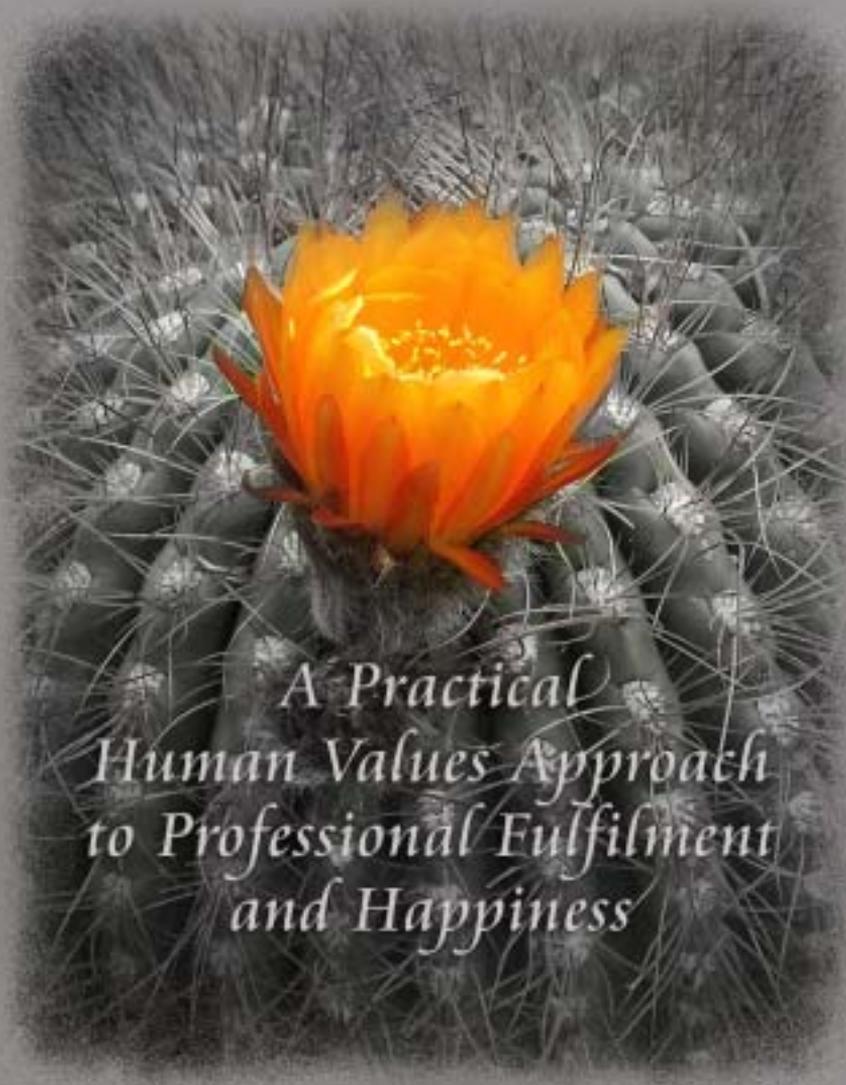


Teacher Survival



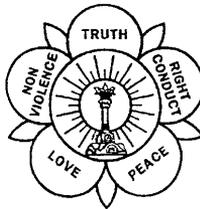
*A Practical
Human Values Approach
to Professional Fulfilment
and Happiness*

Dr. Margaret Taplin

Teacher Survival

*A Practical
Human Values Approach
to Professional Fulfilment
and Happiness*

Dr. Margaret Taplin



Sathya Sai Education in Human Values

Published in 2007 by:
Institute of Sathya Sai Education Limited,
Suites 1517 – 1522,
Two Pacific Place,
88 Queensway,
Hong Kong

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Printed by:

Cover Design by: Vics Magsaysay

Book Design by: Babita Mahtani

ISBN 962-8430-08-4

Published in 2008

F O R E W O R D

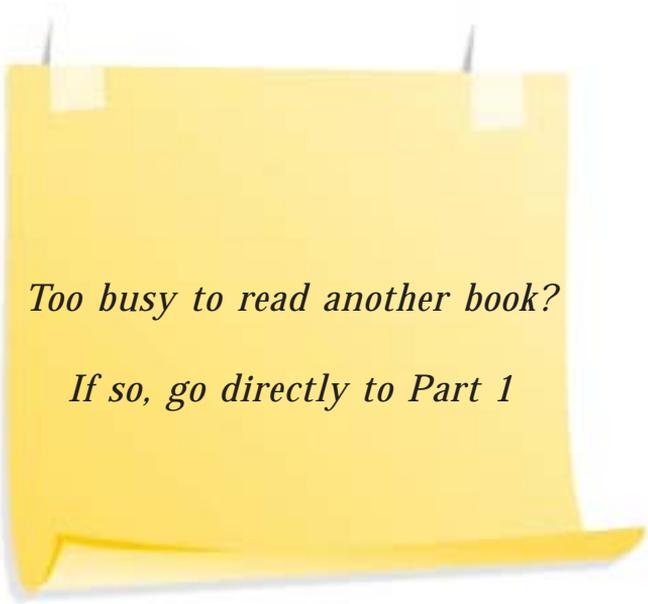
“The place where true teachers and students are gathered should be filled with serene peace and orderliness. On the contrary, we find today that where students gather, fear and insecurity prevail. Peace and order are not to be seen. Students whose hearts should be soft and compassionate have become hard-hearted and violent. Humility, reverence, compassion, forbearance, sacrifice, and sense control are the qualities which reveal the outcome of true education.”

“Teachers are reservoirs from which, through the process of education, students draw the water of life. Only if there is water in the tank can you get water in the tap. If the tank is dry, how can you draw water from the tap?”

“You have it in your power to make your days on Earth a path of flowers, instead of a path of thorns.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

These quotations from Sathya Sai Baba, the founder of the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Programme, describe the cover of this book and the book’s purpose. Teaching has the capacity to be a joyful, fulfilling profession, but unfortunately these days too many teachers are finding it to be a path of thorns because of the many pressures they face. A teacher who is exhausted and suffering from stress cannot be happy or fulfilled, and has little to give to students, colleagues or anyone else. The purpose of this book is to give teachers hope by sharing some strategies that have worked, to help them to get out of the thorns and back onto the path of flowers.



Too busy to read another book?

If so, go directly to Part 1

*“You must take personal responsibility.
You cannot change the circumstances,
the seasons, or the wind,
but you can change yourself.
That is something you have charge of.”*

– Jim Rohn

CONTENTS

Introduction / vii
Stress And Teaching / 1

Part 1 Some Common Teacher Stressors And How Teachers Have Survived Them

Bullying/violence / 6
Coping with special needs pupils / 10
Exhaustion / 13
Extra-curricula activities / 16
Feeling angry / 18
Feeling burnt out/lacking a sense of mission as a teacher / 21
Guilt / 23
Having to pretend/act/give 100% even when you don't feel like it / 24
Lack of support by senior colleagues / 26
Low achievement / 30
Parents / 32
Problems with colleagues / 34
Pupils who won't participate / 37
Rebellious, disrespectful students / 39
Repercussions of stress on family / 45
Students coming late / 46
Theft / 47
Time (never enough!)/excessive workload / 49
Uncontrollable class / 51
Unlikeable children / 54

Part 2
Theory Explaining
Why The Teachers' Strategies Worked

Chapter 1

Reflecting On Your Own Values / 56

Chapter 2

Controlling How We See, Hear and Speak To Students / 58

Chapter 3

Peace / 62

Chapter 4

Silent Sitting and Creative Visualisation / 73

Chapter 5

Loving Students Even In Their Unlikeable Moments / 83

Chapter 6

Raising Students' Self-Esteem / 103

Chapter 7

Diamond Of The Week / 116

Chapter 8

**Combatting Bullying Through Strategies of
Truth, Right Action, Peace, Love and Non-Violence / 132**

Chapter 9

3HV: The Harmony of Head, Heart and Hands / 141

Chapter 10

**Raising Teachers' Self-Esteem:
An Educare Approach To Caring For Teachers / 148**

Chapter 11

Forgiving and Letting Go / 158

INTRODUCTION

I have more power to turn the situation around than I thought.

Some of these practices had almost become habits even before I attended the workshop. However, the workshop helped to reinforce them and now they appear to be more powerful. I find them very useful in leading me through a life that sometimes appears to be rather chaotic. Every day I am so pre-occupied with work and there is hardly any space for reflection. With such practice I know what are the most important things in life and living, and there is always a temple for retreat inside me.

Comments from teachers who attended one of our workshops on "The Educare Approach to Nurturing Yourself as a Teacher"

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

Teachers need to be nurtured. We ask a lot of teachers these days – they need to be subject experts, nurturers, record-keepers, administrators, social workers and role models. Many need to cope with students who are disrespectful, and refuse to do any work in class, much less their homework, and who face pressures that make them feel that they are struggling to keep up all the time. Recently I was observing a very good, committed teacher who had a wonderful rapport with her class. I was very impressed by her smiling face, her calm, unruffled manner, and the way she projected patience and peace to her class. I commented to her about how impressed I was but she replied, "I have to be like this because if I am not the pupils will complain to their parents and then the parents will also complain." When I probed further she admitted that there is often a mismatch between the calmness she is expected to show on the outside and the stress and pressure she is feeling on the inside. This is not a recipe for continued good health for her!

On one hand, most teachers want to make a difference to the lives of their pupils – on the other hand the stresses of teaching today can often lead to burnout, and it is very difficult for a burnt-out teacher to be able to fulfil any of the above roles well and consistently. Even the ones who consider teaching as a vocation or a mission need support. The purpose

of this book, therefore, is to explore some ways in which teachers can unlock their own inner strengths and values in such a way that will make it easier for them to interact with their pupils and colleagues, and hence make it easier for them to become role models to help their pupils and colleagues to do the same. It is to be hoped that, in doing so, teachers will become happier and more fulfilled in their jobs and in their lives in general.

EDUCARE

The philosophy underpinning this book is Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV). Its goals are:

1. to bring out human excellence at all levels: character, academic, and “being”;
2. the all-round development of the individual (the heart as well as the head and the hands);
3. to help individuals to know who they are;
4. to help people to realise their full potential; and
5. to develop attitudes of selfless service.

The main focus is on children, but the same philosophies are appropriate for adults.

SSEHV promotes five universal, secular human values: Truth, Right Conduct, Peace, Love and Non-violence (see below), with the ultimate goal of developing the ‘whole’ student, not only the cognitive and physical aspects.

Five universal values and sub-values

TRUTH	accuracy, curiosity, discrimination, honesty, human understanding, intergrity, self-reflection, sincerity
RIGHT ACTION	courage, dependability, determination, efficiency, endurance, healthy living, independence, initiative, perseverance
PEACE	calmness, concentration, contentment, equanimity, optimism, self-acceptance, self-discipline, self-esteem
LOVE	compassion, consideration, forgiveness, humaneness, interdependence, selflessness, tolerance
NON-VIOLENCE	benevolence, co-operation, concern for ecological balance, respect for diversity, respect for life, respect for property

The first value is *Truth*, which encompasses values such as accuracy, curiosity, discrimination, honesty, human understanding, integrity, self-reflection, and sincerity. The second is *Right action*, which refers to values such as courage, dependability, determination, efficiency, endurance, healthy living, independence, initiative, and perseverance. The third is *Peace*, which includes calmness, concentration, contentment, equanimity, optimism, self-acceptance, self-discipline, self-esteem, and balance of nature and technology. The fourth value is *Love*, which incorporates compassion, consideration, forgiveness, humaneness, interdependence, selflessness, and tolerance. The fifth value is *Non-violence*. This is the ultimate aim and refers to values such as benevolence, co-operation, concern for ecological balance, respect for diversity, respect for life, respect for property, and unity.

These values are all inter-related and inter-dependent. Love is in fact considered to be the *basis of character* and encompasses all of the other values: *love in thought is truth, love in feeling is peace, love in understanding is non-violence, and love in action is right action* (Jumsai, 1997, p.103).

The term Educare is used to capture the essence of SSEHV. This is concerned with reaching deeply into the higher levels of consciousness and bringing out the values and divinity that are inherent there.

The following statement outlines the essence of Educare:

“Educare is not the learning from books by rote, to be vomited in the examination halls. But it is the learning from life, which is absorbed into living and transforming. This gives a new meaning to dull mathematics and geography, a new vitality to language, cosmic understanding to science and an enhanced beauty to music and art. It is not to be stuffed from without into the ears of innocent children. Rather it comes from within. It is the release of the inherent intuition and divinity, which is within every individual. ... Educare is also the art of ensuring a perfect constant balance of the five elements within, by managing the mind and the inputs from the five senses, so that the surge of the Divine energy from within flows uninterrupted. In other words, a harmony between thought, word and deed has to be achieved in such a manner that the physical world is perceived as an extension of the spiritual world.... Educare is when we have sensitized ourselves, when we sensitize our children to begin to respond and become caring people.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

Educare encourages the:

- √ appreciation of the five basic human values of Truth, Right Action, Peace, Love and Non-violence as essential to the development of character,
- √ understanding of the cultures, customs and religions of other people along with their own, in order to appreciate the brotherhood of man,
- √ decision-making skills which help to facilitate development of moral learning,
- √ development of a sense of responsibility for the consequences of our actions and to act with regard for the rights, life and dignity of all persons,
- √ development of self-discipline and self-confidence necessary to promote the fulfilment of potential – by enhancing moral, physical, social and academic achievements,
- √ development of value skills needed for personal, family, community, national and world harmony,
- √ development of a caring attitude towards all forms of life and a valuing of the need for preservation, conservation and general care of the environment.

“Does Educare entail a new curriculum or a new course content? Once again the answer is ‘No’. The answer lies in our implementing this technology in our lives. Am I able to control my desires? Am I conscious of the inputs of the five senses in my mind? Am I able to turn my mind inside? Am I able to experience the power of love within? These are the questions that all of us have to ask, because we are not communicating knowledge, we are not communicating words, what we are really communicating is experience.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

Educare teaches two important ingredients for life. One is that whatever thoughts come into our heads we should think about and examine in our hearts before we act. This is referred to as 3HV, the harmony of head, heart and hands. The other is concentration and inner stillness. The main ingredient, though, is love, and through love individuals are helped to become self-reliant, self-confident, self-sacrificing and eventually self-realised.

MY STORY

When I was a young teacher, I had an appointment to a ‘good’ school, where the pupils were eager to work hard and the parents and colleagues were supportive. I was successful in this environment. My ideas were innovative and I was even asked to share some of these in professional development seminars with teachers from other schools. After a few years, I took a break from teaching to travel overseas. When I returned, I was posted to a housing estate school where the pupils refused to do any work in class and never any homework, were often fighting and arguing with each other, and were bigger than me, so that I was often scared for my own physical safety. To make it worse, my principal, who had once been my teacher, still thought of me as a little girl and, while I wanted to prove to her that I was grown up and a professional, was not prepared to listen to any of my ideas, which further undermined my self-esteem.

As I tried to cope with the situation, I became more and more stressed. I started to eat too much junk food to console myself, and still kept on trying to pretend to myself that I was able to cope. Unfortunately, however, my inability to do so led to disease, and within two years I developed a life-threatening disease that required months of very unpleasant medical treatment. Now, more than ten years later, when I look back at that time, I often ask myself if there is anything I could have done differently that would have protected my own health. Maybe if I had not been struggling so much with myself, with the pupils, and with the situation, I would have been able to do more for the children as well.

TEACHERS’ STORIES IN THIS BOOK

The teachers’ stories in this book have been drawn from the research that we have done with teachers around the world who have participated in professional development in SSEHV. Our observations of these teachers suggested that there was something very unique and special about the ideals that they were projecting to their pupils, and the relationships of mutual love and respect that grew from this. One of the reasons why they were effective teachers was because they were contented teachers who loved their work and respected their profession. The challenge is to explore how other teachers, in the mainstream, can be helped to rediscover these high ideals in order to project them more effectively to their pupils.

I can’t promise that this book will solve all of your problems with teaching-related stress, but I hope it will help you to find your own solutions and

Introduction

suggest some strategies that can help you to deal with work-related stress. It can be used by individuals or as a basis for a series of group workshops. In some parts questions have been included for reflection and discussion - it is recommended that you take time to reflect on these, as they have been designed to help you to identify what is really important for you.

Teacher Survival



STRESS AND TEACHING



REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Why is teaching so difficult?

Think about what causes stress in your teaching situation. Make your own, individual list of as many causes as you can identify, and discuss your list with your colleagues. After your discussion, read on to see what research has to say about the causes of teacher stress.

Causes of Teacher Stress: Some research findings

Many studies have identified some common causes of teacher stress that, if left unattended, can lead to burnout (Borg, 1990, Stern and Cox, 1993, Chaplain, 1995, Byrne, 1998). These include (not in any order of priority):

- disruptive or unco-operative pupils,
- lack of communication and consultation at school organisation level,
- ill-designed or noisy working environment,
- lack of support and care from parents and outside agencies,
- changing social values and excessive demands made by society,
- excessive workload,
- personality conflicts,
- lack of support or disregard from superordinates,
- self-doubt and questioning of professional competence.



REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

What is my stress doing to me?

Make a list of the effects that your stress is having on your physical, mental and emotional health. After you have made your own list, you may wish to compare your symptoms to those listed below.

What is my stress doing to me?

Clearly there are direct consequences of teacher stress that can affect teachers' quality of life as well as the quality of their teaching (Kosa, 1990). These can include fatigue, waking up each morning dreading the day ahead (Stern and Cox, 1993), emotional and physical exhaustion, anxiety and lowered self-esteem (Friedman, 1995).

Newman (1992) includes the following as symptoms of stress. The experts on stress say that if we have even a few of these symptoms we need to do something about it – in my bad year I think I experienced them all!

- tense, tight muscles, especially neck, shoulders or jaw,
- headaches,
- back pain,
- elevated blood pressure,
- allergies, frequent colds,
- chronic fatigue, exhaustion, low energy,
- weakened immune system,
- trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep,
- depression, not enjoying teaching, no enthusiasm, disillusioned,
- feeling personally devalued, broken spirited,
- excessive frustration with self or others,
- impatience, being overly demanding,
- feeling hopeless, helpless, unable to see a positive solution,
- feeling panicky,
- difficulty getting out of bed in morning,
- becoming cynical, pessimistic, negative, sarcastic,
- feeling driven by “musts”, “shoulds”, “gottas”,
- feeling out of control,
- trying to be “superhuman” – scrambling like crazy to have it all, do it all, be it all.

What is my stress doing to my STUDENTS?

Even more alarming is the fact that if the teacher is suffering from stress there can be dire consequences for the pupils. As Borg (1990) reported, “general irritability and bad temper” has been one of the main consequences reported in several studies of teacher stress. Others have been withdrawal from and cynicism towards pupils (Friedman, 1995), and lack of enthusiasm for teaching with the result that students are not encouraged and challenged to learn (Stern and Cox, 1993). Pahnos (1990) has reported other studies that found significant correlations between teacher stress and low pupil/teacher rapport, pupil anxiety, and lack of teacher warmth, as well as negative effects on achievement.

“A school with aggressive children leads to depressed teachers. This in turn leads to the children becoming more aggressive and the teachers becoming more depressed.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

What can you do to solve the problem?

Borg (1990) reported that many teachers try to forget about their stresses by distracting their minds with other activities, alcohol, etc. But he described these as palliative measures, which are not really solving the problem.

It is not always possible to take away the causes of the stress, but it is possible to change the way teachers react to them. For example, some of the coping strategies that have been used successfully by teachers include:

- √ putting things in perspective,
- √ participation in stress and depression management seminars and relaxation and breathing exercise workshops (Wilson, 2000),
- √ establishment of collaborative working environments, promotion of empowering tasks (Pahnos, 1990),
- √ continual re-evaluation of focus and direction of professional life (Stern and Cox, 1993).

But these are all temporary strategies and only cover up the problem because they don't really get to the heart of it.

 **REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

Think back to the list that you made earlier about the causes of teacher stress and tick the ones that you think you can change.

After considering your list, you have probably come to the conclusion that we can't change many of the causes of teacher stress, but it is possible to change the way in which we react to these stressors.

This is the purpose of this book – to help you bring about your own personal empowerment.



PART 1

SOME COMMON TEACHER STRESSORS AND HOW TEACHERS HAVE SURVIVED THEM

How To Use This Section

1.

Locate your problem. (They have been arranged in alphabetical order for easier access).

2.

Read the “snapshot view” for some quick tips to reduce the problem.

3.

Read the teachers’ stories – these are real stories in which teachers share their experiences about what really worked for them.

4.

If you would like more theory to help you to understand the strategies, read the recommended chapters in Part 2 of this book.

The Problem

Bullying/violence

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Love the bully.
- Project positive thoughts and feelings.
- Forgive the bully and give him/her the chance to start again with a clean slate.
- Speak the truth about your feelings.
- Look for the student's unique strength or talent and find ways to nurture this.
- Keep your own base of inner peace strong.

Teachers' feelings about this problem

One day last March I was correcting papers in my office when suddenly in through the gate came an indignant parent with a fat boy and a thin boy. "Teacher, this fat boy has bullied my child all day!" The parent described his words and deeds, and I became very angry. Looking at the fat boy's defiant appearance, I really wanted to step up to him and take his Young Pioneer badge off his chest and reprove him.



There is a pupil called Liang. His height is more than 170 cm, his weight more than 80 kg – he is only in primary school but even if he was in middle school he would be an overwhelming, powerful boy. Not only is he big in physique, he was noisy like thunder and his academic record was not good. He was always stirring up trouble and had a tendency for violence. Everyone feared him and over the years his disposition had become worse and worse. As his teacher I felt anxious and felt pain in my heart, and was always trying to find a solution to help him, to transform him. I used time in and out of the classroom to encourage him, guide him, do everything possible to stimulate him, and to prevent him from having a fit of temper. I worried day and night. One day I was calling each of the children who had not handed in their work to come out into the corridor so I could talk to them one by one. When I called his name and looked to his seat I was scared by his behaviour. I saw him stabbing at his own face with his pen.

Teachers' solutions

[Continuation of the story about the fat boy and the thin boy, above] At this critical moment I remembered a comment, "We should still love students even in their unlovable moments." By this time I had controlled my mood slightly. I asked the parent and the thin boy to sit down, then held the fat boy's hand and said, with a smile on my face, "You also sit down". Now I was trying, like shooting at him, to fill my vision with love as I said to him, "You are all 5th class students, growing to be men. A man should have strong emotions and dare to acknowledge a mistake. Do you think you are able to do that well?" Strangely, by this time the boy had lowered his head. Then I said, "As human beings we all do wrong things sometimes, but we have to know that wrong can't change wrong. Whoever was wrong in this event I am no longer going to investigate. I forgive you for this passing impulse and believe that in your next performance you will show how well you have grown up. Do we have an agreement?" "Good," came a very low voice from the fat boy. Next I guaranteed to the parent that there would be no repeat of the matter. Encouraged by the trust they all placed in me, I was startled to see that the fat boy had tears in his eyes and had closed his lips tightly and made an effort to nod.

"Only through love can we teach students to love", says Sathya Sai Baba. Because he was treated with love and trust, three days later the fat boy visited the parent and thin boy of his own initiative to apologise. Two weeks later the student on duty reported that he had helped a lower grade schoolmate to work. At the end of the semester he was voted by the class as the "pivotal man to take pleasure in serving others". Because of the love and the trust shown to him that day the sprout started to grow healthy and strong. At the end of the year, this boy wrote the following in his diary: "A year ago, a pair of warm hands powerfully gripped my hand. His eyes were filled with love, like warm sunlight, like a happy song – and his love flowed in to open trust in my heart.... For a year I have kept firmly in mind the sincere words and I have given my most honest reply through my efforts, to my teacher." I closed his book, reflecting on how the ideas of the values education have changed me and my student, caused us to learn about love, and created an atmosphere in which love can grow.



[continuation of the story about Liang stabbing at his own face, from above] My heart was sobbing and tears wet my face. At the time all I could do was to try everything possible to control his mood and his

behaviour as soon as possible. I put the class leader in charge of the class, took him firmly by the hand and took him out of the classroom. In tears as I applied medicine to his wounds I asked, “Why are you so silly? You know this causes pain in your teacher’s heart. When you grip that pen to hurt yourself, it is as if you are gripping your teacher’s heart!” When he heard this heart-to-heart talk he hugged me and said “Teacher, sorry, sorry”.

I see this as a turning point. After that I created opportunities to let him demonstrate his talent. He enjoys photography so at school events I let him bring his camera to take photos I and held a photographic exhibition in the classroom for him. He produced some splendid photos for display on the classroom wall for the teachers and schoolmates to enjoy, and as a result he experienced the joy of success. His disposition has gradually changed – others have started to hold him in high esteem, he has started to show a love for study and has improved his discipline. He contributes to the group, lives together with others in peace and harmony. He has also donated a lot of his pocket money to the class charity fund. Everybody has commented on his progress and he receives praise frequently from teachers and his classmates. Now he has gone on to study in the middle school, but our friendship has continued and he keeps me informed about his progress. His mother later said, “You are not like mother and child, it exceeds the mother and child.” This is the strength of love. This shows how using “the love” that is emphasized in values education can educate the students and contribute to a student’s good results.



