



Introduction:

Read this Friends Journal article, *Children and Death*, by John Graham-Pole:
<http://bit.ly/JohnGrahamPole>

Excerpt:

“My mom died of cancer when I was 12, which lit the spark for my 40-year career as a children’s oncologist. The culture in 1950s’ Britain was to avoid discussing death, especially around children. I wasn’t told of her passing until three days later, on a brief excursion home from my boarding school. Twenty-five years later, I immigrated to America and by chance was introduced to Quakers in Columbus, Ohio. It was a troubling time in my life. I had ended my marriage and was struggling with the stresses of culture shock and long-distance parenting. But I knew I’d found an instant spiritual home in that worshipful silence and its encouragement to listen prayerfully for the still, small voice. Something about being received by loving Friends and listened to without judgment let me finally start to shed the cumulative grief I had suppressed since early adolescence.”

You might do a worship share with one or more of these questions for reflection:

How is the Divine/Truth/Love speaking to me through this text?

What experience in my life reflects the message of this text?

What do I have to learn from this message?

What resonates with me in this quotation?

What stands out to me in this text?

What surprised me about this message?

What questions arise about my life as I contemplate this message?





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What canst thou say? (What do I have to say in response to this message?)

What feelings arise in my body as I consider this message?

An image that comes to mind as I listen to this quotation is...

Where is the growing edge for me around this issue?

If I could rephrase this message in my own words, I would say...

In relation to this topic, I used to be....., but now I'm

I'd like to ask Spirit / the Universe / God / the Inward Teacher about this message.

BY JOHN GRAHAM-POLE. ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN FRIENDS JOURNAL. USED WITH PERMISSION.



Books

Using Picture Books for Spiritual Deepening with Children (and Adults!)

Children love books. Reading a book to children builds a sense of connection and shared experience from which lessons naturally arise. When preparing an inviting space for a read aloud, make sure children are all able to see the book. Position yourself, your chair, and the book so everyone feels included. Think about your voice and the pace of your reading. While you don't need to "do voices" to make the story interesting, your voice should be loud and clear, and your pace should be a bit slower than usual, everyday talking. You can ask children to hold their noticings and questions for the end. And/or you may decide to pause at certain points to invite conversation about what's happening in the story.

Books may be presented in one lesson or presented in multiple lessons. Young children, especially, may need to have a story presented over several sessions. Teachers could repeat reading the book and asking wondering questions at each presentation and then move through the various activities over the course of more than one week. Young children love repetition and revisiting books and materials. It gives them a sense of what the book or activity is about and helps them feel some control over the concepts they are learning.

When possible, links to video read-alouds have been included for those who don't have a copy of the book handy. Check your local library for suggested titles. Many of the books are available through QuakerBooks at FGC.

Read the book or share the YouTube video read aloud, *The Invisible String*, by Patrice Karst.

Read the book or share the YouTube video read aloud, *Everett Anderson's Goodbye*, by Lucille Clifton.

Read the book or share the YouTube video read aloud, *The Old Woman Who Named Things*, by Cynthia Rylant.

Read the book or share the YouTube video read aloud, *When I am Old with You*, by Angela Johnson.

Read the book or share the YouTube video read aloud, *Badger's Parting Gifts*, by Susan Varley.

Read the book or share the YouTube video read aloud, *I'll Always Love You*, by Hans Wilhelm.

Read the book or share the YouTube video read aloud, *The Tenth Good Thing About Barney*, by Judith Viorst.





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Read the book or share the YouTube video read aloud, *Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs*, by Tomie DePaola.

Read the book or share the YouTube video read aloud, *I Miss You, A First Look at Death*, by Pat Thomas.

Wondering with Children

The practice of wondering about a story with children makes space for them to explore the ideas and images, words and characters in a story from the particular perspective of that moment in their lives. When we ask children to wonder about a story, we're not asking them for a factual answer to a question. To wonder can also mean to speculate, to doubt, to question, to be unsure. It can also mean to be in awe or to marvel. We invite children to do any of these things when we wonder together about the story we've just experienced.

Some Practical Tips

When you finish a book and begin to ask the wondering questions, make sure your posture, face, and voice are open and welcoming.

Children who have not been asked to "wonder" before may be puzzled by this language. You may need to invite them into this experience very explicitly: When we wonder, we're sharing what we think, feel, or know about the story. There isn't one right or wrong answer. Let's listen in our hearts.

Starting with a question like, I wonder what part of the story you liked best? is open and inviting. Children usually know what they liked in a story. Listen to and affirm responses. Try to avoid comments like, that's right. Instead, reflect back what you heard, you liked the colors.

Use the book! Turn to the pictures or parts of the story children refer to. Remember to be comfortable during periods of silence when children are thinking.

Wondering Questions

I wonder what part of the story you liked best?

I wonder what part of the story is most important?

I wonder where you see yourself in the story, or what part feels like it's about you?

I wonder if there is nay part of the story we could take out, and still have all the story we need?



BY MELINDA WENNER BRADLEY. ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED
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Resources

Faith & Play: Quaker Stories for Friends Trained in the Godly Play Method (PDF ebook) offers stories for children that explore listening, worship, gifts, queries, and sense of the meeting, as well as three stories of witness about George Fox, Mary Fisher, and John Woolman, using the Godly Play teaching method. The stories and wondering together about them offer opportunities to build spiritual community and deepen our experience of Quaker faith, practice and witness.

Sparkling Still: A Quaker Curriculum for First Day School or Home Use for Children Ages 3-8

As Quakers, we recognize children as fully spiritual beings. For children ages 3-8, this is the perfect moment to begin to intentionally explore through a Quaker lens their sense of self, relationships to family, the broader community, and the natural world. Sparkling Still is a curriculum designed for use in First Day School and/or at home.

Sparkling Still provides:

Philosophical grounding in the Quaker concept of continuing revelation is discussed and explored through wondering questions

Practical considerations including a master lesson plan template and concrete suggestions about building classroom community as well as logistical concerns. Seven ready-to-use lesson plans and nearly 30 pages of additional book suggestions and where to go for more ideas.

An appendix with Teacher Resources including websites, books and articles to enrich and expand the leader's own spiritual growth and understanding of the faith development of children.

THE SPARKLING STILL WORKING GROUP OF FRIENDS GENERAL CONFERENCE.

Read more about Spiritual Deepening for Children. - <http://bit.ly/SPFCMORE>

Games for Building Community and Having Fun

Bird, Beast or Fish?

Teacher whispers the name of a bird, beast, or fish (some examples: peacock, horse, shark, seahorse, dog, bear) to a first child up.

The child mimes the bird, beast or fish.





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Other children guess out loud.

The first child with the correct guess gets to be the next child up. Continue until all children get a chance to mime the bird, beast, or fish.

Tug of Peace

Materials: a circular rope

Have children sit around the circular rope facing center with their knees up.

Lay the rope on the laps of those seated.

Each person holds onto the rope with both hands and leans back.

Using tension in the rope, each person should be able to lift themselves.

Discuss the experience.