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Mary Renck Jalongo (Ed.)

Enduring Bonds

The Significance of Interpersonal Relationships in Young Children's Lives

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Mary Renck Jalongo Interpersonal relationships present an interesting paradox to the young child. Although human bonds are a source of love, security and joy, they are, at the same time, the context in which children feel intense and complicated emotions such as jealousy, shame, resentment, sorrow, and rage. To illustrate, consider a series of incidents in the life of a young child named Melissa. All of these events were so memorable that they became oft-repeated family stories. At age 4, after Melissa was reprimanded by her mother, she packed a small plastic suitcase and announced that she was running away. Her mother kept a watchful eye while the preschooler stood at the end of the driveway for several moments. The child's sister—eight years her senior—decided to go out and gently inquire about her younger sibling's plans, to which Melissa responded ruefully, "I can't run away. I remembered that I'm not allowed to cross the street by myself." Months later, Melissa enters kindergarten and she arrives home at the end of her school day, obviously upset. When asked about it, she says, "One of the kids told me I was doing my work wrong and it ruined my whole day." In first grade, Melissa has experience with one of the school child's greatest fears: a mean teacher.

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