The teacher’s attitude should be fair and calm. A lot of students need their teacher’s love, like other people’s appreciation, and like to see their teacher smiling. At the beginning of the year one student liked to argue with bigger boys. If all of the class agreed to something he would disagree. I wanted to scold him, but then thought, “If I’m angry then maybe I am wrong/trapped by the student”. So I took a deep breath and re-aligned my emotions and just said, “Sui Hau, your idea is so different from other people, but remember not to play tricks on me or the classmates,” and I smiled at him. Sui Hau listened to me and felt sad because he had done something wrong. I realized that Sui Hau might not have thought that his speech and action were wrong, but when I made my comment Sui Hau was able to understand that he was wrong. Students hope for the teacher to love them – they don’t want the teacher to just love one or two, they all want to be loved fairly.

Some theory behind the solutions

For deeper explanations about the strategies described by these teachers, please read the following chapters:

- √ Loving children even in their unlikeable moments
- √ Peace
- √ Forgiving and letting go
- √ Truth
- √ Diamond of the week
- √ Combatting bullying



The Problem

Coping with special needs pupils

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Form a partnership with the child's parents.
- Suspend judgment and seek to understand the child's background.
- Give encouragement and use self-esteem enhancing vocabulary and actions.
- Find something the child is good at and encourage this.
- Enlist more able students as peer tutors – ask the special needs child to select a peer tutor who s/he would like to be like.
- Communicate from heart to heart with the child rather than from head to head.
- Use positive self-talk – encourage the pupils to make a list of their strengths and focus on these each day.
- Use silent sitting to visualize their strengths and reduce negative self-images.

Teachers' feelings about this problem

There was a new boy who joined my class whose name was “Bright Bright”, but his performance did not reflect his name. His knowledge and understanding were quite good, but he always spoke in a little voice, lowered his head, would not answer questions and would not speak to anybody.



I have found that many special needs children never have any positive things to say about themselves. Often their parents reinforce this by focusing on the child's defects.

Teachers' solutions

(The case of Bright Bright – see above) Through a conversation with his parents, I found out more about his situation. He had spent a lot of time living with his paternal grandparents, while his parents had lived somewhere else. From his parents, therefore, he had received very little loving concern or communication and he had become estranged

from them. The parents lacked basic parenting methods. When he was mischievous his parents would hit him. In addition, because he had lived apart from his parents for a long time, their bond was not deep and they were not very willing to express their feelings to him. In addition the parents paid excessive attention to his older brother, which caused further damage to “Bright Bright’s” psyche.

I noticed that he always hoped for the teacher to pay attention to him. When I stood beside him, although I did not look at him specially, I could feel that he was looking at me secretly, listening earnestly, and not disturbing me. In the classroom, even if I called upon him directly to answer, he would not open his mouth. His classmates and I would applaud him and encourage him to speak. With this encouragement over time, Bright Bright began to answer questions. He is very intelligent and the transformation was very quick. I asked to have a conversation with him alone. I told him that I was very pleased with his great progress, that his classmates and I all like him very much. I also told him that he was welcome to talk to me whenever he had something he wanted to say, but that one premise for our conversations was for him to make eye contact with me. Because of this conversation, Bright Bright began to gain ground slowly. I would often prompt or start a sentence and allow him to complete it, then I would praise him promptly, as would his classmates.

Throughout the semester, even though he had several relapses, with my patient endeavour and his parents’ co-operation, Bright Bright has changed brightly – really changed! He is no longer the boy we saw before with his head forever lowered and lacking self confidence. He has turned into a joyful young boy who is positive, lively, open and bright, and fills the class with sunlight.



In the new school year I discovered that one boy (aged 8) was very shy. I asked him to raise his head and listen to me. The other boys said he was crazy and simple, and usually only earned a few marks in class. The boy hung his head. I immediately stopped the students from saying this, because I could see that his heart had been hurt. I wanted to help him. First, to rebuild his confidence, I didn’t give any tutorial immediately. I checked the family background and found that his father and grandmother gambled a lot and his mother had to go out to work. Nobody cared about the boy’s study so his school results were poor. I wanted to start with his strengths. I found an example of some good work in one of his assignments so I showed it to the class and asked them all to try to do such good work. The boy felt very embarrassed and his face turned red. After this I started to give tutorials to the boy, focusing on the correct

pronunciation of the vocabulary, and I created opportunities in lessons for him to answer questions and to use these words. I also co-ordinated some study groups and asked some of the brighter students to help this boy. He became happier and more confident. He earned 60 marks in his next exam, which was a big improvement.



Darren was a very disruptive student with a whole range of learning disabilities and attention-seeking behaviours. I decided to engage the other students in some service activity for the sake of the class – to volunteer to be rostered to sit with Darren and help him to complete his work. Each day Darren would choose his helpers from the roster – the only rules were that each pair of helpers could only spend a certain amount of time with him each week so as not to disrupt their own studies, and that if he did not work seriously the privilege of having peer tutors would be taken away from him. It was interesting that Darren had a sense of which classmates would be the most helpful to him – he usually chose the conscientious, brighter ones, who were also the strictest with him and encouraged him to work hard. The experiment was highly successful. Darren felt more secure that he was receiving some compassion and acceptance from his classmates for his positive efforts, rather than negative attention for his disruptive efforts. The other pupils in the class were able to experience a great deal of satisfaction at being able to help a classmate in need. For me there was a lot less stress because this student's peers were catering for his needs much more effectively than I could have done, and the classroom environment was a great deal more peaceful.

Some theory behind the solutions

For deeper explanations about the strategies described by these teachers, please read the following chapters:

- √ Loving children even in their unlikeable moments
- √ Raising children's self-esteem
- √ Diamond of the week
- √ Heart to heart communication



The Problem

Exhaustion

(see also the sections “Extra-curricula activities” and “Having to pretend...” which are related to this one)

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Set up a support network of colleagues – work together rather than in competition with each other. Set up rosters so that each colleague has a turn to take a break.
- Speak up to your colleagues – even to your seniors – about your need to have a break.
- Reflect on your values about teaching – research has shown that this can be very invigorating.
- Nurture yourself – allow yourself some time alone to take care of yourself in a way that helps you to recharge yourself, especially at the end of the school day.
- Remember that “you cannot keep giving water from the tank if the tank has run dry.”
- Develop the skill of communicating “heart-to-heart” with your pupils and colleagues, which uses up a lot less of your energy than “head-to-head” communication.
- Form a network with colleagues to share your problems.
- Use silent sitting to find solutions to your problems.
- Forgive yourself for not being perfect, and accept being a little bit less than perfect.
- Remember that even though you may never hear from your students again after they leave school, you have still had an influence on shaping the lives of at least some of them.

Teachers’ feelings about this problem

I feel as if I am just a machine receiving orders. I have no sense of ownership in anything I am doing.

On the surface I am doing everything I have to do to please management. But I am not having any quality of life and I am putting all my energy

into trying to be useful, so I am always exhausted.

All I am doing is counting the days until retirement.

Teachers' solutions

I was so caught up with being busy, being exhausted, and never getting a word of thanks from my colleagues, the parents or the students. Then, unexpectedly, I received a letter from a student I had taught 25 years ago. He wrote:

I'm not sure that you would remember me, you taught me when I was aged 8-11 in primary school (I am now 36). Shortly after leaving primary school we moved to [another state] and I finished my education there.

I was fairly ordinary at keeping in touch with most people for those years and never got back to visit until 1996 and then in 2005. By that time, when I went back to the school, many of the teachers I knew had gone and the ones that did remember me weren't able to tell me where you were. (I realise I was a bit of a nightmare student so perhaps they weren't keen to tell me even if they did know where you were!)

I am now an orthopaedic surgeon working as a private specialist and I am the Director of Orthopaedic Department which has 7 other specialists. Recently by a series of completely unrelated instances I discovered that [another student from the same class] lived in little town about 20 minutes out of the city and last Saturday we had a reunion after 25+ years - she hadn't really changed at all! Naturally we spent a fair bit of time talking about school and the influence that you had on our lives. I still remember you teaching me about perseverance and Socrates and 'A round Tuit'. If you hadn't, I would never had gotten a scholarship to the private high school that I went to, would never had gotten into Medicine, and would never have coped with the 100+hrs/week for 8 years that was the orthopaedic training program.

I never really thanked you for all the effort and time that you put in to me but I would like to say that I have always appreciated it.

Realising that I had made this amount of difference to just one student, that I had helped to shape just one human life, made me realize that I DO have worth as a teacher.



I decided to stop giving 100% of myself to everything I do in the school day. Now I give 100% to two of my lessons per day, and 85% to the rest. 85% is still a lot – and it leaves me with a lot more time and energy to see my students and colleagues as human beings.

It helps me to think about how to stay calm and be in harmony when I am in a stressful condition.

Some theory behind the solutions

For deeper explanations about the strategies described by these teachers, please read the following chapters:

- √ Reflecting on your own values
- √ Peace



The Problem

Extra-curricula activities

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Use the extra-curricula activities as a time to develop students' self-responsibility and self-discipline. Encourage them to take on some of the organizational duties as a way to develop their own leadership skills.
- Set up a support network of colleagues – work together rather than in competition with each other. Set up rosters so that each colleague has a turn to take a break.
- Speak up to your colleagues – even to your seniors – about your need to have a break.

Teachers' feelings about this problem

Our school has a good reputation – but to keep up our reputation we have to offer a lot of extra-curricula activities for the children. We are expected to be involved in clubs and sports coaching – most evenings I am still at school at 9 or 10 pm. I feel as if I don't have a life of my own.



I don't even get a chance to have a lunch break. We are expected to sit with the students and supervise while they eat their lunch, so there is never a chance for me to have a bit of time to myself and re-charge myself.



When the children are inside during wet weather we are supposed to share the supervision between two teachers, so one can have a break. My colleague, who is also my senior, will always take the first turn to go to the staffroom for a break, and will promise to come back. But she will never come back and I will be left to supervise the two difficult classes for the whole lunch hour. Because she is my senior I am too afraid to speak up and complain about this.

Teachers' solutions

I was becoming exhausted because I had to spend every lunch break distributing the students' lunch that was brought from the canteen and supervising them eating it. I told my colleagues that I wanted to experiment with leaving the students under the supervision of their peers so I could take a break. They scoffed at me and said that unless I was there to distribute the food to the children the greedy ones would take it all and there would not be enough to go around all of them. I made a

promise to them, and to myself, that if this should happen I would personally pay for extra food to feed those who had missed out. I talked to the class about the importance of sharing and helping each other, and told them that I trusted them, then I left the classroom in the charge of the four monitors. The monitors asked the students to line up in an orderly way and insisted that they serve themselves with only a small amount of food. In fact, the monitors themselves waited until last to be served, in case there was not enough for everyone. Only after all of the children in the class had been served were they allowed to line up again for second helpings. This way, with each child gradually taking small portions, there was plenty for everyone to have first and second helpings. The children were well fed in an orderly way and I had a chance for a short break to re-charge myself before going back for the afternoon's classes.

Some theory behind the solutions

For deeper explanations about the strategies described by this teacher, please read the following chapters:

√ Peace



The Problem

Feeling angry

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Use silent sitting for yourself – imagine a situation that makes you feel calm again.
- Use a “facade” of anger rather than really feeling it.
- Keep your own base of inner peace.
- Speak the truth about how you feel about the situation/behaviour that is making you angry.
- Learn to forgive the person who made you angry.
- Breathe deeply.
- Imagine yourself as having an unlimited well of patience inside you.

Teachers’ feelings about this problem

As the teacher, I can also sometimes have mood changes and lose my temper. Othertimes I can say things that can injure a child like an arrow.

Teachers’ solutions

Since participating in the (Educare) study, whenever I want to have a fit of temper, I can look for a place – either go outside the classroom, breathe deeply, or imagine a golden-coloured cloud – and this lets my mood become more stable. Then I can carry on with my work. Sometimes when I am at home or in the office I may encounter an unhappy or worrying matter. Then I also use silent sitting. It is most often advantageous to me.



I put on a facade in a positive way - I become an actor in a comfortable role. When going through stress that was all that kept me going, by putting on a positive front. It permeates to the children. I also put on a façade of anger – the most powerful ‘growls’ are when you aren’t really angry because then you are in control. If I am really angry I will tell the children so and will deal with it later. If I am angry I will move away from the situation and talk about it when I have calmed down. Let them see our model strategies for dealing with anger. I don’t get angry with the class but sometimes I get angry with things that go on around them.



There was a student in the class who did not pay attention to lessons, always lowered his head and got into mischief. I did not criticize him immediately but suggested to him with a “look”. He was aloof and my “look” did not have any effect. Before I would have flown into a rage, I clutched him and criticized him maliciously, but now I patiently waited until the students were doing their practice then went to stand beside him, reminded him, spoke the truth with him. The result was that this student corrected himself very quickly and afterwards did his exercises very earnestly. Also, he guaranteed to me that he would no longer get into mischief in class and would study well. This matter affected my feelings in a very big way. It helped me to understand that I should learn to forgive – when the student makes mistakes I must guide patiently. With patience rather than a storm of criticism the student finds it easy to accept, and is not rebellious, there is no conflict, and only then is it easier to correct one’s errors.



I remember in the past when the class troublemaker had misbehaved I would usually look at him with an angry expression and scold him loudly. Then he would lower his head and not utter a word, but shortly afterwards his bad behaviour would be repeated. His classmates also complained about him. At the beginning of this semester he broke the lock on the classroom door. His classmates were all scolding him. When he saw me enter the classroom he probably thought I was coming to scold him too. He lowered his head and did not utter a word. I remembered the Educare message about forgiveness. So I did not criticize him, I was determined to change him. I let him come to the platform then I said, with a kind expression, “Teacher believes you broke the lock intentionally. You want your classmates to say it was not intentional – right?” Then I asked his classmates to forgive him.

After listening to my speech he was startled at first but later was moved and finally said to his classmates. “Everybody forgives me. Later I will become a student that the class loves.” His classmates listened to his speech and all applauded, as if by prior agreement. It was a surprise to them all that the teacher forgave him. I believe that forgiveness is the seed of love, already sprinkled in the classroom and growing in each student. Therefore, I want to have a warm atmosphere in our classroom, like the warm harmony of a family, enabling each child to feel cared about and cherished. Even if they make a mistake it can be solved and the correct guidance given in a peaceful, forgiving situation can enable them to correct their own errors.



In my class I have a student who was active, mischievous and had a tendency to violence. In class he often did not pay attention, left his seat to take his classmates’ study apparatus, and either whipped his classmates’

hands or punctured them with a pencil when he was sharing a table. He seriously affected his classmates' study and was a very repugnant student.

Before, I would pull him roughly to the office, scold him for his malicious behaviour or ask his parents to give a written guarantee that he would no longer behave like this. But this was not effective and he refused to mend his ways despite repeated admonition. After I learned some ideas about human values education (for example, Sai Baba's quotation about letting children learn love through love), I changed my approach to him. When he makes a similar mistake I am still very indignant but I breathe deeply several times, let myself become tranquil, try to understand patiently, and inquire why he wants to do this. I tell him how his behaviour can have an effect on his classmates and ask him to think about how he would feel if others did this to him. After many attempts, with this patience and the use of vigorous praise for his small progress, he has made a lot of progress in many aspects. In class he now listens attentively, raises his hand, likes very much helping the teacher with work after class, and after every lesson asks, "Teacher, how was my display in class?"

Some theory behind the solutions

For deeper explanations about the strategies described by these teachers, please read the following chapters:

- √ Loving children even in their unlikeable moments
(especially the section about forgiveness)
- √ Forgiving and letting go
- √ Silent sitting
- √ Peace



The Problem

Feeling burnt out/lacking a sense of mission as a teacher

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Look for the positive aspects of the situation.
- Forgive yourself and your students for not being perfect.
- Rediscover the joys of teaching.
- Reflect on your personal values.
- Look after yourself.

Teachers' feelings about this problem

After teaching for 17 years, the continuous challenges, preparing lessons, correcting students' papers and counseling students, left me feeling burnt out and restless. I thought I was a good teacher as long as the students were getting results. Therefore, in my teaching I always strived for perfection and always thought the students had grasped the complete knowledge as long as they obtained good test results. But the fact is not so. You pay so much but the harvest is actually very little. Facing this fact, I had become excessively sad, excessively disappointed and very tired. My teaching did not have any meaning.

Teachers' solutions

I have learned the "humanist" side of the work, to "take love as the starting point" even if the students' outcomes are not so good. I try as much as possible not to look at the superficial things but to discover the students' true intrinsic selves. As a result of my own values change I now always set out to discover the students' happy side, maintain a happy mood in the classroom, and now I have finally found the work to be a joy, and my teaching to be happy. Loving the students has indeed had some very good results. I remember one day early in the semester when I arrived at school and found that the class leader had not taken up her duty. Everything was chaotic. As soon as I saw that, my reaction was to become angry. But I changed my mind as soon as I questioned whether getting angry can have a good educational effect. So I looked for the class leader and asked why she had not taken up her duty for the day. Then I asked her why she thought her teacher and classmates had elected her to be class leader. She had tears streaming down her face. I knew that forgiving

her had touched her conscience and had awakened her innermost feelings.

In my own life I have changed to become calmer. For example, when students are mischievous or quarrel or do not listen to me in class, I respond with repeated patience. With this “gentle mood” treatment I try to guide the students with kind expression, enlighten their thoughts and avoid the stiff teaching methods. I also re-examine myself frequently. For instance, with the moral education strengthened and my understanding more profound, I feel my teacher’s sense of mission more strongly, love the students more deeply, am more harmonious in my relationships with the students, and am more artistic in my methods of work. In brief, I have enhanced my ability to be a good person.



I have love for the children. I find joy in teaching children not only academic work but also spiritual, moral and environmental work.



I think the use of silent sitting has had some influence on me personally. I discovered that if I sit silently, breathe deeply and listen to music it helps me to release work pressure.

Some theory behind the solutions

For deeper explanations about the strategies described by these teachers, please read the following chapters:

- √ Rediscover your own values
- √ Inner peace
- √ Loving children even in their unlikeable moments
- √ Silent sitting



The Problem

Guilt

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Forgive yourself for not being perfect and accept that you cannot give 100% all the time.

Teachers' feelings about this problem

Guilt knocks confidence a lot, for example feeling guilty because you know the children aren't getting as much of you as they should because you have to be doing other things. Then you feel you're not coping – especially if you have a personality where it's hard to stand up for yourself – I have got better at being assertive, I am now more empowered, calmer, can shrug things off – I have done a lot of work on that.

One teacher won't say anything because she knows she won't be listened to. Another, who just stood up, knew it was the right thing to do and said it, now finds herself stronger.

Teachers' solutions

I decided to stop giving 100% of myself to everything I do in the school day. Now I give 100% to two of my lessons per day, and 85% to the rest. 85% is still a lot – and it leaves me with a lot more time and energy to see my students and colleagues as human beings.

Some theory behind the solutions

For deeper explanations about the strategies described by this teacher, please read the following chapters:

- √ Forgiving (yourself) and letting go
- √ Peace



The Problem

Having to pretend/act/give 100% even when you don't feel like it

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Nurture yourself – allow yourself some time alone to take care of yourself in a way that helps you to recharge yourself, especially at the end of the school day.
- Remember that *“you cannot keep giving water from the tank if the tank has run dry”* (Sathya Sai Baba).
- Develop the skill of communicating “heart-to-heart” with your pupils and colleagues, which uses up a lot less of your energy than “head-to-head” communication.
- Form a support network with colleagues to share your problems.
- Use silent sitting to find solutions to your problems and other solutions to the same problems.

Teachers' feelings about this problem

I can look calm on the outside but not be on the inside. Teaching is an act but even though we are acting the negativity can still come through. We really have to keep the mask on, and then sometimes at the end of the day I rip into my husband or family.

Sometimes I'm not feeling angry but when I am giving completely all day I'm exhausted by the end of the day.

I'm always being so nice during the day that I have to re-fuel again. I need a bath, and just to see no children for a while.

I go through cycles. For example, if work is stressful I can't get rid of it at home. If I haven't (de-stressed) I can't give attention to my relationships etc. Then I have a phase where I cannot think about work at all (at the end of the day).

“You cannot keep giving water from the tank if the tank has run dry.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

Teachers' solutions

I have to have a bath after school – I have to have one every night after school. I just want to have some head space.



I used to go home and fight with my family. Then I found if I went into my own room/space for half an hour then I would be fine. I need to check out for a while.



Watching TV was not helping my stress levels because I was not actually relaxing. Now I will start doing some sort of exercise every night, ie a structured switching off.



It's important to have someone to 'dump' stuff on.

Some theory behind the solutions

For deeper explanations about the strategies described by these teachers, please read the following chapters:

- √ Peace
- √ Communicating heart-to-heart
- √ Silent sitting: Going within to solve your problems



The Problem

Lack of support by senior colleagues

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Support each other as colleagues.
- Say positive things to colleagues.
- Make a point of telling your colleagues what you appreciate about them or pass on positive things you have heard others say about them.
- Project positive thoughts and feelings to people who are behaving in a negative way.
- Silent sitting – particularly the Light Visualisation.

Teachers' feelings about this problem

Sometimes there is a double standard – for example, if senior staff are late or absent for personal reasons the other staff keep the school going, but then the senior staff have a go at other people arriving late. They go to the individual and ask if there are any problems.



If I am caught unaware, for example, having to supervise children in “time out” or if I get into trouble, I burst into tears but then I later get angry with myself for reacting that way. There are occasions when things are not fair, when everything good you do isn't acknowledged, when you are ignored for the great things and criticized for the small ones. This leads to stress, particularly where I find it hard to stand up for myself. We shouldn't be feeling like kids in fear of getting into trouble. I was angry about the lack of support so I made up heaps of worksheets for children to do during supervision – I felt much better at the end of the day. It's like having a gag, I don't want to embarrass myself by bursting into tears.



I take a lot more of the adult stress (i.e. stress of dealing with adults in the workplace) than children stress.



I get stressed if I have a fantastic idea that gets bagged.



As teachers, we don't feel needed/appreciated.



Because we are government employees, the employer is very detached from us, so it falls on the senior staff to create that support. I'm thinking

of the teachers who have gone off on stress leave – I don't think it would be that hard for this sort of thing to happen.

❖ ❖ ❖
There is too much policy making. I wrote a very long letter during the holidays about a new policy, but there was no acknowledgement. The teachers don't really know the rules and policies. For example, a parent asked what the school's policy is on bullying – kids, teachers and parents should know. If we sit with children and help them come up with their own rules they have ownership, and we refer back constantly to the children. But we don't have ownership over what we do.

❖ ❖ ❖
I have the feeling of getting into trouble, being humiliated, if I have an opinion in staff meeting – the principal still goes with what he wants. This is much more of a stressor than what happens in the classroom.

A group of students were displeased with me because I had found their assignment drafts to be below standard and talked with them after the lesson for a rather lengthy time to discuss with them what they should do. Later the students were asked to fill out a questionnaire about the course I had taught them. Then one day the co-ordinator of the programme came and knocked on my door. He showed me what the students had written in the questionnaire. In general, it said that I was boring and did not give them chances to take part, and that they did not learn anything in my course.

I was rather shocked. The colleague told me that the representative did not attend the meeting but just handed in the remarks so they could not clarify. I did not want to say much. I told my colleague that most of the remarks were questionable. To be very frank, I had tried hard to prepare the lessons, used multi-media and tried to get them involved. However, I did not want to defend myself so I did not say much. Later, the Head of the Department also asked me to go into his office and asked me what it was all about. I did not want to defend myself. But I am aware that my high demand on their assignment had been a great cause of their discontent.

❖ ❖ ❖
There were two incidents of bullying by (the senior staff member) that year... I was having a lot of anxiety that year anyway with two difficult children... Other colleagues got attacked by the same person, it wasn't just me.

❖ ❖ ❖
When it comes to discussion about matters that I don't think are important or need changing, she always brings out that the parents would like that or says that they are all for the good of the pupils. Then others will not go on giving their points of view on the subjects. Finally, everything is passed.

Teachers' solutions

We need more personal acknowledgement that we're doing a good job – I have started to say positive things to people, I do mean it and it's made a huge difference. Kids don't say them, but we really need to hear it from colleagues. It's an important thing, pastoral care for teachers, for example, if the principal gives a gift to every teacher and says something nice – it's not necessarily the gift but that somebody has noticed – somebody acknowledging me and where I might go in the future. We put so much into doing it with kids but teachers need it too.



