Trust's Short Courses, Professor Chris Pascal, Director of the Centre for Research In Early Childhood. Sally Cave, Headteacher at Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre and Co-Director of The Froebel Partnership. Dr Lynn McNair, Head of Cowgate Under-fives Centre in Edinburgh. And Simon Bates Co-Director of Froebelian Futures.

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Colin

Let's pick things up with Dr Stella Louis.

00:01:48:18 - 00:02:19:14

Stella

Quite often I'm. I'm delivering training to staff teams, and I'm just remembering a recent encounter where on one hand, one of the major Froebelian principles are that children learn through their own effort. It's the activity. It's this whole idea that self-activity leads to sort of understanding, reasoning and thinking. And there'll be some educators, wanting to just teach children because that's how they have been trained.

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Stella

And they will say, oh, you know, this Froebelian approach, just, you know self-activity. What do you mean? And I think where we've worked with those educators, we've worked with their strengths. So we've almost applied the same principles that we apply to children to them. We start with what they know, what they can do, and we bring them with us that way.

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Stella

And, you know, somehow along the process, you know, Sally has a really nice example of one of her staff saying, you know, I just didn't get this Froebel stuff. I absolutely get it now. So it's giving them the time and space to gain wisdom, because an important thing to understand about the Froebel approach, it's exactly that.

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Stella

It's an approach. It's a way of being and doing. It's not a particular method. So one size doesn't fit all. And I think you've got to, just like we would with children play to the educators' strengths. Whatever they may be. You know, we're educating people in the principles that we would see that would allow young children to be educated and to flourish and to fly and to be fulfilled.

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Chris

These are all Froebelian words. we would use the same concepts with adults. We mirror it when we're working with staff or educators or when when those educators we're helping are working with the children. And the first thing is, is starting within that community of practice, a really reflective and self-evaluative dialogue, which is where you're weaving that the evaluation, the research comes within it because you're evaluating your practice and giving, the framework this again of freedom but with guidance.

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Chris

So the, the tutors guide that dialog and feed that dialog, but they don't dominate it or train them to operate in a certain way. What you want is to give those educators that capacity to learn with their own agency through their own self-reflection and rigorous but underpinned by those core principles.

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Colin

Well, that's Professor Chris Pascal speaking on episode one of the Froebel Trust podcast. Let's stay with episode one for now. You'll often hear our guests referring to Froebelian training and the Froebel Trust short courses. There are six parts to these courses for educators, and they're for everyone working in schools and settings and are delivered by a team of traveling tutors.

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Colin

You'll hear each of the courses being referred to as elements. There's also training, CPD opportunities and Froebelian networks organized by other providers. If you're interested in any of these, just check the notes in the podcast descriptions. Well, I asked Lynn McNair, co-lead of the University of Edinburgh Froebel course, and Sally Cave, head teacher at Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre

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Colin

what sort of change they've noticed in staff who undertake this Froebelian training and what it does for them.

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Lynn

We've been carrying out some research on that, and I think that one thing is it makes them much more eloquent, our way of being, and working with them gives them a chance to stand back, to look at something. So say they have a block corner that's existed for a very long time, and it's designed in a particular way,

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Lynn

when they do our course, they step back and think, actually, I'm now starting to understand what I need to do and why I need to do it. And that's been great. And, you know, the early years practitioners, they work tirelessly hard and I think Froebel just speaks to them. I think that at the end they always say, now I understand what I was doing and why I was doing it.

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Chris

I wanted to just make a quick but important distinction between the courses and also ongoing and continuous professional development that goes alongside that. And I think one of the ambitions we have is to help a community of educators network or within a setting to become part of a reflective community. One of Froebel's principles was that reflective practitioner, knowledgeable and reflective practitioner, which is helped by attending a course and going on the course, which is an important provocation, but trying to create regular opportunities for staff teams to come and engage together in a reflective dialogue together, a critical, reflective dialogue about their practice and the practice issues that they're facing, that ongoing professional development which is as important

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Chris

as the the courses that you attend. But you've got to have leaders in those organizations facilitating those times for practitioner dialogue.

