Esteeom friends and colleagues,

On behalf of PLUSA we would like to thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter and for your interest in the Pikler® approach. Caring for our young with respect and loving attention is our purpose and important mission. The world of the infant would not be complete if not for the adults that care for him or her. Your altruistic contribution to improving the lives of our youngest citizens does not go unnoticed. Our babies are the beneficiaries and you are making a difference in the life of a child.

Respectful care can have a ripple effect in one's life. As we consciously address each child in an attentive, caring manner, it is possible that not only our child-adult relationships will flourish; but that we may also find that this respectful care is having a positive effect in other areas of our lives.

I truly believe that our world can be a better place for our children. It starts with an internal transformation of our own selves and our respect and appreciation to all of us who are part of the human team. It is thanks to all of you that this realization can come to fruition. Thank you for caring so much about our young ones, and for making a difference in our world. Together, we are planting a seed of peace and hope for humanity. I humbly think that this is what makes our lives worthwhile. Happy reading!

It is with great joy that we welcome Mrs. Gabrielle Anwar to the PLUSA Board of Trustees. Mrs. Anwar's integrity and ethics, coupled with her creativity, will help us further grow our organization in continuing to share Dr. Pikler's message of caring for babies and young children with respect.

Above: Beverly Kovach M.N., Elsa Chahin, Gabrielle Anwar and Anna Tardos.
Left: Gabrielle Anwar rendering her voice to the film “Playing, Activity, Thinking, Part 2”.

JANUARY 2017
OUR MISSION
Pikler®/Lóczy USA (PLUS USA) promotes respectful and harmonious relationships between the youngest child and the adult. Inspired by the Pikler® approach, our mission is to support the adult through service, training, and research in the USA. Our focus preserves the competence, autonomy, and integrity of the young child, as formulated, studied and practiced by Hungarian pediatrician Emmi Pikler, M.D. (1902-1984), in order to ensure the child’s well being in families and in group settings.

VISION
We envision a world where all children are cared for with respect.

To make a donation to Pikler®/Lóczy visit: www.pikler.org/donate

Two half-scholarships were granted for the two-week Pikler® Intensive “Understanding and deepening your knowledge of the Pikler® Approach”

Testimonial by SZEDONIA JAHASZ
“I was extremely lucky to have won Pikler® USA’s half scholarship to the two-week Basic Level Course held at the Pikler®/Lóczy Institute in Budapest, Hungary. Spending 10 full days at the very place that housed Emmi Pikler’s Infants Home and is now home to the Pikler day care center was a special privilege. As one enters through the gates of Lóczy, the history is palpable.

To me, in addition to offering a thorough basic knowledge that I would most certainly like to enrich, this course ended up being a truly emotional—even spiritual—experience as well. It felt like it contributed greatly to my own development as a mother and as a person in general, too. For this, I will always be grateful to both the Pikler®/Lóczy Foundation in Hungary and the Pikler® USA Association for their generous help through the scholarship. They are all working for a great cause.”

Testimonial by ELSA ARENAS
“I was born and raised in Colombia, South America, and lived in New York state for over 30 years. In a new chapter of my life, I accepted a position as Pedagogical Director at Semillas para una Nueva Humanidad in Puerto Rico, where I also facilitate the Parent-Child Groups (Círculos de Padres y Peques.)

Finding Dr. Pikler’s work has been completely transcendental for me and for the children I have worked with. I loved meeting Anna Tardos personally. Learning from her was an inspiring experience and has illuminated my daily work. Completing two Pikler® trainings has helped me immensely in my work. I have had the privilege of meeting Elsa Chahin, Laura Briley, Agnes Szantos, and many other teachers who have generously shared their knowledge of Dr. Pikler’s work. Over the last 14 years, while teaching Nursery and Parent-Child Groups, I introduced Dr Pikler’s approach as I completed my training at Sophia’s Hearth Family Center in Keene, New Hampshire. The feedback from parents has been inspiring. Dr. Pikler’s approach opened important doors for them and for their entire families. I am excited and honored to learn again with Anna Tardos and to be in Loczy/Budapest. It feels like a dream come true.”
Pikler® Intensive “How Does Play Relate to Cognition” in Orlando, Florida, March 2016 was a huge success.