In a staff meeting, all the teachers had to write something good about each other. I loved that. I've still got mine – if my house was burning down, one of the things I would grab would be that paper.



One senior staff member is very good at saying “thank you” she always makes me feel good when she walks into the room but it's not a part of the school culture. What is more important, support from senior staff or colleagues? Both. But if it comes from the hierarchy, it creates a culture that will flow on. We need appreciation, we can never give enough to the kids but we need it too. It needs to be genuine, not over the top.



I passed on a positive comment I heard from a senior staff member to the teacher concerned. She was very pleased. If parents write letters of praise for a teacher it is important to pass it on.



There can never be enough positive reinforcement.



The only thing that got me through (bullying by a senior staff member) was support from colleagues. Another colleague mentioned to the principal and the principal talked to me – I found it wasn't as big a deal as the senior staff member had made of it. In that situation what I really needed was belief in myself, that I was capable, because I felt like a failure.



My senior staff member was giving me a very hard time. Nothing that I could do was good enough even though I tried my best. Even though it was making me very stressed, I suddenly remembered the strategy of changing how I view that person. Instead of seeing a tyrant trying to make my life difficult, I started to see him as somebody who was out of control of his own life/work and who was behaving in this way because HE was panicking. As soon as I was able to look at him in this way I felt much less hurt by his behaviour and less likely to take these criticisms personally.

Some theory behind the solutions

For deeper explanations about the strategies described by these teachers, please read the following chapters:

- √ Loving students even in their unlikeable moments (especially the section about projecting positive energy to negative people, which is also discussed in the chapter about Peace)
- √ (especially if you are a senior staff member.) Self-esteem for teachers
- √ Silent sitting – particularly the Light Visualisation



The Problem

Low achievement

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Let the students see that you love and believe in them.
- Look for the special qualities or behaviours that you can genuinely give praise for.
- Praise the improvements rather than the level of performance.
- Use self-esteem raising vocabulary and actions.

Teachers' feelings about this problem

In my class there were more bad than good students. Also their maths results were poor – there were more than 10 students with poor results. The students had lost confidence and did not feel motivated to learn. The relationship between students was a nervous one. There was no love for their teachers and the student-to-student relationships also lacked love.



One of the most stressful things for me is the discrepancy between the principal's demands for high performance and the students' low achievement.

Teachers' solutions

Love is the root of values education. The purpose of values education is to encourage students to feel love for others and to make it likely that they are loved by others. However, I didn't give up. I sought out the slow learners to chat individually and found out their learning conditions and the conditions of their daily lives. I deliberately didn't describe them as slow learners and tried to be like a friend. I searched for stories about mathematicians because the students liked to listen to the stories and learnt a lot from them. I used some examples of old boys/girls from the school to encourage the students to build up their self-confidence. I taught them that if they have a target, are patient and work hard they will succeed.



To build up students' self-confidence we should let them experience the feeling of success – to prove that they can succeed. Therefore we should create ways to give the students the feeling of success, to know what

they are good and bad at, whether it is in a talent show, sports day, etc. They all have different abilities so they can have success in different circumstances. After they experienced the feeling of success the classroom atmosphere became different from before. In the past the classroom was very silent and 90% of my questions were not answered. Now, with more self-confidence, the children are very keen to answer questions.

Some theory behind the solutions

For deeper explanations about the strategies described by these teachers, please read the following chapters:

- √ Loving children even in their unlikeable moments
- √ Raising children's self-esteem
- √ "Diamond of the Week"



The Problem

Parents

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Be “transparent” with parents – make them partners in working together for the good of their children and keep them informed (e.g. a class newsletter) about what you are doing and why.
- Don’t avoid the truth or the conflict - speak your worries or concerns truthfully, but in a way that doesn’t make the teacher/parent/child feel he/she is being blamed.
- Help the other party to present their point of view - do not speak from anger, after you have spoken, calmly wait for the other to present his/her point of view.
- If you don’t know a solution to the problem, rather than pretending you know the answers, admit that you don’t know and discuss how you can find a solution together or by calling in a third party.
- Project positive energy to parents before and during your meeting with them.
- Communicate from heart to heart rather than from head to head.
- Ask parents what works for them at home, what they may do at home with the child that you may not be doing, what may have worked successfully last year. Plan together – and include the child in the planning process as well (i.e. form a triple partnership of teacher-parent-child).

Teachers’ feelings about this problem

Every year when you meet the parents in your new class they will say their son/daughter is not performing or is even a little bit backward. You can feel that they are worried (this is normal) but I can’t accept the hidden meaning behind this behaviour of theirs. They just expect that the teacher should take the responsibility.

❖ ❖ ❖

As a professional I often feel unable to influence/change parents’ feelings.

❖ ❖ ❖

Their parents are often too busy in small businesses and have no time for their children. They often neglect the family atmosphere. This contributes to negative thinking and bad habits in society. Most of the children in the school showed this sort of behaviour. They were not focused in class, they disturbed others, were unco-operative, talked in class loudly, intimidated others and broke school rules. They often had very low self-esteem and were not respectful to teachers. Their behaviour

affected other students' progress in school and caused other students' grades to deteriorate as well.

Many parents are only concerned with their children's school results – very few can really understand children's voices. Only a few are willing to cultivate children's values. In some cases, if the teachers reflect to parents that the children may have some wrong values, parents say, "I see" but do not take any action.

What the parents say and do doesn't match what the teachers say and do. For example, some parents only want their children to learn well, not to help with household chores or respect others. They don't expect their children to participate in extra activities. When there are competitions the students only focus on the results and are unable to share others' success.

Whenever I scold children for bad behaviour, their parents come to see me and complain that I am damaging their child's self esteem. I feel that they have no respect for my professionalism.

Teachers' solutions

I have learned so many things by making so many mistakes. I have learned not to talk to the child's parents [if a child has caused upset] while feeling emotional, and that I don't need to tell everything, only what's "true and necessary" – if I tell the parent some important things she can't do anything about it anyway and it only upsets her.

A mother came to see me because she was upset that her son did not understand the way I was teaching him how to do addition. So I sat with her and her son for about 10 minutes and demonstrated the technique to both of them, so that she would understand as well. I invited her to work with me as a team, by encouraging the boy to explain to her how to do the sums so that we could be sure he fully understood. The boy's mathematics improved because of this teamwork approach, and the mother and I formed a closer bond because of it.

Some theory behind the solutions

For deeper explanations about the strategies described by these teachers, please read the following chapters:

- √ Loving children even in their unlikeable moments (particularly the section about radiating positive feelings to negative people).
- √ Forgiving and letting go.
- √ Peace.

The Problem

Problems with colleagues

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Do something to help them, without expecting anything in return.
- Make a pact to talk only about positive things.
- Look at the situation from the colleague's point of view.
- Project positive feelings (eg love, represented by the colour pink) to negative people.
- Use the Light Visualisation and imagine that you are sending light to the colleague/s who you perceive are being unkind to you.
- Communicate from heart to heart rather than from head to head.

Teachers' feelings about this problem

This semester I managed to improve the character of the class. I received praise from my senior colleague. But another colleague queried "Are you tired? How much time do you have to use to arrange your classroom. The teacher's work is already tedious and now you have made it worse for us. The principal has wanted us to learn from you and it has increased our workload."



If students misbehave or are out of her control she immediately looks for your help, and in doing so you can feel she blames you for not training the students well.



I am working with a team of teachers in which one of the group is very reluctant to give up old ideas for new ones. This individual has been at the school the longest of our five-member team and tends to assume a power position. This person does have a position of added responsibility in co-ordinating the team and tends to use this to maintain control. The team is becoming less and less trustful of this person when working and planning programmes. I believe teachers need ownership in what they do and it becomes discouraging when innovative changes are ignored.



There is a problem with people who are negative about children in the staffroom – they do not understand that children are people with problems too.

Teachers' solutions

(continuation of the story above about the colleague who resented the extra workload) - Before I would have ill-humoredly counter-attacked. But this time I smiled. I arrange the classroom carefully to establish the atmosphere – happiness and contentment is very important to the students. But in secret I calmly analysed the problem. I did not want to make extra work for my colleague. After several days, I provided the materials of my own initiative and helped her to arrange her classroom personally. She thanked me sincerely for taking the trouble. I was joyful. The values education helped me to learn to be open-minded and tolerant.



I feel that the teachers are working together and nurturing each other.



Stay away from negative people.



A colleague and I have a deal to only talk fun stuff in the staffroom, no complaining.



The values education has changed me and my relationships with my colleagues. Before I would speak extremely candidly and had not considered the feelings of the person I was speaking to. Now I have learned to pay attention to others' feelings, which has helped to build a harmonious atmosphere with colleagues. Many look from the other's point of view, render encouragement and assistance, and respect each other equally as one respects one's own family members.



I find the heart-to-heart communication and the use of quotations particularly useful for me. I have given a number of talks (to teachers and student teachers). I find that the heart-to-heart communication can help me relieve my performance stress and enables me to speak in a spontaneous and relaxing manner. My audience can feel this and they enjoy my talk because of that. I can see the impact of my talk on their work and personal lives. Some come to me and show appreciation about how my sharings enlighten them.

Some theory behind the solutions

For deeper explanations about the strategies described by these teachers, please read the following chapters:

- √ Selfless service
- √ Positive affirmations

- √ Controlling how we see, hear and speak to others
- √ Silent sitting (especially Visualisation on the Light)
- √ Loving students even in their unlikeable moments (especially the sections about projecting positive energy to negative people and communicating from heart to heart) – these strategies can work with unlikeable colleagues as well!
- √ Peace



The Problem

Pupils who won't participate

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Use silent sitting on a regular basis with the whole class.
- Love.
- Look for the “inner diamond” in these pupils.
- Use self-esteem raising vocabulary and actions.
- Look at situations through the students' eyes. If necessary discuss with them why they are not participating.

Teachers' feelings about this problem

The students in my class are generally very shy and afraid to answer questions, for fear of making a mistake in front of their classmates. Many of them do not hand in their homework.

Teachers' solutions

In the girls' class, where the discipline was originally good, I have noticed that since using silent sitting more are raising their hands to speak. Their work quality has also improved.



In teaching, the strong transfer of love educates the students, through tolerant understanding, sincerity, and acceptance of their shortcomings and mistakes. But the centre of the love has to be strict – only then can education achieve the “twice the result with half the effort” effect. There is a student in my class who does not like studying very much, does not concentrate in class, and does not hand in his work. In order to help him to progress, I used extra-curricular time to give him supplementary lessons and also arranged a pair of good students to support and counsel him. I praise him promptly and encourage him unceasingly. One day when I was correcting students' papers I discovered he had not completed his work. I asked him why and he said loudly, “I cannot do it”. I did not shout at him but said, “If you cannot do it you should consult a teacher”. I returned the work to him and explained it again. He changed his bad habit slowly. “Strictness” must be reasonable, must be moderate, and must allow some leeway. This does not mean to let matters drift. But the students must feel that the teacher's strictness is coming from a centre of

love. Frequently people compare the teacher with a gardener or a mother – the mother who shows loving concern when the child has a problem. With underachievers, we should also be caring and loving. This kind of love, given with nurturing and tireless zeal, will develop a new generation of people with love. When one sincerely, unconditionally loves others, such love can have an enormous effect.

Some theory behind the solutions

For deeper explanations about the strategies described by these teachers, please read the following chapters:

- √ Silent sitting
- √ Loving students even in their unlikeable moments
- √ “Diamond of the Week”
- √ Controlling how we see, hear and speak to students
- √ Raising students’ self-esteem



The Problem

Rebellious, disrespectful students

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Look for the inner diamond in the student/s.
- Love – and tell students you love them.
- Forgive the students for not always conforming to what you want them to be.
- Smile more.
- Arrange a “buddy” support system with colleagues.
- Engage students in service activities.
- Focus on one behaviour at a time.
- Mentally repeat to each difficult student, “You have come into my life for some reason. It may be because I need to help you with something, or it might be that you have some lesson to teach me. Whatever the reason, I love you and forgive you, and I love and forgive myself.”

Teachers’ feelings about this problem

My younger sister expects everything to be perfect. She was even like this with her own daughter. She expected the daughter to do everything according to her wish, scolded her frequently, and had consequently aroused a rebellious attitude in the child. She is only very young but she did not like studying. My younger sister became worried about this.



In my class there was one child who was intelligent, diligent, fluent and clever. However his conduct was unsatisfactory. He spoke out of turn in class, misbehaved, found excuses to shirk his work, talked back when the class leader reprimanded him – although he was intelligent and had outstanding results, the teachers did not like him and his classmates did not want to have him as a friend.



A lot of children nowadays are quite difficult to manage and they are not ready to listen. Often it gets difficult to discipline them. You could be repeating instructions every few minutes to quieten them down but sometimes it doesn’t have an effect on them and it could be quite upsetting. Generally I don’t like to shout at children or speak harshly to

them but sometimes it gets so difficult that they leave you no choice. A few kids sometimes realise the problem but they don't always support me, because perhaps they don't want to be known for buttering up the teacher. I am still trying to figure out how to manage this.

❖ ❖ ❖
... never accepts his own wrong doing and challenges you.

❖ ❖ ❖
...realises himself he is not working on his study. I do everything to help him but with no active co-operation from either him or his parents.

❖ ❖ ❖
I felt that a large percentage of the students in the class – no matter whether it was in class or in other activities – showed signs of selfishness, took advantage of others for their own benefit, didn't care to help anyone, and were always very cold and gloomy towards different matters.

❖ ❖ ❖
Today the desire of most people is for material welfare, quick success and immediate gain. The traditional morality has been abandoned by the people and they have not yet developed a new set of values. Elementary school students are commonly greedy, want to play all the time, are selfish, do not have any sense of responsibility, and have not formed any good behaviour habits.

Teachers' solutions

I told her (i.e. the teacher's younger sister, mentioned above) that every child is an independent individual who must be respected and given loving care. I said, "You now always scold her. This can only develop hatred in the child's psyche. If you really love her, broadcast the seed of love." She listened, reconsidered her own words and deeds, and asked me to lend her material to read. She has slowly nurtured the idea and transformed. The daughter eventually changed to become open and bright, and now the mother and daughter relate harmoniously.

❖ ❖ ❖
Su Qique began to be restless and started to look out the window and scratch his body. The class leader mentioned his name and immediately he sat straight again. But eventually he became restless again and when the class leader mentioned his name he answered back. More than 50 pairs of eyes looked at him. I had to think quickly how I should sternly punish him. I stood at the back of the classroom calmly watching, not willing to scold the culprit because I did not want to interfere with the class leader's dignity. There was complete silence and the students were all anticipating what I would do to punish him. I did not look at him or criticize him, but very happily praised other students for their good performance in the game. After school, on the way home, I met Su

Qique and we talked about his life and he told me a joke. The morning event had not affected our exchange. My heart felt nice and warm and made me realize that loving the other person is the most powerful way to forgive them for doing wrong. I rejoice very much over the children in my class and love both their merits and their shortcomings.

On December 22nd I allowed Su Qique to have a turn as the monitor. He accepted happily and was almost dancing with joy. I had made a prior agreement with the class leader, Lai Baowen, that he would pretend to misbehave and not concentrate on his studies. When this happened Su Qique became angry and said to him. “How can you, the class leader, not be earnest about your study.” I quietly moved around the class listening to children read, while Su Qique was left with the task of maintaining silence. I thought my goal was achieved – I let him experience how it felt to his classmates when they were in the role of monitors and he behaved badly. Engaging him in this kind of experience was more beneficial than giving him a lecture. This experience shocked him in a very big way – as the result he changed a lot, and gained his classmate’s and teacher’s affection. I think that if I had initially scolded him crudely I would have lost a potential pillar of the class.



I took over the worst class in the entire grade – as well as their lack of discipline, their academic performance was not entirely as desired. My class was the one recognized in the school as the most disobedient. The previous teacher had given me a bad impression of one child and I also did not have a favourable impression of him. Frequently he interrupted, disturbed others to get attention, and hit his classmates. His name is Bao Rong. One day in a mathematics class I called the name of a child and he shouted an insulting nickname, “The Bearded Chicken”. I was mad, pulled him to his feet and made him stand facing the wall because of his inappropriate outburst. He continued to use foul language, even towards me. I really was in an uncontrollable rage and raised my hand to hit him. He said, “If you hit me again, what my mother will do to you....” I told him to apologise to me and to his classmates. He glared angrily, both of his fists gripped tightly, turning a deaf ear to me. He became flushed in the face, with a look of hatred in his eyes. I was really regretting that my impulsive response might have injured his immature mind. But I had completely lost face trying to get him to apologise. All I could do was let him return to his seat, and continue to teach the whole class. After school I had a heart-to-heart talk with him. First, I apologized to him. But he still did not say a word and was still hostile towards me. For half an hour he stayed the same while I talked to him, until I told him to go home. I pondered for a long time about how to deal with his hostility and transform him. I had observed that he likes sport very much. I often organize basketball or soccer matches for the children after school

or on holidays. So I recommended him to participate in the school track and field team and the basketball team. He managed to come second in the fifth class 60m and 100m races, which brought honour to the class. I used the opportunity to praise him, and from that time his self-confidence improved and his academic record started to progress. But the changes in his discipline and behaviour were not obvious. It was still very difficult to find anything to praise in this regard. Talking openly with him or preaching to him was only effective for a short time and before long his former behaviour would sprout again. I felt truly puzzled about what to do.

One day I was in my office correcting students' papers. The class leader ran in, shouting loudly, "Mr. Hu! Bao Rong has broken the lamp in the classroom!" Hearing this news, I was extremely angry. I raced to the classroom, wanting to punish him. But I tried to calm down – telling him that it is good to play ball but not in the classroom. What would happen if it hit somebody? Then I let him sweep the room and the disturbance passed.

The next day the children handed in their diaries. I opened his diary. He had written: "Today I make a mistake. My teacher could have told my father or hit me. But he did not do this, and actually did not scold me. Mr Hu, to you, my true feelings, I cannot forget". This student's heart-to-heart writing left me deeply moved. A child who had not previously handed in his diary had written this passage explaining how my method had moved him deeply.

From this time he changed. I found various ways to encourage him to progress. Once the school had a competition for the most civilized class and our class won. I let him go onto the stage on behalf of the class to receive the reward. I smiled at him, saying, "Aren't you good! The class has obtained this result and you share in the merit." As he listened to my words he happily came onto the stage to accept the award. From that time on, he has been a changed person. He is extremely warm-hearted to his classmates. I let him display his special skill, and he is responsible for the school environmental protection committee, keeps order at the school gate and has received high praise from the school. His father happily said to me, "Mr. Hu, thank you. My child now has hope." Having seen his progress and heard this comment from his father, I reflected that if I had initially flown into a rage over the incident of the broken lamp, and punished him, the story might have turned out very differently. As a teacher, forgiving this kind of student has led to the establishment of openness, equality, a harmonious teacher-student relationship, and good effects. The good relationship suggests many different roles of the teacher: "concern education" teacher, "recognition

education” teacher, “success education” teacher, “values education” teacher!



As a teacher you don't have to be very harsh on pupils. Not all pupils come from good homes. First, if you see any problem in a child, try to find out what really is causing the child to behave in that way. I think this was the best piece of advice I got.



I think it would be a first step to have a buddy class (i.e. where teachers can support each other, give each other a break from a difficult child from time to time etc.)...something to use when you just need a break. We need to have networks of people, to whom we can say, for example, “I need a break from this child...he's not doing anything wrong – can he do some task, such as helping children in kindergarten?” Maybe we need to volunteer, for example if I have a good relationship with one child I can volunteer to have him/her – it also helps the child to feel a bit more special because somebody wants them.



(In response to the pupils who were selfish and took advantage of others for their own benefit) - Since, in everyday living, the smallest matter will show a person's character, I requested the children to start with little ways of giving love in the summer holidays. Before the holidays I asked the children to do something for individuals in their families and then, in their own ways, to record something they had done and how they felt about these deeds. In the first week of school after the holidays I organized a meeting at which the children were invited to tell what was meaningful about the deeds they reported and how they felt. They entered into the discussion and exchanged their experiences. Students said they helped elderly neighbours to fetch water, cooked meals, did laundry, made donations to the Hope Project, and helped to tutor younger children.

The discussion created a very positive atmosphere. When school started I asked the students to do good deeds in school and after they had left the school grounds. I organized them to clean up in an old people's home. The students were happy to do this and did very well. Through this practical experience the students came to realize that they could gain happiness through helping others.



One of my survival strategies is to focus on just one behaviour at a time, otherwise it can be overwhelming. I ask myself the question. “What is it that really bothers me the most about this student's behaviour? I also find it helps to set goals with the student (the triple partnership of teacher, parent and child can be helpful here) and to introduce ways of monitoring their progress for all to see.



As assistant principal, one of my duties was to “come to the rescue” when a child was being too disruptive to be able to remain in the class. One day I was called to a Grade 2 class. The misbehaving child refused to come with me and had to be dragged out from underneath a table. As we walked out of the room he was shouting at me, “I want to kill you. I hate you!” I stopped, turned to face him and said, “Well I really love you.” Instantly he stopped in his tracks, his jaw dropped and he said incredulously, “Do you REALLY?” This incident did not lead to any miraculous change in his behaviour, but he did mellow considerably and after that he would always come with me quietly if I had to take him from the classroom.



An inspirational story was sent to me by email when I was having a particularly difficult time with disruptive students. In this story, a psychiatrist in a hospital for the mentally ill made a habit of thinking about each of his patients. “You have come into my life for some reason. It may be because I need to help you with something, or it might be that you have some lesson to teach me. Whatever the reason, I love you and forgive you, and I love and forgive myself.” I have tried this practice with my most disruptive students – every morning before I go to school I close my eyes, imagine each of these students, and repeat the psychiatrist’s words. I have found that it really helps me to feel differently about these students and it has reduced my stress levels a great deal.

Some theory behind the solutions

For deeper explanations about the strategies described by these teachers, please read the following chapters:

- √ Loving students even in their unlikeable moments
- √ “Diamond of the week”
- √ Giving consequences that teach, not punish
- √ Selfless service and ceiling on desires



The Problem

Repercussions of stress on family

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Use techniques that you use in class, such as deep breathing or silent sitting.
- Many of the teachers who have used Educare techniques in the classroom have reported that it automatically helps them to be calmer and happier at home.

Teachers' feelings about this problem

When I experienced unhappy matters in the school, I would vent my mood on my husband. When my daughter had some questions to ask me about her study, when she could not understand, when she calculated carelessly or even when she could not fall asleep, I would criticize loudly. After I had calmed down I would think, "How can I treat the child like this?" but once my temper started to rise I was unable to control myself. Because I often showed fits of temper to my daughter, it caused her to become timid, to feel inferior and not to dare to raise her hand to speak in class.

Teachers' solutions

Since I have been involved in the values education experiment, I try to alleviate the pressure. When I help her with her homework, even if my mood is not good and I want to have a fit of temper, I close my eyes, breathe deeply several times, let my heart calm down and then patiently help her to study. Her school work has progressed and now various teachers praise her progress in a big way. She speaks up very boldly in class and reads sentences aloud in English class. If a classmate is too timid to raise her hand, she will encourage her to have the self-confidence to do so. When she cannot fall asleep I will sit with her and lead her through some silent sitting visualisation. This helps her to become tranquil and she happily goes to sleep. My daughter says, "Mother, it is really mysterious! After I listen to you reciting I can fall asleep very quickly."

Some theory behind the solutions

For deeper explanations about the strategies described by this teacher, please read the following chapters:

- √ Silent sitting and creative visualization
- √ Peace

The Problem

Students coming late

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Expect the child to pay some consequence, but then forgive and let go.
- Speak openly and truthfully about your feelings about the situation.

Teachers' feelings about this problem

In the class there was one student who was often late. Often I would punish him by keeping him in after school or making him stand outside the classroom, but this had no effect.

Teachers' solutions

On the first day of the new term, I said to the class, "In my mind, you are all clean slates and I need you to use good words and deeds to fill in the blanks. I did not look at your past, and will look only at your present and future. In the first week, the pupils all did very well, and in that week the latecomer had not been late at all. I praised him in class and affirmed his progress. However one day in the third week he came very late. This time I was very angry but suppressed it. I remembered the words of Sathya Sai Baba, "When some one has injured you or let you suffer pain, use your wisdom. Do not draw conclusions, promote the truth." Therefore I let him join the class. After class I asked him the reason and found out that he had slept late. I said, "Oh I thought there was some serious problem and worried. If you sleep earlier you can wake earlier and will not be late for class!" This kind of love criticism enabled the student to accept and to take self responsibility.

Some theory behind the solutions

For deeper explanations about the strategies described by this teacher, please read the following chapters:

- √ Truth
- √ Forgiving and letting go
- √ Please refer also to the book *To Teach Not to Punish*, also published by the Institute of Sathya Sai Education Hong Kong, for a discussion of appropriate ways of correcting children for lateness.