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Colin

Yeah, really good point. Sally....

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Sally

I would say the the courses and the continuous professional development, that Lynn and Chris are talking about actually improve staff wellbeing, which as leaders is something we are constantly aware of. I can't make my staff happy, because I don't have any control over what's happening to them in their lived experiences. But my role I see it is ensuring high job satisfaction, having a shared language, having some autonomy, a lot of autonomy in their roles, which is all part of that Froebelian approach gives them, actually really helps

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Sally

have a very high, level of staff wellbeing. A member of my staff told some people on a tour last week, you know, unprompted, she just said, I love working here, and that's what I want. And that's what we all want, isn't it? And especially at a time of, you know, real difficulties with recruitment and retention, I think as well, the research work we're doing, with with Chris's team, that opportunity to reflect gives job satisfaction again.

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Sally

And I can't stress enough, I think the the freedom with guidance that all the staff have within a Froebelian setting. so, you know, and being very ambitious for our children and our staff, but always starting where the child is or where, the adult is.

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Colin

And I asked Professor Chris Pascal to bring episode one to an end by trying to sell the Froebelian approach to another nursery or early years setting. Why should they adopt this approach and set off on the journey?

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Chris

What motivates them is their vocational belief in transforming children's lives, enabling children to be fulfilled. And we know that children will only be fulfilled in their capabilities with highly skilled, engaged, inspired, and excited educators. And so the first step for me would be to get excited yourself, to get the leadership excited and then pass on that passion and that focus for the children, because you have the magic dust in your hand to transform those lives.

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Chris

But you have to be prepared to sprinkle and be hopeful and excited about that yourselves. So you have to channel it yourself and then then share it around and join together in dialogue with others. Find some like minded friends that can get excited with you, and then you'll get the children excited and the magic dust can start to transform your lives and the lives of those who you care about.

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Colin

Now from magic dust to blocks, sticks and stones for episode two, I asked Dr Stella Louis what a Froebelian setting might look like.

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Stella

That's what makes Froebel so engaging, because no two settings will look the same. It is about the environment being a really rich environment, supporting children's choice, their freedom and their autonomy. And that will depend on what children are interested in. And it would require adults or practitioners that are observant and and tuned in. I think ultimately it's about adults' trust in children's intentions.

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Stella

And, I think sometimes in some places we don't often do that. We don't trust children's intentions. We we apply our preconceptions to what we've seen them do. And one of the wonderful things about being Froebelian is it does open you up to just trust in children's good intentions, which makes you think about why they're doing this. It makes you question what you're seeing.

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Stella

And so it's not straightforward. Education should cause thinking, that's what observation should do, I think too.

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Colin

Well, observation is an important theme throughout our podcasts. And we return to it in later episodes. Let's build on that topic just now and revisit a clip from episode six. In this section, Dr Stella Louis, is joined by Gaynor Brimble, School Improvement Partner for the South East Wales Education Achievement Service, and they start to discuss what's considered important in learning and for learning.

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Colin

You'll hear Gaynor talking about what matters in learning, and Stella talks about play, which matters for learning, as well as process which matters in learning. Before they got to that, I wanted to know about the differences between different parts of the UK. Gaynor you're in Wales. I'm in Scotland, Stella is in England. How are the nations different in terms of observation and assessment?

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Gaynor

I can't speak for England, in, in any great shape or form, but in terms of, Wales, we have a new curriculum coming in, Curriculum for Wales, there's much more of an emphasis on children's progress over time. 3 to 16 continuum. I wouldn't say we're there everywhere in terms of observational assessments. It is a new thing.

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Gaynor

So where we are now in Wales and and I feel like we're more aligned to what's happening in Scotland, is that, particularly in the early years, we are looking at, a child centred pedagogy with adults who are observing and noticing and changing their pedagogies to suit the children, rather than trying to fit the children into topics and themes and projects that the adults have chosen and, you know, the assessments that they think are important.

