

# **SILENT THINKING**

## **A RESOURCE MANUAL**



**Dr. Margaret Taplin**  
**Institute of Sathya Sai Education of Hong Kong**

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Background.....	4
Silent Thinking.....	5
Creative Visualisation.....	6
Reported Evidence of Effects of Silent Thinking and Creative Visualisation in the Classroom .....	6
References .....	7
Some Students' and Teachers' Reflections on the Use of Silent Thinking .....	8
Teachers' comments: .....	8
Children's comments .....	8
Some Examples of Silent Thinking .....	12
What are my special strengths? Silent thinking.....	12
Follow-up silent thinking.....	12
Other silent thinking ideas .....	13
Environmental Protection .....	13
Friendship.....	14
Love and Peace .....	15
Visualisation for the start of a lesson.....	15
Visualisations for problem solving.....	15
Opening yourself to find your goals in life.....	16
A visualization for teachers:.....	17
Visualisation to improve relaxation/ coping with stress .....	17
Visualisation before taking an exam.....	18
Visualisation to do at the beginning of a mathematics lesson .....	19
Visualisation to correct a specific behaviour problem .....	19
*The Light Visualisation* .....	20

Using Silent Thinking to Improve Particular Skills.....	21
Silent Thinking to Improve Listening Skills.....	21
A Diary That Can be Used for Research with Students or Parents .....	22
Diary for Parent.....	23
Diary for Children.....	25
How to set up silent thinking action research in your class.....	26



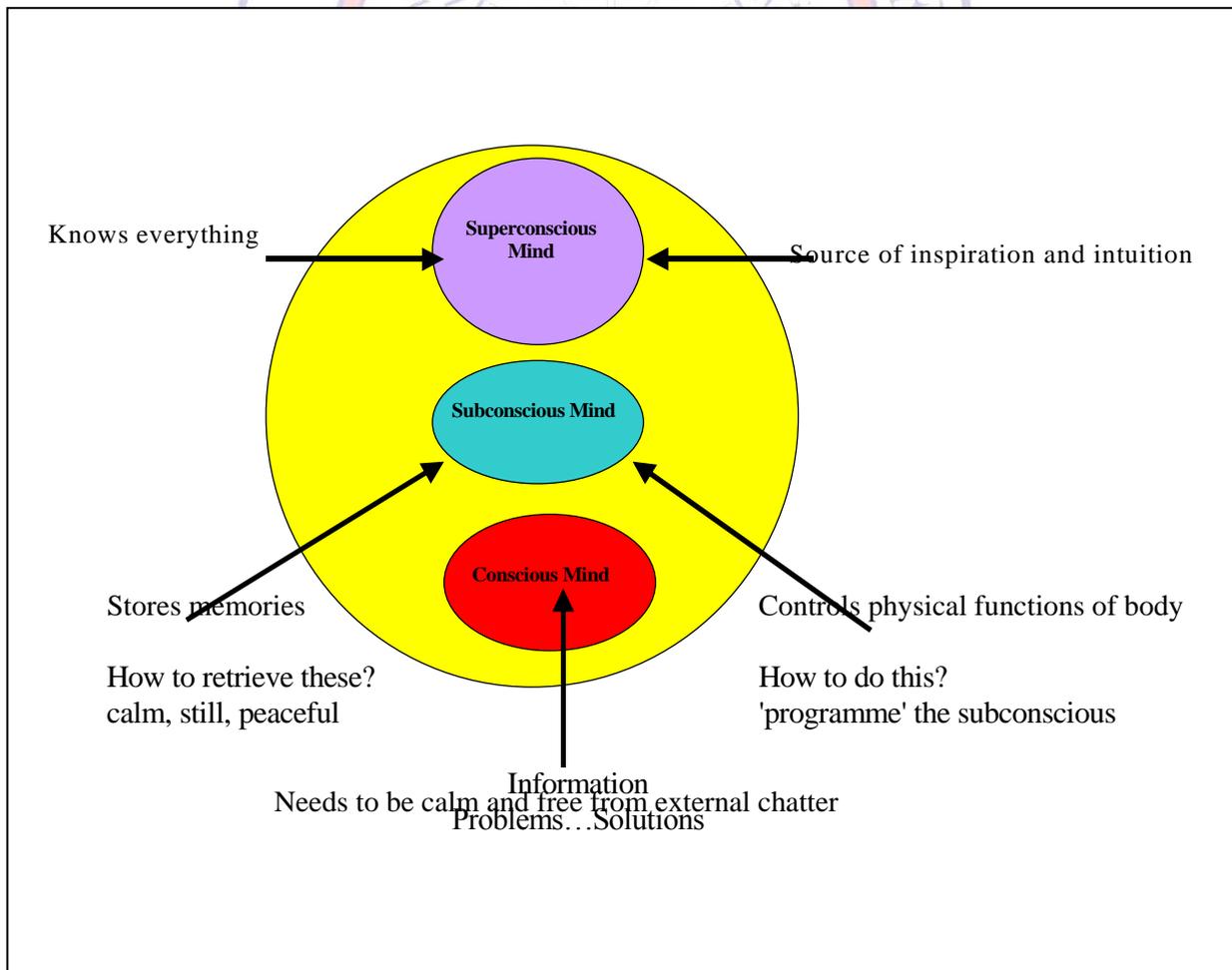
## Introduction

This booklet provides support to teachers to the technique of silent thinking. It is intended to be a simple guide with a range of samples and reflections from students and teachers about its effectiveness as a tool in the classroom.

## Background

We all know that teaching these days is difficult because of increasing problems with discipline, lack of concentration, and lack of pupil motivation. Just as life is becoming more difficult for teachers, it is also becoming more difficult and complicated for pupils. For the sake of both their own well-being and that of their pupils, teachers are constantly searching for ways to address these problems. The purpose of this article is to suggest ways in which "silent thinking" and "creative visualisation" can be utilised in the classroom without taking too much time from other activities. These techniques require just a few minutes once or twice a day.

The value of silent thinking and creative visualisation can be illustrated in a model described by Jumsai (1997). Jumsai's summary is shown below.



This diagram represents the human being's physical body (large circle) and the three levels of the mind: the conscious, the subconscious and the superconscious. Through the five senses, the conscious mind receives and processes information from the environment in order to create awareness and understanding. The subconscious stores the memories of everything that we have experienced, and feeds these memories to the conscious mind to control the individual's thoughts and actions, and even to color our perceptions of events that happen around us. The superconscious mind is the source of our wisdom, knowledge, conscience and higher consciousness. In a holistically-balanced person, these three levels of the mind interact together to contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. Jumsai proposes that there are two important ingredients for this healthy interaction to occur. The first is to free the three levels of the mind from extraneous 'chatter', to enable enhanced concentration and memory. The second is to ensure that the information that is stored in the various levels of the mind is 'clean', positive and constructive, since its retrieval will have such a significant effect on the individual's thoughts and actions which in turn contribute to the presence or absence of holistic well-being. The technique of silent thinking is a useful way to quieten the chatter and hence promote a feeling of inner peace, and that of creative visualisation can programme the mind in a positive, healthy way.

