



**YOUNG
PEOPLE'S
THEATRE**

You and I

PARENT GUIDE

You and I Parent Guide

Production created by Maja Ardal

Directed by Allen MacInnis

You and I is a multi-sensory, playfully interactive adventure that engages little explorers (and their adults!) in discovery through colour, sound, touch and movement. *You and I* has been developed by creator Maja Ardal from research that considers how explorers come to realize themselves as distinct from others, and how they interact as a result.

Maya prefers to use the word “explorers” instead of “toddlers”. Here’s why:

“(The term) Toddlers describes how many of them walk. I find it to be too objectifying. But they are always exploring as soon as they start to travel on foot. I have mentioned this to many parents who like the name a lot... This work of theatre for people 12-30 months invites the explorer to respond in more than one way to the activities of the actors. We encourage responses of observation and interaction.”

Some of the main themes of this play include identifying the differences between ourselves and others, discovery, and surprise, as well as the joy of sharing. Some of the areas of interpersonal relationships explored in the play include:

- Mirroring actions
- True/false belief
- Compassion
- Fairness
- Categorization
- Correcting the incorrect

Ancestral Teaching of Humility

At YPT, our productions explore one or more of the Seven Ancestral Teachings of the Anishinaabe: Respect, Humility, Bravery, Honesty, Love, Wisdom and Truth. These teachings are integral principles by which we can and should live, with ourselves, with each other and all whom we encounter at YPT.

You and I is connected to the teaching of Humility. Learning that we are all unique amongst others is a part of understanding humility.

Research and Exercises to Try at Home

Discovering the Self

“When do you first realize that you are a person and can occupy space and can think? Is it when you first realize that in the present moment you are remembering something from the past? How does awareness differ from self-awareness? And does the ‘self’ need to be limited to the boundaries of the body? In other words, can a sense of self include a sense of ‘me’ and ‘you’ and perhaps even a membership in a ‘we’?”

– Daniel J. Siegel, *The Developing Mind*

Exercise to try at home:

Passing an object back and forth with your explorer is a great way to start to introduce the concept of self. Start with passing an object (such as a block) back and forth between the two of you. Once they are comfortable with passing the object, incorporate a sound with the action, or add in a new motion with the object, such as shaking it up and down, moving it in a circle, or dancing with it. See how your explorer reacts to this. Are they mirroring the motion you made? Are they making their own motion, or just enjoying the new addition to the game?

Play and Learning through Trial and Error

During the second year of life, there are two sub-stages in cognitive development. From 12-18 months children learn through trial and error. They are continuously taking ideas they have in their heads and trying them out as they explore their world. Talking about ideas with them is important. Doing so helps them process the information they gather and see that you respect their thoughts. From 18-24 months is when explorers typically learn symbolic thought and begin pretend play. They begin to understand that one thing can represent another. For example, a block can be a cell phone or a paper plate could be a pie.

– Bright Horizons Child Care

Exercise to try at home:

Observe your explorer interacting with their toys and introduce a new way to engage with the same toy in a different way. For example, if they stack their blocks one on top of another, demonstrate stacking

blocks by twos, or sort the blocks into different containers based on colour or shape. What do you notice from your explorer? Do they follow your lead, or try something new?

Peek-a-boo

“Mental models, the generalizations from past experience, are the essence of learning. These models, derived from the past, shape our perceptual experience of the present and help us to anticipate and act in the future.”

– Daniel J. Siegel, The Developing Mind

This thought identifies the evolution from the game of Peek-a-boo, which has a series of stages. The stages involve memory, imagining the absent person, anticipation of reappearance, and joy of reuniting.

Exercise to try at home:

Playing Peek-a-boo in front of a mirror with your explorer allows them to identify and interact with themselves. Allow them to touch the mirror and play in front of it. Observe how they interact with their own reflection. Does this interaction differ than how they interact with other people’s reflections, and other explorers?

Resources

For more research related to explorers and learning through drama, here are a few resources to check out:

[“How to Keep Up with Toddlers in Motion.”](#) Bright Horizons Child Care, 2020.

Baehr, Sonya. [“Engaging The Whole Child for Deeper Learning Through Drama Education”](#). Keynote Speech for the Kids Drama Symposium. IDEA Conference 2018.

Hine, Connie. [“Developing Multiple Intelligences in Young Learners”](#). Earlychildhood NEWS – The Professional Resource for Teachers and Parents. 2007.

[International Drama Theatre and Education Association](#)



Feedback – we want to hear from you!

We would love to hear how your explorer reacted to the show. Please answer the questions below and email your feedback to us at online@youngpeoplestheatre.org.

1. What did you observe from your explorer after the show?
2. Did your explorer try to recreate anything from the show at home?
3. Does your explorer have any new words or sounds since experiencing the show?