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Gaynor

So, you know, this morning we've had a conversation about why is it so important to you that you would write it down, that children at three know the four shapes, they know the seven colours. They can name them. and, you know, children were being withdrawn to find out that sort of information. so you're dragging them away from their play, their exploration, where they're really into deep level learning to say, you know, do you know what this colour is?

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Gaynor

What colour is this or what shape is this? They're going to know those things later on. Why have we put importance on those items of knowledge at three when we know they're going to get it? They might have got it at 2. But at 4 or 5 or 6, it's not going to make a big difference to their learning.

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Gaynor

The relationships and the experiences that are on offer will make a difference to how they learn, particularly in their dispositions for learning.

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Colin

You were very diplomatic when you said, I can't speak, I can't speak for England, but I've certainly heard the Scottish Government have said things that I've heard about England. Stella, has England got it wrong?

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Stella

I think the honest answer to that is yes, England has got it wrong. I think play has taken a backseat. We all know that children learn through play, and I think the focus is too much on outcome. There were a group of early years, providers and educators that were so upset with the last revision of the Early Years Foundation stage that this whole coalition came

together to form what is now known as Birth to five matters and that is curriculum guidance that we felt reflected all our beliefs and our values.

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Stella

And I have never in all of my life felt I needed to stand up for something as much as I felt I needed to stand up for the early years foundation stage, I would say having worked in Scotland, Wales and in England, I think Scotland has a wonderful, The curriculum for excellence is a wonderful document because it values practitioner training, it values research and it values knowledge.

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Stella

And I think the Froebelian

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Stella

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Stella

threads are filtered through that document. And again, I'm going to say exactly the same for the Welsh document. I think, practitioners, I urge them in England to go with what they know about children and don't just look at children through this, this very narrow lens that devalues play. But what it also does is it devalues practitioner knowledge.

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Stella

And there's a point I want to make. Quite recently I was doing some training, on observation, observing children's learning. And I shared with a practitioner an example of an observation where this practitioner, Roz, had done six observations of this little lad over a period of a year. After she had done these observations, she's got some analysis about what she knows.

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Stella

And this educator said to me, where did she get this from? And I was just stunned. She got that analysis from her relationship, her interaction, her learning environment, and her knowledge of the child. And I think sometimes the consequence of when curriculums are played with and when we're focused so much on outcomes, not only do we make things difficult for children, but we devalue our educators to the point that they don't know what they do know and what is part of their everyday bread and butter and that's sad.

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Colin

Continuing on from these discussions about the role of the educator, in episode eight, I asked, where are the men in early childhood education today? Recent Department for Education data suggests only 2% of the people who work in early years education in England are male. In episode eight my guests and I explored why that was the case

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Colin

whether it's a problem and what can be done about it. Here's Shaddai Tembo, a lecturer in early childhood studies at Bath Spa University.

Shaddai

You know, for me, it's it's really difficult working with some parents sometimes when they have a certain perception of what an early years practitioner is or should be and how they should look. and when you don't meet that expectation, it can be difficult.

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Shaddai

certainly there are a lot of stereotypical views that parents do perpetuate. comments such as 'I don't want that

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Shaddai

man changing my

00:17:18:18 - 00:17:21:07

Shaddai

child's nappy because he's weird' for whatever

00:17:21:07 - 00:17:24:21

Shaddai

reason. Unfortunately, they are commonplace.

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Shaddai

and certainly conversations I've had with men in the early years, reveal that they're more widespread than we think, unfortunately.

Colin

Well, Matthew Langton is one of those rare men working in early years education. He's based at Outdoor Owls, an outdoor based early years setting in south London. Matt was recently named 2023 Nursery World Practitioner of the year, and I asked him if there was anything different that he, as a man, brought to his role.

