



A Manner of Speaking

by Bonnie Neugebauer with Zachary and Schon



Schon (3.5) and Zachary (4.5) helped me create this record of our experience of creating ideas together.

“Let’s decorate the house for Night Train’s (aka Roger) birthday.” Zachary, Schon, Caroline (1.5), and I started messing with the spools of crepe paper, each latching onto our favorite color. “We could do it like this,” I suggested in an adult-centric moment, as I taped a yellow strip to the fireplace.

Zachary: “That’s not how we do it.” He taped the other end of my strip to the mantel to make a loop.

Schon joined in to make loops as well, and quickly, my responsibilities became to cut the paper and provide pieces of tape as directed.

Schon had the idea of taking one piece and attaching it to another. “Can I tape my piece to your piece?” she asked Zachary. “Yes,” Zachary replied. And so she did. Later in the process, Zachary asked, “Schon, can I tape my piece to yours?” “No,” Schon responded.

Zachary: “So when you asked if you could tape your paper to mine, I said yes. And now I asked if I could tape my paper to yours and you said no. So, can I tape my paper to yours?” Again, Schon listened and then responded, “No.”

“Okay.” Zachary shrugged and then turned to a new idea of taping paper strips to the table to create a tunnel to crawl under. Schon had the idea of wrapping one piece of paper around the other, and then she decided to read books. Zachary continued to do his own thing. Taping to the stroller didn’t work. He kept cutting, taping, connecting until all the loose ends were attached and the strips of paper used up. The tunnel was reinforced for multiple crawling experiences, which everyone seemed to enjoy, even when the construction was jeopardized.

“We made a forest,” proclaimed Zachary and Schon. And then they were tired of it.

Later, when we created this record together, they confirmed how it all took place.

- Ideas happened.
- Some worked better than others.
- Ideas inspired other ideas.

But what struck me most was that what worked for one person didn’t necessarily work for another — and that was okay. When we are creating together and inspiring one another, maybe we need to give each other a bit more space and respect — just as Schon and Zachary did.

