CONDUCTING RESEARCH in living. Finding out whys and ways for behaving. This sort of inquiry is the job of a lifetime. Inquiry which begins with individually significant questions. Which follows its course in an especially planned environment. An environment where sensitive response is the method. Sensitive response to people and their problems.

“Why Stephie is riding on my horsie?” asks Jolly as he watches Stephie rock back and forth on the horsie Santa Claus has just brought to their nursery school group. “Why, Barbara? Why is she?”

“Because Santa Claus brought the horsie to Stephie too. It’s Stephie’s horsie and Jolly’s horsie,” explains his teacher offering a hand to Jolly. “Want to go and see about having a ride?”

A few minutes later Jolly is riding on his horsie. Or is it his and Stephie’s? This is something to wonder about and find out about. What does it mean to have a horsie be yours and not yours all at the same time? How does it feel? What is a world like when ownership is not a simple mine or not mine? When mine—not mine are part of the same relationship? When mine—yours are part of the same relationship? When ours is an accurate way for describing reality?

Jolly will not find his answer this morning or even this year in his nursery school. Nor will he find it three years from now in his first grade. Or ten years from now in his junior high. For his questions about the horsie will grow to include the sandbox and the tricycles. A favored position as leader of the line and it in the game of tag. His teacher’s attention and his community’s offers of membership in groups that matter. And his noticing of Stephie will grow to include others in his world. People who are like him and people who are not. People who are in his special group and people who are not. People who want him for a special friend and those who do not. Conducting an inquiry into the meaning of living in a world of people is the job of a lifetime.

“When Is Juice?”

“When is juice?” asks Anne sitting down at one of the low tables in her nursery school kitchen. “Juice now.”

How can now be time for juice? Doesn’t Anne know that she has been in school for only twenty minutes—that juice time isn’t until the middle of the morning? Or is it time for juice—time, that is, as measured by more than just the clock or nursery school schedule? Time as measured by matters of importance in Anne’s living. By matters of importance in Anne’s growing ability to intelligently manage her affairs in a world where people and events are separated by time and space.
Helping Children Learn

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by PEGGY BROGAN, Child Education Foundation
and LORENE K. FOX, Queens College

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How can Anne best be helped to
carry on her self-initiated research into
meanings for living in her world? She
can be told that she must wait for juice
like all the other children. And this
might work. Anne might happily bathe
the doll or paint a picture or in some
other satisfying way fill the time be-
tween now and juice.

But supposing juice time has a spe-
cial meaning for Anne? Supposing
juice time is the reminder that soon
she'll be home with Mommie. Sup-
posing it is the time before juice that
hangs heavily on Anne's hands—that
makes her worry about the time and
space between her and home. Suppos-
ing it is the time after juice that is
happy time for Anne—time when she
can throw her whole self into activi-
ties, now that she knows that seeing
Mommie comes next. Then what is
 gained by having Anne wait another
hour?

Might juice time then change in its
special significance for Anne? Might
it no longer be the comfortable de-
pendable time that gives her a way for
feeling secure in a world of movement?
Might juice time become something
in and of itself? Something to worry
about and think about and play out
alone in the corner? Might waiting be-
fore juice assume such significance that
waiting after juice also becomes some-
thing to worry about, until finally any
waiting is anticipated as something un-
pleasant? That now is the only toler-
able time as far as having pleasure is
concerned?

Perhaps it would be better to act on
Anne's suggestion that now is time for
juice. She seems so unaware of other children—holding out her paper cup. Why not let her drink her juice at 9:20 today? Tomorrow she may not feel this way until 9:30 or 9:45. And out of sensitive responding between Anne and her teacher will come the day when Anne can be asked to wait a little while. And another day another little while. In this way Anne is building a useful meaning for waiting. Like Jolly, she is conducting research in living that will be the job of a lifetime. She is discovering that she can do something about intervals in time and space—that she can include future pleasure as a significant part of her present.

Response to People

"Why is he going to drop bombs?" asks Roger pointing to the pilot in his book. And then, "Do you know what? The next time I see him I'm going to hit him good."

Why is he going to drop bombs? Who can help Roger find this answer? Indeed who wants to? Why do grownups extend themselves into one another's living by way of bombs? What has been the course of our research into living? Our opportunities for sensitive response? What is it that proves bombs to be more effective than laughter? Or love? Or working things out together? What research during three and a half years of living makes Roger want to hit the pilot good? And when will his findings invite him to take another view? To want to drop bombs himself? Bombs that are more powerful than all the rest?

What are the questions of children that start the inquiry rolling? The questions which grow with children as they grow older? If the alligator died, where is his head? Why does it rain when I want it to be nice? Why doesn't Beth like me? Why does work time seem so long today? Why can't I stand it when Tom holds my hand? Why don't I want to do anything? Is this what it means to be bored? To be lazy? What's this self-discipline they're always talking about? Why don't I have any?

Conducting research in living. Finding out why and ways for behaving. This sort of inquiry is the job of a lifetime. Inquiry which begins with individually significant questions. Which follows its course when conditions invite it. When sensitive response is the way for behaving. Sensitive response to the adventure of living. Sensitive response to people and their problems.