### **Silent Thinking**

Children need to have time to just sit and get into contact with their inner selves if they are to be able to improve their concentration and maintain balanced physical, mental and emotional health. Silent thinking can be a useful strategy to settle them down when they are restless or when they have come back in to class after recess or lunch breaks. You can ask them to just sit quietly on their chairs, or sometimes allow them to lie on the floor and close their eyes. In my own experience I have found that the first few times I ask a group of children to do this they are inclined to be a little bit self-conscious and to make silly noises or try to distract their neighbours. After doing it a few times, however, most children settle into the routine and often even ask if they can do it if they are feeling restless. If you want to, you can give them some guidance by asking them to focus on slow, steady breathing or even to visualise a silver-white light moving steadily through their bodies, bringing relaxation and positive thoughts wherever it touches. Children only need to practise silent thinking and inner listening for a few minutes each day to be able to experience its benefits. Five or ten minutes is usually quite enough. Most children appreciate the opportunity to listen to their own inner silence for a while. If they do not find this easy to do, you can help them by playing some soft music that will give them a focal point. In time they will experience the sense of inner calmness and the music will not be as important.

It is an important component of establishing a sense of inner peace to learn to be happy with our own company, rather than looking for other people to be around us, distracting and sometimes even disturbing. Every one of us needs to learn how to find time to be completely alone and to enjoy that time. Yet so many of the children that we teach have never, ever been completely alone out of the sight and hearing of another person. During a school camp once, we decided to use the opportunity to take our city kids into the bush (an Australian term, as that is where I was teaching at the time) to experience this feeling of complete solitude. The first time we did it was during the day. First thing in the morning, before breakfast, we went to the bush area behind our hostel, and asked the children to each find a place where they could feel completely alone, where they could not see anybody else, and we asked them to sit there and experience the aloneness for ten or fifteen minutes until we called them back. At first there were the inevitable whistles and noises, but the children eventually settled down to

their experience. The real impact of the experience came when we returned to the same place at dusk and asked them to sit in exactly the same spot to watch it grow dark. Thinking there alone in the darkness, many of the children had their first experience of complete solitude and silence, and for some it was an intense experience. Afterwards Robert, who was a very big child and a bully who frequently terrorised other children and quite often the teachers as well, wrote, "I could feel the power of the universe and it made me feel very small but safe".

### **Creative Visualisation**

As mentioned above in Jumsai's model, our consciousness operates at many different levels. First there is the conscious level, the mode that we are usually in while we are awake and aware of what is going on around us in such a way that we can think about it and describe it with detail and clarity. Then there is the subconscious mind that continues to be our "watchdog" whether we are awake or asleep, as it takes notice of the messages sent by the conscious mind and passes these messages to the various organs and centers within the body. For example, if you are awake and you accidentally touch something hot, your conscious mind will pass this message to your body and your body will react. If you are asleep and your subconscious mind senses some kind of danger, then it will similarly send a message to your body and your body will take some action to remove the danger. Another level is the intuitive level. This is where you are able to just "sense" or "know" that something is right or wrong without being able to logically explain why or why not. Some people have developed this level to a greater extent than others, but we all have the capacity to tune into our intuitive consciousness. There are many other levels of consciousness as well - in most of us, only a small portion of our brains is ever used, and so many of our levels of consciousness remain untapped.

However, the subconscious mind is constantly and often creatively sending messages to our physical, mental and emotional bodies. You might like to try an experiment in which you tell yourself repeatedly that you are feeling hot, even if it is on a cold day. If you repeat this message often enough then eventually your body really will begin to feel warm. Similarly, if you are constantly telling yourself that you are unhappy or unlucky, then your whole mind and body will become convinced that this is the truth and you will then start to attract more and more situations that make you unhappy or unlucky. In the 1970s and 80s an Australian doctor, Ainslie Meares, did some pioneering work using creative visualisation to heal cancer patients. It has been shown to be a very powerful healing technique.

In the classroom, it is possible to help pupils to develop strategies for programming their subconscious minds in positive, constructive ways. The following are examples of two visualisations that they can be led through in a relatively short time, to help to facilitate this positive programming.

In a later section we have included some examples of creative visualizations for specific purposes, for example coping with stress or preparing for an examination or to solve a mathematics problem.

### **Reported Evidence of Effects of Silent Thinking and Creative Visualisation in the Classroom**

Several studies have explored the effects of utilising techniques such as those described above regularly in the classroom. In particular, positive benefits have been derived for disruptive

or inattentive pupils (Bealing, 1997). One study found that it helped to improve their decision making and put them in touch with their deeper core values (Rozman, 1994), while another found that it helped them to cope better with stressful events (Rickard, 1994). Further benefits have included decrease in levels of impulsivity, increase in attention span and general improvement in behaviour (Kratter and Hogan, 1982). From this and other anecdotal evidence, it appears that this could be something worth pursuing!

## References

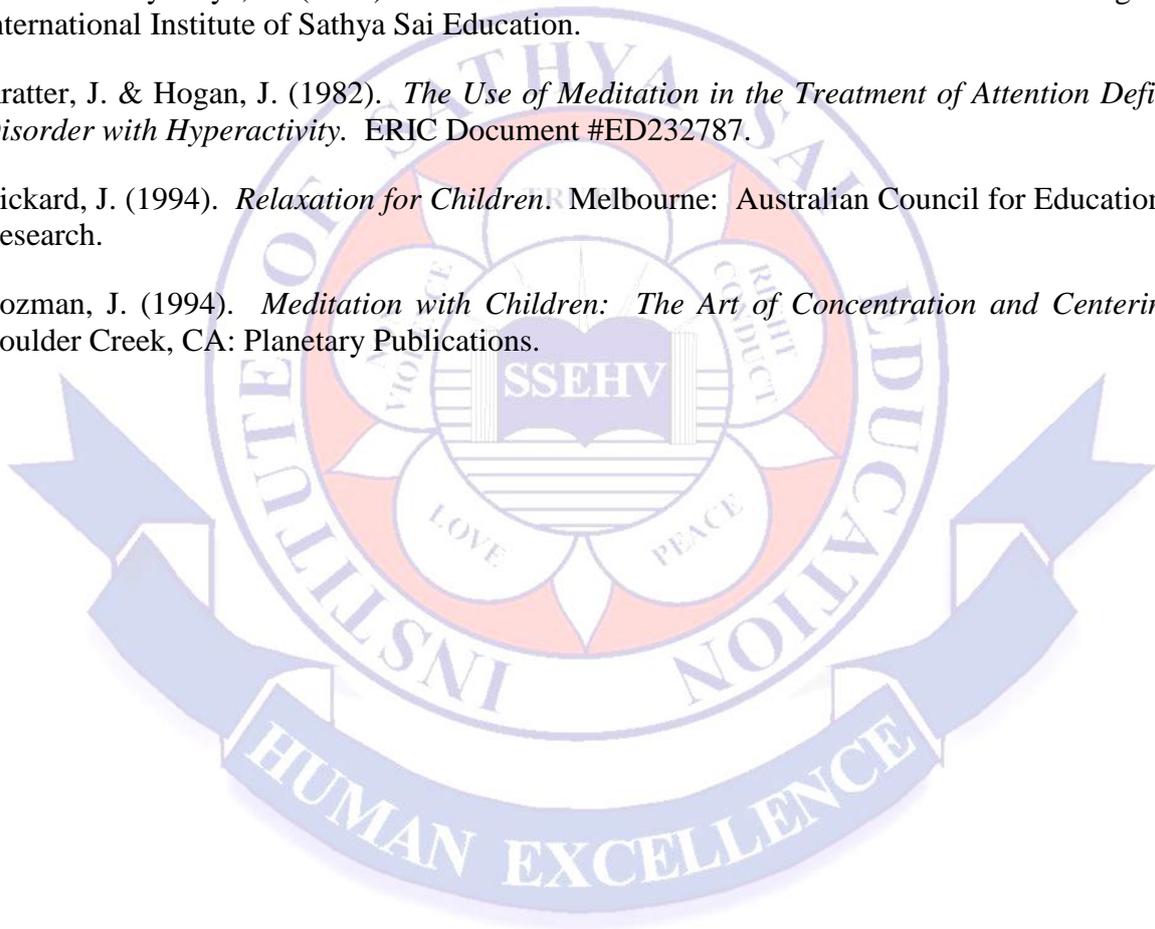
Bealing, J. (1997). "Meditation prescribed for unruly children", *Times Educational Supplement*, 06/13/97, Issue 4224, p.23.