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Matt

We've had a big shift

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Matt

towards like emotional competency and

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Matt  
language and

00:17:54:17 - 00:18:06:14

Matt  
self-regulation, and I feel from personal experience growing up, not having emotionally available men in my life has contributed to me not expressing myself quite as freely

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Matt  
as I would. I think, it's

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Matt  
important

00:18:10:05 - 00:18:11:10

Matt  
that there are men in

00:18:11:10 - 00:18:12:06

Matt  
the setting that

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Matt  
are emotionally available. So specifically, little boys know that it's okay to feel and to express themselves and to have

00:18:20:23 - 00:18:27:08

Matt  
negative emotions and show their sadness and cry, without it being like, man up or get on with it, that sort of thing.

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Colin  
There's a phrase that you used a couple of times there. You talked about being emotionally available. What exactly did you mean by that?

Matt  
In my head, it's just knowing that a child can feel whatever

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Matt  
they want, and it's fine. And you should

00:18:42:24 - 00:18:43:08

Matt

never be

00:18:43:08 - 00:18:47:13

Matt

told that your feelings aren't valid and that you shouldn't be feeling

00:18:47:13 - 00:18:50:05

Matt

this way in a situation. And just being able to have those

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Matt

open and honest discussions about why you feel a certain way about things , why you're experiencing these big emotions at that point and having a conversation, not a teacher student type of interaction, where it is just, you're a person, I'm a person

00:19:04:23 - 00:19:06:13

Matt

We're going to talk through this with each other.

00:19:06:17 - 00:19:07:05

Matt

And

00:19:07:05 - 00:19:08:13

Matt

showing your

00:19:08:15 - 00:19:12:01

Matt

emotions around children and your own

00:19:12:01 - 00:19:12:21

Matt

children.

00:19:12:23 - 00:19:14:00

Matt

So then they know that

00:19:14:00 - 00:19:14:09

Matt

'Okay

00:19:14:09 - 00:19:20:14

Matt

I feel that as well. And Mum and Dad feel that as well. My teacher feels that and they're showing it. So it must be fine

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Colin

to feel that.' Matthew Langton there from Froebel Trust podcast episode eight. Well, this theme of relationships, wellbeing and acknowledging feelings in early education also came up in guest discussions in episode seven, when my panel shared their experiences and research about how children and staff form relationships in early years settings, and how this linked to managing the wellbeing of staff.

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Colin

Here's Holli Williams, head of schools at Linden Tree Nursery Schools and Dr Peter Elfer from the University of Roehampton, discussing their hopes for the early years education sector. What's your hope when you look to the future?

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Holli

My hope is that we have practitioners who are able to really articulate their practice around not only their feelings, but also, about excellence of early childhood. So I think picking up on what, you know, everyone's been saying is that element of trust, trusting your staff, trusting your manager, trusting that what you then say to your manager something is going to change because there's nothing worse than bringing something up and then nothing happening.

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Holli

And you feeling really disheartened about it. I really hope that there's more of an emphasis on the relationships with young children, because that's what quells young children's anxiety. That's what supports them to go on to school and the rest of our lives. It's not just about school readiness. We're supporting these children for the rest of their lives, giving them the tools to be able to, deal with conflict, to make positive relationships.

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Colin

And Peter, I try not to talk too much about politics in this podcast, but in the UK we are expecting a general election at some point in 2024. Is there something you'd be looking for from the politicians that they could do to help the sector?

Peter

The political group that gets in need to to

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Peter

get back

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Peter

to treating staff workers in whatever sector, but obviously from our discussion in the early years sector as, as people, as individuals and not just numbers in a ratio, and they need to get back to treating children as people now, not as future workers. And I think if we get a political system and a political party that's committed to that, then the rest will follow.

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Peter

But like I was saying earlier about permitting circumstances, if you don't have that, then however good your educators are, however good the managers and leaders are, they can't magic up good practice out of nothing and so many settings are running almost on thin air. Resources are absolutely cut to the bone, and it's just not right. It's kind of institutionally abusive.

