

DO YOU MEAN WHAT I SAY?

"A pencil, teacher," asked 3 year old Lisa. Absently, I placed before her one of the thick pencils. She did not pick it up. She looked up, "A pencil....don't you mean what I say?" ^{Apologetically} ~~Stricken,~~
I replaces the thick pencil with a thin one belatedly remembering that Lisa liked only the thinner pencils. When she asked for a pencil she had in mind her kind of pencil.

Adults operate on so many levels of meaning so automatically that it is easy to forget the time and setps that produced such a competency. Teachers and parents must learn to listen, really listen to small children and to contemplate for a moment the child's individual and possibly different frame of reference. Teachers and parents, of course, know to always give directions to small children more than once and in more than one way. It does not take a teacher or a mother long to learn that reiterating / ^{the same} directions with increasing vocal volume does not produce comprehension but confusion.

Listening to small children can be a most salubrious exercise. Children, if you will let them, stretch the boundaries of the explicit and open to question"established"facts and operations. Listen to your child...what he says, how he says it, and for a moment contemplate what ~~she~~ means by what ~~she~~ says.

Have you ever said to a child: "That wasn't what I meant at all." ?

"Please wipe your mouth. OH. That's not what I meant. Not on the INSIDE!"

Don't we confuse? "Please print your name in the upper left hand corner. Ah-h-h...that's right!"

Lucille and Ernie volunteered to paint the cardboard box house. ₂The teachers were charmed. Any adult could see

that the box certainly needed it. The box was a gift from
all over
Benla heating and had printing on-all-sides of its dun-colored
outside. The children enthusiastically chose the colors, mixed
the powdered paint with water, and went outside to the dull-
colored box sitting ready on protective newspapers. Sometime
later, the children brought in their paints, washed their
brushes, and themselves and all tramped outside to see the art
effort. The cardboard house was still dun-colored and the
printing unmarred. The inside of the house, however, was
gay with doors, windows, curtains, and pictures of happy
children!

Do you mean what I say?