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A Birthday Wish

Children of the 1980s are growing up too fast, they are being pushed out of their childhoods too quickly because so few adults seem to have time to be with children, to talk to them, to care for them, and to provide space for them. Adults too often rush children to grow up and take care of themselves. In this way we run the enormous risk of forcing our children to become prematurely independent and to resist their strong needs to be nurtured and helped. With these strong needs denied, our children are forced to restrain their relationships with the adults in their world, and also their relationships with their peers. These relationships have to be restrained, otherwise they will be too painful and create too much anxiety because they remind children of the strong urges that were suppressed.

In a society where children grow up too quickly and become independent too rapidly, one very often encounters aggression, defiance, social isolation, and learning disturbances. The question is whether we can afford these - when all we need to do is care for our children more closely, give them more time to be children and give ourselves the opportunity to be with them. We have to create more space in our minds for our children and accept the fact that children need us. We have to abandon the notion that children will grow up better if they are forced to develop prematurely.

We must provide more time for adults to be with children at play. Play is a crucial

aspect of children's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. Without the time to play and without adults to be catalysts for their play, children are "short-changed," and are deprived of a healthy development.

At this time of OMEP's 40th birthday, when we celebrate our beginnings, we must not forget why we are here, why we exist. We are here for the children, we exist solely to make the lives of children better - to make sure they have the opportunity to be children, to enjoy childhood, and to be happily involved with adults. This is why we are an organization. Of course we do a lot of other things - but we must continue to make the lives of children richer, to allow them the time to learn to adapt to the many different situations which only play can provide. We have to make sure that all children have adults to give them the care and education they all deserve.

With these goals, we can wish ourselves a Happy Birthday celebration.

Otto Weininger