

About Natural Learning Rhythms™(NLR™)

Capacities are innate; development occurs in relationship. What are the capacities of children of different ages? How can they be recognized? And critically, what kinds of environments nourish optimal development of each capacity? These are questions that every parent, teacher, and child-oriented professional yearns to answer.

Succinctly stated, Natural Learning Rhythms (NLR) maps the development of the innate capacities in children and offers guidelines to creating relationships that lead to optimal well-being for both the child and the caregiver.

NLR brings extraordinary clarity and simplicity to the subject of how the child develops by providing a detailed description of what is happening for the child in each stage of life. There are four stages and each stage has an organizing principle or innate capacity to receive, organize, and respond to the psychological and physical environments in ways that promote well-being. NLR describes in detail the psychological, emotional, and physical components that can be provided for the child in each stage of childhood that nourish the whole being. As well as providing a detailed description of those things that are harmful to the child's development. Thus the parent comes away with an understanding of what is happening for their child and can meet their developmental needs with ease.

Natural Learning Rhythms offers considerable information on each developmental stage. For instance:

- Creating environments that support (or poison) well-being in the child
- Clear, simple descriptions of the special qualities, nature, phases, and characteristics of each stage
- An in-depth appreciation of how a child moves from one developmental stage to another—often the most difficult times for parents and teachers
- The importance of the language of each stage—key to successful communication
- The development of meaning within each stage
- Shifts in the perceptions of time and space during the stages and their implications for intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual learning
- Identification of developmental malnourishment and of remedies that restore well-being in the child and the family
- Amazingly, almost every family can nourish the well-being of a child. This means that Natural Learning Rhythms has value for parents, teachers, education administrators, counselors, therapists, and grandparents. In the vast majority of participants we have had in our programs since 1985, socioeconomic status or ethnic/religious background has not inhibited learning. Generally speaking, Natural Learning Rhythms has stimulated ideas about how to glean the best from the culture to boost family well-being.

Definition of Natural Learning Rhythms

Originally, the word "natural" meant "to be born of". It soon came to mean the essential properties of a thing. The core definition of natural that most influences Natural Learning Rhythms--that which is not acquired; or that which is inherent.

"Learning" means to gain knowledge, comprehension, or mastery through experience or study. Learning describes the way we operate in the world, while nature refers to our inborn qualities.

"Rhythm" means movement which has regular recurrence of different qualities, for example the rhythm of the tides.

Thus, Natural Learning Rhythms describes our inherent capacities (natural) to move through life to gain knowledge, comprehension, or mastery (learning) in recognizable and recurring patterns (rhythm).

When we connect to a child's Natural Learning Rhythms we can see through his/her eyes and feel through his/her heart.

Natural Learning Rhythms places importance on the word wisdom. In every stage of life there is wisdom that is present and available to the human. In every stage of childhood there is wisdom present and available in the child. It is that which we are born with. In Natural Learning Rhythms, we refer to wisdom that is in-the-moment -- right action in relationship to context and stage of life (i.e. developmentally appropriate right action). It is action that is always organizing toward the well-being of the organism. In a state of well-being a person can experience that which is most meaningful, beautiful, and true for their developmental stage and their moment of life. We can think of this wisdom as a kind of knowing in response to context without thought or deliberation. Wisdom of the parent is in a mutually beneficial symbiotic relationship to the wisdom of the child.

The Natural Learning Rhythms philosophy recognizes two meanings of "natural." There are two aspects to nature. There is the natural world as we perceive it through our five senses --nature with a small "n". Then there is the life force imbued with meaning, power, and mystery inherent in all natural objects --Nature with a capital "N".