

Is the World a Good Place? Suggestions from the Kindergarten for you at Home

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Dear parents with small children,

The kindergartens are empty, the indoor plants went home with the teachers, and the children are with you.

Assessment 1

What luck to finally have time and peace with the children at home. No more stress due to appointments, obligations, travel and long car journeys - just occasional shopping and enjoying the company at home - there is nothing better for children! Of course, there is a lack of exercise and play in the forest or park - wind, water, earth and the delicate green of beech leaves that have just hatched from their buds. But apart from that: isn't it so beneficial for your children and for all of us that the constant rush of work, school and leisure activities finally comes to an end? Those who are in the happy position of having a garden can see it: it sprouts and grows green like rarely before, because we are always there and can take care of the beds every day. And for the children, who are happy and reassured. At last the people who are most loved by the children have time: the parents and siblings!

Assessment 2

What a catastrophe: more than three billion people are locked up in their homes. Many apartments are narrow and dark, many children suffered from lack of exercise and too much screen usage before, now it's getting really bad. Due to too few physical-sensory experiences and too much intellectual-nervous stimulation, many children are emotionally unbalanced. Spending the whole day in the same apartment with others who have similar problems and with frustrated adults is not an ideal situation to positively transform a tendency to aggressiveness, fearfulness or depression. Especially indigestible for children is also what now takes place for hours in all apartments - talking about the number of sick and dead, about people and powers that are responsible for the mess and about catastrophic future prospects.

Which assessment is correct? In any case, you, dear parents, are currently at home with your children at a time when everyone is very much aware that the health of nature and humanity is under threat. Hopefully you have already received a lot of good advice from your child's kindergarten teacher for your "round-the-clock kindergarten" at home. Here are a few more suggestions, perhaps there is something here that you have not yet thought of.

Is the world a good place?

Surely you've heard of the idea how important it is for the little child to have the adults around him or her in the right mood: The world is good. But many of us are in a situation in life where the assessment 2 seems fully justified. The world is not good, in which alone a difficult-to-control global pandemic with unforeseeable consequences is capable of halting the collective tendency towards the destruction of nature and self-destruction of humanity for a few weeks.

20 years ago the film "Life is Beautiful" by Roberto Benigni came to the cinemas. Some people thought the story was exaggerated or kitschy, but you could feel how a father's unwavering optimism and humor can affect his child. Together they have been arrested by the Nazis and are sitting on the train that the father knows is going to the concentration camp. In his own way, he tries to convey to his child, even in this situation, the mood: "The world is good".

It is not a question of whether the world is really good or bad. It's about whether we as adults have a project that we believe can make the world a little bit good. For the father on the train to the concentration camp, it is the wonderful and cheerful life together with the mother of the child. For Berenger, the main character in Ionesco's play "Rhinoceros" in which all people gradually turn into rhinoceroses, it is the love of art and improvisation; for Michel Vaujour, a French gangster sentenced to several life sentences, it was the development of mental abilities which he noticed grew in an unimaginable way through certain exercises. For me, it could also be the radish bed in the garden or the kitchen shelf that I build myself.

As kindergarten teachers we know how positive it is for the children when we have a project. When we feel like doing concrete work in the immediate surroundings. Through the project and through the work we generate emotional and physical warmth. Suddenly, we are able to deal with quarrels or conspicuous behavior of children much more confidently, release tension and develop confidence.

This is exactly what has a positive effect on the children: Through our work they are encouraged to play freely, get involved themselves, have their own projects that they want to carry out. The warmth spreads - it ignites with the idea of what we could do to make something in our environment a little better or more beautiful, flows into our motivation to do something concrete, lives in our joy at work and finally jumps over to the children, who stop making comments about the corona virus and are encouraged to be self-active. In doing so, they develop a tremendous warmth that far exceeds ours.

We (and especially the children) urgently need warmth when we experience a situation that creates fear: when all the people in the city gradually turn into rhinos, when songbirds and bees die or when a contagious unpredictable virus passes by. Warmth is created when the abstract belief that the world is good is transformed into concrete work that I believe makes the world a better place.

[Suggestions from the kindergarten for you at home:](#)

Radish bed: The children see and feel how "good" we are to the earth crumbs, how delicately we handle the cotyledons.

Kitchen shelf: The wood is nice and smooth after sawing, rasping, drilling and sanding, and the spice tins, which used to lie around in the cupboard untidily, are now doing really well on the kitchen shelf.

Doll's bed: The doll is also doing well when she no longer sleeps in a corner but has her own bed. It doesn't have to be made of wood, it can also be a cardboard box or a basket, which you have to

work on for a while until it is nice.

Clothes cupboard: Because it is much too narrow, the clothes are very cramped there. We could say hello to them all, spread them all out on tables, chairs and beds, and then, choose the ones we like and are not too small, fold them nicely again and put them in the cupboard, and put the others in a nice box to give away. Then they will be really well!

Bookshelf: All the books and little things that have been on shelves for months and are now coughing with dust, we could all carry them to another corner of the living room and pile them up and then wipe the shelf and polish it...

Festive meals: One or more days a week we could declare a festival day, that will be prepared in every possible way one day before: Through cleaning, ironing, baking, roasting, cooking, learning songs, making decorations...

Don't rush: If the warmth you generate is to spread to the children and motivate them to play, it is important that you do everything with a degree of calm. But since we have time now, you can take your time...

Can the living room become a playground? Yes, children need space and materials to build and play, and building houses and hiding places is a particularly important activity. But it's good if you insist that at certain times of the day it belongs to the adults, who will furnish it to their taste again. Cleaning up the playground is best done together and you should take your time for that too.

Dear parents, I'm sure you have many interesting practical ideas yourself. Perhaps some of you have enjoyed life with your children so much that you would like to work in a kindergarten after the epidemic. And maybe you have noticed how important Erich Kästner's well-known saying is for life with small children:

"There is nothing good unless you do it. "

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