Excerpt from Welcome Speech by Board of Director member, GABRIELLE ANWAR

It is such a pleasure to be here as a student. I was first introduced to the Pikler® approach with my son, Hugo. I attended classes in California, and later Children’s Corner, and it opened his little soul to life, and changed mine. I observed quite the most beautiful awakening to the world as Hugo unfurled his body in harmony with my mind, and growth, and spirit. His character forming with his own unique discoveries of self.

Without my interference, he was free to play, with the air at first, with shadows and subtle changes in light, with sounds; squeals, gurgles, cooing. Over the following months, I found myself observing other children and adults, and being saddened and often appalled at how little reverence there was between parent and child. How a baby was shoved into a car-seat, spoken to with such disrespect, or how a confused toddler was forced to apologize to another child for an act that warranted no such interrogation. I became hyper aware of my interactions with my son, keenly cognizant that he was fresh from the spirit world, the most precious gift that I was being entrusted with. I did not want to damage his perfection.

Our teacher gave us calm instruction, some of the mums struggled with the separation that occurs when you are asked to allow your tiny child to peel her own banana. Who knew that such a simple act as peeling a banana would bring so much pride and triumph to a child?

It is these successes, finally bringing the fist into the mouth, rolling onto the belly, and back to the back, sitting, up, standing up—these successes that belong to our children—not to us to take control over or take credit for. When Hugo first stood on his own two feet, I wept. It was not the independence that would indeed detach him further from me, that brought on the tears - it was the joy of witnessing my son’s exquisite face when he registered that he and he alone had mastered months of struggle from the feral, animalistic all fours crawl, to that of manis and therefore his own, bipedal evolution. One of a million “milestone” accomplishments since conception, no doubt.

This is what brings me again and again to Dr. Emmi Pikler and her approach, to make a point of meeting her daughter, the formidable Anna Tardos, to learn as much as I can about Pikler® and the life of a legend, to write a biographical screenplay to invite in the world.

When we are unconscious ourselves, holding a baby, undressing that child, touching her skin, forcing food into her, forcing ourselves on her, taking away her freedom, we become the perpetrator, violating her body and her soul. This is after all, how we were likely raised. My Pikler® children know immediately when they are being violated, there is no confusion. And thus, they know how not to violate another. It is probably one of the greatest gifts I can give them as a parent.

And it all began on their backs, with a simple cloth, in the shade of the trees, while I sat back and witnessed their discoveries: the sciences, mathematics, language, engineering, humanities, geology, anatomy, politics, sociology, poetry, music, art. All in the name of play.

20 participants received partial scholarships thanks to the generous grant by Community Playthings®.

Excerpt from LINDA HINRICH’S Welcome Speech

I have a story to tell about the journey I am on. I have loved working with young children for a very long time. Last June, I participated in my 10th Intensive Study Tour at Lóczy. Today, I am taking part in my 5th Pikler training in the United States. Once, someone asked me, “Why are you here? Surely you know all this by now?”

Yet, at each training I learned something new, something to ponder, something to bring back, and something to share with children, parents, staff, and colleagues alike. One new idea I introduced with my staff at Children’s Corner in Topanga, California involved a weekly two-hour staff meeting. Staff response was positive as they found ways to incorporate the Pikler approach into their daily work and make them their own.

On a recent tour at Children’s Corner, one of the visiting parents said “The children here are so gentle with each other.” I was reminded when licensing came to do an unscheduled site visit the agent said, “The children here are so kind to one another. I visit a lot of places every day and I don't usually see that at this age.” At Children’s Corner we allow and support free play, we model acceptance, and our children reflect it back. Eva Kalló said, “Children playing freely without the adult's direct guidance, experience at this age, as a lesson, what many adults consider a failure.” I thank Dr. Pikler, I thank Magda, and I thank this approach.

I recently felt very rewarded when I received the following email excerpt from a past teacher as she moved on in her academic studies, “There really is not a day that goes by where I am not grateful for what I learned with you and from working at Children’s Corner. I apply all my knowledge and experiences to my everyday work and I couldn't imagine teaching any other way. I feel like I can work with so many students and give them the education they deserve. You were, and are, truly an amazing gift in my professional life and I thank you so much for everything that you have given me.”

