



What We Can Continue to Learn from Fred Rogers



Plant One Seed -- Grow Two Lessons



Welcome, springtime! It's the "growing season" and a time when many teachers help children grow plants from seeds. That's a great science lesson because children can see what a plant needs to grow – soil, water, light.

But I've learned from Fred that there's another lesson here, too, one that's harder to see and harder to learn. That's the lesson about waiting.

We know many children have trouble waiting. And waiting for a seed to grow can be especially hard because of children's poor concept of time, dependence on their senses like their sight, and magical thinking.

But what an important lesson that is -- learning to wait. Lots of things in life take a long time. Think about how long it takes for children to learn new things, like writing their name, riding a tricycle, or managing their feelings. When you have trouble waiting, it's easy to be discouraged, frustrated and want to give up.

Fred knew how hard it is for children to understand that most growing happens little by little. Watch how he talked and sang about that on this *Neighborhood* episode.



Here are some ways we can help children with the lessons about growing and waiting -- for planting seeds and other times:

Helping children with realistic expectations.

Before planting, ask the children how long they think it will take for the seed to grow into a plant. Then you can prepare them for the long wait by giving them a more realistic expectation. You may even want to use a number line or calendar.

You might also use this opportunity to talk about other times when they have to wait, like waiting for a turn in the block corner or on the swing. As Fred sang on the video, it helps to “think of something to do while we’re waiting.” You could ask the children what helps them deal with times when they have to wait. You might want to make a list of their ideas, and then you can remind them to use one of those strategies when they seem to have trouble waiting.

Helping children notice the small changes.

One teacher I know gave the children a “Science Journal” for drawing and dictating every few days what the plants look like. An amaryllis is especially good for this because it grows quickly, with a tall stem that children can measure for a math lesson. Looking back through the Journal drawings helped the children realize there are changes. It’s a different kind of drawing from other creative art. You might even call it “drawing like a scientist,” a term I learned from my friend Dr. Mary Hynes-Berry at Erikson.

It’s not just children who have a hard time seeing growth that happens gradually. With all the day-to-day work you’re doing with and for the children, it’s easy to get caught up in the moment, and feel frustrated and discouraged because you aren’t seeing quicker results from your efforts. It can be hard to remember that, like plants, most social-emotional growing happens little by little, and you may have to look really closely and even document them to notice the changes.

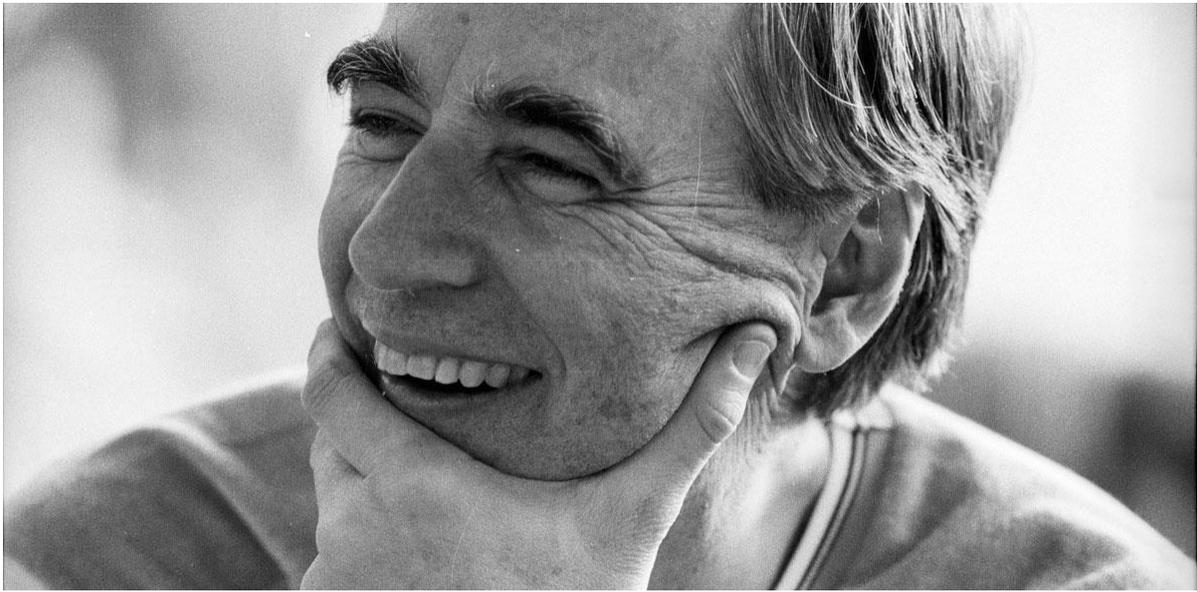
Now that it’s almost the end of the school year, I hope you’ll take a minute to think about what the children were like at the beginning of the year and compare that to what they’re like now. And I hope you’ll feel good about how much they’ve grown and developed – because of your caring cultivation – your consistent, on-going, loving, limit-setting, and support.

Thank you for being our neighbor,



Hedda Sharapan
M.S. Child Development
PNC Grow Up Great Senior Fellow
hedda.sharapan@stvincent.edu

Timeless Wisdom from Fred Rogers



"It's tempting to think "a little" isn't significant and that only "a lot" matters. But most things that are important in life start very small and change very slowly and they don't come with fanfare and bright lights."

[MORE QUOTES](#)



[Subscribe](#) | [Forward](#) | [View past issues](#)
[Update your profile](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)

© 2016: *Fred Rogers Center*

Photo courtesy of the Lynn Johnson Collection: Ohio University Libraries

Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning & Children's Media

Saint Vincent College

300 Fraser Purchase Road

Latrobe, Pennsylvania 15650-2690