The Problem

Theft

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Let the student know that you love and believe in him/her.
- Encourage and show that you respect truthfulness even if you don't respect the act of theft.
- After punishment, forgive the student and create the opportunity to start again with a clean slate.

Teachers' feelings about this problem

This semester, a substantial amount of money which a student had brought for school uniform money disappeared. A student came to tell me that the classmate with whom he shares a table, Johnny, had stolen it. After listening, I looked immediately for Johnny and asked if he stole the money. He is usually mischievous and likes to pilfer, therefore he did not acknowledge me.

Teachers' solutions

At that time I wanted to scold him loudly, again asking him to confess. Then I remembered something we had heard in the values education course: "Love the students, trust them fully, and try to find a way to help them reform." Yes, I should believe in this child – he can certainly correct his own shortcoming. I let myself calm down first and then said to him, "I believe you, certainly it was a mistake to blame you, moreover I will forget, because you were not the thief, right?" After Johnny had listened to me he nodded immediately and said, "Teacher, later I will give the money to you and I will not steal anything else". Because of my tolerant, trusting speech I really changed the student. Afterwards, he not only stopped stealing, he actually stopped misbehaving and progressed earnestly with his study. This is the effect the values education has had on me and on the students.



There was one child in my Grade 6 class who was a frequent thief. One day some money went missing from a child's bag and I had good reason to suspect that this boy had taken it. Instead of accusing or questioning him, I delivered a very lengthy lecture about the fact that we can hide our behaviour from others but we cannot hide from our own conscience.

I spoke about how I respect a person who is brave enough to examine his/her own conscience and to speak the truth about having done something wrong, rather than trying to hide it. The following morning the boy came to me and said he had been thinking about his conscience overnight and confessed to the theft. We agreed that he had to be punished for the theft but I told him that I respected for his truthfulness.

Some theory behind the solutions

For deeper explanations about the strategies described by these teachers, please read the following chapters:

- √ Loving children even in their unlikeable moments
- √ Forgiving and letting go
- √ Truth
- √ Please refer also to the book *To Teach Not to Punish*, also published by the Institute of Sathya Sai Education Hong Kong, for a discussion of appropriate ways of correcting children for theft



The Problem

Time (never enough!)/excessive workload

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Learn to let go of the feelings of guilt!

Teachers' feelings about this problem

All stress – the bottom line is time. A lot of time is being encroached on but it passes so quickly. I feel guilty if I can't get to all meetings.

We just don't have time to talk, especially about personal-professional things – I often feel guilty about just talking.

The workload is unbearable!

Story: A Full Jar



One day an expert in time management was speaking to a group of business students and to drive home a point he used an illustration those students will never forget. As he stood in front of the group of high-powered over-achievers he said, "Okay, time for a quiz".

Then he pulled out a one-gallon, wide mouth mason jar and set it on the table in front of him. Then he produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them, one at a time, into the jar. When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, "Is this jar full?" Everyone in the class said, "Yes".

Then he said, "Really?" He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. Then he dumped some gravel in and shook the jar causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the space between the big rocks. Then he asked the group once more, "Is the jar full?" By this time the class was on to him. "Probably not", one of them answered.

"Good", he replied. He reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping the sand in the jar and it went into all of the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question, Is this jar full? "No", the class shouted.

Once again he said, "Good". Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. Then he looked at the class and asked, "What is the point of this illustration?" One eager beaver raised his hand and said, "The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard you can always fit some more things in it." "No", the speaker replied, "that's not the point". The truth this illustration teaches us is: If you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all.

What are the big rocks in your life? Time with your loved ones? Faith, education, your dreams? A worthy cause? Teaching or mentoring others? Remember to put these BIG ROCKS in first or you'll never get them in at all. (Try the same experiment but put the sand in first, then the gravel and leave the rocks until last!)

So, tonight, or in the morning, when you are reflecting on this short story, ask yourself this question: "What are the big rocks in my life?"

(Retrieved from World Wide Web, March, 2007 – original source unknown)



The Problem

Uncontrollable class

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Use silent sitting on a regular basis.
- Use visualization yourself to fill the classroom and surround the students with love. (Use a pink bubble as a metaphor for love if you find this difficult).
- Use self-esteem raising vocabulary to reinforce good behaviour.
- Use corrective consequences that teach rather than punish.
- Forgive your students for not being exactly as you expect them to be.
- Tell stories that have a moral or a message in them.
- Find things about the students that you can respect, so they will in turn learn to respect you.

Teachers' feelings about this problem

Watching the interns (final year student teachers on teaching practicum), I can see them sink, see the class picking it up and start getting on top. When I first started I loved it when the teacher went out of the room – nobody knew if I wasn't perfect. Even now if a senior staff member walks into the room, my stress levels go up.

Teachers' solutions

Since I have been participating in the values education research I use silent sitting as much as possible to influence the students' feelings. When I first started the students all thought it was very amusing. Once in a while they would secretly open their eyes to look. Afterwards when they started to take it more seriously, they really started to experience the effects. In the class with mostly boys (where the behaviour had been bad), they will now do silent sitting well. Few students speak out of turn now.



Using the pink bubble and throwing love to the children (see below) has been useful for me. I advised a student teacher to do it too – it does work. We can't change other people, only the way we react to them – I find myself applying this a lot in all aspects of my life, especially in the

classroom. For example, with my student teachers – they have a couple of good days and then a bad day – they were getting more and more stressed. They were doing nothing wrong but they were focusing on the things not going right. We had a talk about those days when we are feeling down, we have to search consciously for the things that are good – for example if one child is fiddling we have to go over the top being positive to the ones who are being good. This year I have found teaching less stressful.



It was a bad class which was infamous in the school for fights and not handing in work. Since starting values education the use of silent sitting has enabled them to settle down peacefully and immediately. Their behaviour has become more civilized, the entire class' discipline has improved and the academic record has also progressed. The students have changed from being quarrelsome to peaceful, from liking fighting to becoming loving, caring schoolmates. Even those who did not like studying have come to like it, those who did not understand politeness have become civil, and their academic records have also slowly improved. The quality of their behaviour has changed and they now show compassion and respect. These are the advantages that values education brings to the students. It lets them transform for the good, and have a good start. Sowing a good seed for the students healthy growth enables the growth of fruits which is good for the harvest.



If students argued, fought, or did not listen I used to punish them. Now I try to sit silently myself and look at the situation from their point of view. I communicate more with my students and say more positive words rather than scolding them. I laugh and smile more.



It was in January 2001 when I was given the Grade 5 class to handle. A lot had been said about this class in the year 2000. The class was generally known to be noisy and restless. Of course, in the early stages of handling the class, I noticed that. However, I managed to control the class by using a stronger voice which was full of command but love at its best. This did not mean that I was cruel with the pupils but that I wanted to instill discipline in them. Later on, they began to change slowly and I still believe that they will definitely change completely one day. They no longer shout as they used to. This only means that punishment should be given to pupils, not necessarily making them do hard labour, but it can be achieved through the use of language that is full of love. In other words, send good thoughts and vibrations to the pupils and later on they will change, and harmony and togetherness will flourish in your classroom.

Some of the teaching strategies that have helped me are silent sitting and story telling. I was given a grade six class in 1999. This class was very naughty. But after I had attended some seminars about Sathya Sai Education in Human Values, I tried to apply the two teaching techniques I have just mentioned. In this class there were two boys who were restless. All the time they were jumping around. But from the time I introduced the two techniques these pupils began to calm down and eventually they improved. These pupils were among those I termed to be dull. But today these pupils are doing very well at one of the local secondary schools.



I was too much into perfectionism with children's behaviour, wanting to use force to "fix" each child. I was really tough and used fear tactics (mainly because I had been too soft with another class). I still have to watch that I don't go on an ego trip – it's very easy to do that when you are a teacher. I'm much more relaxed now as a teacher.



If there is no love there is no education. The secret of education is that the teacher loves the students. The teacher doesn't demand the students listen to him – if the teacher's smile is warm and the students trust him it is easier. Teachers should respect each student from the heart. Whether in class or chatting with students after class, teachers should be aware of and serious about the students' feelings. If students do something wrong, the teacher should start from love. Even though punishment is necessary we must start from a point and that point is love. When facing naughty students the teacher should have a big heart to bear with their shortcomings, to allow them to correct themselves slowly and gradually, and not to shout at them or use severe punishment because that doesn't work.

Some theory behind the solutions

For deeper explanations about the strategies described by these teachers, please read the following chapters:

- √ Loving students even in their unlikeable moments (especially the section about projecting positive energy to negative people)
- √ Peace
- √ Silent sitting
- √ Giving consequences that teach, not punish
- √ Raising students' self-esteem

The Problem

Unlikeable children

A snapshot view of what to do about this problem

- Look at different ways in which a teacher can show love to students.

Teachers' feelings about this problem

There are some students in my class that I just don't like. When one particular boy walks into the room I try to smile and to greet him, but my heart sinks as I wonder what disruptions he will cause.

Teachers' solutions

There was a boy in my class who I just could not like. He was very overweight and dirty, and a bully to the younger children. I could not find any reason to speak kindly to this boy. After participating in the EHV project I realized that I could still find ways to show acceptance – and even love – to this boy without having to like him. I looked very hard to try to find a way to show some love towards him. The one I found the easiest to use was compassion – I knew he came from a very troubled family background so instead of feeling disgust towards him every time I looked at him, I tried to feel compassion for his troubled background. Gradually I found that even though I still didn't like him, I was able to tolerate him much more easily, and that reduced my stress a lot.



There is a boy in our school who was branded a failure from a very early age. By accident, the music teacher discovered that he was a very talented musician. Now he is having music lessons and developing his talents. The results have been amazing because now he is succeeding in his academic studies and is a much more likeable boy, it seems because he is happier and more fulfilled.

Some theory behind the solutions

For deeper explanations about the strategies described by these teachers, please read the following chapters:

- √ Loving students even in their unlikeable moments

PART 2

THEORY EXPLAINING WHY THE TEACHERS' STRATEGIES WORKED



CHAPTER 1

REFLECTING ON YOUR OWN VALUES



Reflection and Discussion

The Teaching Experience I Really Want

This activity was adapted from Newman (1992). Reflect on what you would really like your teaching experience to be like and write down your “wish list”. Keep in mind Newman’s suggestions:

- Don’t attempt to be/do/have everything.
- Make sure that your statement is honest and it truly inspires and empowers you to reflect the real you.

After you have made your list, you might wish to share it with your colleagues. Are there any common patterns in what you would like?



Reflection and Discussion

The Values I Want to Use to Guide My Teaching

Newman (1992) suggests that it is a useful strategy to list the important values related to your teaching that:

- reflect the kind of person you want to be known as
- are values you want to live by on a daily basis
- are values that empower you
- come from within and reflect who you really are

and which are:

- √ enduring values that have stood the test of time (is wanting lots of money an *enduring* value?)
- √ truth-based values

Some Examples of Values Suggested by Newman (1992)

- ◆ Be treating all people with respect and love.
- ◆ Be focused on making a difference in the lives of people rather than on accumulating things or being concerned only with serving myself.
- ◆ Be listening to others with a sincere desire to understand them, and then help them understand me.
- ◆ Be taking good care of myself so that I can feel good about myself, be productive and be happy.
- ◆ Be aware that I always reap what I sow – what I sow is what I get.
- ◆ Be cool, calm and collected when dealing with problems and stressful situations.
- ◆ Be loving, compassionate, caring, giving and forgiving.
- ◆ Bringing out the best in me and in others.
- ◆ Be mentally tough and focused. Be emotionally resilient.
- ◆ Be spiritually strong, vibrant and joyful.

The following is a set of universal values that are prominent in most religions and most cultures. How closely does your list of values match these?

Truth: accuracy, curiosity, discrimination, honesty, human understanding, integrity, self-reflection, sincerity

Right Action: courage, dependability, determination, efficiency, endurance, healthy living, independence, initiative, perseverance

Peace: calmness, concentration, contentment, equanimity, optimism, self-acceptance, self-discipline, self-esteem

Love: compassion, consideration, forgiveness, humaneness, interdependence, selflessness, tolerance

Non-violence: benevolence, co-operation, concern for ecological balance, respect for diversity, respect for life

CHAPTER 2

CONTROLLING HOW WE SEE, HEAR AND SPEAK TO STUDENTS

What Can One Do to Change That Which is Within One's Power?

This section has been based on a series of steps for stress management suggested by Newman (1992), and modified to be relevant particularly to teaching. It also draws on the theories of the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values model.

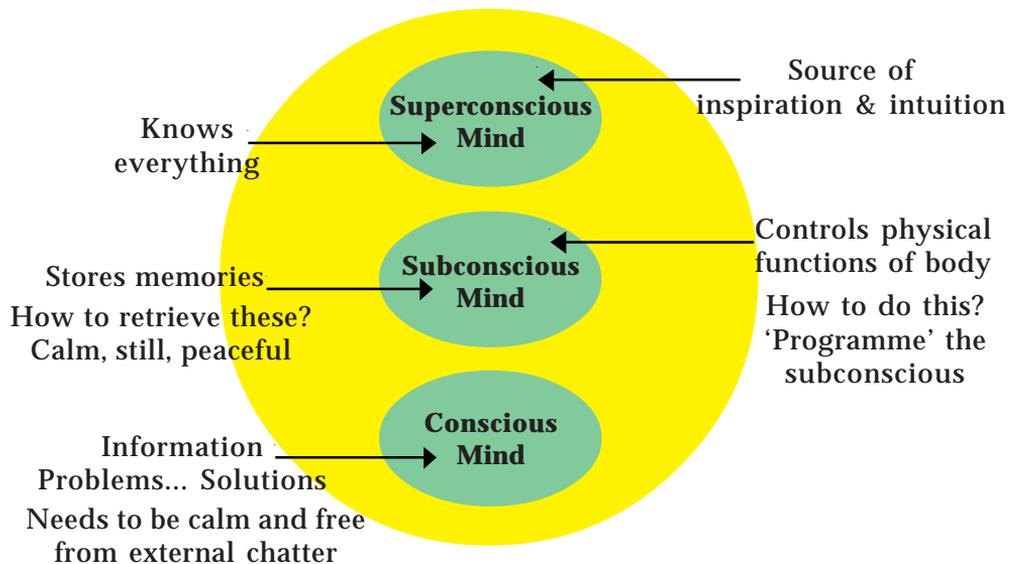
*“Be in control of what I always can control –
my thoughts, emotions and actions.”*

- Newman, 1992

“If a pupil has a vice, he alone suffers from it. But if a teacher has a vice, thousands are polluted.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

The above quotation from Sathya Sai Baba emphasizes why it is so important for teachers to be in control of these. Let's look at some theory about why it is important to control our thoughts, emotions and actions. The International Director of the Thai Institute of Sathya Sai Education, Dr. Art-Ong Jumsai, has developed a simple model to explain it (Jumsai, 1997).



This diagram represents the physical human body (large circle) and the three levels of the mind: the conscious, the subconscious and the superconscious. The first level is the conscious mind which takes in information. Through the five senses, the conscious mind receives and processes information from the environment in order to create awareness and understanding. The five senses just feed us the information, but we have the power of discrimination to choose whether we interpret these things as good or bad.

The subconscious mind 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 colour our perceptions of events that happen around us. So if we have anger stored there and something happens that triggers this anger we react in an angry way – but if we have positive feelings stored the stimulus is more likely to trigger a positive reaction. This is why we need to control the way our five senses experience things around us.

“Through constant self-observation you will become more aware of your own possibilities and difficulties while at work. This will help you to be more open and sensitive to the possibilities and difficulties of your students in the different parts of their being.”

- Sri Aurobindo Education Society (2001), p.65



Reflection and Discussion

As you read through the notes in this section, you may wish to reflect on the following questions. As you reflect, it may be useful to write down your thoughts.

How can I control:

how I see my pupils?

how I hear them?

what I say?

After reading and making your own notes, have a group brainstorming with colleagues about examples of different ways to see, hear and speak to our pupils that make us and them more empowered.

How we see them:

A well-known American psychologist, Leo Buscaglia (1982), tells us that if we really think about it we will realise that every “downer” we experience is because somebody didn’t meet our expectations.

There is a beautiful story on the Internet (Bits & Pieces - June 1995, Economics Press) about a teacher called Mrs. Thompson who had very clear expectations of how she thought her students should be – clean, hardworking, etc. But there was one child, Teddy Stoddard, who didn’t meet any of these expectations. He didn’t play well with the other children, his clothes were messy and he constantly needed a bath. And Teddy could be unpleasant. It got to the point where Mrs. Thompson was really stressed by his behaviour and would actually take delight in marking his papers with a broad red pen, making bold X’s and then putting a big “F” at the top of his papers. But at Christmas Teddy gave Mrs. Thompson a gift in a tatty paper bag. It was a necklace and half-used bottle of perfume that had belonged to his mother, who had died the previous year. This act touched Mrs. Thompson and she began to see Teddy in a very different light – and by looking at him differently she found he was much less stressful and frustrating to teach.

***“Take all the things which irritate you
as a lesson for yourself
and your life will be more peaceful
and more effective as well,
for a great percentage of your energy
certainly goes to waste
in the irritation that you feel
when you do not find in others the perfection
that you would like to realize in yourself...”***

- The Mother, Sri Aurobindo Education Society (2001), p.65



How we hear them:

In a grade 4 class I was teaching, there was a girl who would frequently throw temper tantrums if things were not going her way. The first time it happened she was hurling abuse at me, telling me that she hated me... My first reaction was to feel hurt and angry. But then I started to hear what she was really saying underneath the abuse: “I am unsure about myself and I am unsure whether you like me. I need you to love me and to give me some validation.” By hearing this different message I was able to look at the situation very differently and to feel much less stressed about it.

A starting action could be:

- ◆ Say regularly something positive or at least smile once a day to the most difficult child in your class, or the most difficult colleague in your school.
- ◆ Observe your feelings while doing this. What is needed to make your smile a true smile?
- ◆ Try to implement this.



What we say to them:

Buscaglia suggests that 90% of what we say is talking at pupils and not with them. It is stressful for us to talk at them: “I am angry, you are bad, your work is careless, how many times do I have to ask you”. Let’s try to talk more with them instead.

This is what Sathya Sai Baba means when he talks about **3HV**, harmony of head, heart and hands – the thoughts that form in our heads need to be run through the discriminatory filter of our hearts before we put them into action with our hands.

***“It is also helpful to use active inner dialogue to talk to yourself in an encouraging way to build up the positive side. In this case you could tell yourself something like this:
‘Come on, be kind, be gentle.
You will feel better if you don’t get angry any more.
Getting angry hurts yourself as much as the other.
Learn to act positively, there is something good in everyone.’”***
- Sri Aurobindo Education Society (2001), p.48

“Try to recognise these stages in yourself so that you can move consciously from one stage to the other.

1. *“Rahul, it’s very bad to pass nasty comments.” (judgment)*
2. *“Rahul, I don’t like it when you pass a nasty comment to Siddharth.” (observation with a ‘colour’ attached to it)*
3. *“Rahul, you are passing a nasty comment and I notice that Siddharth is affected by it.” (a clean observation).”*

Ibid, p.174

CHAPTER 3

PEACE

“Human values cannot be learnt from lectures or text-books. Those who seek to impart values to students must first practise them themselves and set an example.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

These days, classrooms are often turbulent, unhappy places. Students are no longer automatically respectful to their teachers as they were in the past. Gangs and bullying are becoming more prominent and often carry over from the playground to the classroom, so that many students feel intimidated or even afraid. Conflicts between students can often arise and teachers find it difficult to resolve them. There are increasing numbers of students with learning difficulties that cannot be catered for in the normal classroom, and because they are unwilling or unable to learn they can become disruptive and make it difficult for those who do want to learn. Added to this are the pressures of time and syllabus constraints and growing pressures to succeed in examinations. Overall, school can be a very stressful place for a lot of teachers and students.

As a way of addressing this situation, SSEHV advocates peace as one of the five values that need to be instilled in pupils if they are to be able to cope with their student lives and become well-balanced citizens. Of course, the problem is that although many teachers would certainly acknowledge the need to talk about peace (or any of the five values), they would also, quite rightly, claim that there is no time in the curriculum to teach about it and that many of their pupils would probably not be receptive to direct teaching about values anyway. However, there are some simple but effective techniques that have been tried - with considerable success - by teachers who have wanted to make a difference in their classrooms but have not had any extra time or resources to make big changes.

One of the most effective ways of promoting peace in the classroom is to start with the inner peace of the teacher himself/herself. If the teacher is able to establish and maintain a basis of inner peace that is strong enough not to be unbalanced by disturbances in the classroom, s/he can provide a very valuable role model for the pupils and a settled atmosphere. This,

also, is important because these days many children and young adolescents come from home environments that are unsettled and anything but peaceful, and so there are many who never have the opportunity to experience first hand the strength that comes from inner peace.

Of course, to be able to establish a base of inner peace, and maintain it when things become difficult, takes commitment and regular practice by the teacher. If we are to help our students to develop and maintain a state of inner peace, it is important for us to be models. It is not easy to establish this inner balance at first and it is even less easy to maintain it. With practice, however, it will become increasingly easier for you to put yourself into a peaceful state and stay in that frame of mind throughout the day.

Creating Your Own Inner Peace

A useful starting exercise is to go to a place where you feel very safe, relaxed and secure, and know that you will not be disturbed by outside influences. Allow your mind to be still and simply concentrate on accepting the feeling of calmness and letting it flow over you. Even if you are unable to maintain that state during your daily life at first, make a pact with yourself that you will return to the same place, either physically or in your imagination, at least once a day and allow yourself to experience the same feeling of space and peace. After you have practised this exercise a few times, you will probably start to feel that the sensation of peace is staying with you for longer and longer each time.

This can be a good time to start to focus on what is happening within you. When you are in this state of calmness your cardiovascular, muscular and nervous systems will slow down to a pace where they are each able to work in harmony with others to bring about your health and well-being. When this state is disturbed or agitated, then one or another aspect of your system will speed up or tense up and disharmony will occur within you.

An exercise to maintain your inner balancing system is to sit quietly and focus your attention on the place in your body where the feeling of calmness begins to grow. Allow the sensation to spread from this centre until it fills your entire body and the area surrounding you. Take your attention in turn to your cardiovascular system, then your muscular system and then your nervous system, and feel the sense of balance and equilibrium. In

particular, notice the way your breathing becomes slow and regular, and allows fresh energy to be pumped through your body and mind. Attach a colour to the sense of balance that you are feeling, and allow the colour to fill your whole system. With practice, you will begin to find that you only have to think about that colour for a few minutes and allow it to flow through you, and you will easily slip into the state of balance. If you know that you are going into a potentially stressful situation you can take a few moments to fill yourself with your chosen colour and your inner balance will protect you from being harmed. It is important for you to try to maintain this state of inner peace through your interactions with others. If you are in a situation where the other person is in a state of turmoil then just by simply maintaining your own centre of balance you are creating a feeling of peace that will have an effect on the other person as well. Let yourself be like a rock, a central pivot for the peaceful feeling, and the students will turn to you as a source of strength. If you respond to them with gentleness and do not allow yourself to disturb your sense of inner peace by becoming angry then you will provide a model that will help them in the development of their own inner peace.

A second way in which teachers can encourage a sense of peace in the classroom is to explore alternative strategies for dealing with conflict - either conflict between pupils, or situations in which there is conflict between the teacher and the pupil. In the classroom or playground there are many situations where conflicts can potentially arise and these are the times when you need to focus on the colour that you have chosen and allow it to be your balancing agent. You are not going to be able to help the situation by becoming agitated, impatient or even angry. It is better for your own health and the state of the environment if you remain calm and send your peaceful feelings to the students involved in the conflict. Speak to them quietly and politely and they will be more likely to respond to your modelling.

Another exercise that can help you to maintain your own inner peace when dealing with a situation of conflict is to imagine the scenario in your mind when you are in a quiet, relaxing place. In the replaying of the situation you are more easily able to control your own feelings and, therefore, more easily able to maintain your own state of inner peace than you might have been in the heat of the moment. Replay the entire scene but in doing so make certain that you have first used the colour technique to balance and centre yourself. Then imagine how the scene might have unfolded differently if you had been able to remain calm and

detached. Each time you replay a situation in this way you are creating a type of healing of the situation and you are also training your subconscious mind to trigger the same kind of reaction whenever you are in a similar situation in reality.

Helping students who are in conflict. A teacher has to deal with situations that arise countless times in the school day when students get into some kind of a conflict with each other. Often these conflicts arise from very small beginnings. For example, somebody might take another student's possession without asking for permission, or say something that is potentially hurtful. If this happens, a lot of children and adolescents are very quick to become sparked into angry reactions and conflict is inevitable. This state of conflict not only releases potentially dangerous chemical reactions within them, it also creates negative patterns of energy flow between them, and in the general environment around them. This can eventually lead to disease, either while they are still in childhood, or at some later stage of their adult lives. More immediately, the angry energy patterns can have an adverse effect on the whole environment and disturb anyone else who comes into contact with it. The teacher is often able to stop the conflict and even prevent it from happening again by punishing the perpetrators. But usually the teacher is powerless to do anything about changing the angry feelings that the pupil might be containing and the way these can affect others.