In closing, Anna Tardos commented on the growing global interest in learning and applying the Pikler approach, “It is perhaps motivated by the wish to create a more active, cheerful, and more peaceful generation in the future.”

Pikler’s ideas work! We must blend our voices together and be heard. The message we must share can help bring peace to a weary world. Together we can do it, we can make a difference.
Testimonials from participants of Pikler® Intensive, Orlando 2016

LIZ HAGERMAN, Pikler® Pedagogue Candidate
"Play is the work of early childhood. This is a common phrase in Waldorf ECE, but it is usually referring to the play of the child from 3-7—which is imaginative, and creative play. But what comes before? This is what I learned in the Pikler® Intensive in Orlando. In my parent toddler classes, I was always delighted to see the beginnings of symbolic play emerge in a child. As a movement specialist, I am keen on the natural development of movement and building up the child's sense of self. The missing piece in the first three years was the cognitive aspect of play.

Since returning from the training, I have noticed a change in how I observe the infants' play and manipulation of play objects. I have changed the objects that are available in my classroom. The Pikler® Intensive on Play has opened a window into a new area of thought and practice around infant's play and I am grateful and hoping to learn even more through my own observations and through more Pikler® Intensives. I highly recommend this Intensive—any Pikler® Intensive to any person working with infants and toddlers. All my Pikler® trainings have created deep and positive shifts in my approach to young children."

MARIE MORRIS, Lead Teacher, Sun Room (Toddlers 18-27 months) PSU–Helen Gordon, Child Development Center
"I greatly appreciate the scholarship granted to me that allowed me to participate in this conference. The conference allowed me to connect with others in lasting ways, to test the boundaries of my own knowledge, and to come away feeling transformed. I was so excited when the opportunity arose, for I arrived in Florida hoping to be reminded of what I should be doing in the classroom and why it mattered. I also hoped to learn strategies for sharing some of the information from the conference with other staff at our center, particularly those struggling to understand the value of maintaining predictable and consistent routines and what these things meant for children's learning. In other words, I hoped to come away from the conference with a stronger sense of purpose.

A point that resonated with me was the reminder to watch and wait for the children to initiate sharing their experiences with adults—that it is important to wait and observe if a child shows signs that they want to share their joy. I appreciate the idea that even a positive response to witnessing a child's joy may interfere with his or her play, taking them out of their rhythm, potentially disrupting their line of thought. In other words, instead of sharing the joy, one may be deterring from it—and even taking it away.

"Even participants with many years of early childhood education will learn something new."

Another point I appreciated was the importance of applying an inquiry protocol to one's observations. Throughout the conference, participants had many opportunities to analyze children's play activities and identify the cognitive/developmental significance of movements and activities. This analysis highlights the importance of practicing observation, analyzing observations, and knowing the language of cognitive development to more effectively share observations/assessments with parents and others—and to do so using a variety of means, including documentation.

A third point that resonated with me is the importance of careful, attentive, gentleness during care routines. Arguably, one of the most powerful experiences we participated in was the hand-washing exercise. The differences in body-feel and well-being communicated experiencing a rushed care routine and a gentle care routine could not have been made more clearly; therefore, I will be a lot more aware of structuring transitions to accommodate making time to connect with individual children, to help them process transitions at their own speed, and to support them with my full attention during these times.

I would highly recommend this training. Even participants with many years of early childhood education will learn something new. The information presented by experts Eszter Mozés and Judit Kelemen from the Pikler Institute in Budapest, the mindfulness exercises led by Elsa Chahin, and the small and large group discussions that helped participants form a learning community are a few of the training experiences used to help participants see infants and toddlers with new eyes. The Pikler® strategies honed through decades of research and practice are immediately relevant to the lives of all children in that they help teachers become far more thoughtful, caring, and patient with the children in their care."

LARISSA NIELSON ESQ., Author of The LA Nanny
"I was fortunate to attend the Pikler®
training in Orlando. The conference was beyond my expectations it was a privilege for me to hear Eszter Mozés and Jutka Kelemen share their knowledge, work, and life experience at the Pikler Institute.