Jumsai Na Ayudhya, A. (1997). *The Five Human Values and Human Excellence*. Bangkok: International Institute of Sathya Sai Education.

Kratter, J. & Hogan, J. (1982). *The Use of Meditation in the Treatment of Attention Deficit Disorder with Hyperactivity*. ERIC Document #ED232787.

Rickard, J. (1994). *Relaxation for Children*. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Rozman, J. (1994). *Meditation with Children: The Art of Concentration and Centering*. Boulder Creek, CA: Planetary Publications.



## Some Students' and Teachers' Reflections on the Use of Silent Thinking

### Teachers' comments:

It calms down the children's minds. When they close their eyes they can try to recall previous knowledge – not just in class but also things they have done right or wrong, i.e. self-assessment.

Silent thinking is a way of thinking, gives people a sense of quiet, they are very free to think about anything and escape temporarily from reality – therefore it decreases the pressure of work. I use it personally to have a break mentally or physically.

I have found my self able to control my own mood easier.

The silent thinking is very good to nurture their study habits. It encourages the students to think, try new things and change their attitudes towards their studies. They are now beginning to see that they are studying for themselves, not for their parents.

Values education and silent thinking bring real benefits to students – reduces pressure, concentrates minds, improves thinking, changes naughty behaviour, improves imagination and quality of writing.

Sometimes students give up when facing difficulties but, after silent thinking, they are more persistent.

### Children's comments

- ❖ Much previous knowledge comes to mind after silent thinking for a few minutes
- ❖ It can help me to recall previous knowledge and help me to learn new things.
- ❖ It is easier to concentrate and remember what I have learned.
- ❖ I am not very easily annoyed or irritated any longer.
- ❖ It helps me to forget sad things.
- ❖ I can actually find a way to solve a problem by using silent thinking.
- ❖ It is quicker to think of answers than with eyes open. Time slows down when my eyes are closed, so there is more time to find a solution.
- ❖ I have found myself to be more energetic and clear-minded.
- ❖ I have found more interest in learning and study than before. Now I enjoy studying.
- ❖ I have made obvious progress in my study since using silent thinking.
- ❖ Within one minute silent thinking I know one thing. In class no matter who interrupts me I won't be influenced. I just concentrate then I can make progress. Silent thinking makes

me understand whatever you do you have to do it diligently, make your own effort, don't be afraid of hardships and you can do everything well, completely beautiful.

- ❖ Silent thinking makes me understand in class you have to listen carefully, don't interfere with others, study hard. When you grow up you can become a contributing person to the country.
- ❖ Silent thinking makes me understand first of all I should have self discipline, then if you want to tell others you should do something, first you should do it by yourself and then let others know, listen to the teacher. When silent thinking I hope all the students in the class will sit quietly then the teacher and students can finish this class happily. The teacher doesn't need to remind us to sit well etc.
- ❖ Silent thinking impressed me a lot, gave me a very deep impression. As well as I learned a lot, I understand a lot of things. It's also built up my confidence to study and live better.
- ❖ I long for the 2 minutes silent thinking, listening to teacher's intonation with the background music and I feel quite relaxed. I feel there is a bright spot in my mind that turns round and round in front of me and takes my soul away to the forest, over the sea, over the endless grassland etc.
- ❖ Silent thinking is fascinating or mysterious. It made me change from impatient to a very lovely kitty. I was talkative before and now I've become more careful. All my teachers say I have made great progress, so thanks for silent thinking.
- ❖ After PE class every time I come back to class sweating all over. It makes me feel agitated about coming back into the classroom. But now we have 2 minutes silent thinking I calm down and "no ripples"
- ❖ Silent thinking always takes me to a beautiful and mysterious wonderful world. It lets me feel I am in big mountains, grasslands covered with snow and other places of interest. It gives me peace and happiness, and lets me finish the class full of vigour.
- ❖ Every day we have five classes before we can have a break. So I feel very tired, especially the third and fourth classes in the morning. Tired and hungry, dizzy and with a big head. Since we have had silent thinking, when I feel hungry I imagine there's a roast duck in front of me. When I feel tired I feel I become a bird flying in the sky or a fish swimming in the water. Therefore all hunger and tiredness goes and I can finish my classes happily.
- ❖ Everyone has times when we are not happy. If you have this kind of mood for the whole morning or the whole day it is difficult to have your class. Then you get "half the result with twice the effort". The silent thinking makes me feel I am with the clouds to enjoy sightseeing of beautiful scenery in different countries, and my whole body feels totally relaxed and happy, no worries at all.
- ❖ Every time in silent thinking I feel in my heart there is an ideal kingdom. People there get along well with each other, they help each other, they are always "ready to help others for a just cause" and also sacrifice your own interests for the sake of others. What a peaceful and calm picture, then my heart will calm down.

- ❖ I really experienced that silent thinking can cultivate my “morality and temperament”. In the past my handwriting was very terrible. After silent thinking I have become more patient. I can practise a character for 20 minutes a day [i.e. a sign of very deep concentration] I won the 2<sup>nd</sup> prize in the school in “character practice little expert”. In class sometimes I talk so after class I punish myself to sit silently for 5 minutes and try to find out the reason why I talk in class. In every exam I make mistakes because of my carelessness, and Mum and Dad criticize me, but I still do it again. I just cannot get rid of this bad habit. After silent thinking my heart calms down, I become patient so I do better and won't be careless in my exams again.
- ❖ This semester our Teacher Liu promoted a new teaching method in Chinese class, silent thinking. This method is considerably helpful for me in class, concentrating. My deep impression was the first day of the new semester because of a long time with no class it was hard for me to concentrate. This time my teacher said in order to let us concentrate we will do silent thinking. Silent thinking? I raised my doubt, half believed and half doubted. I listened to the teacher, closed my eyes, followed the teacher's reading, became a happy swallow flying everywhere. After silent thinking my energy was concentrating gradually. I did very well in that class. Silent thinking concentrates all my vigour – my actions become quicker – much better as well if I have some worries I will sit silently. Finally my mood will become better and better. Silent thinking, for me, is a good medicine for adjusting mood and making my mood peaceful. I suggest to you, why not have a try.
- ❖ I like silent thinking very much. Silent thinking can make our mood peaceful, don't have any worries. This is the reason why I like silent thinking, perhaps. I remember the first time the other day I was very angry, anxious, no mood to go to class. Suddenly Teacher asked us to sit silently. I closed my bright crystal clear eyes. According to Teacher's descriptions I imagined I became a swallow flying over the big grassland, high mountains, rivers and streams. After silent thinking I become more peaceful. It's unbelievable a little silent thinking can become my psychological doctor, make me shift from worries to peaceful, from anger to happiness. Since then we do silent thinking for 3 minutes in class. My academic record advanced rapidly. Since I learned silent thinking, life for me is not sad or miserable any more. It's happy. Look, silent thinking, this psychological doctor, is so great.
- ❖ Silent thinking is like a vacuum cleaner, clearing all my distracting thoughts, like sweeping the floor, it sweeps all worries from my heart or my mind.
- ❖ “The peace and silence can go far” [idiom teacher uses often in class – means especially if you are not a patient person you can become much improved by doing this]. At the beginning I didn't quite understand the real meaning of this. But after Teacher asked us to do silent thinking I understand. Silence is the magic weapon to success. Every time after silent thinking my heart is like putting down a very heavy big rock. I feel totally, completely relaxed and can fully concentrate in class. My memory is boosted and my academic record advanced.
- ❖ Silent thinking makes me feel full of vigour and very motivated in my study. In the past I liked running, coming and going – it was hard for me to concentrate. I could not sit still for long. Now I enjoy the benefits of silent thinking. Later on I will do more silent thinking. In the past I always felt quite worried and impatient but now I know I won't feel like that any more later. I wish everybody would say farewell to no interest in study.