The following exercises offer some suggestions that could be useful to try as an alternative to punishment, in a situation where pupils are in conflict, and as a way of changing the nature of the negative thought patterns that have arisen.

Cooling-down time. The students will not be prepared to listen to your reasoning when they are already in a state of anger. They will not be able to focus on anything else except their negative feelings. This is why many teachers and psychologists advocate the use of a "time-out" place where the student can "cool down" to a state where it is more feasible to reason with her. When the student has settled down, the teacher is able to discuss the reason for the conflict and to explain the effects of staying in a bad mood. If the student is still angry the teacher might like to try one of the silent sitting visualisations suggested above, either with the whole class or on a one-to-one basis with the individual student. I used to do this with my classes of 12-year-olds when they became restless or if there was conflict in the air. The first few times they treated it as a joke but after a while they began to ask for it when they felt it was needed, and a minute was plenty of time to help them to feel more balanced. Another strategy could be to have them make up their own visualisations that they can use whenever they feel the need to.

Monitoring anger. If a student has been involved in some kind of a conflict that has punctured the social conventions of the community, then it is sometimes necessary for some kind of punishment to be given, which will enable him/her to take responsibility for the consequences of the action and, hopefully, prevent a recurrence. Traditional forms of punishment, such as withdrawing a privilege or completing an unpleasant task, can often have an effect - but equally as often, this type of outcome does not have a long-term effect on the child's thinking or reactions to situations. There are some strategies that can be very useful in changing the child's whole behaviour pattern and enabling him to experience the advantages of remaining in a stable state of inner peace.

One exercise to encourage children to reflect on their behaviour is to give them a calendar and ask them to make a mark every time they become angry. Better still, ask them to write down their reasons for becoming angry. It is important for the teacher to meet with the child regularly to discuss the calendar and to help to identify any patterns in the source of anger. If the child is able to maintain a clean record for a few days, s/he will begin to feel that it is not worthwhile becoming angry if it means that the record will be spoilt.

Forgiving and letting go. This is also a good time to teach students the value of forgiving and letting go. Instead of inflicting a punishment for the behaviour, the students involved in the conflict can be required to spend a certain amount of time writing down a list of all the consequences of not forgiving the other person, and in a corresponding list write all the consequences of forgiving and letting go of the conflict. These can include physical or emotional consequences for the children who were involved directly in the conflict, and also the ways in which other people around them could be affected. They need to be able to understand that to hold onto old grudges can eventually lead to physical or mental illness, and to recognise the positive health consequences of letting the grudges go and taking time to forgive the other person for not meeting their expectations. In the letting go, they are really finding a powerful way of creating their own reservoirs of inner peace. In doing so they are inevitably contributing to the peaceful nature of the environment around them.

Co-operative problem solving. Another activity that can be given to students who have been in conflict with each other is to set them a joint task on which they are required to work co-operatively together. One example of such a task might be to find ways of preventing other students from having conflicts, or to find ways of expressing their disagreements without allowing this to lead to damaging, hostile feelings. If they are able to work together on such a project without having any ill feelings towards each other, then they can be rewarded for their efforts. Before

they begin, you can negotiate with them what this reward might be. At the end of the project it would be a good idea to talk to them about their feelings towards each other and the ways in which they might have changed since the initial conflict. In particular, it can be a good idea to ask them to focus on the physical reactions to their feelings, so they can recognise the potentially damaging effects of harbouring anger or resentment.

Of course, the strategies described here go only a small step towards resolving some of the problems experienced by teachers and pupils in current classrooms. Nevertheless, with regular and persistent practice, teachers can lay a foundation of strength and peace that can not only help them to cope better with difficult situations but can also help their pupils to experience a greater sense of balance and strength.



**Choosing to calm your mind,
be centred and to think clearly under pressure**

Choosing to approach problems in a calm, collected manner

The quotes below from Sathya Sai Baba emphasize how important it is to have an inner peace that doesn't get disturbed when you are under any amount of pressure. Children have the ability to receive messages from the non-verbal cues of others and so we have to be very careful that the teacher's mind is calm and full of peace at all times – because children will have thoughts similar to the teacher's.

If we look again at Jumsai's model we can understand how important it is for the conscious and sub-conscious minds to have quietness and freedom from external chatter so they can take in information more easily and enable us to function more effectively.



Reflection and Discussion

What practical and realistic things can you do during your school day to bring this about?

“Purify your hearts, your thoughts, feelings, emotions, speech; strengthen your nobler impulses, then no panic can unnerve you; nothing can shake your stability, your inner peace.”



“The treasure that is unmistakably precious is the quality of peace, equanimity, unruffledness. Practise this and make it your natural reaction.”



“In the state of peace, human nature will be like the unruffled water surface.”



“Peace is the best treasure, without which power, authority, fame and fortune are all dry and burdensome.”



“Peace of mind is the most desirable thing in this world.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

After your own brainstorming, you might like to read the notes below and compare to your own experiences.

Breathing. When we are stressed or angry we change our breathing pattern. It becomes short and shallow and the oxygen doesn't reach the parts of our body that need it. Simply by taking some slow, deep breaths we can do a lot to help ourselves.

Put situation in perspective. When my grandmother was quite old she and her elderly friends used to squabble a lot. One of the ladies would always shrug her shoulders and say, “What's all of this going to matter in 50 years' time?” She was the one who really helped me to learn to put situations in perspective – we might think it is the most serious problem in the world right now, but is it really such a problem in the greater scheme of things?

Defuse situation with humour. In my first year of teaching, a child in my class tried to sneak a candy into his mouth. He dropped the packet and the sweets rolled all over the floor, making a tremendous clatter. I reacted with frustration and anger because he disturbed my lesson - one of my biggest regrets, because every time I recall the incident I think how funny it was, with the rolling sweets and the look of shock on his face, and I wish that I had reacted with humour.

I heard a story about a child who was swinging on the curtains while his teacher was absent from the room. His teacher came into the room and caught him in the act. It could have become a very unpleasant situation for both the teacher and the child – however, the teacher chose to treat it with humour and said, “Come on Tarzan, get down from

there.” The child definitely got the message that he was doing the wrong thing, but this message was conveyed in a way that was stress-free for both teacher and child.

Suspend judgment and seek first to understand. During my most difficult year of teaching there was one particular child who gave me a lot of heartache. He was so disruptive that, so the other children told me, his Grade 3 teacher had resorted to tying him to the chair. He was single-handedly responsible for a lot of the distress I experienced that year. However, part of the way through the year I heard his story.

His mother had left the family several years previously. His father had become involved with a 17-year-old girl who became pregnant. Her family had tried to kill the father to prevent her from marrying him, but she had married anyway and had two young children from this marriage. My being able to understand the situation didn't make the child behave any better, but somehow it made me less stressed by his behaviour.

To negative people, radiate positive attitudes and greet them with positive statements. The following is a story told by my friend's daughter:

I was a young student teacher and was assigned to my final practice teaching session in a secondary school with a very bad reputation for students refusing to work and often becoming disruptive in class. I was put in charge of a biology class. The regular class teacher was usually not there, so I was on my own. The kids, particularly the boys, began to play up badly and I was getting more and more frustrated that my lessons weren't working out. The students knew I was frustrated and scared of them, and the more they sensed this, the worse they got. I had a practical lesson coming, and I was really panicking - I was actually scared that somebody would do something stupid with a scalpel and somebody could get hurt. I was really feeling desperate, and just didn't know what to do. In desperation, the evening before the lesson, I called my Mum, who is also a teacher, to ask for her advice. She is a very loving, compassionate person, and she reminded me of what she has been teaching me since I was a young child, that 'positive thoughts can move mountains'. She suggested that if I had difficulty 'loving' these students, it could help to imagine that I was surrounding them in a pink bubble, since pink is often the colour associated with love. Thinking that I had nothing to lose, I decided to try what she suggested. When I went into the class the next day, I took a few minutes to concentrate on building up a feeling of positivity towards the pupils. Then I 'let it go' - I literally threw the feeling out into the classroom from my heart. The result was unbelievable - for the whole lesson, the pupils were happy and worked co-operatively together. There

were no incidents and the lesson went far more smoothly than I could ever have hoped.

Bringing your mind totally to the present moment. In my observations of the teachers who I have found to be the most stress-free I know, I have found that they all have in common one thing – the ability to be totally focused on the child with whom they are interacting at that moment, even if it is only for a few seconds and no matter what other things are on their minds that have to be done in the next moment.

Take brain breaks during the day to refresh yourself. In order to practise what I preach I have started to make a conscious effort to do this – even if it is just for a few minutes of silent sitting or deep breathing – and I have found that it has a huge effect on reducing the stress that builds up during the day. If it is too difficult for you to find time alone for brain breaks, you can always take a minute in class to do it with your pupils, and they can benefit from it too.

Other strategies suggested by Newman (1992) are:

- ◆ Re-look at the situation in a way that empowers you.
- ◆ Clear your mind of distracting, stress-producing thoughts and refocus your mind on something peaceful and empowering.
- ◆ Focus on thinking about your guiding values every day.
- ◆ Do one thing at a time.



Low Stress Versus High Stress Communication

“When ridiculing, reprimanding or punishing pupils, teachers must try to picture themselves in their position and discover how they would have reacted to the same when they were pupils. Self-inquiry of this kind will be very useful.”

- Sathya Sai Baba



Reflection and Discussion

High Stress Behaviours

How many of these do we engage in – and what effect is it having on us?

(Have some group discussion about incidents where we have been adversely affected by this kind of behaviour)

- √ yelling, screaming
- √ interrupting others, not hearing them out
- √ losing your temper
- √ putting down, insulting, embarrassing, belittling, or otherwise lowering their self-esteem
- √ over-using “shoulds”
- √ not listening attentively/not being totally present
- √ being sour-faced or stern, not smiling

Low Stress Behaviours

- √ nurturing others with respect and dignity
- √ giving others a chance to express views or share information

In my first year of teaching, I had a boy in my class who was very gifted. If I made a mistake he would hasten to point it out to me. You can imagine how stressful this could be for a young teacher. I learned a valuable lesson from him – that if I could swallow my pride enough to admit I was wrong and to give him a chance to share the information he had, I could avoid feeling distressed about it, and we could all benefit from his knowledge.

- √ maintaining or enhancing their self-esteem

Silberman (1978) has suggested some positive modeling strategies for bringing about positive self-esteem in children. If we can use more of these we will find that we are reacting to situations with less stress and so are they. The strategies include:

- distinguish between the trivial and the important.... Ask children to make their list of important values and to ask the question ‘why does this matter to me?’
 - narrow down to the essentials and then have some honest talk about what’s important and what’s not
 - be the kind of person you want your children to become
 - emphasize your approval whenever possible: ‘It is always tempting to transmit criticism. “Why is your room so messy? Why are you so careless with money?” Yet we seldom praise our children when their rooms are neat or when they have handled money well. We should, because compliments enable parents and teachers to transmit values by heaping deserved praise instead of inflicting unnecessary guilt.’ (pp.135-136)
 - Count how many times in a day you make negative comments: “I never realized how many times a day I made negative comments to the children,” a mother told me, “until I actually began to keep score. I was appalled!”” (p. 136)
- √ using non-verbal gestures of acceptance and respect
One of the most beautiful, relaxed teachers I have observed was in the Sathya Sai School of Zambia. When speaking or listening to a child he would use non-verbal gestures such as leaning his ear towards the child and smiling to show he really respected what he/she was saying. He really conveyed the message that he fully respected each individual.
- √ praising and complimenting others sincerely
- √ consciously striving for a win-win relationship
- √ attacking the problem, not the person.



CHAPTER 4

SILENT SITTING AND CREATIVE VISUALISATION

We all know that teaching these days is becoming increasingly difficult due to increasing problems with discipline, lack of concentration by pupils, and lack of pupil motivation. Just as life is becoming more difficult for teachers, it is also becoming more difficult and complicated for pupils. Therefore, 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 chapter is to suggest some ways in which the techniques of 'silent sitting' and 'creative visualisation' can be utilised in the classroom without taking too much time away from other activities. Neither of these techniques needs to take up a lot of time in the classroom - just a few minutes once or twice a day are enough.

The value of silent sitting and creative visualisation was illustrated in Jumsai's (1997) model described in the Introduction. This model considers the three levels of the mind: the conscious, the sub-conscious and the super-conscious. Through the five senses, the conscious mind receives and processes information from the environment in order to create awareness and understanding. The sub-conscious 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 colour our perceptions of events that happen around us. The super-conscious 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, and ultimately to bring out the latent divinity within the person. 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 sitting is a useful way to quieten the chatter and promote a feeling of inner peace, and creative visualisation can programme the mind in a positive, healthy way.

Silent Sitting. 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

sitting 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. It can be particularly beneficial to give them some guidance by asking them to focus on slow, steady breathing or even to visualise a light moving steadily through their bodies, bringing relaxation and positive thoughts wherever it touches.

Children only need to practise silent sitting 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 an isolated place 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 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. Sitting 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."

The Light Visualisation. In SSEHV a particularly powerful and beneficial form of silent sitting 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 super-conscious mind: concentration, contemplation and meditation (where meditation simply means the state of being in touch with one's own super-conscious 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 close our eyes and visualise this light. 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 it blossoms into a beautiful flower, fresh and pure. Now think, "My heart is also pure and full of love". Let the light travel down the two arms to the hands. Let these hands be filled with light and think: "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. Let them be 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.

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 sub-conscious 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 sub-conscious 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 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 sub-conscious 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 1980s an Australian doctor, Ainslie Meares, did some pioneering work using creative visualisation to help 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 sub-conscious minds in positive, constructive ways.

The following are examples of visualisations that they can be led through in a relatively short time, to help to facilitate this positive programming.

√ ***Visualisation to improve relaxation and 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 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 sitting 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 on the morning of your exam, but it can also be a good idea to take 2-3 minutes when you are actually sitting 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 be there, 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.

The role of positive affirmations and quotations. "You can consciously create mindsets and use them as *extraordinarily powerful* tools for

producing the results you want,” (Newman, 1992). The sub-conscious mind is not able to think independently, but once a thought is firmly planted in it, it has an incredibly powerful effect on putting that thought into action. Like creative visualisation, the use of positive affirmations and quotations can help to bring this about.



Reflection and Discussion

Start a collection of powerful, productive quotations or affirmations

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

The following are some examples suggested by Newman:

- ◆ “I refuse to let problems or frustrations interfere with my success, health and happiness.”
- ◆ “I will make people shine.”
- ◆ “I don’t have to be perfect. I’m not perfect but parts of me are excellent.”

Reported evidence of effects of silent sitting and creative visualisation in the classroom. Several studies have explored the effects of utilizing 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 (Kratzer and Hogan, 1982). In the UK, Anita Devi found with her Grade 4 class that regular use of silent sitting led to a significant improvement in the children's concentration, behaviour and mathematics attainment, and the same thing has been found repeatedly in the schools in which we have worked in China. When, as a control, Devi stopped the practice for a month there was a decline in all three aspects, and eventually the children themselves asked to start it again. From this and other anecdotal evidence, it appears that this could be something worth pursuing!



Reflection and Discussion

Silent sitting for the teacher's own use

This journey to personal empowerment as a teacher is one of inward reflection. The following questions for discussion and personal reflection have been taken from Sri Aurobindo Education Society (2001), p.12. It is suggested that you can reflect on these questions from your reasoning mind, or you can utilise the techniques of silent sitting and go within yourself for the answers.

- √ When, where or from what do I find maximum guidance in my life?
- √ A moment or situation in my life of great learning was...
- √ The feeling associated with that moment is....
- √ What brings me closer to my inner nature?
- √ The best present I can give to myself is
- √ Something I would like to develop in myself is
(and some more practical questions)
- √ How much effort am I willing to put into this journey of self-discovery?
- √ Am I ready to spend time on it every day?
- √ Where can I find a quiet place all by myself?
- √ How do I make sure that during this time I will not be disturbed by others?

Choosing to Think Calmly and Go Within Myself for the Answers to my Problems (Newman, 1992). Recently in Australia I was working with a very special teacher who appeared to be totally calm and relaxed, and unphased by whatever happened in her classroom. At the end of one day, there was an incident with a particularly disruptive girl. The teacher handled it in her usually calm way. However, when she arrived at school the next day she was looking exhausted. She said that she had been lying awake all night worrying about how to follow up the situation. So even she, for all her calmness, was suffering on the inside because of work-related problems. I suggest she could have saved herself a sleepless night and found a solution more quickly and easily if she had really gone inside herself and listened to her own inner voice.



*“When we are in contact with our psychic centre
we experience the world in a different way:
everything becomes more beautiful,
we stop making judgments,
we see the deep harmony that exists
in spite of outer appearances
and we spread loving goodwill
and harmony ourselves.*

- Sri Aurobindo Education Society (2001), p.4



As already mentioned earlier, in Jumsai’s model we see that the third level of the mind is the super-conscious. This is the part of the mind that knows everything and is the source of our inspiration and intuition. If we can find a way to get in touch with our super-conscious, we can find solutions to our problems very easily. It was mentioned earlier in this chapter that in Sathya Sai Education in Human Values we use a technique called the ‘Light Visualisation’ which is a safe and effective way of progressing through these three levels. We use light as a focal point for our concentration because it is symbolic of purity, warmth, knowledge and wisdom. This technique is beneficial in silencing the mind’s extraneous ‘chatter’ to improve concentration and problem solving, and enabling us to go deeply within our own consciousness to tap into the wisdom that is latent there. Below is a version of the Light Visualisation that has been adapted slightly for teachers themselves to use, to focus on addressing the problems that arise in teaching.

Take a deep breath and as you breathe in, draw the light into your head. As you breathe out release your stress and tension. Draw the light in a line from your head to your heart and let it settle there for a few moments, opening your heart like a flowerbud. Now let the light pass through your feet and your hands so they will lead you to meet with good people and do good things. Next take the light to surround your mouth and tongue so you can speak wisely and with compassion your eyes. Then take it to your eyes and let it fill your eyes so that you can see only the good qualities in your students. Let it fill your ears so you will hear the truth in what they are saying. Now bring the light to the top of your head and allow it to fill your mind with peaceful thoughts, then imagine that you are sending it to your pupils – particularly the ones who make your life difficult – your colleagues and then to the whole Universe. Say to yourself, “I am in the light. The light is in me. I am the light”. As you say this, hold your problem in the light for a few moments and trust that the illumination will bring a successful solution, and then release the problem.



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.

CHAPTER 5

LOVING STUDENTS EVEN IN THEIR UNLIKEABLE MOMENTS

Love is the first and foremost principle of Sathya Sai Education in Human Values.

“Teachers who will promote qualities of mutual love and regard in their students are sorely needed today. You can teach love to students only through love.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

Her name was Mrs. Thompson. And as she stood in front of her 5th grade class on the very first day of school, she told the children a lie. Like most teachers, she looked at her students and said that she loved them all the same. But that was impossible, because there in the front row, slumped in his seat, was a little boy named Teddy Stoddard. Mrs. Thompson had watched Teddy the year before and noticed that he didn't play well with the other children, that his clothes were messy and that he constantly needed a bath. And Teddy could be unpleasant. It got to the point where Mrs. Thompson would actually take delight in marking his papers with a broad red pen, making bold X's and then putting a big "F" at the top of his papers.

Bits & Pieces
- June 1995 Economics Press

It has been well documented (for example Burke and Nierenberg, 1998; Noddings, 1988, 1992, 1995a, and 1995b) that most teachers work very hard and care about their students. Mrs. Thompson was clearly one of these. But despite the fact that we know how important it is for all pupils to be loved, she, like many teachers, found that there are times when it is difficult to love them, either because there is something about the child that we do not like, or because we are feeling stressed in a situation and forget about the love. This raises two questions. The first is, “Can we be successful as teachers if our work is not based on love?” And the second is, “How can we overcome our own personal problems and be able to create a classroom environment in which love is consistently projected to all of our pupils?” The purpose of this article is to suggest some ways

in which inspirational teachers have been able to make their pupils feel loved even when it has been difficult for them to do so. First, however, we will look at why it is important to love the students we teach.



What is love and why is it important for teachers to project it?

“Love perceives a spirit of identity with others, a feeling of oneness. It is the realisation of the brotherhood of man and the kinship of life, arising in one’s own heart. It is the concept of not only being loving and kind to others, but of treating them as oneself. Love is not an emotion, but a spontaneous reaction from the heart.”

*(Programme of 3rd International Conference
on Sathya Sai Education in Human Values,
Thailand, 1991, p.20)*

Love, which incorporates compassion, consideration, forgiveness, humaneness, interdependence, selflessness, and tolerance is considered to be the basis of character and encompasses other desirable human qualities. “Love in thought is truth, love in feeling is peace, love in understanding is non-violence, and love in action is right action” (Sathya Sai Baba). It is for this reason that love is fundamental to Sathya Sai Educare, which is concerned with eliciting from children their latent inner values and their ability to become caring individuals:

“Educare is education which makes one a caring individual, because one becomes a caring individual when one realizes that one is not different from the other, that both are the same. My brother’s pain, my sister’s sorrow is my sorrow, my pain. When you become aware that there is no difference, you become a caring individual.... The answer lies in our implementing this technology in our lives. Am I able to control my desires? Am I conscious of the inputs of five senses in my mind? Am I able to turn my mind inside? Am I able to experience the power of love within? These are the questions that all of us have to ask.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

The greatest healing power of all is love. The state of unconditional love is a very powerful protector of our own well-being. Creating and maintaining a state of unconditional love, without any expectations from others, is a great physical, mental and spiritual health tonic for ourselves and for others around us as well. If we allow the love to be projected to those around us, we will also be helping them to heal and be purified. Where selfishness or jealousy are allowed to flourish, disease can grow and pain can thrive. The most powerful way to overcome these is to let the love be sincere and without self-interest.

The state of unconditional love is one that will help children to relate better to other children and adults. No matter what others do or say to them, if they are able to maintain this state they will find that they are not as easily able to be hurt or distressed by what is going on around them and, in some instances, may even have the effect of changing the situation simply by sending the right kind of feelings to their attackers. It is a significant component of a balanced, harmonised classroom and a value that ought to be instilled in all children from a very early age. As well as teaching children to project the feeling of unconditional love to other people, they can be encouraged to try the exercise with animals, plants and even places. There can never be an over-supply of this positive energy.

Bullough and Baughman (1993) have presented an interesting discussion of the role of 'love' in enhancing the classroom environment, as exemplified by the following comment from an experienced teacher (p.90):

A lot of my success comes from learning how to deal with the students and to treat them the way they need to be treated, positively. I call it loving them along, because that is what works for me. I want to have a loving environment in my classroom where my students can blossom. A second principle is that a classroom should be a warm, fuzzy place like a family, where students feel loved and cared for, but more than a family - a caring community where students feel connected and responsible for one another...

In fact, it has been suggested that this can be one of most important factors in enabling teachers to cope effectively with adolescent pupils (Gordon, 1997). One of the most useful things a teacher can do to model this value is to interact with colleagues and pupils from heart to heart rather than from head to head. Teachers who consciously practise acting and reacting to their pupils and their colleagues with compassion and acceptance find that their interactions are more positive because they are

able to respond to the situations around them with a different attitude, and they are able to be more accepting of others' faults and weaknesses. They also find that this is less taxing and less stressful, because they are able to let go of distressing situations more easily and will not be in as much danger of damage to their own physical and mental well-being.

Opening our hearts to our pupils helps them to become aware of the "ever-present flow of joyous love within themselves and others" (Sathya Sai Baba Central Council of the United States of America, *Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Teachers' Manual, 1996...* p. 3-A-49). This helps them to:

- √ awaken their faith in themselves
- √ trust in the goodness of others
- √ give service to others
- √ desire sincere friendship
- √ recognise others' needs
- √ desire to relieve others' suffering
- √ love their country
- √ have reverence for all life
- √ love themselves

"You can teach love to students only through love."

- Sathya Sai Baba



Some teachers' stories about the power of love

Many people have had experiences about situations of potential physical or mental abuse, that have been diffused by projecting the energy of pure, unconditional love towards the potential perpetrator. What an empowering thing it would be if we could use this strategy to help to diffuse children's anger or fear in the classroom, and even more empowering if we could teach the children to use it for themselves in times of potential conflict. As strange as it may seem, both of the following stories are true. In fact, the first one has been mentioned already in the earlier chapter "Peace" – whenever we share this story with teachers in our workshops and they decide to try the strategy for themselves they report that it brings about successful results.

