

A WORD FOR KINDERGARTEN BASICS Socrates insisted that the unexamined life is not worth living and there's wisdom in that, to be sure. But the examined life isn't always a picnic either. In such times I fall back on what I've come to think of as a Kindergarten State of Mind. Most of what I really need to know about how to live, and what to do, and how to be, I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate school mountain but there in the sandpile at nursery school. These are the things I learned: Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat. Flush. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Live a balanced life. Learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some. Take a nap every afternoon.

When you go out into the world watch out for traffic, hold hands and stick together. Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the plastic cup. The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that. Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the plastic cup -- they all die, and so do we.

And then remember the book Dick and Jane and the first word you all learned, the biggest word of all: LOOK. Everything you need to know is in there somewhere. The Golden Rule and love and basic sanitation. Ecology and politics and equality and sane living. Take any one of those items and extrapolate them into sophisticated adult terms and apply them to your family life or your work or your government or your world and they hold true and clear and firm.

Think what a better world it would be if we all -- the whole world -- had cookies and milk about 3 o'clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blankets for a nap. Or if the United States of America had as a basic policy to always put things back where it found them and cleaned up its own mess. And it is still true, no matter how old you are, when you go out into the world it is best to hold hands and stick together.