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Peter

It's just not right. And the people that are going to suffer most are, of course, the children.

Colin

Well, let's go back now to episode three, when we turned to how Froebelian settings and nursery schools connect with their local community, including parents, families, and primary schools. This led into an interesting conversation about race and diversity, and how the Froebelian approach can enable those issues to be opened up with children, rather than glossed over and hidden away.

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Colin

Here's Dr Stella Louis.

00:22:38:03 - 00:23:07:03

Stella

Children are not colourblind. You know, staff may pretend to be, but children, certainly aren't. They absolutely notice. And observe all sorts of things that are happening around them. And, and I think we need to be in a position where we respond to what it is that they notice. When you think about diversity and equality, you know, really we're thinking about how we don't just celebrate the sameness, but how we also celebrate and respect difference.

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Stella

As practitioners, they need to not shy away from sometimes having conversations that make them feel uncomfortable. You know, I think Froebel talks about children being part, you know, part of the human race, their individuality and their diversity is hugely important. So we've got to find ways to, to incorporate those things. And talking about difference, whether you're talking about differences in leaves their shapes their types, their veins, or differences in hair colour, eye colour, different, lengths of hair, skin colour, all of those things are huge teachable moments.

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Stella

And it's knowing your children, knowing your community, and knowing how best to guide.

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Colin

I can see Professor Chris Pascal wants to come in here. Go ahead Chris.

00:23:57:24 - 00:24:24:11

Chris

Children live in the real world and real world issues are going on around them, and it's how we enable them to live those out in the nursery as well. Those real puzzles and questions or emotions or responses and during Covid part of the work we did it at Sally's nursery in Guildford was, how children were dealing with the Covid situation and we were observing how children were playing, how their play

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Chris

was enabling them to make their experiences a reality. And we noticed that the children had created this game and kept playing this game, which they called the death game. And during Covid, this was very real. And the death game was that there was a family at home. And then the mother started to cough, and she lay down, and she got into bed and the other children ministered and brought drinks and and then eventually the parent died.

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Chris

And then the game kind of came to an end. But we noticed they kept playing this game, but they didn't want to play it when there was an adult around. So it was something that was really important to them because it was happening for some of these children.

Bereavement or death, or they've seen it and we had a big conversation as a staff team about why would they not want to play the game when there was an educator around and adults around? The adults were aware it was being played, but the children didn't...

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Chris

If the adult went in, it closed down and it stopped. We felt in the end it was important to enable the children to have the freedom to play that game without us interfering and going in and scaffolding and extending and just enabling them to to play that experience out, that that was okay. But at least those children felt they could come into nursery and play that game.

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Chris

So sometimes as educators, it's important not to intervene as well as when to. But children bring their real world experiences into the nursery with them, and they don't kind of think, oh, it's the nursery, I've got to leave that at the door, because now we're into this. If the environment is open enough, they have come trailing families and experiences and life.

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Chris

And our job, I think, as an educator, is to give that life, whatever it is, space and opportunity to be explored. And I just think the death game is a nice example of they bring it in and they worked it through, and we as educators have to respect that and respect when they want to do that away from us as well as when they want to do it with us.

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Colin

Many of the conversations during our podcast episodes have come back to play, and the importance of nurturing and protecting all kinds of play in early education. Block play was the focus for episode 4, a fundamental aspect of a Froebelian approach: sets of plain blocks of wood of various sizes and shapes that, in the hands of a child can be transformed into, well, anything really.

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Colin

Jane Whinnett associate tutor on the Froebel and Childhood Practice course at the University of Edinburgh, and Paula Phillips a Froebel Trust Travelling Tutor were my guests for this section. You're going to hear Paula first. And I was really struck by how when I asked the question about what it is that children find engaging about blocks, she goes on to give a wonderful description of children's intrinsic motivation creative drives, developing autonomy and how they represent their inner self and experiences through symbols.

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Colin

Now a trained Froebelian educator, stepping back and observing can see there's a great deal going on. Well, what do you think it is, Paula, about building things and working with the blocks that so appeals and engages children?

