

Tips for Parents by Susie Kohl

“Remedies” for Spring Fever

IF YOUR CHILD’S PERSONALITY seems to change at this time of year, try not to worry. In spring, a child’s fancy turns to pushing limits and boundaries. The same process that incites spring flowers into what Rilke called “blooming most recklessly” propels children’s instincts for expansion. In the past, people called these surges of energy “spring fever.” Wasn’t it nice when there was a name for it?

Mark Twain once wrote about the condition. “It’s spring fever . . . And when you’ve got it, you want—oh, you don’t quite know what you want, but it fairly makes your heart ache, you want it so.” Sound familiar? At school, when teachers remark, “The energy in class is so wild today,” it doesn’t mean students are misbehaving. We just need to remind ourselves that it’s spring.

Every spring in preschool a few children will start talking about marrying each other and giggle. Inevitably, a little boy will urinate behind a tree. After reminding themselves that this is only a “seasonal disorder,” teachers have to summon their creativity to provide new projects and challenges to channel the forces of growth exploding within their students.

You may find yourself noticing the budding of new behaviors at home. Sometimes we can take advantage of these times by offering children more responsibility. Increased physical activity outdoors is also an age-old remedy for spring fever. How wonderful that we have them working in our gardens. Children also need encouragement to run, to climb, and to gambol like newborn lambs. Springtime is also a period when we can reflect on limits and whether our children can help us create new guidelines that correspond with their spurts of new awareness and growth. And in spite of the time change, children require more sleep than we think.

You can always pause to share in the “perpetual astonishment” spring brings and the reality that the earth itself pushes us all to change.

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