The more you learn the more interested you feel. I put down my pen but then I remembered something else to say. “If you have a peaceful heart you will be absolutely extraordinary”.

- ❖ Silence to people is extremely plain, but for me it is a good way of rest. Silence can make us relaxed, our worries completely vanish. Silent thinking lets our mind rest, forms good habits, cultivates your temperament, gets rid of bad habits, very helpful with our body, study and life. Class teacher Hu asked us to sit silently. After that our mood is from panic to relaxation. In class totally relaxed, “twice the result with half the effort”. I suggest students should do silent thinking five minutes a day – it makes you feel relaxed so that it is of great help with your body, life, study and mood.



## Some Examples of Silent Thinking

There are many ways in which you can use silent thinking in your classroom. You may invite the students to listen to relaxing music or even just to their own inner silence. This section includes a range of guided visualisations that have been used by teachers. Some are for a specific purpose, such as to help students to find their own inner strengths or to improve their problem-solving abilities. Others may be purely for relaxation. Some teachers have even invited the students themselves to select suitable music or to compose appropriate visualizations to share with their classmates. A particularly effective one is the visualisation on the light, which has been included in this section.

### What are my special strengths? Silent thinking

Imagine that you are inside a golden bubble. You are floating around in the bubble, very safe and happy. The other children are in their bubbles too. Sometimes you bump gently against each other but you are inside your own bubble and nobody else can come in. Your golden bubble is your own special space where you can go whenever you like.

Next imagine that you are very, very tiny and you are walking inside your own brain. It looks like a library, with lots of shelves and books. Inside the books are all the things you have ever learned. You walk along the shelves until suddenly you find what you are looking for. It is a big book on a very high shelf. You take it off the shelf and look at the cover. On the cover it has your name and it is called “My Book of Special Strengths”. Imagine that you open the book. On the first page there is a list of all the special strengths that you have, and all the things that you are good at. It might be words, or it might be a picture, or it might be like a movie. If you can’t see anything don’t worry because it will pop into your mind later. Have a good look at what is on the page and make sure you take careful notice of the information that is given to you. When you are ready, close the book and put it back on the shelf.

### Follow-up silent thinking

Continue to use the theme of the golden bubble or a golden circle.

Also get the children to imagine themselves in situations where they are “helpful”, e.g. a tree growing up and giving shade to others, a lighthouse shining light all around to help others, a staircase or ladder or bridge to allow others to climb higher etc. When we know what the children have listed as their strengths I’ll try to help you to prepare some more specific silent thinkings.

**Lesson 3 Silent thinking (with music)** Introduce them to the idea of filling their heads, hearts and hands with light so they can help each other.

Imagine that you are thinking under a tree. It can be any tree that you really know or a pretend one. Feel the tree trunk on your back just like the back of the chair, and lean back against it. Breathe in deeply but gently. Feel the warmth of the sun and the coolness of the earth protecting you and making you feel safe. Look at yourself doing the thing that you have chosen to change about yourself. Then do something to destroy that picture. You can tear it up and throw it in the bin, burn it, stamp on it or whatever you like. Now celebrate –

do whatever you want to do – have a party or whatever you would like to do – to celebrate that the picture has gone. Now come back to sit under the tree and lean against it. Now think about the new strength that you need to be able to change. As you breathe in imagine this new strength getting stronger and stronger in you.

### **Other silent thinking ideas**

- Visualise a golden wheel with a black hole in the middle. Breathe all your worries and fears into the black middle, and breathe in the golden spokes to replace it.
- Imagine a balloon with your ‘false’ faces that hide who you really are. eg if you act like a clown, imagine a clown face on the balloon. Imagine that you squeeze the balloon and let go. Every time you let go imagine that now you don’t need to be that false face any more. Keep doing this until you have squeezed all the energy out of the balloon. Then let the balloon go or burst it.
- Be like a bee going from flower to flower, taking nectar and spreading it to the next one, helping each one to get better and stronger. Don’t be like the mosquito that sucks others’ blood and spreads disease and suffering.
- Imagine yourself floating in a boat on calm, smooth water...nothing that happens stops you from feeling calm. If you do something good and others praise you, you just smile and accept, without becoming big-headed. If somebody shouts at you or hurts you, you do not feel small, you just keep on floating in your boat. (The golden bubble can also be used for this.)
- If you cannot do good at least refrain from doing bad.

### **Visualisation for getting in touch with your true self (to be used on a daily basis)**

[Begin with a few slow, deep breaths to encourage relaxation.] Take your concentration deep inside your chest. Hidden there is your true self. This is the part of you that knows no fear and is always courageous. It is the part of you that never knows loneliness because it always knows love. It is the part that knows no attachments to external things because it is always complete within itself. Hold your attention on that deep, inner part of yourself and imagine that a beam of light is shining down through the top of your head onto that spot. Continue to allow the beam to pour onto that spot. Watch as the light touches your inner self and allows it to expand, like a flower opening. As the flower unfolds, your inner self grows and grows, larger and stronger, until it fills your whole body and your mind and your emotions with an intense feeling of peace and love. This is the time when you can trust yourself the most, to make the best decisions, and to have your own strength and completeness. Open your eyes slowly in your own time, and appreciate the inner strength you have unlocked.

### **Environmental Protection**

The purpose of this visualisation is to remind children that each one of them is empowered to

make a difference to the state of the environment and that each one has a responsibility to do so.

Close your eyes and imagine that you are in a spaceship, moving far, far away from the Earth. As you move away, you look back at the Earth from the window of your spaceship. You can see that more than 1/3 of the Earth is made up of water but of the 1/3 only a very small amount is suitable for drinking, washing or growing plants. As you watch, you can see clearly what people are doing. Watch them. Some are throwing chemicals and rubbish into the clean water. From your spaceship you can see the blue water turn to red or brown. Now you can see many people wasting water. Look at the many ways they waste water, without even realizing it. As you watch, you can see what this bad treatment is doing to our Mother Earth.

