

# Waldorf Education Your Questions Answered

## What does working with rhythm and routine mean?

Humans need rhythm to function healthily and achieve balance. A rhythmic approach encourages us to look holistically at our days and the patterns woven into them by our basic physical needs and other activities requiring balance. Routine, on the other hand, is pre-designated and man-made.

Rhythm is a strong feature of life and of our curriculum. You find rhythm in the outer world in the changing seasons, days of the week and times of the day. You find rhythms in your own body clock. Rhythm can hold us strongly, give us security and comfort and enhance our wellbeing. In our practices there is often a three-fold rhythm which allows a beginning, middle and ending. Our day and natural bodily cycles give us periods of 'breathing in' with deep concentration, and of 'breathing out' with physical activity and artistic expression.

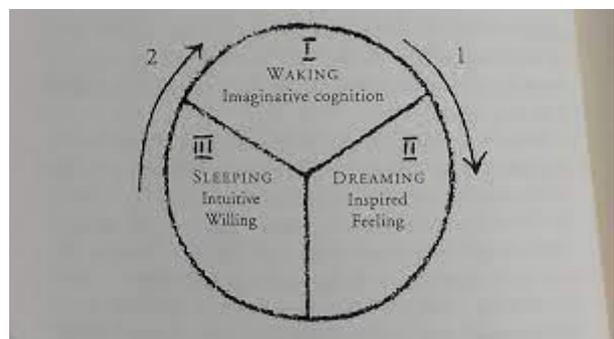


**Daily Rhythm and routine** We set up our daily and weekly routines based on these rhythms mirroring our rhythmic patterns of energy and of our physical, emotional and intellectual availability.

Our idea of rhythm is not simply a schedule but takes into account the needs of the whole child, as well as the class: the child's need for movement, for focused, quiet times and time to explore and direct their own activities. Times to use their minds, times to use their bodies and times to use their hands. Different subjects lend themselves well with these ends in mind. We look at the structure of the whole day to reflect the child's changing needs and also look closely at the flow of the lessons themselves. Rhythm is created through the way the teacher teaches. The teacher responds to the content and delivery of the activity focusing on certain points and expanding on them. Adding moments of tension and relaxation and responding to the children to allow breathing in and breathing out moments. Responding to the children when they are awake, when they are tired and bring activities to them that respond to these inner changes maximises learning, interest and engagement. Such is the artistic nature of teaching.

The children relax into the rhythms we set for them; they find comfort and security knowing exactly what to expect each day. This gives them the freedom to focus their time and energy on more important work: social learning, emotional development, and both gross and fine motor skills.

**The three-day rhythm of learning** This is an essential ingredient of Steiner learning as it allows sleep to be incorporated into the learning process. By way of sleep what is experienced in the day is woven into the habits and condensed to faculties. What is absorbed through observation and thought by day sinks into deeper strata of the soul at night and returns to consciousness confirmed in feeling and willing. This is a three-day process. What is merely apprehended on the first day returns enriched by personal feeling on the second day and becomes part of oneself on the third day. We use this rhythm when structuring our lessons.





## The seasons and festivals

We celebrate the seasons and cultural festivals to bring a more conscious awareness to the greater rhythms of nature and the world around us. The breathing in and out of nature.

## Creating your own daily/weekly rhythms and routines

Modern life, hectic schedules often disrupt our rhythms and routines but children who have solid routines know what's coming most of the time can better adapt to the occasional unexpected event. Things like a nightly dinner routine can provide rich language development experiences and foster social skills. Story telling/reading routines are proven to improve literacy and imagination. Daily living routines, like meal preparation, homework, and age-appropriate extracurricular activities, can foster social skills and independence.



There is security and comfort knowing that you can predict certain activities on particular days of the week eg this is the day we do craft or have games. Knowing what to expect can help us to organise our thoughts and help us to mentally and physically prepare for what is to come. Having this outer organisation to our week can bring us inner order.

No matter what routines you and your family decide to embrace, the research shows that it will help balance your child's behaviour, build academic and social skills, and relieve stress in the family.

If you want to learn more about setting up your own daily, weekly, seasonal and family rhythms then there are a number of good resources out there. One website you might like to visit is

<https://www.lavendersbluehomeschool.com/blogs/rhythm-quick-start-guide> it is full of really valuable ideas.

*“Establishing rhythm with children is crucial, creating familiarity and a sense of their place in the world so that they can relax into it as they incarnate. A lack of rhythm causes disharmony which is experienced as stress for the individual and can be expressed in terms of unhappiness, behaviour problems or issues with eating or sleeping and even illness.*

*One of the greatest gifts we can give our children is the skill of listening to and honouring their own rhythm within a structured and balanced family life. We can do this through our own example. We can show them the rhythms of the natural world, with which young children instinctively have such an affinity: pointing out that the sun is gone, and so it is time to sleep. Breathing practices and meditation, dance and music, looking at art or watching the waves breaking on the shore are all ways which we experience and enjoy rhythm in a tangible way. Through them we learn to reconnect with our own unique rhythms as well as the rhythms of others around us and our environment, allowing us to become more conscious of the rhythm which exists in all areas of life.*

Things to be mindful of when establishing rhythms:

- sleeping- quiet before bedtime, having a predictable routine, observing the rising and setting of the sun, moon and stars.
- eating- regular times, watch for cues for hunger, offering a range of seasonal foods, textures and flavours.
- movement – must be balanced with stillness, regular body stimulation for the physical being such as running, dancing, jumping, massage.
- celebrating festivals marking the passing of seasons and key events, noting the rhythms of the year.
- establishing simple but meaningful family traditions and ways of doing things to add familiarity and a sense of belonging.
- plenty of experience of rhythmic activity: dance, music, and experience of nature.”

Lucy H. Pearce <https://dreamingaloud.net/2010/10/have-you-got-rhythm-or-has-routine-got-you/>