Coping with a difficult class

I was a young student teacher and was assigned to my final practice teaching session in a secondary school with a very bad reputation for students refusing to work and often becoming disruptive in class. I was put in charge of a biology class. The regular class teacher was usually not there, so I was on my own. The kids, particularly the boys, began to play up badly and I was getting more and more frustrated that my lessons weren't working out. The students knew I was frustrated and scared of them, and the more they sensed this, the worse they got. I had a lesson coming up in which the students were going to dissect frogs, and I was really panicking - I was actually scared that somebody would do something stupid with a scalpel and somebody could get hurt. I was really feeling desperate, and just didn't know what to do. In desperation, the evening before the lesson, I called my Mum, who is also a teacher, to ask for her advice. She is a very loving, compassionate person, and she reminded me of what she has been teaching me since I was a young child, that 'love can move mountains'. She suggested that if I had difficulty 'loving' these students, it could help to imagine that I was surrounding them in a pink bubble, since pink is often the colour associated with love. Thinking that I had nothing to lose, I decided to try what she suggested. When I went into the class the next day, I took a few minutes to concentrate on building up a feeling of love towards the pupils. Then I 'let it go' - I literally threw the feeling out into the classroom from my heart. The result was unbelievable - for the whole lesson, the pupils were happy and worked co-operatively together. There were no incidents, and the lesson went far more smoothly than I could ever have hoped. I couldn't believe that the effect of 'throwing' the love at them could be so profound - but I have certainly remembered to do it at the beginning of any other lessons I teach!

Defusing violence

I was working as a social worker in a school when I was called urgently to the Principal's office. I got there to find a particularly angry father. He had been called in because his son had been constantly in trouble and this time it had been necessary to suspend him. The father was furious with his son, and he was also furious with the Principal for making decision that he knew would affect his son's future. It was a very ugly mood and we could not calm the man down. He became angrier and angrier, and physically grabbed hold of the Principal as if he was going to become violent. At that moment I remembered having been taught the strategy of projecting 'love' towards an angry person. I did it and could not believe what happened. The man literally let go of the Principal and dropped his hands to his sides. Of course he was still upset and angry, and we still had to spend a lot of time talking to him, but the use of the strategy had calmed him down enough to turn the potentially violent moment around.

These two stories give very dramatic examples of how projecting love can bring about transformation in people. But the reality is that, like Mrs. Thompson with Teddy Stoddard, even the most aware teachers find that it is not always possible to remember to project love. Sometimes in the heat of the moment we might become angry or simply too busy to think about projecting love. Sometimes if a child is naughty or rebellious it is difficult to love unconditionally – it is much easier to love them if they are clean, tidy and well-behaved than if they are being obnoxious. However, there are many different ways that we can ‘love’ our pupils, even at the difficult times.



***Generating the feeling of love through
regular self-programming***

“Only if there is water in the tank can you get water in the tap. If the tank is dry, how can you draw water from the tap? If you fill the tank of your heart with unconditional love, you can have love towards everyone and receive love from everyone.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

One strategy is to programme yourself to project love. The following visualisation can be very effective in programming the sub-conscious mind. If the sub-conscious hears the message often enough, it will take control and continue to project the love even when you are not able to consciously think about it.

A visualization 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, like 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 sitting 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.



Other ways of giving love

Acceptance

“Quiet acceptance is the best armor against anxiety: not the acceptance of the weak, but the courageous acceptance of the heroic.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

If we are able to accept others in spite of their faults and weaknesses, we are able to do much to make them feel loved. The following extracts from Bits and Pieces (*Economic Press*, June, 1995) illustrate the profound effect that teachers can have on pupils' lives simply by accepting them for what they are rather than putting them down for not meeting our expectations.

.... his parents said they wanted me to know what I had done for their son. They said that after he was in my class he had a really bad year where a teacher constantly put him down. He began writing that he was stupid, he was dumb and that he hated himself. Then one day he went out into their barn with the intention of hanging himself. He thought of me and my faith in him and couldn't do it. His parents then thanked me for their son."

- Pamela Elliott



Just when I was about to give up because I thought my teaching wasn't even changing or helping even one child, my mind was completely changed. I went to school the next week to begin my placement and one of my first grader's parent came to me and just fell into my arms and cried out, "THANK YOU". She had explained that her child had ADHD (I had already discovered that) and no one had the patience to teach or just love her for who she was. She told me that I made a difference in her daughter's life, just by showing I cared and having patience with her. She wanted to learn when she was with me, but her other teachers constantly condemned her because they couldn't control her. What a compliment, needless to say I am continuing on with my student teaching. Never give up, if you teach from the heart you may not realize it at that precise moment but you are making a difference in someone.

- Crystal Anderson

Gordon (1997) has described the importance of a teacher accepting the students' social culture in order to be able to bring out the best in them.

A student teacher was discussing a particularly complex topic in genetics with a 10th grade ESL (English as a Second Language) class. The students were struggling with the content but were focused intently on the student teacher. She radiated warmth and professionalism, and she used a popular video game as an example to help the students remember the structure of a gene. Everything about her, including her body language, verbal expression, and even eye contact, communicated sensitivity and empathy with her students. They recognized that she understood them; she had encountered the same feelings they were experiencing. The teacher was familiar with their culture, and this familiarity laid the groundwork for mutual respect. Students did not need to act out with her. Additionally, if any disruption occurred, she spotted it immediately and acted accordingly.

The following summarizes the strategies this student teacher used to ensure that she was in touch with her students' culture, thus facilitating her connection and rapport with students.

- 1. Expose yourself to adolescent culture. As painful as it may seem, watching MTV, listening to current music, and attending popular movies can help provide a connection to what is current in students' lives. This does not require teachers to participate in the latest fashions. For example, having an eyebrow pierced will not endear an adult to young people and can actually alienate them. Adolescents need to distinguish themselves from the adults who nurture them. Teachers can appreciate adolescent culture without embracing it as their own.*
- 2. Affirm students' 'weather.' It can be helpful to understand why students have a high level of energy or are not interested in class on a particular day. For example, the school dance, holiday, a lunch fight, or approaching vacations can all contribute to volatile student weather. Telling students it makes no difference that the prom is the next day is whistling in the wind.*
- 3. Relate content to students' outside interests. Making abstract ideas more concrete by using examples that come from the students' adolescent world can be very effective. For example, in one classroom, the teachers' explanation of why an oxygen atom attracts two hydrogen atoms did not seem relevant to Jesse; however, phrasing the concept in terms of the fact that two 7th grade girls were attracted to him hit closer to home.*
- 4. Know your students. The secondary teacher has very little time to talk with students one-on-one, but it is important to find time for individual chitchat. Effective teachers use strategies such as greeting students at the door, referring to a student's interests in their lectures, or talking to students as they monitor classwork. Attending sporting events and school plays, reading the school paper, or being a club advisor are just a few ways teachers can connect with their students' educational and social loops.*
- 5. Share your humanity with your students. Celebrate life with them. Successful teachers are not afraid to show their strengths and weaknesses to students in the proper context. The classroom is not a therapy group but teachers can enjoy life along with their students.*

Beauty

One of the ways in which we can be more in touch with loving our pupils in their unlovable moments is to look beyond the exterior and to try to

find their inner beauty. In some of the moments when I have been feeling the most 'down' about children's behaviour I have seen some of the most touching glimpses of their inner beauty. Two recent incidents reminded me of this.

I was trying to teach a new mathematics game to a class of 10-year-olds but they were over-excited and becoming unruly. So I stopped the game and packed the materials away and said, with a very serious face, that we would have to try another time when they were more settled. Instantly several of them crowded around to apologise and one little girl touched me on the face and said, "Please smile again teacher". I was deeply touched by their genuine concern that they had done something to make me sad.

On another occasion we were having a big clean-up of the school grounds. I decided to see what would happen if I didn't ask the children to help, so I started by myself to clean up a gazebo that was full of litter and dried mud. For a while none of the children playing nearby bothered to come to help me and I was starting to feel annoyed with them. Eventually one little girl appeared. She ran off to get a broom, swept the floor for a while, and then ran off again. I was feeling disappointed that she hadn't concentrated on the task for long, when I looked up and saw her, with four classmates, struggling to carry a big bucket of water. With no fuss, they divided the labour and worked at cleaning and scrubbing for the next hour and a half. At one stage somebody appeared with some soap and they washed the floor thoroughly. Eventually we had a team of eight working – when one became tired, she would move to a less strenuous task and one of the others would replace her.

Once again I was touched by the industriousness of these little girls who were willing to work so hard to help without having to be asked, and at their resourcefulness in allocating the tasks between themselves. Both of these experiences reminded me that even when I am feeling annoyed with children, if I can be reminded to take a glimpse of their inner beauty – even if it's necessary to dig deeply to find it - I can still feel love for them.

Sometimes in group gatherings like school assemblies I play a game with myself where I try to focus on one child and to think of one thing that is beautiful about him/her. Usually after a few minutes something comes into my mind, even if it is a child I don't know very well – and by playing this game I learn to see the unlikeable children in a very different way.

Brotherliness

“When the behaviour of some one person or some one family disrupts life and breeds fear, faction and fighting in the community.... the forces of brotherhood, mutual help and sympathetic understanding have to overpower the sinister influence of these individuals and promote unity and strength.... Above all, cultivate unity and brotherhood. A single fibre of hemp cannot bind even an ant; thousands rolled into a rope can tame a wild elephant into submission. In unity lies strength and prosperity.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

Seeing ourselves as one family or one community can be a very powerful way to help a child to feel loved as long as the child is made to feel like a valued member of the community with the rights and the responsibilities that come with belonging. Some teachers are able to think of the class as an extension of their own family:

“The best advice I was given during my teacher training was to love the children and be a model to them....this has led me to treat the pupils I teach as my own biological children.”

- secondary school teacher

In this kind of community we can all learn from each other – we can learn from the children just as much as they can learn from us. If we are aware of this concept of unity, or ‘oneness’ we can often recognise that when a child is behaving in an unlovable way, we can see it as a mirror of ourselves and think about what we can learn from him/her. For example, if a child reacts by losing his temper and throwing things around, it can help us to think of ourselves when things go wrong and whether we behave in a similar way – and we can silently thank the child for bringing this lesson to our attention.

Compassion

“Seeing a person in distress and expressing verbal sympathy is not compassion. Compassion must express itself in action to relieve the suffering. Nor should you adopt an attitude of aloofness or indifference on the plea that each one is suffering for his own folly. Though suffering may be due to one’s mistakes – mistakes to which everyone is prone – we should seek to remedy such suffering just as we try to get rid of our own suffering....”

- Sathya Sai Baba

Compassion can be defined as deep sympathy for the suffering of another. If we are finding it difficult to feel love for a child, then perhaps it may be easier to tune into the child’s inner feelings – the pain, confusion or anxiety that s/he may be feeling because of the situation. Burke and Nierenberg (1998) describe one teacher’s decision to become a primary support person for a child battling against leukemia, visiting her in hospital and at home. The child, as a young adult, reflected that the teacher’s support at this very vulnerable time of her life had influenced her profoundly.

Some other teachers have commented:

As a teacher you don’t have to be very harsh on pupils. Not all pupils come from good homes. Firstly, if you can see any problem in a child, try to find out what is causing the child to behave in that way. In terms of compassion, I show it according to the situation. My voice is low, sorrowful and composed. My metamessage is completely compassion. When anything happens, as a role model I must be equal minded. I use comforting and kind words to people who are stressed. When I need to correct my pupils or tell them when their behaviour is inappropriate, I try to do it with compassion rather than anger. I also find that this is less taxing and less stressful for me, because I am able to let go of distressing situations more easily and am not in as much danger of damage to my own physical and mental well-being.

Forbearance and tolerance

“Forbearance is truth, righteousness, right living, love, non-violence, all virtues rolled into one. Tolerate all kinds of persons and opinions; all attitudes and peculiarities.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

Forbearance refers to the discipline of refraining from or overcoming anger and other harmful emotions. If we are frequently upsetting our own equilibrium by getting angry or frustrated at certain situations, we are wasting a lot of time and a lot of our own energy. If we can stay in a balanced frame we will probably be surprised to find how much more energy we have to complete our day's tasks, and how much extra time we are able to create for ourselves.

In the opening story about Mrs. Thompson and Teddy Stoddard, Mrs. Thompson found it very difficult to love Teddy because he was dirty and badly behaved. However, she later found out that his troubles had started when his mother had become ill and then died. Having learned this, Mrs. Thompson became more tolerant of Teddy's shortcomings. The outcome of the story was that she formed a special bond with him that inspired him to succeed with the rest of his education and to become a successful and responsible adult who never forgot this special gift his third-grade teacher had given him.

Forgiveness

“Self gets and forgets: Love gives and forgives.... Love can never entertain the idea of revenge.... When some other person insults you or inflicts pain, allow wisdom to have mastery over you. Discover the truth and do not rush to conclusions.... Forget the harm that anyone has done to you and forget the good that you have done to others.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

One of the most powerful ways to love others is by forgiving them for anything they have done wrong to you. Certainly there are times when a teacher needs to be firm and to give punishment. However, once the incident is over it is important for us to forgive the child and give him/her another chance. If a child must be punished always do it with love. A school principal told the story of a girl who was caught cheating in an examination. She had written some definitions on a piece of paper. When the principal looked into the reason for cheating, she discovered that the child was having so much difficulty with English (not her native language, but the language of the exam) that she could not understand the important terms. Of course, the principal had to punish her by deducting marks. But she then forgave the girl, told her that everyone is entitled to a second chance after making a mistake, and arranged for her to have extra English tuition so she could catch up with the rest of the class. Much later, after she had left the school, the girl wrote to the principal to tell her how important that second chance had been, and how the forgiveness had touched her conscience in a way that punishment in anger could not have done.

Giving, selflessness and service

*Give with humility.
Give in reverence.
Give in plenty.
Give with modesty.
Give as to a friend.
Give without any thought of reward.
Develop the love that asks for no return.*

- Sathya Sai Baba

Burke and Nierenberg (1998) recount several young adults' accounts of teachers who had shown love to them by giving selflessly. One was the teacher who was remembered by his former student as a teacher who, "Said 'Hi' to everyone, eyes lit up when past students came to visit, ate doughnuts every Thursday and would sneak me one, came to every sporting event if at all possible." Any of these is a small action within itself, but it is these small acts of giving that make the students feel they are special and cared for. We might not think that our pupils notice these small things, but they very often do.

Trust and respect

“One should respect all others as one’s own kin.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

One of the greatest gifts of love we can give our pupils is to show them we trust them, and that they can trust us not to ridicule them or break their confidences. The following anecdotes (Burke and Nierenberg, 1998) illustrate the impact of teachers who were able to build this kind of trust.

Dr. J. was probably 70 years old when he decided to retire. I was very bashful until that year. I hated to read out loud in class and he knew it. He knew it because I told him. His response to me was, “If you don’t practise reading out loud, how are you going to get better?” He then proceeded to call on me at least once a week. Not only to read but to answer questions. I hated him! I was only a freshman and felt that he was picking on me. One day he decided to make reading out loud more fun for me, so he put me into a group of four other people and gave us 20 minutes to read over a play. As we started to practise he called me over and said, “Rikki, this is your time to shine!” I couldn’t let him down, so I practised harder than anyone else. My entire group and I got up in front of the class and put so much emotion into our play. I had fun! The class couldn’t believe it and neither could I. I didn’t stumble; my face still got red but I smiled. This is the one time that I can remember feeling good about reading and having a better self-esteem.... I will never forget him. I think about him weekly. Now I smile when I think about everything he did for me.



When I was in third grade I was a ‘tomboy.’ I got ridiculed sometimes, but she taught me to look beyond remarks from other people. She brought out things in me that I never thought I had. One time we studied theatre. We got into everything from dancing, which was her specialty, to mime work. She needed someone to be “the mime”. Nobody wanted to do it because it was so outrageous. So she nominated me. I thought my life was over. But, she really boosted my ego and told me that I could do it, without a doubt. When it came time for me to go on stage, the other children loved it. It really helped me. . . . She always had a huge smile on her face. Her energy was nonstop. I loved her and I still do.

In both of these incidents, the students recognised that the teachers trusted them to do the job well and in turn they placed their trust in the teachers and strived to do their best. In both cases the teachers knew about the students' weaknesses (fear of reading aloud and being a tomboy) but did not use this knowledge to put the students down in any way, and this helped to build the relationship of trust. Traditionally we have learned to expect that students will automatically respect their teachers but this is no longer the case. Even for teachers it is necessary to earn respect and one of the most powerful ways of doing this is by first showing respect to the students:

Mrs. Z treated us like adults. She respected us and for that we respected her. She treated us as team members on her team, she treated us like her friends, and she also treated us like her own children. She was funny. Mrs. Z laughed with us and enjoyed making us laugh. She was stern in her rules, yet unconditional in her support.... She taught us that every child has his or her bad days - however, every child is still good inside. She loved even the worst of us. She always made time to laugh or to say something positive and nice.



***“Giving that ‘healing touch’
so much required in today’s world.”***

The above is a quotation from a teacher who was very much aware of the need to give healing to our pupils through love. We don't have to project love from our hearts only – if we don't feel able to do that for some reason, we can just as effectively project it from our eyes or our hands.

If a child is restless I will sometimes think about drawing in blue energy from the universal supply around us and allowing it to flow through my body and out of my hand into the child to calm him down. Usually I can notice a change after a few minutes. (This can work just as well without actually touching the child if you are in a school system where touching is prohibited).

Similarly, blue energy can help to cool down a child who is angry. If the child seems sad, imagining that you are sending pink energy through your hands helps her to feel loved. The most effective of all is to send them pure white energy because this can have the effect of calming, settling, healing and loving all at once.

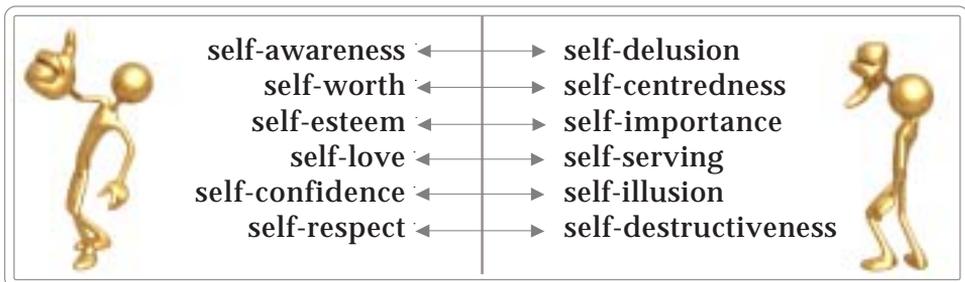
What IS Unconditional Love?

Loving unconditionally doesn't mean that we have to stand by and accept others doing wrong to us – sometimes that becomes martyrdom rather than unconditional love. It means that we are able to reflect the love to such an extent that the world reflects the same back to us. It arises when we have achieved a combination of:

- √ *self-awareness – recognizing that “I have the capacity to have an impact”*
- √ *self-worth – “I am worthy”*
- √ *self-esteem – not drawn from external sources like friends or job status that can be taken away at any moment, but from internal things like honesty, trust and not consciously hurting people, that enable you to appreciate yourself*
- √ *self-love*
- √ *self-confidence that comes from a combination of trust, humility, hope and courage*
- √ *self-respect that comes from appreciating and honouring your emotions and becoming a valuable person to yourself*
- √ *accepting people and things to be the way they are*
- √ *being able to detach – if something comes up to make you hurt or angry, being able to express it, release it and move on*

from Lazarus: Unconditional Love

We can't learn how to love unconditionally. It is something that is already there within us, so we need to work at bringing out. But we can avoid the opposites to each of the above:



from Lazarus: Unconditional Love



Reflection and Discussion

Let's be honest and check on ourselves! If you feel that you are lacking in any one of the above, you might like to do the following visualization that will help you to open yourself up to these six desirable qualities.

**Visualization to help you to open yourself
to the six desirable qualities of a loving person (adapted
from Lazarus: Unconditional love)**

Relax your body and mind. Slowly count backwards from ten, and with each count feel yourself relaxing and letting go more and more. Let down your guard and your resistance to knowing the value of love and allow yourself to seek to find the unconditional within yourself. Imagine yourself in a place where you feel completely safe and secure.... Imagine that a small bubble of light appears before you, and grows bigger and bigger until it engulfs you. Allow yourself to feel that you have impact – let go of any conditioning you may have that you do not have any impact or that your impact is negative. Tell yourself, “I have impact” and let it be.... Now open yourself to the fact that you are worthy – not because of what you have done or who you know but because of the spark within you. Allow yourself to feel and appreciate the worth that has always been there within you.... Next open yourself to the compassion and esteem you have earned for yourself – allow the integrity, the honesty, the responsibility and the trust to come forward from within you.... Let in the security and the pleasure and the honesty and vulnerability – let it in. Let in the caring and the intimacy and the trust. Feel the security. You will not lose this love. Let it be.... Feel the tingle of confidence....the joy and laughter of knowing that confidence, of holding that confidence, to honour your emotions.... allow yourself to respect these emotions.... Allow yourself to catch a glimpse of yourself as a purely, unconditionally loving being.

While we are working on awakening our latent ability to love unconditionally, we can use the many different ways of showing love to our students that have been described in this chapter.

A touching story that shows the power of love even with hardened criminals:

Changed Lives - The Story of Catherine Lawes and Sing Sing

In 1921, Lewis Lawes became the warden at Sing Sing Prison. No prison was tougher than Sing Sing during that time. But when Warden Lawes retired some 20 years later, that prison had become a humanitarian institution. Those who studied the system said credit for the change belonged to Lawes. But when he was asked about the transformation, here's what he said, "I owe it all to my wonderful wife, Catherine, who is buried outside the prison walls." Catherine Lawes was a young mother with three small children when her husband became the warden. Everybody warned her from the beginning that she should never set foot inside the prison walls, but that didn't stop Catherine! When the first prison basketball game was held, she went, walking into the gym with her three beautiful kids and she sat in the stands with the inmates. Her attitude was: "My husband and I are going to take care of these men and I believe they will take care of me! I don't have to worry!" She insisted on getting acquainted with them and their records. She discovered one convicted murderer was blind so she paid him a visit. Holding his hand in hers she said, "Do you read Braille?" "What's Braille?" he asked. Then she taught him how to read. Years later he would weep in love for her. Later, Catherine found a deaf-mute in prison. She went to school to learn how to use sign language. Many said that Catherine Lawes was the body of Jesus that came alive again in Sing Sing from 1921 to 1937. Then, she was killed in a car accident. The next morning Lewis Lawes didn't come to work, so the acting warden took his place. It seemed almost instantly that the prison knew something was wrong. The following day, her body was resting in a casket in her home, three-quarters of a mile from the prison. As the acting warden took his early morning walk, he was shocked to see a large crowd of the toughest, hardest-looking criminals gathered like a herd of animals at the main gate. He came closer and noted tears of grief and sadness. He knew how much they loved Catherine. He turned and faced the men, "All right, men you can go. Just be sure and check in tonight!" Then he opened the gate and a parade of criminals walked, without a guard, the three-quarters of a mile to stand in line to pay their final respects to Catherine Lawes. And every one of them checked back in. Every one!

(By Tim Kimmel from *A 4th Course of Chicken Soup for the Soul*)

Conclusion. The teachers' stories and anecdotes have given some examples of ways in which we can project loving attitudes to students even in their "unlovable" moments, or when other emotions get in the way of our

ability to feel loving. While we can sometimes see immediate effects from using these techniques, as several of these anecdotes suggest, we sometimes might not see any effects and the pupils themselves might not even be aware of the effects until much later in their lives.

Once upon a time there was an island where all the feelings lived; Happiness, Sadness, Knowledge, and all the others..... including Love. One day it was announced to all of the feelings that the island was going to sink to the bottom of the ocean. So all the feelings prepared their boats to leave. Love was the only one that stayed. She wanted to preserve the island paradise until the last possible moment. When the island was almost totally under, Love decided it was time to leave. She began looking for someone to ask for help. Just then Richness was passing by in a grand boat. Love asked, "Richness, Can I come with you on your boat?" Richness answered, "I'm sorry, but there is a lot of silver and gold on my boat and there would be no room for you anywhere." Then Love decided to ask Vanity for help who was passing in a beautiful vessel. Love cried out, "Vanity, help me please." "I can't help you," Vanity said, "you are all wet and will damage my beautiful boat." Next, Love saw Sadness passing by. Love said, "Sadness, please let me go with you." Sadness answered, "Love, I'm sorry but I just need to be alone now." Then, Love saw Happiness. Love cried out, "Happiness, please take me with you." But Happiness was so overjoyed that he didn't hear Love calling to him. Love began to cry. Then, she heard a voice say, "Come Love, I will take you with me." It was an elder. Love felt so blessed and overjoyed that she forgot to ask the elder his name. When they arrived on land the elder went on his way. Love realized how much she owed the elder. Love then found Knowledge and asked, "Who was it that helped me?" "It was Time", Knowledge answered. "But why did Time help me when no one else would?", Love asked. Knowledge smiled and with deep wisdom and sincerity, answered, "Because only Time is capable of understanding how great Love is."