Suddenly you feel a surge of great strength go through your body. You have become a super hero and you are the one who can save the Earth from the wasting and polluting of the water. Quickly you turn your spaceship and race back to Earth. Now, for a few moments just sit quietly and visualize what it is that you can do to make a difference to our Earth.

Equipment: cassette recorder, water music cassettes

- ❖ Close eyes. Imagine the river as you listen to the water music.
- ❖ What can you see? Hear? Smell?
- ❖ What does the water look like?
- ❖ What are the plants like?
- ❖ What else is there?
- ❖ What life is there?
- ❖ How is the river used by the plants and the animals?
- ❖ What are the rules for humans using the river?
- ❖ Open eyes and ask children to share their visualisations with a partner.

### **Friendship**

Imagine that you are a dolphin in the bright blue sea, swimming up and down. You're looking at all the fishes, crabs, starfishes, dolphins and octopuses. They are all of different sizes, shapes and colours. All the fishes are playing together and all the other living creatures in the sea. You go with the dolphins. The sun is shining on you. You make friends with them and start playing. Then you see another dolphin that is alone. You remember how you felt when you were alone and somebody let you come with them. So you tell your friends to go on and you go to that dolphin and say come and play with my friends and me. He becomes so happy and starts playing with you and your friends. Friends are for playing with, when you or they are alone, for helping you when you get hurt and a lot more things. In your own time come back to the classroom, slowly open your eyes and shake hands with someone you don't normally play with.

**(Omar, Year 4, Welldon Park Middle School June 2002)**

## **Love and Peace**

As you listen to the music imagine you are strolling on the seashore. It is very beautiful and you feel happy and contented. Look at the waves as they gently lap against the beach. Everything around you is beautiful. Look at yourself – inside, you are beautiful too. You are lovable and beautiful and so are the others around you. Seeing this you feel happy and you send out silent messages of love and peace...out across the sea...out across the world...to everything...to everyone. (Sathya Sai Education in Human Values: An Introduction and Lesson Plans: SSEHV Trust, UK, 1995, p.103)

Breathe out any unpleasant and uncomfortable things that upset you...Know that you have the courage inside you to do what is right...People around you are not your enemies...The uncomfortable things that you breathe out are your real enemies...See the feelings that upset you drift away...As they go you feel peaceful and loving to everyone and everything. (Sathya Sai Education in Human Values: An Introduction and Lesson Plans: SSEHV Trust, UK, 1995, p.169)

## **Visualisation for the start of a lesson**

Close your eyes and imagine that there is a candle burning inside your head. Let the light get brighter and brighter until it fills your whole head. Let it light up your brain so that you will be able to think clearly and well. Imagine that the same light is going from you to everyone in your class, so they will be able to think clearly too.

After this visualization the following points can be discussed with pupils:

- You have the knowledge and ability inside your head already.
- Regular use of this kind of visualization will help to improve your concentration.
- Wishing for classmates what you wish for yourself (i.e. to do well) is more healthy than feeling envy or jealousy.

## **Visualisations for problem solving**

### **Visualisation 1**

First read the problem. Then put it aside. Close your eyes and just listen to the inner silence of your mind for a few moments. Focus your concentration on the back of your closed eyelids at the point where your eyebrows meet. Don't try to think about anything – just allow your mind to be still and empty, and concentrate on the blankness behind your eyes. When you feel that your mind is completely still, think for a moment about the problem you need to solve. You can either repeat the whole question in your mind, or you can simply say, "I need to find the solution to the problem I am about to tackle." Once you have asked this question, return your attention to focusing on the silent, blank emptiness of your mind behind your closed eyelids for a few more minutes. Then visualise your subconscious mind working like a computer. First it sorts the knowledge you already have to solve the problem. Then it sorts out what else you need to know. Next it puts this knowledge together in a logical way.

Finally it sends the output into your conscious mind so it can work on the problem. Take 3 slow, deep breaths, then open your eyes and start to work on the problem.

## **Visualisation 2**

Take 3 deep, slow breaths. Each time you breathe out, let go of any frustration or anxiety. Each time you breathe in, breathe in inspiration. You can decide what this might look like – might be a light that lights up your mind like a bulb, might be a colour, or might be a shape. Just keep drawing it in each time you breathe. Now imagine that your mind has gone completely blank – as if there has been a power cut and it has been plunged into darkness. Sit there for a few moments in the total blackness. If any thoughts or images come into your head, just let them go and return to thinking about the darkness.

Now imagine that you are going down a long, dark tunnel, right into the deepest part of your mind. This tunnel leads you to your inner mathematician, deep inside your brain. This is the place where you have all the answers and all the techniques you need to solve the problem. All you need to do is unlock the door behind which the inner mathematician is thinking. The door is golden, and in the lock is a big golden key. Slowly turn the key, open the door, and all the knowledge you need can be seen right there. As you return along the tunnel, imagine that you are dragging the knowledge along behind you, bringing it closer and closer to the front of your conscious mind, where you can put it to good use. Now open your eyes – don't worry if the inspiration isn't there immediately, as it will come.

## **Opening yourself to find your goals in life**

Allow yourself to become relaxed and comfortable. Take a few minutes to concentrate all of your attention on your breathing. Consciously allow it to slow down to a steady, even flow. As you breathe in, feel your entire body and mind filling with clean fresh air that will help to give clarity to your thinking. As you breathe out, expel any stale air or negative thoughts that might interfere with your thinking.

Place your hands on your heart area and feel the warmth that they create around your heart. Then place your hands on your forehead and allow their warmth to fill your head. Next place them on your solar plexus and let the warmth flow into that area. When you are filled with warmth it will be easy for you to incubate your thoughts and ideas.

Imagine that you are inside your own mind and that it is like an archive filled with rows and rows of shelves. Stored on these shelves is all the knowledge and wisdom that your higher intelligence has accumulated and stored for many years – knowledge of which your conscious mind has retained only the smallest fraction. Deeply stacked away on one of the shelves is the information you are seeking, about your mission in life and the immediate goals which can help you towards fulfilling this mission. Ask the keeper of the archives to help you to find what you are looking for. Feel yourself being guided to the appropriate shelf and finding the book or container where the information is stored. As you open the receptacle, ask yourself the question, “What are the goals I am looking for to make my life complete and meaningful?” Open the book or container and look inside. There you will find something which will give you what you are seeking. It might be an object, or a word, or a thought. If you cannot see this clearly, do not be concerned. As long as you keep your mind open, the message will become clear to you – perhaps not straight away – perhaps tomorrow, or next week. It might be revealed through a thought that you have, through a dream, through somebody you meet, or something you read about. You can be confident that when the time

is right for you, the message will be delivered loudly and clearly.

When you are ready, return the container to its place on the shelf and thank the keeper of the archive for helping you. Slowly leave the place and return your awareness to the room where you are thinking. Move your fingers and toes slightly, then stretch your arms and legs to make certain that your awareness is fully back in the room. Please remember – do not be disappointed if the answers to your question do not appear immediately. Remain patient and open-minded, and you will be amazed at the way in which they are revealed to you.

### **A visualisation for teachers:**

It can be helpful if you can get into the habit of doing this visualization every morning before school, and at least once during the day to retain the momentum that it generates. It only needs to take a few minutes.

