



Watches, Clocks, and Children

By Shirley Minster

Watches and clocks have always fascinated me. I love to observe gears, wheels, and springs doing their jobs, dependent upon one another yet vital in their individual jobs.

My World of Clocks & Watches

As a child, there was a drawback to my fascination because I had to remove the covers to see their inner workings, often causing them to stop permanently. My favorite childhood clock was made in Switzerland and featured a Swiss girl on a swing that went up and down on a spring as the clock ticked. A tiny bluebird kept the time by tipping back and forth. When I was a teen, my favorite place to visit was The Wee Little Tick Tock Shop in Portland where the owner always made time to talk with me and show me his latest arrivals to his clock hospital.

This personal attention helped me understand how to examine watches, to pay close attention to minute details that could be causing problems for the timepieces.

When I consider buying an old clock, I do not particularly care if it works or not. It's important to check the condition of the outer case and inspect the inner works and chiming mechanism. If all appear to be in fairly good condition, the purchase is made. Anticipation mounts as I travel home and prepare to work on the watch or clock. Specialized tools are hard to come by, so over the years, I have acquired a set of tools to fit the tiny sizes and unique fittings.

When all my clocks are working well, there is a cacophony in my home. The cuckoo clock chirps hoarsely, the 31-day clock chimes melodiously. The grand old mantle clock deceives people by having a most dainty tinkling bell inside. Still other clocks announce the time loudly, while others whisper magic tones. One travel clock does not have an alarm shut-off button, so every day of the week it dutifully beeps twelve times ... at 1:25 PM.

My wristwatches are interesting. One is fitted onto a pen and works best when it is held steadily with no sudden moves. The ring watch is not just for show with its artificial pearls and tiny face; it does its best staying close to me on my finger. The alarm watch tells me when it is time to switch to another activity, but it is hard to set and must be prodded. One watch has a scratched face and seems always to be getting new scrapes. The wristband for one is too tight and squeezes more as the weather changes.

**Children:
What Makes Them Tick?**

As a parent, you know your children as well as I know my clocks and wristwatches. You have observed their idiosyncrasies as you play and work with them. Most likely you have found out what makes *them* tick. If, however, you are still trying to understand your children's special needs, I have a few suggestions. Decide which chains to pull and how often, which chalet needs straightening, and when to wind each one. Each child responds differently to your tools, your words and actions. Use the right tools that will best fit your little 'clocks.' Make your actions fit the ages and developmental stages of your children. Long, detailed instructions, overbearing commands, and unreasonable adult expectations will not work.

Just like timepieces, some children will be early and tick brightly, needing little encouragement. Some will be cranky and slow down as they tire. Some will need regular cleaning and maintenance. Some will suffer many scrapes and bruises in life, and others will seem to be perennially late in whatever they do.

If you take the time to recognize each special feature that makes your children unique and special, they will feel your understanding, security, and love. They will understand that they are vitally important to your family and that they are loved for their individuality.♦♦