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Paula

I think it's, certainly their inner desire, but it's also that they can keep control of their own play, that they're building through things that, that they want to be doing. I mean, again, they may not realize, but subconsciously that perseverance, that, sort of resilience that try and try again, you know, it is exciting trying to build a bridge.

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Paula

Well, how how can I do that? I don't know until I've learned the skills that I need to know that the balance, the balance or the size or the shape of the block I'm using is going to work. And if we think about sort of a tall, tall tower, if we're building upwards a tall tower, we can be using things like a step or a small step, ladders or things.

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Paula

And the adults knowing and, valuing that that time to leave the children. And, you know, there is a real sense of excitement, whether they're alone and that's, that's important as well for children to be creating themselves on their own, but also in a group, and the

excitement of it sort of getting higher and higher and higher and higher than me as a child, you know, when's it going to fall over and how how's that going to be?

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Paula

I think it's, it's just natural that children just want to continue and continue their play. They might also be sort of trying to represent something. So, we might have pictures, pictures of buildings around, the block play or books or things, photos where they've been or things like that. And actually, you know, that, that perseverance and that wanting to create something either from within myself and within my head based on real life experiences or a picture that I'm copying.

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Paula

Actually, you know, they they want to be doing it. They really desire to do it.

00:29:27:10 - 00:29:45:03

Colin

Jane, I was looking at the pamphlet that you wrote that's on the Froebel Trust website. People can go and download it and see it for themselves. There's some amazing constructions that people have created, using blocks. Can you just maybe pick out a couple of a couple of the most interesting things that you've seen people building?

00:29:45:05 - 00:30:15:09

Jane

Oh, that's a tricky thing because for every child their best, you know, kind of creation is a different thing and it's meaningful to them. I think things that come from children's real experience sometimes are interesting. You know, when, they've maybe been away doing something, like the child who had been visiting London and had seen London Bridge, and, and had, created that in the blocks and had, you know, little blocks as people waiting to cross.

00:30:15:09 - 00:30:22:13

Jane

So some of the real strong features of the architecture of the bridge, you could see in the, in the building.

Colin

And why

00:30:22:13 - 00:30:34:04

Colin

do you think, or why would Froebel think that it's better to recreate that with those plain wooden blocks than something like coloured Lego or Duplo or Meccano or something.

00:30:34:06 - 00:30:36:17

Jane

That's a good question, Colin.

00:30:36:19 - 00:30:38:13

Jane

I think it's because

00:30:38:13 - 00:31:08:22

Jane

the resource, transforms itself so that different children can use it in different ways. So if it's a very fixed resource, then you've not got that flexibility to allow others to, you know, it might be a one off thing and then it can only be that. Whereas I think one of the the real strengths of the blocks is that they can be so many different things and it doesn't have to be a huge experience like, you know, being away somewhere, seeing something unusual.

00:31:08:22 - 00:31:15:03

Jane

It can be their daily experience. So one of the examples in the pamphlet

00:31:15:03 - 00:31:16:01

Jane

It's children using

00:31:16:01 - 00:31:29:03

Jane

blocks as game controllers and, you know, using and other blocks as screens. It's transferring from that to everyday experience that they have and using that in their constructions.

00:31:29:08 - 00:31:40:12

Colin

In episode five, our conversation turned to outdoor play. Here's, Froebel Trust Travelling Tutor, Felicity Thomas, telling me what Froebel had to say about the outdoors.

00:31:40:14 - 00:32:13:00

Felicity

Froebel believed that you could learn everything in the outdoors and in nature, because his main principle is around unity and connectivity, and he was absolutely passionate about children being connected to their home, which is their planet, their universe, and that everything that we need to learn in life can be learned through nature and through being in nature and understanding and having a connection and seeing ourselves.

