

# The RIE™ Approach

Educator and infant/toddler specialist Magda Gerber and pediatric neurologist Tom Forrest M.D. have developed a unique philosophy and methodology for working with infants. Together they founded **Resources for Infant Educators** (RIE) to continue educating parents and professionals in their approach.

In order to foster quality care **RIE™** encourages:

- Basic trust** in the child to be an initiator, an explorer and a self-learner.
- An **environment** for the child that is physically safe, cognitively challenging and emotionally nurturing.
- Time for **uninterrupted play**.
- Freedom to explore** and interact with other infants and toddlers.
- Involvement** of the child in all care activities to allow the child to become an **active participant** rather than a passive recipient.
- Sensitive observation** of the child in order to understand his or her needs.
- Consistency**, clearly defined limits and expectations to develop discipline.

Respect is the guideline of RIE'S philosophy. The educator shows respect, for example, by not picking up an infant or toddler without telling them beforehand, by talking directly to and not over the child and by waiting for the child's response. Such respectful attitudes help develop an authentic child.

RIE's goal is to help raise authentic infants and toddlers who are:

- Competent
- Focused
- Peaceful
- Involved
- Cheerful
- Cooperative
- Resourceful
- Initiating
- Confident
- Aware
- Secure
- Attentive
- Curious
- Exploring
- Interested
- Inner-directed

Here at Village Infant/Toddler Center we believe that the child should be allowed to freely explore, doing all they can by and for themselves without “help” or interference as far as possible. Safety is always of the utmost importance and is a determining factor in deciding if intervention is necessary. However, if a child has maneuvered themselves into a difficult situation but is not in danger or endangering others, they would be allowed to solve their problem, unless they asked for help.

By allowing the child to be totally involved in everything they do, either in their own individual explorations or in their own interactions with others, you allow them the maximum learning experience possible. They are, in effect, their own teacher, learning at their own rate, fully understanding each stage.

The caregivers at Village Infant/Toddler Center believe that the first three years of life are a crucial time when basic patterns of coping, living, and learning are set. Parenthood is a most important and difficult vocation. From the beginning, parents could be better prepared to make parenting easier and more rewarding. The most recent abundance of publications on infancy produces much controversy among professionals and confusion to parents. To quote mothers, “whom do I trust?” “too much advice.” “too little real help.” “nobody really shows me how to apply it to my baby.”

Therefore our infant and toddler program is based on demonstration. We designed an infant/toddler-oriented environment that encourages the child to become an attentive, active, exploring person who is self-rewarded in their mastery of new tasks. The child is given space, equipment to move in, appropriate objects to manipulate, and other children to watch and imitate. The staff demonstrates special methods of selective intervention that allow the child to reveal themselves, to make their own choices, and to evolve their own style of mastery.