During this Intensive, I learned a very important lesson about how school readiness evolves. They explained to us that the child discovers the relationship between self and objects through play. This begins when, the child laying on her back discovers her hands. By simply playing with her hands, the child becomes aware of this part of her body. She also discovers that she causes movement and effect through touching, knocking, waggling, picking-up, dropping, and twirling. Now, she continues to do the same and discovers some the following:

- she can pass the object from one hand to the other
- she can make a sound
- she becomes aware of identical objects
- she uses the object as a tool; rubbing the object against the walls or the floor
- she can build, stack, transport objects from one side to another
- she develops special relationship with the objects; she starts using the object as a tool and then leaves a mark

At this point, Eszter was teaching us that the “leaving a mark” could mean tracing a finger on a steamy window when the child puts her hand on it, or on the wall with her hands. Eszter emphasized it is important to see when the child actually realizes that she is leaving that mark. She asked the participants, “When do children start drawing?” The answer doodling is the result of using an object as a tool, for example, when using a marker you are leaving a mark, we can leave a mark using

Continued to next page
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a stick on the sand, our nose to a steamy window, dirty hand marks on the wall, or with our feet on the snow. Wow! I never saw it this way I never connected the relationship of the baby with an object all the way to leaving a mark! And ultimately drawing!

I want to thank the Pikler® USA Board for awarding me with the scholarship, it helped and encouraged me to continue learning and I am proud to say that I will be attending the next summer training in Budapest in July 2016.

JOYCE HEPLER, Specialist–Professional Development (Oklahoma Early Childhood Program)

“I wanted to share a few things I was blessed to experience during the Pikler®/Lóczy USA training due to your generous scholarship support. First and foremost, I was so blessed to experience the journey of many children through the eyes of two loving caregivers who truly understand the importance of children. I could see not only through their eyes, but those of the children by listening to their words which were so beautifully translated by Alex.

Second, I could have a morning experience through Elsa’s daily ‘moments in time’, which began our day with a true feeling of connectedness. Third, I could hear stories from many throughout the room which also aided in my learning journey. As for what I believe to be my greatest take away, I would have to say it is a vision of “true caring and respect” for children and the wonderful belief that someday this care will be given to all children. As I listened to each story that was shared, I could envision this place that would someday be mine where I could train caregivers to care for children in this special and unique way. I am applying the knowledge I gained in my daily practice as well as with my own children and grandchildren and I am sharing what I learned with others. I was even able to share with a total stranger who spoke to me during
my stay at the Florida Hotel who asked why I was there and when I told him about the training he was just so interested. He was a young father who said he was going to go back and look up Pikler*/Loczy. Anyway, I share all this to say thank you and know that for me it was a true blessing and gift of a lifetime for me that I could attend the training and I believe it has changed and continues to change my thought process, my beliefs, and how I work with families and children. Thank you for this wonderful gift!"

VALERIE WARFEL

"Having heard wonderful things from previous attendees, my expectations for my first Pikler® training were set high from the start. However, I did not realize that my expectations would not only be met, they would be greatly exceeded. If you want to sit down and be passively lectured to, this is not the training for you. On the other hand, if you want to actively put your preconceived notions of infants to the test through deep reflection, questioning, and meaningful interactions, then you need to be a part of this.

One thing that made this training so distinctive to me was the open and authentic atmosphere that encouraged a reciprocal dynamic between the participants and the speakers. All thoughts, questions, disagreements, and concerns from participants were expected and welcomed. Eszter even mentioned that she would be concerned if we just agreed with everything she told us without ever questioning it. I think it is very rare to come across a training run by individuals who not only have incredible experience in the content they are teaching, but are also incredibly humble in their approach to teaching. I could sense their genuine desire to inspire reflection and true internalization of the content they shared with us. Elsa led us through a variety of mindfulness experiences that complemented and magnified the impact of our learning. Perhaps the best part is that there is still so much left to learn and as I write this testimonial a month later, I have yet to stop dissecting my notes and processing it all. Change is long due as a society in our approach to infant and early childhood care, and I am certain that this, the Pikler Institute and everything it stands for, is it. I recommend this training to any parent, student, or professional brave enough to be challenged and transformed.

