

## Report of Gloria's activity, during "Creative Meeting of Parents of Children with Special Needs"

Bratislava, September 20 – 21, 2013

**Interaction with Leo** (mother Jana) Saturday, Sept 21. 14:00 – 18:00.

**Video recordings (files 00057 to 00063).**

I was invited to interact with Leo (2 and half y.o. with cerebral palsy) and his mother (Jana) in a session during the group activity. I was seeing them for the first time, but had a short direct interaction with Jana during a movement and touch warm-up led by Thomas in the beginning of the workshop that day.

### 00057

Leo is in her mother's lap. I sit on a large ball behind them so that Jana can rest her back on the support of the ball. My first approach is **to contain both, mother and child**, while holding Leo's hands symmetrically. Then we change position.

### 00058

We now place Leo on the floor in a sitting position his mother is supporting him from behind and I'm in the front. As I'm touching Leo and looking at him, I feel what support his available (**tone**), especially for the head; how movement is in relationship to the rest of the body (**posture and coordination**); how he responds to perceptual stimulation. As we make a transition to a better position for Leo and for making Jana more comfortable (with a soft ball under her bottom), she begins to touch Leo's head in a very delicate way, giving him support only as it is needed.

I touch the child's R-hand, while looking for visual and auditory clues and **engaging the child in a frontal relationship with me**. I hold Leo's **hand** that I slowly guide in **coordination with body movement** and perceptual responses. Then he begins to look alternatively at his hands and at me who am **opening** and kissing his **hand** while talking to him. I open his R-hand while moving gently his **wrist and elbow**, separately and with the arm as a whole.

Leo often smiles. When excitement is too much, his head turns suddenly to the left and his mouth opens wide. It also seems that he looks for his mother. Then I put a toy in front of him, a red ball, which he slightly touches with his hand, but the object is too big for him to hold it, even with facilitation, and he loses interest. When **placing a smaller object** (a green egg-maracas) **in his hand**, with help in opening the fingers, Leo shapes his hand around the object. I then touch the other hand, putting my thumb in his palm. Then I slowly bring the hands to the midline. Now I register in my hands Leo's impulse (intention) to **move towards and away to/away from hands and object**. I amplify his impulse expressing the movement in space. Then Leo connects his mouth with the R-hand where he holds the toy (with help). At times, his attention is caught by something happening in the room. **This whole exploration** involving his hand lasted about **2 and half minutes**, during which he was able to experience more inner support in holding his head.

Then he seems to need some rest and sinks towards the left side on his mom's leg. We change position and after a brief time in a flexed side lying position, I take him in my lap

### 00059

I hold Leo with my R-arm and he's sitting on my left leg. His mother is now in front of him. Leo and I keep eye contact while I hold his R-hand. I then explore his response to vestibular stimulation, moving very slowly through different planes. We maintain engagement with each other through eye contact, facial expression and voice/vocalization. More specifically, I move my tongue while making the sound "la, la, la". I touch his mouth (lips) and he protrudes his tongue out. When stimulation is too much, some automatic movement occur in his pharynx and neck. **This interaction lasts about 2 minutes**, and is characterized by **Leo smiling** several times, him **making more sounds** and having a **good holding of his head**.

Then Leo gives me some clue that **his attention and needs are changing**. I slowly move him around to “change scene” but also following what I perceive to be the directions where he goes with his perceptions (visual, auditory). I invite his mother to come closer and at the end of a turn that I do with my body, he finds and looks at her. His mom seems to wanted to play “hide and sick” with him.

#### 00060

Leo is now in his mom’s arms. She holds him with her L-arm. Jana and I talk about Leo’s **feeding and mouthing pattern organization**. I ask her if she has some snack for him and what he likes. She has brought some grape. We explore Leo’s relationship with this food. During this time I notice that he has less head support. Leo moves his tongue in a rather reflexive way, with **occasional gag reflex triggering**. The child does not look so happy to go on with this food, and we stop this process.

