

Pedagogical Narration: Between a Rock and a Hard Place

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Sophie has grown up exploring our dense forest, particularly the large dirt mound. She has watched many of her friends climb the dirt mound with ease and then happily slide down. Sophie, however, would sit at the bottom and scream and cry, waiting for me to help her climb up this mound. Although my nurturing instincts made me want to help her, I stopped myself. Instead of rescuing and enabling her, I waited, watched, and encouraged her. Finally, Sophie challenged herself to climb up to the very top of the mound all on her own. She was incredibly proud of herself (as was I) when she accomplished her goal.

One day in the winter, the children and I were again in the forest. It was very cold, the ground was very hard, and the wind was biting at our faces. The dirt mound was extremely hard and slippery, and many children without mittens had cold hands. Sophie sat at the dirt mound wearing my gloves and stared at the hill. The weather brought an entirely new challenge, and with that, new obstacles for her to face. She slowly crawled up the frozen dirt mound with my large gloves on, grunting the entire way, her determination never wavering. She never once cried, yelled, or screamed for assistance. As she grunted along, I wondered

Showing great persistence, Sophie crawled over the rock! Despite the frozen ground, despite the cold, and despite her fingers turning red, Sophie's determination was equal to her focus.



if Sophie no longer sought help because I had consistently given her words of encouragement instead of rushing over to lend my helping hands.

Finally reaching the top, Sophie clapped her hands in excitement, but as she did so a glove flew off and rolled down the hill. She sat on the hill quietly, staring at the fallen glove. She could have easily become upset. It was a less-than-ideal situation. The cold wind bit at her hands and fingers, and at the top of the hill, there was another obstacle to face: a large rock sitting right in the middle of the hill. She backed up and started to go around it. Her peers seem to understand the importance of their friend conquering this obstacle, and stood back patiently watching. This hill is usually full of life, with bugs and

insects crawling all over it in the warmer weather, and children racing up and down. Today, however, all was calm. It appeared we understood that this was Sophie's moment.

Although I believed in Sophie, I realized it would be easy to rush to her aid and "help" her. If I did help her, would it be a selfish act so that I would no longer feel uncomfortable? Anastasia Butcher (2015) questions this perfectly by asking, "Do we have a right to interrupt their flow?"

I also contemplated the land and what it has taught Sophie. I wondered if the hill felt familiar to her and if the dense forest felt safe and reassuring.

Sophie stared at the rock calmly. I wondered if past experiences came into play to assist her? I