MELANI LADYGO, Program Manager, Infant Toddler Specialist

"This was my first Pikler® training, and I will absolutely be attending any future Pikler® trainings I can get myself to. The style of teaching contributed to developing my observation and critical thinking skills: I walked away with a more refined eye, a long list of materials and ideas for children’s play, and an eagerness to get back to my work as a Parent-Infant Guidance™ class facilitator...both so I could share this information with the parents in my class, but also so I would have the opportunity to observe children at play again.

It’s difficult to put into words exactly how the training achieved this...the pace of the learning, the questions asked, the videos watched, the experiments/exercises that were presented all worked together to contribute to a rich and profound learning and understanding. It simultaneously taught me so much and showed me how very much more there is to learn.

I’ve already referred several people to the training in the month since it has ended, and eagerly look forward to future opportunities to train with Pikler®.

ANNA RUTH MYERS, Doula and Birth–Three Specialist

“I had a wonderful time at the Pikler® training in Orlando! It was an enriching, enlivening experience to gather with like-minded colleagues and friends. I left class each day with my mind full of new thoughts and ideas. Studying the Pikler® approach has not only had a positive effect on my professional life, but on my personal relationships as well. This approach is life-changing!”

CAROL ROWLAND, MS Specialist–Professional Development (Oklahoma Early Childhood Program)

“First, thank you for another amazing experience with the Pikler® Intensive. I loved first being with Anna and Agnes to begin this beautiful journey of respectful, responsive care with infants...and now to experience the wisdom of Eszter and Judit as they walked us through the “Whats and Whys” of the Pikler® ways that has made a difference with so many adults (parents and teachers) who will help change child care. Thank you, again and I promise I will continue to try to help teachers see the importance of their work and the long-range trajectory for success that each child deserves!”
My experience at an advanced Pikler® training, summer 2016

BY RUTH MASON, Israel

This past June, I had the good fortune to attend two week-long seminars at the Pikler Institute: Observation, and Nonviolent Early Care and Education Based on the Pikler® approach. At Lóczy, one gets the benefit of several hundred cumulative years of expertise from people with decades of experience at the Pikler Institute. The information and insights passed on by the people who worked under Dr. Pikler are as close to the source as we can get today. Some of the highlights of this year’s training for me: “The key to how we see is how we observe.”

The Lóczy staff helped us to see how they see through lectures, discussions, exercises and especially through the many hours of films they have of babies’ lives in the infants’ home and the day care. Emmi Pikler realized early on that filming would be of key importance in both documenting and training and we students are the beneficiaries of her foresight. There are many film moments to illustrate just about any point a teacher is making.

How do we come to see what they see? Anna paraphrased from one of Dr. Pikler’s books:

“The eyes are not enough to see, we have to pay attention. We must… imagine ourselves in the child’s situation, to think as if we were the child. This is not easy because the child lives on a different wavelength; he can’t communicate with us with words, and we have to pay close attention to decipher what he feels and what he knows.”

Anna stressed the importance of giving meaning to what we observe: After watching a video of eight-month old Erszike, we realized we could see parts of the child’s personality: she is persistent, attentive, exploring, focused.

In the Piklerian model, observation does not mean sitting silently and observing the child. Rather, it is an attitude that caregivers and parents can take whenever they are with the child. Observation is not a separate activity, said Anna, but a part of the quality of being together. We are always paying attention. And to pay attention, we need to slow down.

We spent a lot of time on the care situations to illustrate both the quality of paying attention and the non-violent approach.

Andrea Szőke, who had worked in the infants’ home for years said, “…this is the real genius of Pikler®: (seeing the) care situation as quality time. It is the core of the approach–everything stems from this.”

She quoted Éva Kálló who said that in the care situation “we are not just doing something for the moment, we are doing something for the future”.

In addressing nonviolent care, we had many discussions about conflict and aggression.

Conflict, said Szőke, is characteristic of the life of children. And not all aggression is bad.

“It is important to have conflict,” she told us, “because it gives children an opportunity to learn to stand up for themselves and represent their interests.”

Of course, this is done with help from the caregivers when needed. “It’s not our task to immediately stop all aggression but to help children choose another way to express it. How the caregiver responds to these situations is important. Many try to understand the reason or motivation for the behavior. They ask what happened–but the child often doesn’t know. It’s not beneficial to find out why…” Szőke added.