I now sit behind Leo and on the right side of Jana, and begin to **touch Leo’s head**. He sits comfortably in his mother’s lap. I turn my attention to Leo’s **brain and CNS structures** and inner movements (particularly, brain stem and cerebellum, in relationship to midbrain above and spinal cord below). With delicate touch of my hands, I pick information and track movement patterns that seem to indicate a **poor connection between the different brain levels**. When a pattern of dropping the head forward (like a gradual collapse) occurs, I follow the movement with my hands continuing to give some support to the head, but not forcing or holding (I consider a form of support just my awareness of the potential central support that the system can recognize, given the opportunity). Inner **rhythm of condensing and expanding** is underlying everything that happens in external movement.

With the help of Anka, we give more support to Leo from underneath, placing a soft ball under his bottom. As I continue to move his head, my awareness goes to the **peripheral nerves of the face and neck**, to feel what connection there is with the CNS. Leo moves his tongue a lot, protruding it several times. Jana keeps a hand on Leo’s chest. After he collapses the head forward, then catching Leo’s intent to lift his head up, I guide his movement with support and awareness, so that **Leo can register the sensation of connection and continuity with the rest of the body**. Leo’s activity with his mouth becomes even more intense and the video shows at some point that he moves his eyes orienting his vision to towards something that caught his interest. Occasionally, eye movements are independent from movement of head, intentional and guided by perception.

Jana’s touch of Leo’s trunk becomes even more effective after I help her to feel the **support coming from internal organs** (the content inside the container). I demonstrate on her own body. Returning then to touching Leo’s head, I’m impressed of how quickly Jana “learned” the new quality and how Leo immediately responds to that information. She and I, without verbal communication, began to give to our hands a very gentle (almost not perceivable from the outside) shaking motion, like when one holds a water balloon and feels the water motion inside. Leo’s movement of head begins to have a more 3-D quality. He seems more active perceptually. He yawns. Continuing to follow his head movement, I add awareness of the vestibular registration. Movements become faster and more intense and I perceive through my hands more support of head from the inside, as a result, I believe, of **better communication/integration of CNS levels, internal organs, perception**.

#### 00061

In conclusion, towards the end of the experience, I noticed in Leo:

**1) more ability to focus and be present, 2) more integration and mutual support of head and trunk, 3) clearer connection eye-mouth and hand-mouth, 4) when he was letting go of his head forwards, there was less collapse and an easier way to lift the head back up. The whole exploration lasted more than 12 minutes.**

Then, Leo began to show that he had enough of explorations and **needed to rest**. When I touched his throat thinking in this way of “completing” the process so far, he express a sense of discomfort that was for me the “please stop” clear signal that the session was coming to an end. So I changed intention and entered a transitional time. I still wanted to **verify some responses** from him (visual and auditory) and look at his postural tone:

**1) he visually tracked my fingers that were snapping with a sound, moving his head from side to side; 2) he initiated lifting of the head from semi-supine position; 3) he could better orient himself around the midline.**

The session continued with Leo resting and Jana and I talking. I explained the mother what I perceived, what I had done, and what I had seen in Leo towards the end of the session.

After addressing some issues to the mother, I reported to the group of other parents, practitioners and staffs (files **00062 e 00063** ) some of the following aspects of the process experienced in the session:

- Starting from where engagement seems to be easier and available for the child in that moment.
- From that starting point, looking, gradually and consistently, for a track of exploration that can lead to integration.
- Continuity and consistency as key elements of any process of integration: Leo's reality is fragmented and many sensations and experiences "do not make sense" for him.
- We have to "give sense" to the process, and share that awareness, through touch, movement, perceptual and emotional forms of interaction, in the context of a meaningful relationship.
- We have to give time to the child to digest information and to ourselves to pick up clues and indicators of the child response to what he's experiencing in relating to us and to himself.
- Our relationship with the child includes our relationship with the mother (parents in general): her competency, conscious and unconscious, her desire of wellness for her child and for herself, emotional and cultural.

Key words of the session:

**Hand opening – midline – hand to mouth through mobilizing wrist and elbow – spatial awareness in hand to mouth connection – catching child's shifts of attention for timing and spatial changes – vestibular stimulation – support at brain stem level – connection among brain levels – CNS and internal organ support.**

Gloria Desideri

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