Close your eyes, and take 3 slow, deep breaths. On each outward breath feel yourself relaxing more and more. Take your attention to the classroom/s you will be working in today. If there is more than one, mentally go to each in turn. Imagine that you are painting the whole classroom with something that symbolizes peace. It might be a peaceful scene from nature, or it might simply be a peaceful colour such as pink. Quickly but thoroughly mentally paint each room in the way that you think is best.

Next, take your attention to the pupils. Imagine your pupils thinking in the classroom/s. focus your attention for a moment on their faces – in a split second, allow yourself to see each one as a separate and beautiful individual. Now take your attention to focus on the feeling of pure unconditional love – that is the feeling of giving without expectation to receive. You might symbolize this by a colour, by a flower, or simply by allowing yourself to feel the sensation. Or you might have another method of your own. Allow this symbol to build up, stronger and stronger, then allow it to burst so that it showers the whole room and every individual in it. See everyone surrounded by this sense of unconditional well-being, and see yourself as being the source of it throughout the whole day.

When you are ready, bring your awareness back to where you are now, open your eyes and go on in confidence that you have created the right energy patterns for a successful day for yourself and all your pupils.

### **Visualisation to improve relaxation/ coping with stress**

One of the best ways of improving our state of relaxation is by focusing on our breath. Our breath is the source of our life and our energy and if it doesn't flow freely through our bodies then toxins can build up and these chemicals can prevent us from relaxing. Also, if we focus on our breath it helps our mind to settle and to release all the thoughts that buzz around and keep us awake.

You can do a simple exercise to focus on your breathing. First make sure that you are thinking or lying in a comfortable position and that your breathing is not restricted by any tight clothing. Start by listening to the sounds that you can hear in the room around you, and then take your attention to the sounds outside. Try to hear sounds as far away as you can.

Now bring your attention to your breathing. Don't try to change it - just take notice of every time you breathe in and every time you breathe out.

Try to slow down your breathing so that you are only breathing once for every two times that you were before.

As you breathe out, imagine that you are sending the breath right down to your toes. As the toes receive the breath, they feel heavy and relaxed.

Now send your breath into your legs, so that they become filled up with air, starting at your feet and working up to the top. As each section of your legs fills up with air you can feel it becoming warm and heavy.

Continue to take in slow deep breaths of air and, as you breathe out, fill up your whole body - your torso - your arms, starting from the finger tips and working up to your shoulders - your neck - your head. As the breath fills each part of your body, feel it becoming warm and heavy.

Now just sit or lie for a few minutes and enjoy the sensation of the warmth of the breath that has filled your whole body.

When you are ready, slowly start to move your fingers, your toes, your limbs and your head. Stretch your arms high above your head and point your toes. Take in one more deep breath, let it out with a big sigh, and when you are ready you can slowly get up.

If you repeat this 2 or 3 times every day, you will notice that you begin to feel more relaxed, even when you are under stress or pressure.

### **Visualisation before taking an exam**

You can do this visualisation the day before and again on the morning of your exam, but it can also be a good idea to take 2-3 minutes when you are actually thinking in the examination room, after you have looked at the questions on the paper but before you start to write. This will help you to clear your mind enough to be able to access the information that you have stored in your memory.

First, take three long, slow, deep breaths. This will help you to relax and will settle any feelings of nervousness that you might have, which can block your thinking. Next, just close your eyes and concentrate on looking at the blackness behind your eyelids. Sometimes you might see imprinted colors or images - if you do, just observe them and let them fade away. Imagine that you are a very tiny person and that you are walking inside your own brain. Picture yourself going to the section where the knowledge that you need for your exam is stored. Imagine that this is stored in cupboards and that you are unlocking the doors and opening them so the knowledge can be released. The knowledge you need is neatly arranged in a row, in the correct order that you will need it. Any superfluous knowledge that is not relevant is stacked to the side on the shelves. You are the one in control. When you give the signal, the knowledge will jump down from the shelf and move out, ready for you to use it. Repeat to yourself, 'I have the wisdom and the common sense to use this knowledge in the most appropriate way to answer the questions'. Take three more deep breaths, and begin writing.

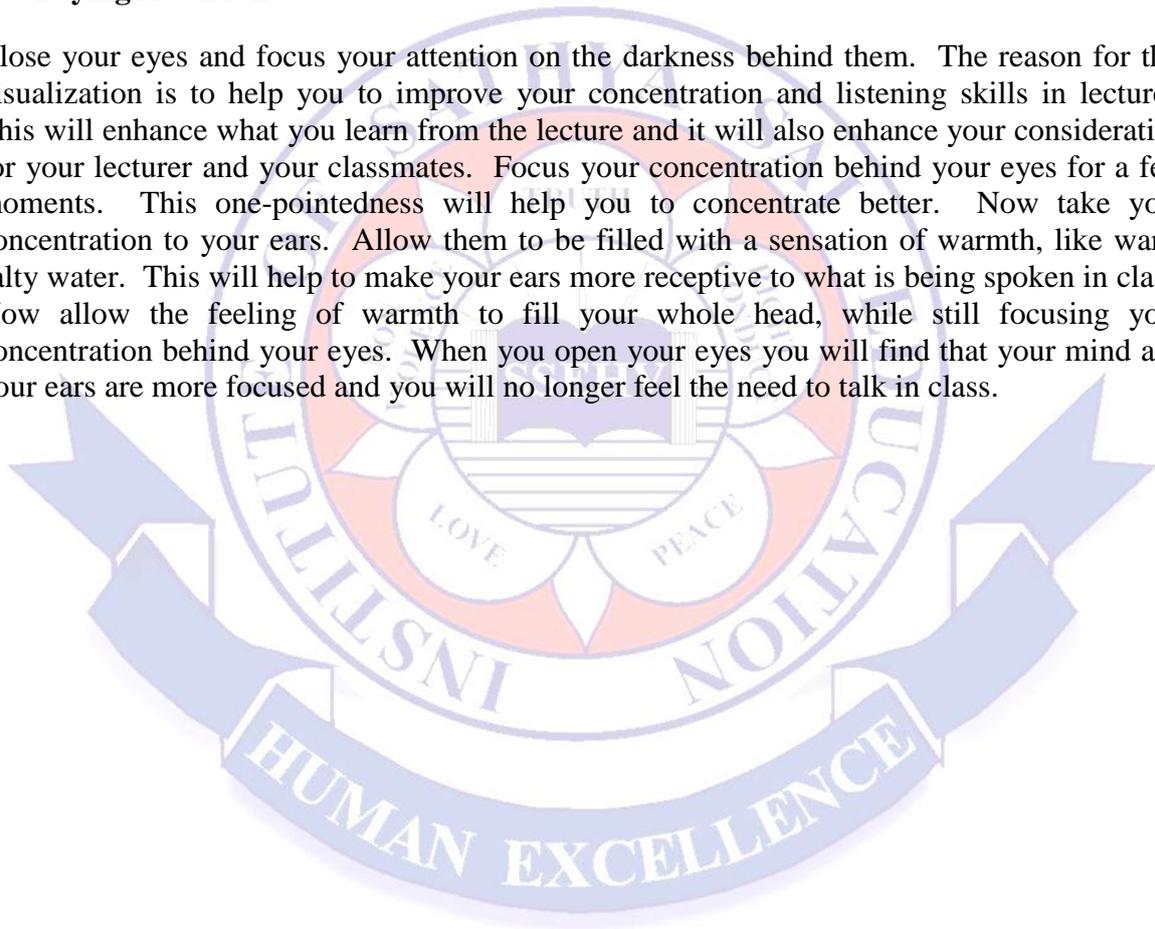
### **Visualisation to do at the beginning of a mathematics lesson**

Close your eyes and take some slow, steady breaths. Think very hard about the part of your brain where your mathematics skills are kept. Think of that place in your brain as being like a flower. As you breathe in, imagine that the breath is caressing the flower like a soft gentle breeze. As it touches, the flower starts to open slowly, petal by petal, until it is fully open. This flower is your potential to understand mathematics and to do the problems. Now that the flower is open you will find that the mathematical thinking will come to you quickly and easily. Open your eyes now and you can begin your work.

