

by Docia Zavitkovsky

## *Docia Shares a Story about Staff Relationships*

*Enjoy  
a  
Docia  
Story*

When we talk about staff relationships, we really are talking about how harmoniously we as individuals get along with members of a group — how well we interact with one another; how well we communicate, support, and accept one another's differences, strengths, weaknesses, and points of view.

As in all centers, there are concerns and problems which if not aired can increase in magnitude and become disruptive. For example, take a center that has a staff of nine — a director, five teachers, a cook, a housekeeper, and a part time nurse. Their working relationships are good, but lately they have been muttering and grumbling and occasionally making snide remarks about what is going on in the center.

At a staff meeting, the director asks if there are things bothering them and, if so, to talk about them and get them out on the table for discussion. Their concerns are fairly typical and topical:

*June Always on Time resents Sue Always Late never being on time, and say it is hard enough getting things underway in the morning without having to be responsible for an additional group of children.*

*June Always on Time is impatient with Phoebe the Nurse because she has been asked to restrict water play. She believes this is an important activity and, as long as the children have aprons and extra clothes, she can't see what the commotion is all about. Phoebe the Nurse doesn't agree with this point of view because she is the one who has to talk with the parents, and the parents believe that the children get colds because they get wet.*

*Judy the Cook complains that Sue Always Late's group is never on time for lunch. Sue Always Late said that it isn't her fault. Her group is the last to get ready for lunch and she has to wait for the bathroom to be available and anyhow the needs of the children should come before the needs of the cook.*

*Energetic Ellie wishes Sweet Mary would put things away after she uses them instead of leaving them out for everyone else to put away.*

*Hannah the Housekeeper is upset because she is constantly having to sweep up sand tracked in from the sandbox and wants the blocks put away before she comes in with the lunch. Energetic Ellie said that her children often leave block arrangements up for several days and she doesn't want it mandatory that they have to be picked up.*

*Sweet Mary said that she can't see why she always gets the late shift and Restless Sandra always gets the early shift. Restless Sandra said she has to have the early shift because her husband picks her up on his way from work.*

*Energetic Ellie thinks Sue Always Late should take her turn setting up the outside yard. Sue Always Late says this would be impossible for her because she has a bad back and can't lift heavy things.*

*All at the meeting want the director, Connie Dedicated Beaver, to be more involved with the children — to pitch in when the going gets rough instead of sitting at the desk or wandering around with seemingly nothing to do.*

Because there is good communication and a feeling of cooperation and good will, changes that restore balance can be initiated. There is agreement that staff members have the same basic needs, and many of the same conflicts, anxieties, and frustrations as anyone else.

Each person has his/her ups and downs. They don't always feel good; think logically; say the right thing; plan for the best use of materials and equipment; or remain cool, calm, and collected. They are human.

The director plays a key role. If she is sensitive to the shadings of what is being said and done, she will anticipate the areas of dissension and quickly move to bring staff together to discuss and plan how staff, children, and center needs can best be met. I say **together** because it is amazing how much the other person knows if we just take the time to listen.

*Docia Zavitkovsky has furthered the cause of young children as a practitioner in the field for over 45 years and as past president of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Known far and wide for her storytelling, she has traveled extensively as an early childhood consultant, lecturer, and adventurer.*

### **Editor's Note for Personalized Software**

In the November/December issue of **Exchange**, we featured a Buying Guide for child care specific software. Regrettably, the format of this guide was misinterpreted by many of our readers. We would like to clarify that **Personalized Software** has been in the child care industry since 1985, not for 18 months as the article leads one to believe. Personalized Software has several thousand users across the country such as Children's World, Bright Horizons, Bright Beginnings, and many independent centers. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused our readers and Personalized Software.