



undisturbed babies will concentrate on exploring like this for a very long time, sometimes up to 1 hour.

What kinds of things can be in a Treasure Basket?

Household and real life objects made from different materials (i.e. not made from plastic or designed for children by an adult with a purpose in mind) such as:

Natural Objects: fir cones, shells, large pebble, lemon, natural sponge, ...

Real Objects: bunch of keys, bell, curtain ring, ribbon, small basket, cotton reel, wooden clothes pegs, small glass bottle, leather glasses case, bag of herbs, smooth heavy glass/metal object,...

Household Objects: shaving brush, wooden nail/other brushes, shoe horn. ...

From the Kitchen: wooden/metal spoons, egg whisk, small pan, egg cup, tea strainer, bottle brush,...

From the Bathroom: flannel, pumice stone, natural sponge, loofah, plug+chain...

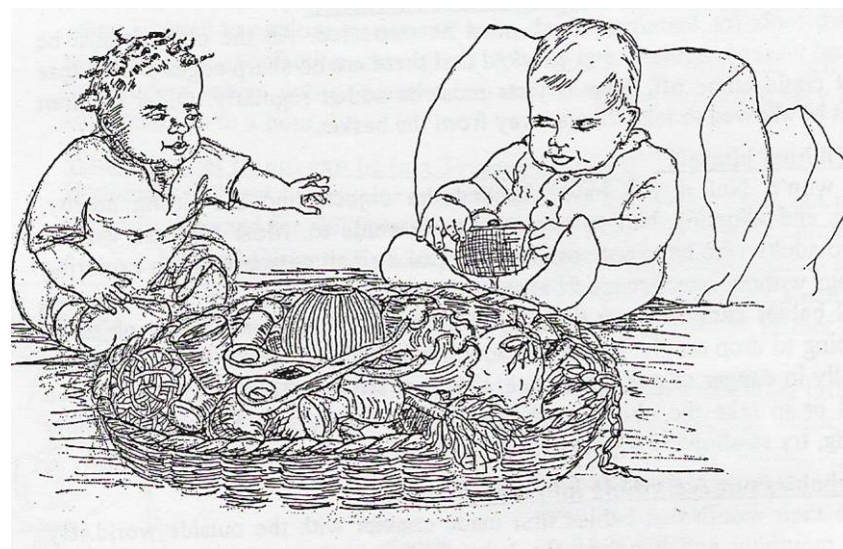
FOR BABIES FROM 5 MONTHS:

What is a Treasure Basket?

A Treasure Basket ('invented' by Eleanor Goldschmied as in her book: 'People under 3') is a strong basket (about 30 cm in diameter) filled with about 100 everyday and natural things (no plastic or toys) of different size, shape, feel, weight, smell, taste and sound. It needs to have a rim the height of a mug so it will not tip over when a baby leans on it for support.

Why is it good for your baby?

Babies are new to this world. They don't know that things made from wood feel and look different from metal, which is shiny. When trying to lift a heavy object, they are surprised at the different effort this takes. But babies are full of curiosity and want to find out about everything. When a baby sees a Treasure Basket, he wants to reach out, touch, feel, pick up and explore it. He can hold, turn, smell and bang the objects. By mouthing, sucking, biting, licking the baby discovers textures, shapes, smell, taste and temperature. When all his senses are drawn into one focus of attention like that, his brain grows and is making lots of new connections and his mind develops to be ready for language. Your baby also gains confidence when allowed to explore by himself and to make his own choices. The enormous pleasure and satisfaction this gives him makes his sense of self grow. If



WHAT DOES THE ADULT HAVE TO DO?

Babies must never be left alone with a Treasure Basket

You need to sit nearby and enjoy watching what your baby does. How does he do it? What could he be thinking and feeling? Sometimes your baby will need to look at your face to check that your mind and eyes are still on him: then he is talking to you with his eyes, even though he has no words yet. Sometimes he may need your help, e.g. to sit him up again. But do not try to show the baby what to do, or pick out objects yourself, or direct his exploration.

When there are older children around:

Arrange for a 'safe space' so that the baby can play undisturbed by older children:

- a) by demarcating the area, perhaps with a carpet that won't ruffle and a low cupboard as a partition +
- b) a comfortable chair for the adult between baby and others, so her attention can be on the babies, but she can also re-direct other children trying to disturb them.

Safety, Hygiene and Looking after a Treasure Basket:

These are tools for learning, which must be respected. All the objects must be sorted and washed regularly and checked that there are no sharp edges and no loose bits that could come off. New objects must be added regularly. Older children must not be allowed to take things away from the basket.

'But he'll hurt himself!'

No, he won't. Not if you have checked the objects and are sitting nearby, watching and allowing him to explore as much as he can. Most of these worries belong to adults who have not seen how careful a small person is when exploring new things without.

Small babies cannot throw things, and if you see that some heavy object is really going to drop on his foot from enough height that it would hurt him or that he is really in danger of poking his eye, then you are near enough to gently move his hand or to take the object from him. If you worry that he might swallow something, try swallowing it yourself: if you can't then he can't: you are bigger.

Why do babies put everything into their mouth?

It is with their mouth that babies first made contact with the outside world. By sucking, mouthing and handling the baby finds out about weight, size, shape, taste, smell and sound, and as s/he chooses an object we can imagine him saying 'what's this?' Mouthing objects helps a baby to move to the next developmental stage when they are ready.

For more information and to arrange sessions or consultations please contact

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