Humans are captivated by looking into the eyes of others to read the other’s reactions and long before the first year of college. The understanding of how we observe and analyze others’ faces has become an intriguing study across at least art, neuroscience, psychology, child development and spirituality.

The art print, above, of Mary Cassatt’s mother and child represents singularly focused gazing into each other’s eyes and conveys a sense of trust and contentment as they luxuriate in each other’s presence.

Faces stimulate the strongest brain response to any other visual image (Kanwisher). By two days, infants pay more attention to their mother’s face than another women (Bushnell); by four months infants’ brains process faces almost as well as adults.

Children learn to prefer people similar to them, perhaps merely by exposure and frequency (Kelly et al 2005). Infants living in a nonmixed racial home preferred looking at people of their same race but infants in racially mixed homes do not show this preference (Bar-Haim, Ziv, Lamy, & Hodes, 2006). The same is true for gender (Quinn, Yahr, Kuhn, Slater and Pascalis 2002).

A well researched concept of child development, separation anxiety, is the absence of being able to see the face. Erikson’s stage of trust vs. mistrust points to the need to be able to understand the reactions others have to us.

If development is the unique trajectory of the interaction of relationships and experiences within a child’s life (Lerner), interpreted by the biology of...
the child’s brain, then understanding faces is a critical tool. If you love me, if I can trust you, I will see it in your eyes, in your face.

Religious traditions regarding face are rich. Humans are created in the image of God: We have the capacity to see with His eyes into the lives of others. Moses, in the Jewish tradition is the one human who saw God face to face suggesting the depth of their intimacy (Exodus 33:11). To represent face, Hebrew stories use the word *panim* and Christian stories use the Greek, *prosopon*: Both have a conceptual meaning of “presence” emphasizing the significance of face (Bible Dictionary, Loder, Spirit, page 90-1). Repeatedly the Christian Old and New Testaments refer to having eyes but not able to “see.” We can see but do not try to understand the motive and purpose beneath what one sees. Christians strive to become “like Christ”: To see through God’s eyes and then to act in alignment with that understanding as Jesus did on earth, both of which are lifelong tasks.

How does this discussion of “face” help you understand the importance of relationships?

**Sources**


**Related Children’s Books**


**Sayings**

dkjdjklhf
Rituals and Greetings
sadjkldjkdfgjk

Songs and Poems
adfkadfkldfgjk

Games and Activities
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