“The most important thing is not to make justice between the children… We talk to both parties, remain calm and tactful—not tense and anxious. We say what we can’t allow and why; and we pay very close attention… . The aggressor is often in deeper trouble than the victim. We comfort the victim and help the aggressor find a way out of the situation.”

But, she reiterates, repeating what we’ve heard so often during these two weeks: “There is no formula.”

The trainings were full of pearls that made us think such as this one Szőke quoted from Éva Kálló: “Those children who resist don’t have enough opportunities to feel competent.”

It’s no wonder then–with so many opportunities to feel competent both during caregiving routines and during play–that the “Pikler babies” we see in films are so often cooperative.

**NEWS BRIEFS AND GRATITUDE**

- Thank you to Community Playthings for their generous donation that allowed us to give 20 scholarships this year!
- We want to also thank Ruth Mason from Israel, and Lisa Better from Florida, for their generous donations to our scholarship fund.
- Thank you to Little Learners Lodge for sponsoring the Charleston 3-day workshop.
- Thank you to our in-kind donors:
  - Editor in Chief, Debbie Laurin PhD Candidate
  - Gabrielle Anwar–narrator for the film “Playing, Activity, Thinking, Part 2”
  - Victoria Looseleaf–Journalist, editor, narrator of the film “Playing, Activity, Thinking, Part 1”
  - Larissa Neilson

Coming soon, new Pikler® film available in English, “Playing, Activity, Thinking, Part 1.”

Beloved illustrator, colleague and friend, Klara Pap was the recipient of the 2016 Emmi Pikler Award for her valuable contributions to the Pikler® approach.

Klara Pap worked closely with Dr. Pikler by sketching the natural progression of children’s gross motor development as well as the tender moments of care at Lóczy, the infants’ home in Budapest, Hungary.

Her memory lives on through her illustrations, and she is deeply missed.

Quality Care for Infants and Toddlers: The Respectful Childcare approaches of Dr. Emmi Pikler and Magda Gerber. August 4-5, 2016, Tel Aviv, Israel

BY RUTH MASON, Israel

With no official organization or budget, our committee spent four months spreading the word, sending out invitations to everyone we could think of involved in early childhood. Early on, I pictured eight of us sitting in a small circle in the middle of a big room. But as time went on, registrations poured in and we reached our goal of 50.

The participants, composed of a Ministry of Health official, day care providers and supervisors, mental health professionals, occupational therapists, academics, NGO leaders, and parents were fascinated, lively and engaged. Held at the beautiful Mofet Institute, and taught by Elsa Chahin, the seminar introduced participants to the basic principles of: caregiving as an opportunity for building relationships, the art and importance of observation, freedom of movement, and the importance of self-initiated uninterrupted play.

“The Seminar was a dream come true, Elsa is the kind of person people fall in love with,” said Hannah Sasson, the initiator of the Friends of RIE® and Pikler® in Israel Facebook group, and co-organizer of the event.

Emma Baruch, a childcare provider wrote, “The seminar was fantastic! I learned a lot, not just as an early-years professional but also as a mother. I have already started spreading the joy of RIE® and Pikler®. I was very inspired…”

Dr. Alison Stern Perez, psychologist: “…the seminar was really great. It was so exciting that there were important people in the field in attendance and that there is a chance to affect real change… I wish I could have brought my husband, because some of the exercises we did had a great impact on my thinking and my practices at home. The seminar made me think a lot about my own parenting, as well as how I can bring about change in the preschools in which I work… Overall, an amazing endeavor, and a great success!”

Miriam Blau, trainer of professional caregivers said, “Two wonderful days! Much too short. A great group. Elsa was amazing. A woman so full of knowledge yet so humble.”

Fiona Hauptman, occupational therapist and director of Baby Base in Tel Aviv said, “I was buzzing from this seminar and wish it could have continued. I definitely plan on furthering my education in this field.”

Adi Avraham, Waldorf teacher: “The seminar was very interesting. I’ve taken some ideas and begun implementing them with my baby daughter and it’s improved our daily life.”

The organizers want to thank PLUSA for their solid commitment and constant support, and Elsa for leading the seminar with such skill, sensitivity, humor and aplomb.

