



# Processing Crisis through Play

*Supporting Children on Their Search for  
Meaning*

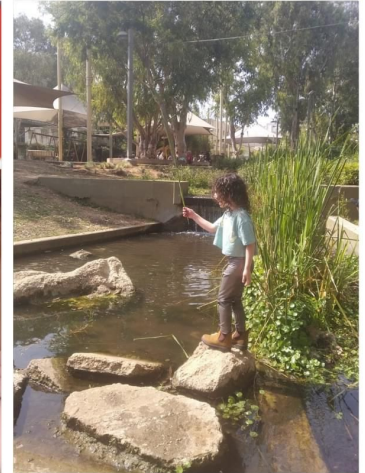
Maya Lan & Danielle McCrea | Play on Athens 2022

**W** **ONDER**

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## Who We Are

WONDER



*“We cannot be smugglers of worlds, we can’t smuggle worlds in that we dream or believe possible, to replace the one that is. There is a sense of reality that we have to try and take possession of and, much as it may disgust us, much as it is difficult to ride on the back of, and much as it costs us, we have to understand and interpret the issues left on the table in this difficult and tragic situation today. **The biggest mistake we can make is to grit our teeth in silence to save the children.**”*

- Loris Malaguzzi (1991)

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**We DO Censor Crisis**


**We DON'T Censor Crisis *Play***

# A Game Called “War”

*Documentation from  
Wonder School,  
2019*

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*The last while, there has been a new game in the yard. The children run in groups and yell out things at each other, standing in a warrior-like stance. We have heard them call it: “War!” I was very curious about this game. There seemed to be a core of players and I wanted to hear from them more about it.*

**Teacher:** We want to know about the game “war”

**M:** A. took a photo of us on the phone during the war

**Teacher:** What did you see in the pictures?

**M:** We saw that we are fighting!

**Teacher:** Who is “us”?

**M:** Me and A. and J.

**J:** And D.!



**L.:** We aren't playing.

**Teacher:** L. is saying "We aren't playing." What do you mean L.?

**L.:** They want to play. We have enough children and they want to be with us.

**J:** That's not true! You don't have enough children.

**A.:** It's not true. You don't have enough children!

**J:** We are trying to kill them, not play with them.

**M:** That's right. To kill them not to play with them.

**Teacher:** Aha. In the game, what does that mean, "to kill them?"



**D:** Because there are teachers [here], I feel it isn't nice. You can't really do that.

**Teacher:** Aha....

**D:** So you CAN'T kill them!

**A:** So I CAN kill the teachers!

***Laughter!***

**D:** And I can run away easily!

**J:** And I can easily hide and nobody will be able to see me!

**Teacher:** Do you fight each other?



**M:** No we fight other children.

**D:** We fight them!

**Teacher:** You fight them!

**M:** We fight D. and L. and S.!



## How Did the Teacher Respond?

1. She did NOT stop the play!
2. Approached with curiosity
3. Asked open-ended and clarifying questions
4. Maintained the playful spirit



## What Were the Big Ideas in the Play?

1. They see themselves as a part of the war
2. War means fighting
3. War means people are killed
4. You fight with your friends against “the other”
5. War has heroes

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**What Next?**

*Expanding on Big Ideas*

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A constructivist teacher must be **planful** and **flexible.**”

*“But planning must always be paired with its seeming antithesis, which is **spontaneity**. We cannot plan the magical experiences that happen. We only plan the context in which they occur.”*

– Christine Challie (2007)



## **What Next?** *Expanding on Big Ideas*

Our Guiding Principles:

1. Keep It Child-Led
2. Don't Teach
3. Don't Correct
4. Inclusion of All People & All Ideas

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# The Toy Gun

*Documentation from Wonder School, March 2022*

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# Supporting Families



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*“The biggest mistake we can make is to grit our teeth in silence to save the children. We need to speak with children, talk to them, and above all give responses to the questions they ask, and questions they probably will not ask but will feel, and which will emerge in their play-acting, non-conventional languages, and their verbal languages etc.. [...] So it is pointless to try and keep silent, or alter the facts in impossible ways. Children feel, children know, children are informed.”*

*- Loris Malaguzzi (1991)*

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# Thank You!





## References

Chaille, Christine. 2007. *Constructivism Across the Curriculum in Early Childhood Classrooms: Big Ideas as Inspiration*. Prentice Hall.

Malaguzzi, Loris. 2021. *Fragments II, Children, the War and Us, Living Authentically with the Different Ways of Feeling*. Reggio Children.