1. Playing in the park

It’s a sunny afternoon in springtime, and David is playing on the swing in the local park. His dad is pushing him, and the rhythm of the swing moving back and forth leads David to close his eyes. As the swing is gradually pushed higher and higher, David begins to giggle. He can feel the rush of wind against his face and the giddy sensation in his tummy as the swing gains momentum in moving backwards and forwards in constant rhythm. He is aware of his bodily movement and of his own physicality – his hands clutching the chain of the swing, his bottom on the seat, and his legs stretched out as the swing propels forwards, and tucked underneath as the swing retreats backwards. He has a deep-down feeling of contentment. At this moment, nothing else matters to David. He is attending to the here and now of his experience. There is no past. There is no future. Just the present moment in which he is situated.

1. The Inquisitive philosopher ….

Jane is three years old. Her family is having dinner together one evening and is chatting about some of the antics that Michael – Jane’s older brother who is now nine years old – got up to when he was a youngster. Jane listens intently as her mother recounts the time Michael was playing in the backyard and got himself stuck in the branch of the large elm tree. All of the members of the family laugh heartily. Jane is hanging on every word that her mother says. She seems to be captivated by this story. When the laughing has subsided, Jane turns to her mother and asks ‘Where was I when Michael got stuck up the tree?’. Jane’s mother looks lovingly at her and replies, ‘You weren’t born then, sweetheart.’ But Jane’s wonder and curiosity have been aroused, and she has a sense of connectedness to something greater. Insistently, she pursues the conversation. ‘Yes, I know,’ persists Jane, ‘***but, where was I***?’

1. Showing Empathy

Tam is playing happily on the adventure playground equipment at kindergarten. As the other children finish their games and get ready to go inside for some quiet time, Tam notices that one little boy named George is trying to reach the tap at the drinking fountain. But being a short little fellow, his mouth cannot quite reach the spout. Having been in that situation before, Tam empathises with George. She knows how frustrating that can be, especially when you are so thirsty. She watches George for a few moments, and then sees her kindergarten teacher coming towards her. ‘Are you coming inside Tam?’ asks her teacher. ‘Yes,’ replies Tam, ‘but I think I should get a small chair for George to stand on. He can’t reach the tap to get a drink.’

1. Making sense of the death of a pet ……

Jake’s pet dog, Samper died last week. It was an emotional time for Jake and his two sisters, but he seems to be coping well at the moment. Today, Jake has a friend over to play, and his father listens as Jake describes to his friend how they buried Scamper in the back garden. ‘I was really sad.’ begins Jake. ‘My dad dug a hole and we buried him near the big tree near the back fence. But this week, I don’t feel quite as sad. I saw this show on TV where a mother died right after she had her baby. The bloke who was the dad said he couldn’t believe how the baby looked just like the mother. He even said that the thought the baby *was* the mum, come back to life. Now, the lady down the street has a dog that has just had pups. They were born right around the time that Scamper died. I think that maybe Scamper’s spirit is sort of alive in one of those baby pups … one of them even looks a bit like Scamper….’ Jake’s dad is amazed. They were not really a religious family. So where had he learnt about things like spirits, and what seemed like a form of incarnation? And how on earth was he able to make sense of the loss of a family pet in that particular way?

Source: Hyde, Brendan. *Children and Spirituality – Searching for meaning and Connectedness.* London: Jessica Kingsley publishers, 2008.