### **Visualisation to correct a specific behaviour problem**

#### **Not Paying Attention**

Close your eyes and focus your attention on the darkness behind them. The reason for this visualization is to help you to improve your concentration and listening skills in lectures. This will enhance what you learn from the lecture and it will also enhance your consideration for your lecturer and your classmates. Focus your concentration behind your eyes for a few moments. This one-pointedness will help you to concentrate better. Now take your concentration to your ears. Allow them to be filled with a sensation of warmth, like warm salty water. This will help to make your ears more receptive to what is being spoken in class. Now allow the feeling of warmth to fill your whole head, while still focusing your concentration behind your eyes. When you open your eyes you will find that your mind and your ears are more focused and you will no longer feel the need to talk in class.



### **\*The Light Visualisation\***

In SSEHV a particularly powerful and beneficial form of silent thinking is used at least once a day or more with children of all ages as well as adults. The Light Visualisation is in fact fundamental to the SSEHV Programme. It allows the child to progress safely through the three stages described by Sathya Sai Baba as necessary for contacting the superconscious mind: concentration, contemplation and meditation (where meditation simply means the state of being in touch with one's own superconscious mind). The following extract appears in many SSEHV materials but, in this instance, has been taken directly from *The Five Human Values and Human Excellence* by Art-ong Jumsai Na Ayudhya (Bangkok: International Institute of Sathya Sai Education), pp. 83-88.

This is a valuable exercise to do with children on a regular, preferably, daily basis. The light is very important because it is associated with knowledge, wisdom, power and warmth - it literally dispels darkness.

Imagine that there is a light in front of us. If this is difficult to imagine we may light a lamp or a candle and place it in front of us then open our eyes and look at the flame for a short while. Then we should close our eyes and try to visualise this light. Now using our imagination, bring this light to the forehead and into the head. Let the head be filled with light. Then think, "Whenever there is light, darkness cannot be present. I will think only good thoughts". Now bring the light to the area near the heart and imagine that there is a flowerbud there. When the light reaches the bud imagine that it blossoms into a beautiful flower, fresh and pure: "My heart is also pure and full of love". Now let the light travel down the two arms to the hands. Let these hands be filled with light: "Let me do only good things and serve all". Now the light is moved through the body and down the legs to the feet: "Let me walk straight to my destination, let me walk only to good places and to meet with good people". Now bring the light up to the head once again and leave it there for a little while. Now continue to move the light to the eyes and let our two eyes be filled with light. Again concentrating on the light, think "Let me see the good in all things". Slowly move the light to the ears. Let the ears be filled with light and think, "Let me only hear good things". From the ears we move the light to the mouth and tongue. "Let me speak only the Truth, and only what is useful and necessary". Now imagine that the light is radiating from your being to surround your mother and father. They are now full of light. "May my mother and father be filled with peace." Now radiate the light to your teachers and send it out to your relatives and friends and especially to any people who you think are being unkind to you. Let it expand out into the whole world to all beings, animals and plants everywhere. "Let the world be filled with light; let the world be filled with love; let the world be filled with peace". Remain immersed in this light and send it out to every corner of the universe and think to yourself, "I am in the light...the light is in me...I AM THE LIGHT"..... Then take the light back to your heart and let it remain there for the rest of the day.

## Using Silent Thinking to Improve Particular Skills

The technique of silent thinking can be used with individuals, groups or a whole class to help them to improve skills or attitudes. In the following example, a teacher developed a one-week programme to help students to enhance their listening skills.

### Silent Thinking to Improve Listening Skills

#### Monday

Close your eyes and take three slow, deep breaths to make yourself feel calm. Then imagine that you are a tree with roots that go deep into the ground. You can feel your toes digging into the warm soft earth and you can feel your arms reaching high up to the sky. It is wonderful to be a tree because you can enjoy the sun and the breeze and the rain and you can give people shelter and all sorts of help, and you don't have to worry about anything at all. One of the greatest strengths of being a tree is that you can watch and listen to everything that goes on around you, so your ears are very sharp. Imagine for a minute that you are listening to the sound of the breeze whispering in your branches. Now listen very carefully for the chirping of a baby bird in a nest high up in one of your branches. If you listen very carefully you can hear the sounds of the children playing in the schoolground – you can hear them laughing because they are having a lot of fun. In the distance you can hear cars going along the road and far above your head you can hear an aeroplane flying [note to reader – pause after naming each of these to give the children a chance to focus on each thing]. Now just listen very carefully and try to find other sounds that you can hear. When you are ready you can open your eyes and come back to being a person again – but remember to keep your ears open and sharp for the rest of the day.

#### Tuesday

Close your eyes. Have you ever really listened to silence before? For 30 seconds I am going to say nothing at all and I want you to just listen to the silence that you can hear in your head. Even if you can hear other sounds in the classroom or outside, forget about them and only think about the silence inside your head. Concentrate with all of your energy on just listening to your own silence. [Pause]. Next I want you to notice a sound in the classroom. For the next 30 seconds, I would like you to concentrate as hard as you can, with all your effort, to listen just to that sound and try to close out any other sounds around you. [Pause]. Now for the next 30 seconds try to find a sound outside the classroom somewhere and use all of your energy to concentrate on listening just to that sound and to nothing else. [Pause]. Last of all, come back again to the silence inside your own head, and listen to that for a moment longer....then when you are ready, you can open your eyes.

#### Wednesday

Today we are going to use the light of the sun to help us to improve our listening. Imagine that you are thinking in a special, peaceful place and the sun is shining down on you. You are wearing a hat so you are protected from being sunburnt, but the good effects of the sunrays are coming through your hat and into your head. Just enjoy thinking there with the warmth and the sunlight filling your head, until your head is also a ball of light just like the sun. [Pause for a moment to let them reflect on this]. Now imagine that the sunlight is running along the passages that connect your brain and your ears. You can feel the warmth

and see the brightness lighting up all of these passages so the connection between your brain and your ears is clear and working well. Maybe there are some places where the passage is blocked. If there are, you need to get rid of them because these can stop you from listening as well. So let the sun melt any blockages, and then the passage is completely clear. [Pause for a few seconds]. Now imagine that somebody is talking to you. It might be your teacher, or your parent, or one of your friends. Imagine that you can see their words as they come into your ear and then travel along the sunlit passage that you have just cleared and into your brain, where the message is received and you can hear exactly what the person said to you. After you open your eyes and we start our work, keep remembering that you have these two sunlit passages and that whatever the person who is speaking says will now go straight into your brain.

### **Thursday**

Today I am going to play some quiet music for you to listen to for two minutes. Try very hard to close out all of the other sounds around you and only listen to the music, even if there are other noises in the background. While you listen to the music you can imagine whatever you like – whatever the music makes you think about.