“In honorable remembrance of Klara Pap”
Diapering at Lóczy: “Inspiration not Replication”

BY DEBORAH LAURIN, PH.D Candidate, University of Oklahoma-Tulsa

Villő, 28 months, waits at the gate that divides the play space from the eating area. For several minutes, she spins the wooden latch of the gate her attention focused on her activity as Gabi, her caregiver, attends to breakfast with Abel. Finished with breakfast, Abel returns to the play area. Now it is time for Villő’s diaper change! Villő walks with Gabi to the washroom and steps up on the little stool in front of the dressing table. She lifts her left leg to the table, while balancing with her right foot on the stool, then reaches with both hands, finding stability in her three points of contact, before easily pulling herself to standing on the table. Leaning with her back against the rails that enclose two sides of the dressing table, Villő faces Gabi who is speaking softly to her. Gabi begins to unzip Villő’s pants, pausing as Villő helps push her pants partially down, Gabi then, gently slips them over the bulk of her diaper. Villő sits now for more stability, with one leg extended and the other bent her little fingers capably push her pants down to her ankles. Pushing the pants over her foot presents more challenge, so Gabi assists Villő easing the pant leg over Villő’s foot to the end of her toes. Now, Villő finishes her task, first pulling one pant leg over her toes and then the other. Villő stands bending her knees a little with her legs apart to aid Gabi as she carefully removes her poop-filled diaper. Ready with a basin of water, Gabi holds the basin as Villő puts her fingers in the water and touches the bar of soap. Speaking softly to Villő, Gabi meets her gaze with a smile. Taking the cloth from the water, Gabi gently cleans Villő with slow wiping movements, then, pauses. Standing sideways in a semi-squat position, Villő holds the dressing table rails with both hands for balance. She adjusts her posture in cooperation, first lifting one leg slightly and then the other as Gabi continues to clean her bottom. Now the washing is complete and Villő removes a wipe from the package and cleans her vulva with a few back and forth strokes, then, places the wipe in the garbage bag Gabi is holding ready. When Villő has completed her task, Gabi takes another wipe and gesturing she speaks to Villő who in response cooperatively lifts her leg so Gabi can continue with cleaning. Standing, Villő gazes through the window above the dressing table, observing the children playing in the room next door. Gabi follows Villő’s gaze and noticing her interest, pauses in the diapering process to narrate about the activity that has captured Villő’s attention. When Villő’s interest shifts back to Gabi, she offers two diapers for Villő to choose. Gabi holds them in front and in a moment of playfulness, Villő selects a diaper lifting her right leg and chooses with her toes. They both smile at this, their eyes meet before Villő turns to hold the rail with both hands as Gabi places the diaper, secures the tabs, then, snaps her onsey closed. Gabi rolls Villő’s pant leg into a doughnut like shape to guide and ease Villő’s dressing. Now Villő turns to face Gabi, still holding the rail with one hand for balance, she steps one foot and then the other through the doughnut hole of each pant leg. Gabi pauses, watching and waiting, as Villő pulls her pants up stopping at her diaper. This is difficult and requires Gabi’s assistance to ease it over the bulk of her diaper. Fully dressed and still standing, Villő lets go of the rail smiling widely and gazes at Gabi with warmth and delight, she extends her belly toward Gabi. Gabi leans toward Villő too, returning Villő’s smile and gaze before offering her hands, then, lifts her from the dressing table to the floor. It is time to wash hands! Villő walks to the little sink at child height, turns on the tap, and washes her hands rubbing them together under the running water. Gabi stands nearby, speaking to Villő, but does not interfere with Villő’s task. Reaching for her towel Villő dries her hands, then, finding the little loop on the towel, she hangs the towel on her peg. Her diapering completed she returns to play.

Lóczy exemplifies an approach with children based on child readiness, rather than school readiness.