00:32:13:00 - 00:32:39:01

Felicity

I think David Attenborough said this in one of his programmes, he said about how we are as human beings, are part of nature. But unfortunately, in this time, this age that we live in now, we have to see ourselves as apart. We're outside nature now, and we should be absolutely in the centre of it. And that's what Froebel believed.

00:32:39:05 - 00:33:05:10

Colin



There's some excellent insight in this episode, as my guests explain how they make the outdoors work in a variety of environments. Some settings have lots of space around them, others not so much. We talked about how they use gardens and water, and I love this section with Beverley Dickenson, nursery manager at Tiddlers Wraparound in Caerphilly, Wales where I began by asking what proportion of the day a child might spend outside. About 90%.

00:33:05:10 - 00:33:21:03

Beverley

I mean, we're out all winds and weather all day. The doors are open all day. So, you know, again, Froebelian freedom with guidance. There are obviously always educators around, but when those doors open it's very, very

00:33:21:03 - 00:33:21:18

Beverley

rarely you

00:33:21:18 - 00:33:41:01

Beverley

get children staying indoors. They'd rather be outdoors. So we've always got wet weather clothing and wellies that we provide for the children. We have clear umbrellas so they can go out and do raindrop racing you know, just to still be part of their surroundings. But yeah, I'd say the majority of the time our children are outdoors.

00:33:41:03 - 00:33:53:15

Colin

You've been talking about all weathers. Now there's a big difference, Felicity, between, you know, being out in drizzle and a torrential downpour. So is it practical, you know, to be out even when it's as bad as that?

00:33:53:17 - 00:34:20:20

Felicity

Yes. Absolutely. Yeah. What a wonderful sensation. You know, if you've got the right clothes on, I think it's the sweets that say there's no such thing as bad weather, any bad clothes. And that's absolutely true. Children love being out in torrential rain. The sound is just amazing. And then if you take things out that magnify the sound, like take a cymbal out and put a cymbal on your head in torrential rain.

00:34:21:00 - 00:34:53:05

Felicity

You've never heard anything like it. It's just amazing. But it's about making those connections and children experience everything through their senses. So the more sensory experiences that you can give children and the outdoors is so rich in sensory experiences, you know, indoors you're limited. And one of the senses or two senses that I think you're really limited with indoors is the sense of sight and your sense of smell.

00:34:53:07 - 00:34:56:17

Felicity

Now outdoors, they are in abundance.

00:34:56:19 - 00:35:10:19

Colin

Great. Beverley, I wonder if you could maybe just give me an example. How would you summarize? What do you think spending more time outdoors has done for the children? What kind of difference do you think it's made?

00:35:10:21 - 00:35:38:11

Beverley

I mean, a huge difference because, you know, we have children who also have additional learning needs. and you go into that outdoor space, and it's just they all get to experience it from where they're at. That freedom, the child who wants to go and sit by themselves but doesn't feel self-conscious outside doing that, they can go and hide away in a little den or go and sit on their own.

00:35:38:11 - 00:35:55:05

Beverley

And whereas, you know, when we're indoors, we do feel really self-conscious I think. If you wanted to go and sit alone, it kind of looks a little bit more obvious. So I just think, I mean, the freedom children have and being able to explore and investigate.

00:35:55:07 - 00:35:55:22

Beverley

I mean, it's

00:35:55:22 - 00:36:00:19

Beverley

cognitively and spiritually, it makes a huge difference to them.

00:36:00:22 - 00:36:09:09

Colin

And are you all in agreement, because you seem to be, that behaviour improves outdoors?

00:36:09:11 - 00:36:12:03

Everyone

Yes, yes. Absolutely.

00:36:12:05 - 00:36:33:16

Colin

Well, a moment of unity there from Froebel Trust podcast episode five on outdoor play. Well, we've almost ran out of time, but perhaps we should wrap up this extracts episode with a clip from the most recent edition of the Froebel Trust Podcast in episode nine, I asked can a Froebelian approach work in any kind of school or early years setting?

