

INTRODUCTION
For PARENTS

Teaching the Joy of Wonder

If there is one joy that children absolutely are born with, this is it! Our challenge is to encourage, to preserve, to reinforce, as well as to learn from our children as they naturally see the wonder of life.

This unit encompasses the following previously named units: Joy of Curiosity and Interest, and Joy of Spontaneous Delight.

Concept

Let's begin by thinking through the child example given in *Teaching Your Children Joy*:

I remember sitting once, off to the side in a busy shopping mall, looking at passing people — watching to see who was watching. The adults were preoccupied with their jobs, their problems, themselves. Their eyes never met mine. Their eyes saw only what was necessary to navigate through the crowded corridor.

But the little children saw everything. Each child looked straight at me for at least a moment, and for a moment at everything. Their eyes and ears were receptors, taking in all data, seeing, hearing, questioning.

It is no wonder that we learn as much in our first five years as in the rest. We see more, feel more. We are born with a natural and joyful curiosity and interest. What happens to it? Where did those adults drop it? When would those children lose theirs?

One study showed that babies spend one-fifth of their waking hours in motionless, focused gazing, simply figuring things out with their eyes. Their minds are so malleable, so impressionable! Parents can perhaps change their children's minds more, for better or for worse, than they can change either their bodies or their spirits.

This is a unit about curiosity, this is a unit about being interested in all around us, and this is a unit about fun! Because what is more fun than being totally delighted by the wonder and beauty and silliness and love all around us?

We will also be doing some spontaneous things, some will be our ideas, some the children's. A major part is helping them to live in the present, to notice the interesting things around them and to be sensitive to their environment.

There is often a paradox in adult minds. On one hand, we admire curiosity, spontaneity, delight and wonder; we speak of the free spirit, the unconventional, with at least a lingering trickle of envy. On the other hand, we associate maturity with words like sophistication, reserve, and proper. How many times have you seen a parent give a sideward, brow-furrowed look of scorn to a child whose spontaneous delight and enthusiasm was “socially improper”? We let our own inferiorities and inhibitions stamp out the spontaneity in our children, and we let our schools and institutions do the same thing. If we are not careful, it becomes harder to preserve and protect in our children the joys they were born with than to teach them the ones they came here to learn.

We encourage and exhort you to use this unit as an opportunity to delight in your children’s natural Joy of Wonder and to make commitments to encourage, foster, and nourish it as long as they are in your care.

Tips and Reminders

1. Be sure you have read the Joy School Introductory Manual.
2. Read the corresponding chapters in *Teaching Your Children Joy* by Richard and Linda Eyre, so you will better understand the joy you are trying to teach. (Free copies can be found at eyresfreebooks.com). The chapters that apply to this unit are Chapters 1 & 4.
3. Remember to read the “Notes to Parents” to the children each day before they go home. Then staple or paper clip them on their art/craft project.
4. Parents can help at home by being spontaneous and excited with their children and to share in their natural interest and curiosity, thus encouraging this great joy that children are born with but so often lose as they try to be more like adults.
5. **IMPORTANT:** This unit, more so than any other unit, has far more activities in each lesson than could actually be accomplished. Please use **discretion** in what you plan for your Joy School day. Do not be reluctant to even under-schedule the day so you can repeat the activities you do use. You can always plan to do the unused activities next year or at home with just your own child(ren). **The large amounts of material in this Unit is meant to provide options for the teachers so they can be sure to pick what will be the most fun for them to do with the children.**
6. **FURTHERMORE,** if you are NOT taking a week off for **Spring Break** during this semester or need the semester to be longer, Lessons 7.5 and 7.6 could be stretch to cover two lessons each.

Lesson Overviews

This unit's six lesson plans are divided into three parts:

The **first week** (first two lessons) are devoted to simple interest and curiosity. The objective is awareness, sensitivity, sagacity.

Lesson 7.1 Fun With Noticing

This lesson reminds children of the benefits of noticing the big and the small details all around them. It concludes with a brief nature walk.

Lesson 7.2 The Power of Questions

Children love asking questions! This lesson is an absolutely fun lesson, with many experiments and discovery activities to really get those questions going in the children's minds. The parent in charge of next week's lesson may be asking the other parents to send a small picture of their child for next week's lesson.

The **second week** aims at questions and research, seeking to help children find the joy in looking, searching, finding answers and knowledge. The first day of the second week is a library trip where they look things up and find answers to the questions they have predefined, and the second lesson is experiments, magic tricks, etc. Again, remember to measure yourself by what the children feel. The objective is to help them feel happily curious . . . and to sense what fulfillment can come from being interested and curious.

Lesson 7.3 Library Visit and Asking Questions

This lesson continues with encouraging good question asking and culminates (or begins) with a trip to the library. Read the lesson and plan ahead to ensure this is a pleasant and worthwhile experience for everyone.

Lesson 7.4 So Many Things Make Me Curious

This lesson introduces a variety of "curiosities", including some "magic" tricks to get the kids wondering.

The objective of the **third week** and the "Spontaneous Delight" lessons is to reinforce the natural interest and enjoyment that children feel in their lives. Part of our work in this unit

revolves around surprises; games with surprises, discovering a surprise, etc., so that we can encourage and praise the children's natural spontaneous delight that they already have.

There is only a week devoted to "Spontaneous Delight" principally because the ideas of fun and surprise and spontaneity occur throughout all other units.

Lesson 7.5 Spontaneous Delight

This lesson plan is just designed to "get children into it" to open them up to **spontaneity and fun**. The children will be able to learn that it is good to have fun and do things a little bit crazy and out of the ordinary sometimes.

Lesson 7.6 More Spontaneous Delight

The second lesson plan is an attempt to **get the parents (who are invited to come to the first 40 minutes of Joys School this week) to have the same kind of spontaneous fun** with the children (you will notice that some of the songs in this unit are as much for the parents as for the children). If this unit has a goal, it is surprises and laughter.

By the End of This Unit...

By the end of this unit the children will have realised it is okay to keep their natural inclinations to ask questions, be curious, be spontaneous and have fun, and to wonder and delight in the world around them.

Parents should also commit to be examples of this Joy of Wonder. Ask questions, and let your children hear and see you asking questions. Delight in the world and notice and point out the wonder of it all. And, you don't need to be serious all the time, and you can still have lots of fun and enjoy your life, appreciating the spontaneous joy that comes from being full of wonder.

Book List

The books with specific lesson numbers are specifically used in the lessons. However, any of the other books or any of your other favorites about questions and curiosity would work well during this unit. Try to read books at home with your children about these subjects as well.

	Title	Author(s)	Synopsis or Theme
7.2	<i>When The Wind Stops</i>	Charlotte Zolotow	Using the concepts of <i>trust</i> in nature, and showing how this is a jumping point for interest in the world.
7.3	<i>Just Open a Book</i>	P .K. Hallina	A book about the pleasures you can find in a book: how books open the door to adventure and knowledge.
7.4	<i>Why?</i>	Richard Torrey	A delightfully simple and real-life portrayal of all the “why’s” inside these kids’ minds.
	<i>Press Here</i>	Herve Tullet	This book sparks their curiosity on each page about what will happen when they do as the instructions say--it’s interactive and creative.
	<i>What Do You Do With An Idea?</i>	Kobi Yamada and Mae Besom	Curiosity breeds ideas.
	<i>Why? The Best Ever Question and Answer Book</i>	Catherine Ripley	A good book specifically related to curiosity
	<i>Usborne: See Inside How Things Work</i>	Conrad Mason and Colin King	This book is very interactive for all the kids. It’s a lift-the-flap book.