The vignette of diapering between Villő and Gabi, gives the reader a picture of a very different diapering experience. It reveals Villő’s interest and agency to participate in her diapering care, and her competency as she works with Gabi to complete her diapering and dressing. Gabi responds to Villő’s movements with knowing gestures, a light touch, and quiet dialogue, pausing as Villő’s interest shifts or she completes a task. For example, Gabi pauses for Villő to make bodily adjustments, and move freely before undressing begins. This occurs when Villő of her own volition sits down on the dressing table to remove her pants. Villő’s free movement revealed her ability to anticipate the sequence of diapering and cooperate with Gabi in the process, turning her body, and lifting her legs. Turning away from Gabi, grasping the rails of the dressing table in a semi-squat position facilitated Gabi’s cleaning movements, Villő stood with stability and security while this occurred. Together they work in a successful choreography because of an authentic cooperation and mutual tuning to each other. This is the foundation of a good relationship (Tardos, 2016). Gabi adjusts to Villő’s needs and still fulfills the care routine.

T he beautiful vignette above is an actual observation of diapering at Lóczy, in Budapest Hungary at the Pikler Institute from a visit in June 2016. Ahead of its time, even in 1946, the Pikler Institute continues with a unique approach to childcare that exemplifies ideals independent of the status quo. For most, the practices described may seem different from the way diapering is typically conducted in most infant and toddler group care settings. The diapering routines at Lóczy offer a cultural context in which to re-envision most infant and toddler diapering practices. Importantly, the Pikler® approach is not a recipe to follow in a lock-step manner. A phrase coined by a participant at the San Francisco Pikler® Intensive, “Inspiration, not replication” resonated with my experience of observing the caregivers and children at Lóczy. It is a reminder of what Lóczy offers, without copying; valuable insights about the way the Lóczy children and their caregivers are together. My visits observing in the children’s groups at Lóczy profoundly moved me, in a visceral way, deeply imprinting in my psyche the well-being of the children and the utmost care in every gesture and word of their caregivers. It gave me a feeling of immense hope, like recovering something precious, previously thought to be lost.
Eszer Mozés (2016) explained how the caregiver while observing may briefly suspend activity. For example, Gabi followed Villő’s gaze and interest when she looked through the window at the activity occurring in the other room. Gabi paused in the diapering care, observed, listened, and talked to Villő about what she was watching. These moments of shared mental states are vital to the child’s development of agency and sense of self. Knowing Villő liked to be tactile Gabi held the basin of water for Villő to touch the water and hold the bar of soap. This vignette revealed a wonderful attuned relationship. The back and forth, or give and take was like a harmonious dialogue between Villő and Gabi as they moved together to accomplish a task. For example, moving to a more stable sitting position on the dressing table enabled Villő to push the legs of her pants down to her toes. Gabi assisted where the removal of the clothing presented challenges, over the bulk of the diaper, over the heel of the foot, pausing to allow Villő to finish her task. Rolling the legs of the pant trousers into a rumpled doughnut shape helped Villő to see where to place her foot, then, Villő pulled her pant legs up to her diaper and Gabi assisted once more when needed.

Observing at Lóczy in 2014 and 2016 inspired my research into diapering practices in a Midwest US city. Observations of 150 infants and toddlers, 75 caregivers, in 34 infant and toddler classrooms contributes information about the quality of caregiver interactions in diapering care routines. Available research on US diapering practices exists mainly in the medical literature and focuses on disease and dermatitis prevention, handwashing, and hygienic protocols. Despite an emphasis on individualized care for young children, scant research highlighting routines reveals less communication and missed opportunities for relationship formation. Frequently, routines in infant and toddler group care is a hurried experience viewed as “time away from the program” (Psaltis & Stonehouse, 1988, p. 88). In a pilot study of diapering practices, (Laurin, 2015) found on average, diapering was completed in under two minutes. This fast pace gave little time for attending and responding to the give and take interactions between caregiver and child.

Lóczy exemplifies an approach with children based on child readiness, rather than school readiness. By shedding light on diapering routines, current diapering practices would be transformed through small steps and small changes, becoming an anticipated source of joy for both caregiver and child. This joyful diapering experience between Gabi and Villő beautifully reveals how the moment-to-moment experiences are significant anchored moments between a child and a caregiver in their day. I am grateful to the caregivers and staff of Lóczy for providing inspiration to re-envision diapering practices in infant and toddler care settings. I would also like to thank the Early Childhood Education Institute (ECEI) and the George Kaiser Family Foundation (GKFF) at the University of Oklahoma-Tulsa for supporting my visit to Lóczy in 2014.
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