00:36:33:18 - 00:36:47:23

Colin

And my guest Jessica Holme, a qualified teacher who most recently was reception and early years teacher at Newlands Spring Nursery and Primary School in Essex shared why she thinks a Froebelian approach works for educators, now.

00:36:48:00 - 00:36:51:15

Jessica

I think most early years practitioners, to be honest, I'd

00:36:51:15 - 00:36:52:23

Jessica

actually go as far as

00:36:52:23 - 00:36:54:12

Jessica

saying most teachers, thinking

00:36:54:12 - 00:36:55:13

Jessica

back to

00:36:55:15 - 00:36:57:15

Jessica

my training days all those years ago.

00:36:57:15 - 00:36:59:13

Jessica

And even those teachers

00:36:59:13 - 00:37:10:04

Jessica

that I've had the privilege to train, I think any educator that goes into teaching, and specifically the early years practitioners I think it's innate. I mean, the the Froebelian principles are

00:37:10:04 - 00:37:15:11

Jessica

so... they're the original reasons why people go into teaching. And then

00:37:15:11 - 00:37:17:20

Jessica

due to the political climate, due to all the

00:37:17:20 - 00:37:20:01

Jessica

other stuff that comes with teaching,

00:37:20:03 - 00:37:23:03

Jessica

that gets forgotten. And actually, even on my

00:37:23:03 - 00:37:25:03

Jessica  
course, we made a really lovely

00:37:25:03 - 00:37:27:04

Jessica  
group, we're still in touch

00:37:27:06 - 00:37:41:02

Jessica  
which is really a lovely part of the the Froebelian courses is that you do make those network of friends that you keep for life, and I won't say her by name because I don't want to embarrass her, but she got a bit tearful at the end and she's like

00:37:41:04 - 00:37:42:06

Jessica  
'this course has reminded

00:37:42:06 - 00:37:45:12

Jessica  
me why I'm doing my job.' I think that's something

00:37:45:18 - 00:37:49:00

Jessica  
particularly with all the schemes of work, with all the expectations

00:37:49:00 - 00:37:51:04

Jessica  
on teachers, with the workload....

00:37:52:14 - 00:37:57:14

Jessica  
you forget the reason, you forget your 'why', why you've come into education and you forget why you're here.

00:37:57:16 - 00:37:59:22

Jessica  
And even just when you read the books or

00:38:00:18 - 00:38:04:07

Jessica  
when I got to create the nursery, or you speak to others you're like, yeah, this is why

00:38:04:07 - 00:38:09:19

Jessica  
I'm doing it. The purpose is for the children to

00:38:09:21 - 00:38:13:21

Jessica

in a holistic way, discover who they are and to discover who they

00:38:13:21 - 00:38:19:14

Jessica

want to be be. Being Froebelian, it's almost just synonymous with being an educator.

00:38:19:16 - 00:38:50:22

Colin

Jessica Hulme there from episode nine of the Froebel Trust podcast. There's so much more to discover and so much still to come. I hope this special episode of extracts from the series has whetted your appetite for more. You can dive in and explore all our previous episodes in further detail. Now one thing that really shines through for me throughout all these conversations is the commitment and care that these people have to help young children discover all that they can be and enjoy rich and fulfilling lives, whatever form that might take.

00:38:50:24 - 00:39:19:21

Colin

I'm so grateful to my guests for their work and for speaking about it so openly. And I'm grateful to you for listening. Thank you and I'll be back soon with a whole new series of the Froebel Trust podcast, you'll find a full archive of all our episodes, full details of all our guests over the last nine episodes, full transcripts, and links to the various resources referred to in the podcast by visiting the podcast page at [www.froebel.org.uk](http://www.froebel.org.uk)

00:39:19:23 - 00:39:50:11

Colin

We'd also welcome any suggestions for topics, questions and issues you'd like us to discuss in future episodes. And you might also like to suggest yourself as a guest. You can email [office@froebeltrust.org.uk](mailto:office@froebeltrust.org.uk). It would be great to hear from you.

(ENDS)