### **Friday**

When we are listening to somebody who is speaking to us we cannot close our eyes – so today we are going to do silent thinking with our eyes open so we can see how it can help us to listen better to somebody if we also look at them. As I am speaking I would like you to look at me with all of your concentration. Imagine that there is a thread going from your eyes to my eyes. You can make the thread any colour that you like and as thick as you like, but just be careful to make it connect from your eyes to mine for the whole time I am talking and don't let it break. This is very important – whatever you do, don't let that thread break. Now I would like you to send some feelings along the line from you to me. First please send me the feeling of respect, because it is very important for us to respect the person we are listening to if we are going to be good listeners. [Pause]. Next, please send good thoughts along the line from your eyes to my eyes because this will help me to be able to say good and useful things. [Pause]. Next, imagine that you are sending a smile along the line – let the smile start in your mouth but then send it up through your eyes and along the line to my eyes so I can see it. [Pause]. Last of all, please send me some support – imagine that the support you are sending me along the line is making me stronger and stronger so I can be a better and better speaker for you. Today when we are thinking on the mat, I would like you to try to remember about the thread from your eyes to mine and to try as hard as you can not to break it. And when other people in the class are speaking, you can try to do the same thing with them.

### **A Diary That Can be Used for Research with Students or Parents**

In our research we have often made use of the following diary templates to enable students and/or their parents to monitor their use of silent thinking and the benefits they experience from it.

## Diary for Parent

Do silent thinking daily at home with your children for about 5 minutes at least once every day for the next 2 weeks. (Once is enough although the results will be better if you do it twice a day.)

Please fill in the diary every day. Most questions can be answered simply (eg yes/no) but sometimes it would be a good idea to write a few words to remind you of what happened. Please note that this diary is only for your benefit. You do not have to hand it in and be “marked” on it.

<b>Day / Date</b>	<b>How many times did you do silent thinking today?</b>	<b>How did you feel during and just after the silent thinking?</b>	<b>Did silent thinking have any lasting effects on you during the day? If “yes” please write a few words to describe the change.)</b>	<b>Has there been any unexpected change in your child’s behaviour or another family member’s behaviour? If “yes” please write a few words to describe the change.)</b>

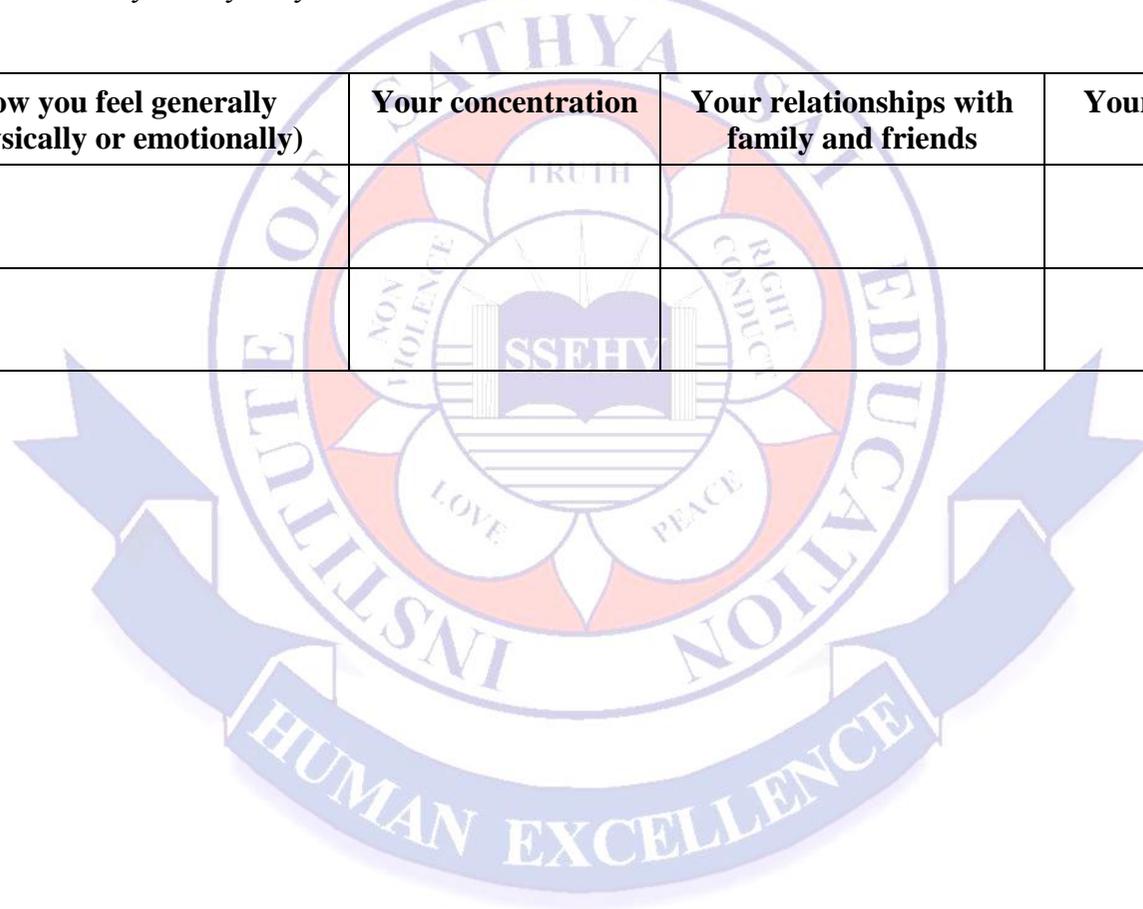
Day / Date	How many times did you do silent thinking today?	How did you feel during and just after the silent thinking?	Did silent thinking have any lasting effects on you during the day? If “yes” please write a few words to describe the change.)	Has there been any unexpected change in your child’s behaviour or another family member’s behaviour? If “yes” please write a few words to describe the change.)

After one week and again after two weeks, ask your children what they think about it and whether they feel any benefits. Fill in the diary together.

## Diary for Children

Since you have been doing silent thinking, have you noticed any changes in any of the following? If you have, please write a few words to describe. Please note that this diary is only for your benefit. You do not have to hand it in and be “marked” on it.

	How you feel generally (physically or emotionally)	Your concentration	Your relationships with family and friends	Your understanding of topics taught at school
After week 1				
After week 2				



## How to set up silent thinking action research in your class

There are many different ways in which silent thinking can be utilized with students. The following model is one that we have used effectively.

- Introduce silent thinking in a minimum of three lessons for the same class per week, over a period of at least three months.
- Spend 3-5 minutes of the lesson in silent thinking. It may be at the beginning of the lesson (ie to settle the class down or as an introduction to set the scene of the lesson), in the middle (eg to help children to prepare themselves to solve a problem) or at the end (to settle down after the class or to reflect on what has been learned)
- From time to time talk to the class about why you are doing silent thinking, and explain to them that it is to help them to get in touch with the higher levels of their minds which enable them to solve problems and get in touch with their own wisdom.
- Select 6 students of different abilities. Once a month ask them to share with you their experiences of silent thinking, including their perception of its effects on their concentration, behaviour, study habits and general well-being.
- Make a note of any changes you notice in the concentration, behaviour and academic performance of the class.
- Monitor the students' scores on academic tests to see if there are any changes when they have used silent thinking.