Source unknown

References

- Burke, R. & Nierenberg, I. (1998). In search of the inspirational in teachers and teaching *Journal for a Just & Caring Education*, Vol. 4 Issue 3, p. 336-354.
- Bullough, R. & Baughman, K. (1993). Continuity and change in teacher development: First year teacher after five years. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 44 (2), 86-95.
- Gordon, R. (1997). How novice teachers can succeed with adolescents. *Educational Leadership*, 54 (7), 56-58.

CHAPTER 6

RAISING STUDENTS' SELF-ESTEEM

“The place where true teachers and students are gathered should be filled with serene peace and orderliness. On the contrary, we find today that where students gather fear and insecurity prevail.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

A few years ago in Hong Kong there was a sad incident with a primary school boy who was caught viewing pornographic material on the Internet. He was called to the Headmaster's office but rather than facing the disciplinary consequences he went home and committed suicide. In another incident a secondary pupil, who was punished for handing in homework late and being late for school by having to sit and work outside the Headmaster's office each day for a week, felt so humiliated by his classmates' teasing that he claimed it caused him to become schizophrenic. A friend who is a teacher recently told me about one of her 14-year-old pupils who took an overdose of pills before coming to class in a suicide attempt, not her first. Her reason was that she was lonely and could not see any other way out of it. A twelve-year-old told me that the reason he made no attempt to do any work in class was because, "I won't be able to get any posh job anyway, so what's the point?" In my fairly small home town there has been a spate of unemployed youths, with nothing better to do, attacking cars stopped at traffic lights, breaking windows and slashing tyres. Various acts of bullying, whether physical, mental or emotional, are rampant in schools everywhere (Safe and Caring Schools Project, 1997).

All of these acts seem to point to a common problem: lack of the kind of healthy esteem for self and others that is needed to encourage our youth to become positive about their own lives and their contributions to society (Burke and Nierenberg, 1998). While the job of teachers has traditionally been to convey skills and knowledge, it is becoming an increasingly important challenge for us to help our pupils to acquire a sense of their own self-worth and of the worth of others (Burke and Nierenberg, 1998). It is not an easy challenge, particularly in those education systems where academic achievement is regarded as the priority and intensive curricula allow little time for the development of personal qualities. The purpose of this paper is to share some strategies that can help, without adding anything extra to already-demanding programmes. It includes some

quotations from spiritual teachers that challenge us to examine our own teaching practices and the ways in which we interact with our pupils, to make certain that we are not inadvertently and unconsciously engaging in any behaviours that can be damaging to their self-esteem, particularly in cases where self-esteem is fragile to start with (for example with many adolescents). Interestingly, there has been some research evidence to suggest that in taking time to focus on self-esteem we will most likely also be contributing to enhancing the pupils' achievement, since negative feelings such as concern, fear, frustration, and loneliness have been shown to negatively affect learning as well as behavior (Peterson and Skiba, 2001).

What contributes to low self-esteem?

“In the case of children we find the inordinate ambition, aroused by an exaggerated sense of inferiority, acting like a poison in the soul – forever making the child dissatisfied. Such a dissatisfaction is not one which leads to useful activity. It remains fruitless because it is fed by a disproportionate ambition.”

- Adler (1996), p.49

Apart from the above-mentioned overt signs of low self-esteem, we need to be aware of some of the more subtle signs. As mentioned above, bullying other pupils is often a sign that the bully's self-esteem is low (Safe and Caring Schools Project, 1997). But research has also suggested that other behaviours, such as tardiness with handing in papers or assignments, procrastinating on projects and displaying a tendency to attribute difficulties to personality flaws like being lazy, undisciplined or not knowing how to organize time, can all be associated significantly with anxiety, depression and low self-esteem (Senecal and Koestner, 1995). Another telltale sign can be fear of failure (or of blame, rejection, or other anticipated social consequences of failure), characterized either by trying to escape from situations in which their performance will be judged, or setting aspirations for themselves that are so low they can easily fulfil them without effort, or so high that they can excuse themselves for failing because it is impossible to fulfil them (Brophy, 1996).

It has been suggested that our society tends to equate achievement with self-worth, which leads to a perception that individuals are only as worthy as their achievements (Scott, 1999). This perception is particularly evident, both explicitly and implicitly, in schools, where students often confuse ability and worth (Renchler, 1992; Scott, 1999), and, as Scott

suggests, where there may not be sufficient guidance to help them modify this perception.

How can the school climate promote student self-esteem?

“Students today are oblivious to self-support. How, then, can they achieve self-control?”

- Sathya Sai Baba

There is much that teachers can contribute to the growth of self-esteem by creating classroom environments that students perceive as caring and supportive and where there is a sense of belonging and everyone being valued (Lumsden, 1994). One way in which this has been achieved has been to give students greater opportunity to become self-supportive, for example by allowing them to choose and control their learning. This can result in greater confidence and self-esteem along with other qualities, like higher motivation and greater commitment (Adler *et al.*, 2001). We need to help pupils to have a realistic awareness of their personal strengths and weaknesses and the ability to create reasonable goals (Maitland, 2000). Furthermore, Maitland advocates that encouraging self-monitoring of their success in achieving these goals, rather than relying on the teacher, contributes to the development of positive self-esteem. Self-monitoring and basing instruction and evaluation on outcomes can make it possible for slower students to experience success without having to compete with faster ones; attribution retraining can help apathetic students view failure as a lack of effort rather than a lack of ability; and co-operative learning activities help students realize that personal effort can contribute to group as well as individual goals (Renchler, 1992).

Peterson and Skiba (2001) have suggested that building self-esteem and a sense of community can be brought about by promoting specific qualities that include:

- self-respect that derives feelings of worth not only from competence but also from positive behavior toward others;
- social perspective taking that asks how others think and feel;
- moral reasoning about the right thing to do;
- moral values such as kindness, courtesy, trustworthiness, and responsibility.

They suggest that these can be brought about by paying attention to “Six Pillars of Character”:

1. **Trustworthiness.** Be honest; don't deceive, cheat, or steal. Be reliable—do what you say you'll do. Have the courage to do the right thing. Build a good reputation. Be loyal—stand by your family, friends, and country.
2. **Respect.** Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule. Be tolerant of differences. Use good manners, not bad language. Be considerate of the feelings of others. Don't threaten, hit, or hurt anyone. Deal peacefully with anger, insults, and disagreements.
3. **Responsibility.** Do what you are supposed to do. Persevere: Keep on trying! Always do your best. Use self-control. Be self-disciplined. Think before you act. Consider the consequences. Be accountable for your choices.
4. **Fairness.** Play by the rules. Take turns and share. Be open-minded; listen to others. Don't take advantage of others. Don't blame others carelessly.
5. **Caring.** Be kind. Be compassionate and show you care. Express gratitude. Forgive others. Help people in need.
6. **Citizenship.** Do your share to make your school and community better. Co-operate. Stay informed. Vote. Be a good neighbour. Obey laws and rules. Respect authority. Protect the environment.

Having discussed a few examples of **what** needs to be done, we will now take a look at some strategies for **how** we can achieve some of these needs to promote our pupils' self-esteem. One way is through monitoring what we say and do to them.

Appreciating pupils' good qualities

“Educators can develop a sense of self-respect and self-esteem among their pupils by respecting them as individuals of unique abilities. As a matter of fact a real teacher always does so. When a real teacher teaches his pupil he makes him feel his uniqueness and the potential of things that he can do after his full development.”

- Jayaswal (1997), p.63

Sometimes we under-estimate the effect a teacher can have on a pupil's self esteem. Carson (1996) has described the potential transformative power of a teacher's ability to see personal worth and academic ability that may often be unrecognized by the students themselves, and she suggests that this can have a life-long impact.

The story on the website <http://www.motivateus.com/stories/ican.htm> is about a third grade teacher who made a great difference to one pupil's self-esteem through a seemingly very small action. Another such story is summarized below:



Sarah was a seven-year-old girl who loved her teacher and always tried her best with her schoolwork. When the headmistress came into the classroom one day and announced that some important visitors would come to the school and that everyone must do their best to make a good impression, Sarah hoped desperately that her artwork would be chosen to display for the visitors. But sadly for Sarah she was always the slowest, and always the last to be chosen for anything, so she thought it was very unlikely her work would be chosen. So she was incredulous when her teacher asked her to stay behind after school and told her that she had been chosen for the most important task of the day. The following extract from the story speaks for itself:

"She couldn't believe what she'd heard. "Me?" she asked incredulously in a small voice. "You've chosen me?"

"Yes, you Sarah," said Miss Ellis, smiling. "You have a very special quality."

A look of such amazement and joy swept over Sarah's face that it was a moment before Miss Ellis went on. "Tomorrow, Sarah, when our important visitors arrive, I want you to be there at the door to greet them. You will be the very first person they see. The very first! And I want you to give them your beautiful smile!"

*"First Impressions" by Rosemary Abbeyfield,
Australian Woman's Day, October 25, 1999, p.87*

Modeling self-esteem enhancing behaviour

“When ridiculing, reprimanding or punishing pupils, teachers must try to picture themselves in their position and discover how they would have reacted to the same, when they were pupils. Self-inquiry of this kind will be very useful.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

Natural but deliberate modeling by teachers has been shown to be a particularly effective way to bring about character development in students (Scott, 1999). In particular, it is valuable to model perseverance with difficult tasks and the use of failure as a learning experience to move on to new levels of growth (Scott, 1999; Taplin, 2000). Of course, in modeling these behaviours we are not only enhancing the pupils' sense of self-worth, but also encouraging them to mirror the same behaviours in their interactions with others.

Silberman (1978) has suggested some positive modeling strategies for bringing about positive self-esteem in children. They include:

- distinguish between the trivial and the important.... Ask children to make their list of important values and to ask the question “why does this matter to me?” – narrow down to the essentials and then have some honest talk about what’s important and what’s not;
- be the kind of person you want your children to become;
- emphasise your approval whenever possible: ‘It is always tempting to transmit values by criticism. “Why is your room so messy? Why are you so careless with money?” Yet we seldom praise our children when their rooms are neat or when they have handled money well. We should, because compliments enable parents and teachers to transmit values by heaping deserved praise instead of inflicting unnecessary guilt.’ (pp.135-136);
- count how many times in a day you make negative comments: “I never realized how many times a day I made negative comments to the children,” a mother told me, “until I actually began to keep score. I was appalled!” (p. 136).

Webster (1996) suggests some enabling strategies that we can utilize to enhance children’s sense of self-worth. She cautions that there are certain ‘disabling’ things that we should be careful **not** to say because constant

repetition of these messages may cause long-term damage that may undermine the child's sense of well-being now and in the years ahead:

- Be careful when and how to give constructive criticism: even constructive criticism can sting when it's delivered at the wrong moment – for instance, right after a youngster has mucked up a project. That's when he's most vulnerable.... Later on...put your effort into discussing the child's feelings and working together on ways to improve his performance. (p.24)
- Avoid excessive teasing, particularly about their physical appearance or short-comings: 'teasing that comes from parents [or teachers] is the most painful teasing of all – and can lead to more negative views of themselves as they grow up. (p.24)
- Encourage them to express their feelings: when we continually deny their feelings, our children get the message that they shouldn't express them. They begin to think that they're supposed to keep anger and other emotions to themselves.... If your child expresses acute disappointment or a negative emotion... listen to what she or he has to say, and acknowledge his or her feelings with respect. (p.25)
- Don't be over-effusive with praise: because children will stop believing it and are likely to experience a big letdown when they get into the larger world. Temper praise with honesty. (p.25)
- Express anger without being hurtful: criticize the child's behaviour instead of the child himself. Don't say, "You're such a slob." Try: "Your room is a mess. You need to pick up the dirty clothes." (p.26)
- Share the child's enthusiasm about sharing something he has done: don't always put him off with "not now" – a persistent pattern of putting him off can leave a lasting impact. (p.27)

Silent sitting

"He (the child of the future) is never lonely because he has found his true self. He knows that happiness means enjoying the things around him, and for that he doesn't have to possess them; that true joy is to possess the wholeness of things, the wholeness of himself and the wholeness of the universe – a wholeness which, since his babyhood, he has never left."

- Medhananda (1996), p.78

What most of these strategies discussed above have been advocating is helping children to get in touch with their true selves. What an enabling thing it would be if teachers can help to bring about this sense of inner strength. One simple technique that can be used on a regular basis to help with this is that of silent sitting and creative visualization (please refer to the chapter *Silent Sitting and Creative Visualisation*).

Silent sitting is a tool for silencing the mind's extraneous 'chatter' to improve concentration and problem solving. It refers to encouraging pupils to sit quietly and allow their minds to relax for a few minutes, particularly at the beginning of a lesson, to make them feel more focused and peaceful. Positive visualization can be incorporated into a silent sitting activity to guide pupils to focus on constructive, healthy thoughts and actions, rather than negative or destructive ones. It is an empowering technique that can have immense benefits for all pupils - even those who are initially reluctant to participate in silent sitting sessions begin very quickly to look forward to and even to ask for them. The following visualization is one that can be utilized on a regular basis to enhance their self-esteem by helping them to get in touch with their true selves.

**Visualization 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, 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.

Value statements, proverbs and positive affirmations

Student self-esteem can be enhanced by the use of value statements, which are statements of positive characteristics that all teachers and students can accept as desirable goals and that are prominently displayed in key locations in the school and are sometimes included on stationery, newsletters, and assembly programs (Peterson and Skiba, 2001). This use of value statements can be enhanced by the use of proverbs and/or other positive, inspirational quotations - with regular, frequent exposure it is possible for these to have a 'reprogramming' effect on our thinking, which in turn has positive effects on the way we act. Some examples of esteem-enhancing quotations are shown below:

"Someone once asked me what I want on my epitaph when I pass away. Just the words - 'I tried.' That's what this game of life is all about. Trying. There's the tryers, the criers, and the liars." — *Mickey Rooney*



"As long as we are persistent in our pursuit of our deepest destiny, we will continue to grow. We cannot choose the day or time when we will fully bloom. It happens in its own time." — *Denis Waitley*



"Persisting through lesser difficulties builds your capacity to persist through greater difficulties, and achieve even greater things." — *Brian Tracy*



"The establishment of a clear central purpose or goal in life is the starting point of all success." — *Brian Tracy*



"Don't dwell on what went wrong. Instead, focus on what to do next. Spend your energies on moving forward toward finding the answer." — *Denis Waitley*



"The problem is not that there are problems. The problem is expecting otherwise and thinking that having problems is a problem." — *Theodore Rubin*



"You can do anything in life you set your mind to, provided it is powered by your heart." — *Doug Firebaugh*



"How different our lives are when we really know what is deeply important to us, and keeping that picture in mind, we manage ourselves each day to be and to do what really matters most." — *Stephen Covey*



“Every living creature that comes into the world has something allotted him to perform; therefore, he should not stand an idle spectator of what others are doing.” — *Sarah Kirby Trimmer*



“You must take personal responsibility. You cannot change the circumstances, the seasons, or the wind, but you can change yourself. That is something you have charge of. You don’t have charge of the constellations but you do have charge of whether you read, develop new skills, and take new classes.” — *Jim Rohn*



“The choice is yours. You hold the tiller. You can steer the course you choose in the direction of where you want to be - today, tomorrow, or in a distant time to come.” — *W. Clement Stone*



“Don’t go around saying the world owes you a living; the world owes you nothing; it was here first.” — *Mark Twain*



“My philosophy is that not only are you responsible for your life, but doing the best at this moment puts you in the best place for the next moment.” — *Oprah Winfrey*



“Whatever you believe with emotion becomes reality. You always act in a manner consistent with your innermost beliefs and convictions.” — *Brian Tracy*



“If you believe you can, you probably can. If you believe you won’t, you most assuredly won’t. Belief is the ignition switch that gets you off the launching pad.” — *Denis Waitley*



“Somehow I can’t believe that there are any heights that can’t be scaled by a man who knows the secrets of making dreams come true. This special secret - curiosity, confidence, courage, and constancy, and the greatest of all is confidence. When you believe in a thing, believe in it all the way, implicitly and unquestionable.” — *Walt Disney*



“One person with a belief is equal to a force of ninety-nine with only interests.” — *John Stuart Mill*



“People begin to become successful the minute they decide to be.” — *Harvey Mackay*



“Learn how to be happy with what you have while you pursue all that you want.” — *Jim Rohn*



“Happiness comes when you believe in what you are doing, know what you are doing, and love what you are doing.” — *Brian Tracy*



“Happiness is an attitude of mind, born of the simple determination to be happy under all outward circumstances.” — *J. Donald Walters*



“Opportunity often comes disguised in the form of misfortune, or temporary defeat.” — *Napoleon Hill*



“Effective people are not problem-minded; they're opportunity-minded. They feed opportunities and starve problems.” — *Stephen Covey*



“Be more concerned with your character than with your reputation. Your character is what you really are while your reputation is merely what others think you are.” — *John Wooden*



“Character is a quality that embodies many important traits, such as integrity, courage, perseverance, confidence and wisdom. Unlike your fingerprints that you are born with and can't change, character is something that you create within yourself and must take responsibility for changing.” — *Jim Rohn*



“The history of the human race is the history of ordinary people who have overcome their fears and accomplished extraordinary things.” — *Brian Tracy*



“If I were asked to give what I consider the single most useful bit of advice for all humanity, it would be this: Expect trouble as an inevitable part of life, and when it comes, hold your head high. Look it squarely in the eye, and say, “I will be bigger than you. You cannot defeat me.”” — *Ann Landers*



“Hard work often leads to success. No work seldom does.” — *Harvey Mackay*



“Optimists are right. So are pessimists. It's up to you to choose which you will be.” — *Harvey Mackay*



“‘I can't do it’ never yet accomplished anything. ‘I will try’ has accomplished wonders.’ — *George P. Burnham*



“Ability is what you're capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it.” — *Lou Holtz*



“Any fact facing us is not as important as our attitude toward it, for that determines our success or failure.” — *Norman Vincent Peale*



“Positive thinking will let you do everything better than negative thinking will.” — *Zig Ziglar*



“Don’t say, ‘If I could, I would.’ Say, ‘If I can, I will’” — *Jim Rohn*



“Whether you think you can or think you can’t — you’re right.” — *Henry Ford*



“If you look up, there are no limits.” — *Japanese Proverb*

Finding inner potential

“The first duty of the teacher is to help the student to know himself and to discover what he is capable of doing.”

- The Mother (1996), p.16

Much that has been written here about strategies for enhancing self-esteem has been concerned with helping pupils to understand their inner potential, and how this can be used to make a meaningful contribution (Dowsett, 1996). Everyone has something unique and special about them and it our responsibility as teachers to help them find and value this inner potential, and how it can be used to contribute positively to the student’s **own** life, for the **whole** of life, as well as to contribute to society (Dowsett, 1996). This issue has been discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, *Diamond of the Week*.

“Without self-confidence no achievement is possible. If you have confidence in your strength and skill, you can draw upon the inner springs of courage and raise yourselves to a higher level of joy and peace.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

References

Adler, A. (1996). ‘Goal-forming activity of the child’. In Dowsett, N., Jayaswal, S. & Srinivasan, M. (Eds). Education and the Growing Child. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Sciences, pp.46-57.

- Adler, R., Milne, M. & Stablein, R. (2001). 'Situating Motivation: An Empirical Test in an Accounting Course'. Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences, Vol. 18 Issue 2, pp. 101-114.
- Brophy, J. (1996). 'Working with Perfectionist Students'. ERIC Digest.
- Burke, R. & Nierenberg, I. (1998). In search of the inspirational in teachers and teaching Journal for a Just & Caring Education, Vol. 4 Issue 3, p. 336-354.
- Carson, B. (1996). 'Thirty years of stories: The Professor's place in student memories. Change, Vol. 28 Issue 6, pp. 10-17.
- Dowsett, N. (1996). 'Realities of spiritual education'. In Dowsett, N., Jayaswal, S. & Srinivasan, M. (Eds), Dimensions of Spiritual Education. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Sciences, pp.42-51.
- Jayaswal, S. (1996) 'Education of the future'. In Dowsett, N., Jayaswal, S. & Srinivasan, M. (Eds), Education of the Future. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Sciences, pp. 56-64.
- Lumsden, L. (1994). 'Student motivation to learn'. ERIC Digest, Number 92.
- Maitland, L. (2000). 'Ideas in practice: Self-regulation and metacognition in the reading lab'. Journal of Developmental Education, Vol. 24 Issue 2, pp. 26-31.
- Medhananda (1996), 'The child of the future', In Dowsett, N., Jayaswal, S. & Srinivasan, M. (Eds), Education and the Growing Child. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Sciences, pp. 77-81.
- The Mother (1996). 'Teaching children', In Dowsett, N., Jayaswal, S. & Srinivasan, M. (Eds), Education and the Growing Child. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Sciences, pp.10-21
- Peterson, R. & Skiba, R. (2001). 'Creating school climates that prevent school violence. Social Studies, 92 (4), 167-175.
- Renchler, R. (1992). 'School leadership and student motivation'. ERIC Digest, Number 71.
- Safe and Caring Schools Project (1997). Bullying – everyone's problem. <http://www.uncg.edu/ericass/bullying/DOCS/safe1.htm>
- Scott, C. (1999). 'Modeling self-esteem: The potential impact of school personnel on students'. Professional School Counseling, Vol. 2 Issue 5, p367-372.
- Senecal, C. & Koestner, R. (1995). 'Self-regulation and academic procrastination'. Journal of Social Psychology, 135 (5), 607-619.
- Silberman, A. (1978). 'Teach values, not guilt', Reader's Digest, October, 131-136.
- Webster, H. (1996). 'Seven things smart parents never say', Reader's Digest, March, 23-27.
- Taplin, M. (2000). 'Creating a safe, supportive math classroom'. Published electronically: Mrs. Glosser's Math Goodies. http://www.mathgoodies.com/articles/safe_math.shtm



CHAPTER 7

DIAMOND OF THE WEEK

Finding inner potential

Last year while I was visiting a village in India a friend invited me to spend the night at her home so I could join her family and friends for a special early-morning celebration of one of their main festivals. After the celebration the guests dispersed. Suddenly I realized that my friend was not there, and as suddenly she came back into the room with five little girls, who sat in a row in the kitchen. My friend's mother put a food offering on a plate for each little girl, along with a one rupee coin for each. Then the girls stood up and, taking a pitcher of water, she gently washed the feet of each one. And as quickly as they had come they were gone again, continuing on their way to school.

These little girls had been invited into the house and given such respectful treatment because of the belief that every little girl is an embodiment of the goddess Durga, and by paying respect to the girls, the family was paying respect to the goddess within each of them. This custom is a simple but a beautiful one – to recognize the divinity within a child is paramount to acknowledging that same divinity within each and every one of us.

Five little girls, passing by on their way to school, were for a few moments recognized as divine. How empowering it would be if we could only remember that in every child is an emerging god or goddess, to be nurtured like an opening flower, not just on special festival days but in even the ordinary times and the times when they are naughty or frustrating. To see the divine beauty within and to cherish it and allow it to grow is the greatest gift of love we can give to our children.

This incident made me think of the opening lines of my favourite song, Whitney Houston's *The Greatest Love of All*:

I believe the children are our future.
Teach them well and let them lead the way,
Show them all the beauty they possess inside.
Give them a sense of pride....

Everyone has something unique and special about them and it is our responsibility as teachers to help them find and value this inner potential and how it can be used to contribute positively to the student's **own** life, for the **whole** of life, as well as to contribute to society (Dowsett, 1996). To do so is quite a challenge considering the many roles and responsibilities of a teacher, but to help a pupil to develop self-fulfillment is undoubtedly one of the most valuable gifts we can give.

In a recent survey of some of Australia's most gifted young musicians, they were asked to explain why they play music. Their answers included:

- Because I love it. It's why I get up in the morning. I can't ever imagine doing anything else!!!!
- Artistic expression. I adore it to my soul's depth.
- It's become a part of my life that I can't be without.
- I love being part of the music. I love listening to it, feeling it, and physically creating it all simultaneously.
- To let out the music that is in my head, to communicate with other people. My main reason for making music is that I love doing it.
- The emotion that music conveys is unparalleled in my experience and it has a great effect on me.
- Because I can express myself through music and I want to work at something I love and actually enjoy doing!
- I can't imagine my life not doing it.
- I love music. It is what I am passionate about. There isn't really anything else that I love to do for hours and hours a day that I get so much stimulation, inspiration and enjoyment from it.
- I love music and the joy it gives myself and others.
- ...utterly unexplainable. Ask me why I breathe.

