



Docia Shares a Story

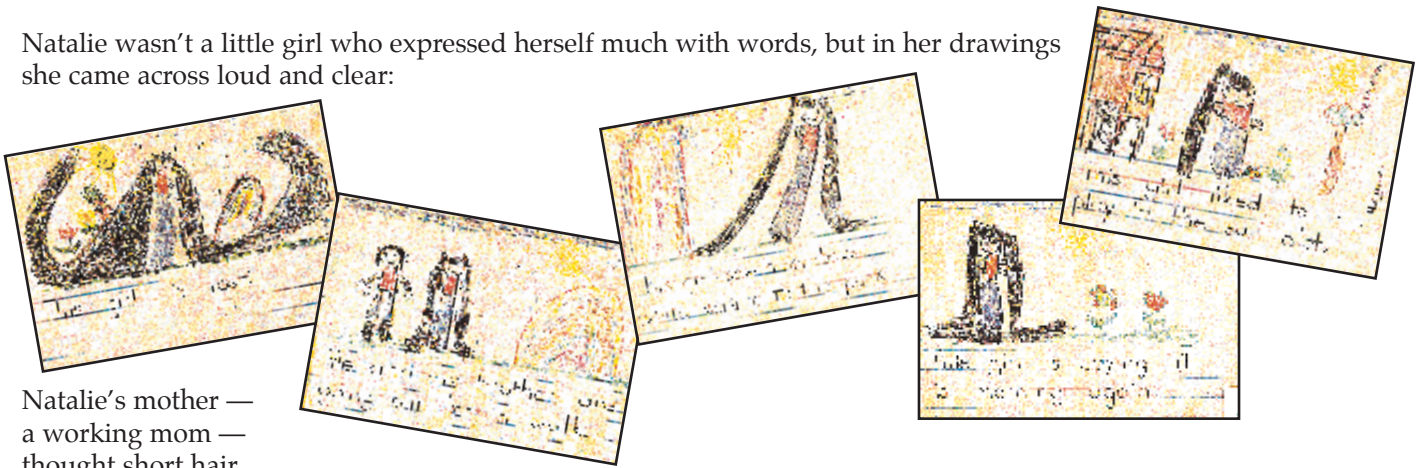
EXPRESSING YOUR FEELINGS

Most of us at one time or another have had the urge — and the need — to clean out the “stuff” we have accumulated . . . things that may have sentimental value, but no longer serve a purpose.

Photograph by Jean Berlfein

I was deep in such files and boxes when I came across five year old Natalie’s drawings, vintage 1983. I had kept them because they so vividly told a story about Natalie’s feelings when her mother took her to the beauty parlor to cut her long and beloved hair. Natalie cried, and wanted her hair put back . . . but short it was, and short it would remain.

Natalie wasn’t a little girl who expressed herself much with words, but in her drawings she came across loud and clear:



Natalie’s mother —
a working mom —
thought short hair

would make it easier to get Natalie ready for school; so when Marsha, Natalie’s teacher, showed her the drawings, she was amazed at how important long hair had been to Natalie.

It is so easy to unintentionally and unwittingly do things to and for young children without stopping first to consider their feelings. Natalie’s drawings are a reminder that in personal decisions — such as hair cuts, hair washing, when to stop using a pacifier, choices in clothes, choices in friends — children have the right to be heard and to be part of the decision process.

Docia

PS: When mailing this story to *Exchange* from a post office in Norway, Maine, I showed Natalie’s drawings to the postal clerk. She said she was one of eight children and that she had long, blond hair which her mother would brush and comb into curls. When she entered first grade, her mother, with seven other children, didn’t have time for hair and so hers was cut into a “Buster Brown” bob. She said that she cried and cried and didn’t want to go to school because all the other girls had long hair.

Kathy said that now she can understand why it was necessary to have a hair cut, but she remembers how sad she was when it was done. Kathy today is in her late thirties . . . and she has very long hair.

Docia Zavitkovsky has furthered the cause of young children as a practitioner in the field for over 50 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.