Clearly these young people are fortunate in that they have been able to recognize their own gifts and encouraged to utilize them to help others, and it's obviously something that brings them great fulfillment.

"Each has his particular duty, task, role as an individual. Do that duty, carry on that task, play that role as best you can; that is how one can fulfill himself."

- Sathya Sai Baba

The quotes below suggest that this should be one of the foremost aims of education, to help **every** individual to find that special gift that will enable him/her to be fulfilled and a useful contributor to society:

“It is the task of the teacher to help the taught in self-discovery and thus make him realize his hidden potentialities.... As one thinks, so he becomes, is the old saying. The spirit of education lies in developing self-awareness and such a consciousness as removes the barrier between the body and the soul.... ‘Each individual must find his own place, the place which he can alone occupy in the general concert, and he must give himself entirely to it, not forgetting that he is playing only one note in the terrestrial symphony and yet his note is indispensable to the harmony of the whole...’” (quote from *The Mother*) — *Jayaswal (1996)*



“There is a genius within every one of us – we don’t know it. We must find the way to make it come out – but it is there sleeping, it asks for nothing better than to manifest; we must open the door to it.” — *The Mother*



“We have forgotten that the most important factor of education is the instrument of knowledge, the student himself, not how much objective information he can absorb. It is the student who is being educated and it is the student who must contribute something from himself that no one else can give. It is this contribution that will enrich his life and in consequence the life of the nation.” — *Dowsett (1997)*



“The first essential is to educe that greater potential lying dormant within every human being, that wealth of riches yet to be evolved in man as his true contribution to the human race.” — *Dowsett (1996)*



“Man today is trying to master every kind of knowledge, but is unable to discover his own true nature.” — *Sathya Sai Baba*



As I read these quotations I could not help but wonder about the extent to which we are **really** doing this in schools. Years ago I came across the story *The Animal School* (see below) and the question has stayed in my mind of whether we are in fact creating this scenario more than that described in the quotes.

The Animal School

**(Dr. George H. Reevis, Assistant Superintendent,
Cincinnati Public Schools, 1939-1948)**

Once upon a time, the animals decided they must do something heroic to meet the problems of "a new world". So they organized a school. They adopted an activity curriculum consisting of running, climbing, swimming and flying. To make it easier to administer the curriculum all of the animals took all the subjects.

The duck was excellent in swimming, in fact better than his instructor, but he made only passing grades in flying and was very poor in running. Since he was slow in running, he had to stay after school and also drop swimming in order to practise running. This was kept up until his web feet were badly worn and he was only average in swimming. But average was acceptable in school so nobody worried about that except the duck.

The rabbit started at the top of the class in running but had a nervous breakdown because of so much make-up work in swimming.

The squirrel was excellent in climbing until he developed frustration in the flying class where his teacher made him start from the ground up instead of from the tree-top down. He also developed a "charlie horse" from over-exertion and then got C in climbing and D in running.

The eagle was a problem child and was disciplined severely. In the climbing class he beat all the others to the top of the tree, but insisted on using his own way to get there.

At the end of the year, an abnormal eel that could swim exceedingly well, and also run, climb and fly a little, had the highest average and was valedictorian.

Looking beyond what we normally see

"A diamond is first just a dull piece of stone, a hard pebble, only when it is cut by a skilful artisan does it become a multi-faceted flame of fire."

- Sathya Sai Baba

Matthew suffered from a specific learning disability that caused him to struggle with formal school subjects. He found reading, spelling and maths particularly difficult to comprehend. He had plenty of creative story ideas in his head and wanted to be able to convey them, but his disability prevented him from being able to do this. He became frustrated, bored and rebellious. He loved to play with modeling clay and he spent a lot of time doodling on scrap paper instead of doing his work in class. Where his previous teachers had punished him for not paying attention, his Grade 4 teacher recognized his latent artistic talent. She gave him big pieces of paper and enough time to draw things properly. With two or three other children who were the same, he was allowed to do more artwork instead of other things and they were encouraged to prepare entries for a competition. Matthew reflected that this, "Made me feel pretty good, as if I was the number one student. This teacher and another one who taught me later were very encouraging to believe in me – made me feel comfortable – whereas the others made me feel separated, those two made me feel I could be myself and express myself." Matthew went on to develop his artistic gifts and now he not only derives income as an artist but brings great pleasure to himself and to others who have a chance to share his work.

David was another child who was regarded as a 'slow learner'. He was a big, strong boy who worked on his family farm before and after school. He had little time left to do his homework. His handwriting was almost illegible and, although he tried very hard, he could never master the idea of spelling. But when his Grade 6 teacher took the trouble to decipher his writing, she discovered that it was concealing some of the most beautiful, sensitive poetry that she had read from a child of this age. With his gift revealed, it was possible to help David to present his work in a way that it could be shared with others.

Stephen was a very gifted child academically, but he was emotionally and socially very immature. He was ostracized by his classmates because he was unable to relate to them and they could not understand his sense of humour. From his conversation and the books he read, his Grade 5 teacher realized that he had a particular aptitude for science. She placed him in a group with two other children who were also scientifically gifted and allowed them time to work on special projects together during class time, instead of doing some of the other class work that they already knew how to do. As the result of this shared interest, a strong bond developed between these children and Stephen was able to find a friend who "accepted" him. Stephen went on to pursue his love for science as his career and he maintained the friendship with his two like-minded Grade 5 classmates.

Fortunately, recent writers such as Gardner (1985, 1999) have reminded us that there are many different dimensions of “intelligence”: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, bodily-kinaesthetic, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, spiritual and existential, which are all valuable and should be cultivated. However, as in all three of the cases described above, it was not immediately obvious for the teachers to see the diamonds concealed within the rough stones. Left undiscovered, all three of these children would have continued to suffer from a sense of inferiority.

“...acting like a poison in the soul – forever making the child dissatisfied. Such a dissatisfaction is not one which leads to useful activity. It remains fruitless because it is fed by a disproportionate ambition. This ambition may be seen twisting itself into character traits and personal mannerisms. It acts like a perpetual irritant making the individual supersensitive and on guard lest he be hurt or trodden upon.

Types of this nature – and the annals of Individual Psychology are full of them – develop into persons whose abilities remain dormant, persons who become, as we say, ‘nervous’ or eccentric. Persons of these types, when driven too far, wind up in the world of the irresponsible and the criminal because they think only of themselves and not of others.”

- Adler (1996), pp. 49-50

In a class of 35 children, it is probably not realistic to expect the teacher, no matter how sensitive, to be able to recognize the unique gifts of every child simply from observation. However, it is important to talk to children about the fact that every one of us has a unique potential – even to share with them some of the quotations used in this article – and it is possible to guide them to find their own gifts. Below are some suggestions for whole-class activities that can help to do this.

Helping them to find what they want

“The only thing you should do assiduously is to teach them to know themselves and choose their own destiny, the path they will follow; to teach them to look at themselves, understand themselves and to will what they want to be.... But what is very important is to know what you want. ... They must discover in themselves the thing or things which interest them most and which they are capable of doing well....”

- The Mother

Silent sitting and creative visualization

One way to help people find their potential is through the regular use of creative visualization (for more details please refer to the earlier paper *Silent Sitting and Creative Visualisation*). Following is one example of a visualization that can be used with people of all ages who are seeking to identify their purpose in life.

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 sitting. 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.

The Interestalyzer

(Joseph S. Renzulli, Creative Learning Press Inc., P.O.Box 320, Mansfield Center, Connecticut 06250)

This questionnaire was designed to help students to become more familiar with some of their interests and potential interests. They are asked to think about some of the things they would like to do if given the opportunity. They are invited to think about the questions for a few days before answering, and not to discuss their ideas with others in case others' influence might prevent them from exploring some of their own interests. Examples of the questions include:

1. Pretend that your class had decided to put on a play to raise money for charity. Each person has been asked to sign up for his or her first, second or third choice for one of the jobs below. Mark your first choice with a 1, second choice with a 2, and third choice with a 3:
actor/actress; director; design costumes; make costumes; light/sound person; design scenery; build and paint scenery; announcer; playwright; musician; dancer; singer; business manager; design advertisements; photographer.
2. Pretend that someday you will be the famous author of a well-known book. What type of book will it be (History, Science, Poetry, Fiction, Fashion, etc.) and what will the book be about?

3. Pretend that you can invite any person in the world to be a teacher in your class for two weeks. Who would you invite?
4. Pretend that a new time machine has been invented that will allow famous people from the past to come back to life for a short period of time. If you could ask some of these people to give a talk to your class, who would you invite?
5. Are you a collector? Do you collect stamps, seashells, cards, or other things? List the things that you collect and the number of years you have been collecting.
6. What are some of the things you would like to collect if you had the time and money?
7. Pretend that your class is going to take a trip to a large city. After visiting the zoo, the historical sites and going to a sports event, each student can choose one place where he or she can spend an entire afternoon. Mark your first, second and third choices:
art museum; television studio; science museum; stage play; opera; newspaper office; fashion show; hospital; museum of natural history; ballet; parliament; symphony orchestra; stock market; computer center; court room; planetarium.
8. Newspapers often have special feature columns or sections such as the ones listed below. Pretend that you have just been given a job as a feature writer. Which of the following columns would you like to write?
gardening; movie reviews; science facts; political cartoons; crossword puzzles; local history; horoscope; outdoor life (camping, hunting, fishing); stock market analysis; advice on bridge; popular music; clothing fashions; advice to consumers; personal advice; business trends; humour; editorials; famous people; mathematics puzzles; furniture refinishing; games and activities for children; advice on chess; book reviews; travel; pet care.

Children identifying each others' talents

Children can be very perceptive in recognizing their classmates' gifts and potentials. This can be done as a game. For example, each child can have a piece of paper pinned on his/her back and every student in the class can be asked to write on every other child's piece of paper

in response to the question, “What is my special gift and how can I use it?” Similarly, the children can be given a class list and asked to respond to the same question. The following inspirational story (source unknown) illustrates how effective this kind of activity can be.

One day a teacher asked her students to list the names of the other students in the room on two sheets of paper, leaving a space between each name. Then she told them to think of the nicest thing they could say about each of their classmates and write it down. It took the remainder of the class period to finish their assignment and, as the students left the room, each one handed in the papers.

That Saturday, the teacher wrote down the name of each student on a separate sheet of paper, and listed what everyone else had said about that individual.

On Monday, she gave each student his or her list.

Before long, the entire class was smiling.

“Really?” she heard whispered. “I never knew that I meant anything to anyone!” and, “I didn’t know others liked me so much” were some of the comments.

No one ever mentioned those papers in class again.

She never knew if they discussed them after class or with their parents, but it didn’t matter. The exercise had accomplished its purpose. The students were happy with themselves and one another.

That group of students moved on. Several years later, one of the students was killed in Vietnam and his teacher attended the funeral of that special student. She had never seen a serviceman in a military coffin before. He looked so handsome, so mature. The church was packed with his friends. One by one, those who loved him took a last walk by the coffin. The teacher was the last one to bless the coffin. As she stood there, one of the soldiers, who acted as pallbearer, came up to her.

“Were you Mark’s math teacher?” he asked. She nodded: “Yes.”

Then he said: “Mark talked about you a lot.”

After the funeral, most of Mark’s former classmates went together to a luncheon. Mark’s mother and father were there, obviously waiting to speak with his teacher.

“We want to show you something,” his father said, taking a wallet out of his pocket. “They found this on Mark when he was killed. We thought you might recognize it.” Opening the billfold, he carefully removed two worn pieces of notepaper that had obviously been taped, folded and refolded many times.

The teacher knew, without looking, that the papers were the ones on which she had listed all the good things each of Mark's classmates had said about him.

"Thank you so much for doing that," Mark's mother said. "As you can see, Mark treasured it."

All of Mark's former classmates started to gather around. Charlie smiled rather sheepishly and said, "I still have my list. It's in the top drawer of my desk at home."

Chuck's wife said, "Chuck asked me to put his in our wedding album." "I have mine too," Marilyn said. "It's in my diary."

Then Vickie, another classmate, reached into her pocketbook, took out her wallet and showed her worn and frazzled list to the group. "I carry this with me at all times," Vickie said, and without batting an eyelash, she continued: "I think we all saved our lists."

That's when the teacher finally sat down and cried.

She cried for Mark and for all his friends who would never see him again.

After finding the talents, it's important to put them to good use

This article has argued a case for making specific efforts to help children to recognize, from as early an age as possible, what their unique gifts and potentials are. The quotations from spiritual and educational leaders have suggested that it is only through getting in touch with these gifts and setting in train strategies for realizing their potential that fulfillment can be achieved. Certainly the comments from the young musicians indicate the powerfully fulfilling impact of their musical participation. But, as is suggested in this final set of quotations, recognizing and realizing the potential in every individual is the starting point – to achieve real fulfillment there is a further step that needs to be taken, which is to encourage them to find ways in which they can use their gifts to make some contribution for the good of others.

"Traditional forms of education have all the accent on how much one can take from parents, teachers, books, life – but the Future Education will have its accent on first educating knowledge from within, finding the individual potential, then making that a contribution to life. This alone can be the fulfillment of the human being in an evolving universe....establish the whole

being, both inner and outer, and for the whole of life.” — *Dowsett (1996)*



“Up to now our educational systems have only fitted man to take, to make demands, to expect his so-called ‘rights’ from society. But any educated incompetent can take. It requires a man, a true individual, a mature being, to contribute something which is uniquely his. For this, man is loved, is truly recognized, is accepted into the heart of the community, the soul of the nation, the evolutionary movement of the world.” — *Dowsett (1996)*



“Happiness consists only in helping others.” — *Sathya Sai Baba*



“Students should regard service to the community as their main objective.” — *Sathya Sai Baba*



“The educated man should be delighted to serve and not desire to dominate, for service is divine, service makes life worthwhile, service is the best way to use one’s skills, intelligence, strength and resources.” — *Sathya Sai Baba*

References

- Adler, A. (1996). ‘Goal-forming activity of the child’, In Dowsett, N., Jayaswal, S. & Srinivasan, M. (Eds.). *Education of the Future* (pp.46-57). Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Sciences.
- Dowsett, N. (1996a). ‘Realities of spiritual education’ In Dowsett, N., Jayaswal, S. & Srinivasan, M. (Eds.). *Dimensions of Spiritual Education* (pp.51-57). Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Sciences.
- Dowsett, N. (1996b). ‘Academy of the future’, In Dowsett, N., Jayaswal, S. & Srinivasan, M. (Eds.). *Education of the Future* (pp.71-77). Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Sciences.
- Dowsett, N. (1997). ‘Education and yoga’ In Dowsett, N., Jayaswal, S. & Srinivasan, M. (Eds.). *Yoga and Education* (pp. 58-64). Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Sciences.
- Gardner, H. (1985). *Frames of Mind*. London: Paladin.
- Gardner, H. (1999). *Intelligence Reformed*. New York: Basic Books.
- Jayaswal, S. (1996). ‘The spirit of education’,. Dowsett, N., Jayaswal, S. & Srinivasan, M. (Eds.). *Dimensions of Spiritual Education* (pp. 58-66). Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Sciences.
- The Mother (1996). ‘Teaching children’, In Dowsett, N., Jayaswal, S. & Srinivasan, M. (Eds.). *Education and the Growing Child* (pp. 10-21). Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Sciences.

Diamond of the Week project

The first aim of this activity was to encourage the children to find their own unique strengths. The first lesson began with the use of silent sitting – a simple, quick technique involving children sitting quietly and using their imaginations to visualize empowering situations (please see Chapter 4 for more details). We used the idea put forward by a number of experienced psychologists, of enclosing hyperactive children in a golden circle that helps them to define their boundaries, but extended the idea to a golden bubble that enclosed them completely. The golden colour represents security and purity.

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 is 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.

Following this, they shared what they perceived to be their own unique strengths. Some of the ideas they shared with us later were:

- ◆ *I am kind.*
- ◆ *I smile a lot.*
- ◆ *I take pride in everything that I do.*
- ◆ *I invite children who are lonely to play with us.*
- ◆ *I make Mum laugh with my jokes.*
- ◆ *I do things (like tidying my room) without having to be asked.*

Phase 2 of the project required each child to fill out a weekly diary on “How I used my special strengths to help

- (a) myself,
- (b) my friends,
- (c) my family,
- (d) my school, and
- (e) the world.”

Working with the “Diamonds of the Week”

It was in Phase 3 that we really integrated the concept of children using their strengths to help themselves and others with the idea of helping them to come to a deeper understanding of themselves . First the children repeated the same silent sitting exercise as above, but this time they were asked to find in the book something that was not so good about themselves, that they would like to change. Over a period of several weeks, one child was chosen each week to be the “diamond” for the week, to be polished and purified. First they shared with their classmates what the thing was that they would like to improve in themselves, following which they were invited to share how they would like their classmates to help them to make this improvement. The rest of the class and the teacher then suggested further ideas, and they all agreed that they would work together in unity to help that week’s “diamond” in the agreed ways for the week to come.

When we first called for a volunteer the first hand to shoot up was that of a child diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder. He sincerely wanted to change himself – he wanted to be able to sit still at his desk and do his work. We agreed that his classmates would help him by reminding him to focus on his work and help him if he was having difficulties, as well as to use silent sitting to withdraw into his “golden bubble” if he was feeling agitated or disturbed. In the second week the “diamond” was a boy who said that he wanted to stop being mean to children who are mean to him. We talked about some strategies including walking away from a confrontational situation and drinking a glass of water to cool down, and his classmates worked very hard at taking him away from potential conflicts and playing somewhere else with him. The class teacher reported that, even in the very short time of the project, the improved behaviour and self-esteem of these troubled children was miraculous. The third week’s “diamond” was a girl who wanted to improve her concentration. At the end of the week, the class reported

that she had focused so hard on helping herself that there had been no need for any of the other children to remind her or help her.

One of the girls said that she wanted to stop being annoyed by her brother. In our final session she told us that: “Whenever my brother starts to annoy me, I do my silent sitting and go into my golden bubble. Then I become calm and my brother stops annoying me. And then Mum and Dad are happy because we are not fighting. So when I use silent sitting instead of fighting back when my brother annoys me, it makes everyone in the family happy.”

As mentioned above, after finding the talents, and purifying the diamonds, it is important to put them to good use.

“Happiness consists only in helping others.”

— Sathya Sai Baba



“He who dedicates his time, skill and strength to service can never meet defeat, distress or disappointment. He will have no foe, no fear.”

— Sathya Sai Baba

The focus of this teaching experiment was for the children to engage in selfless service to help their classmates, one at a time, to recognize their unique inner qualities and to work on those characteristics within themselves that they wanted to change. Next, the children’s teachers encouraged them, over an extended period of time, to find ways of using their special strengths to help themselves, their friends, their families, their school and the whole world. The ultimate goal is for these children to come to the stage described in the two quotations below.

“He (the child of the future) is never lonely because he has found his true self. He knows that happiness means enjoying the things around him, and for that he doesn’t have to possess them; that true joy is to possess the wholeness of things, the wholeness of himself and the wholeness of the universe – a wholeness which, since his babyhood, he has never left.”

- Medhananda (1996)

*If there could be only one thing in life for me to learn
I would learn to love...*

*To respect others so that I may find respect in myself,
To learn the value of giving, so that if ever there comes a time in
my life that someone really needs, I will give,
To act in a manner that I would wish to be treated;
to be proud of myself,
To laugh and smile as much as I can,
in order to help bring joy back into this world.
To have faith in others,
To be understanding....*

*To stand tall in this world and to learn to depend on myself,
To only take from this Earth those things which I really need, so
there will be enough for others,
To not depend on money or material things for my happiness, but
To learn to appreciate the people who love me, my own simple
beauty and to find peace and security within myself.
I hope I have learned all of these things,
For they are love.*



*Adapted from "A Teacher's Prayer",
Donna Dargis*

CHAPTER 8

COMBATting BULLYING THROUGH STRATEGIES OF TRUTH, RIGHT ACTION, PEACE, LOVE AND NON-VIOLENCE

An article in the South China Morning Post, the leading English language newspaper in Hong Kong, drew attention to the need for a full-scale anti-bullying campaign in schools, with startling survey results from Hong Kong having found that 70 per cent of students had suffered some form of bullying and that 96 per cent had witnessed it. There is no doubt that in many countries bullying has become a serious concern in schools, with statistics suggesting that as many as 1 child in 10 is regularly attacked either verbally or physically by bullies (Safeguarding Your Children at School, 1997).

It must be noted that bullying does not always have to take overt forms, but rather ‘any physical and emotional behaviors that are intentional, controlling and hurtful’ (Safe and Caring Schools Project, 1997), which includes behaviors like making offensive racial or sexual comments, belittling, excluding others from a group or activity, shunning, ignoring or lying (Safe and Caring Schools Project, 1997). The long-term effects of bullying can also be serious, with indications that as many as one in four children who bully will have a criminal record relating to aggressive, violent behavior before the age of 30 (Bullies: A Serious Problem for Kids). Quite often the only message that is given to bullies, either explicitly or implicitly, is “don’t get caught” (Action Against Bullying, 1992). In the short term, even seemingly mild forms of bullying, such as teasing, taking lunch money, insulting or threatening, can cause some children to avoid school or even become violent in retaliation (Bullies: A Serious Problem for Kids).

Numerous publications and websites have proposed strategies to help teachers, parents and children to combat bullying. Many of these point to the fact that there has been a decline in knowledge and, particularly, the practice of basic, fundamental human values. The purpose of this article is to outline some of these strategies that have been suggested by experts, and to suggest that by utilizing them teachers and parents can be doing much to address the urgent need to restore a sense of values in young people at the same time as addressing the immediate problem of bullying. While many of the suggested strategies are not specific to the SSEHV programme, this article will show how well-tested strategies for combating bullying can be combined with SSEHV strategies to address the bullying problem.

Truth

“Speak the truth, but speak pleasantly. If speaking the truth will cause pain or grief, keep silent. Don’t have hypocrisy or crookedness in your speech. Both unpleasant truth and pleasant untruth have to be avoided. In the name of truth, one should not utter words which cause pain to others.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

In encouraging truth, we want students to learn to value honesty and to express their feelings in appropriate, constructive ways. It is believed that as many as one in four children who are bullied will not disclose the incident to parents or teachers (Safe and Caring Schools Project, 1997).

If bullying is a problem, it is first important to acknowledge this and to raise awareness of bullying by encouraging staff and pupils to speak out about ways in which they have observed it happening. One way to do this (Action Against Bullying, 1992) is to conduct a short questionnaire:

have teachers/pupils experienced bullying, what was it, what did they do about it?

Experts have suggested that “the best way to safeguard your children from becoming a victim of a bully is to teach them how to be assertive. ... to express their feelings clearly, to say no when they feel pressured or uncomfortable, to stand up for themselves verbally without fighting, and to walk away in more dangerous situations” (Safeguarding Your Children at School, 1997).

- Encourage children to talk about things that happen at school, and particularly any incidents that make them feel scared or uncomfortable (Safeguarding Your Children at School, 1997).
- Help children to recognize the difference between telling tales and reporting incidents of bullying (Safe and Caring Schools Project, 1997).
- Teach children to use “I feel” statements, for example encouraging them to look the bully in the eye and speak in a calm, clear voice to name the behavior he or she doesn’t like, and state what is expected instead (Safe and Caring Schools Project, 1997).

Right Conduct

“We are endowed with the discriminating power to control our actions. This power must be used to decide whether any action is wrong.... Let not that which you do harm or injure another.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

“The key to promoting positive interactions among young children is to teach them how to assert themselves effectively. Children who express their feelings and needs, while respecting those of others, will be neither victims nor aggressors. Adults must show children that they have the right to make choices – which toys they play with, or (within boundaries) what they wear, or what they eat. The more children trust and value their own feelings, the more likely they will be to resist peer pressure, to respect warm and caring adults, and to be successful in achieving their personal goals (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1997). It has been suggested that “bullies are less likely to intimidate children who are confident and resourceful” (Safeguarding Your Children at School, 1997).

- Have a system for reporting incidents and spelled-out, consistently-applied consequences (Mackie, 2000).
- Parents and teachers can model appropriate behaviors of respecting the rights, bodies and properties of others (Safeguarding Your Children at School, 1997).
- Don't respond to a bullying child with either physical or verbal bullying behavior of your own, such as ridiculing, yelling or ignoring (Bullies: A Serious Problem for Kids).
- Children should be kept active in sports, clubs, volunteer work, and family and community activities so they do not have time to become involved in gangs which can often lead to bullying behavior (Safeguarding Your Children at School, 1997).
- Help children develop the social skills to make friends, which will in turn reduce the likelihood of bullying or being bullied (Bullies: A Serious Problem for Kids).
- Instill in children the rules for “fighting fair”: Identify the problem. Focus on the problem. Attack the problem, not the person. Listen with

an open mind. Treat a person's feelings with respect. And finally – take responsibility for your actions (Noll, 2001).

- Encourage children to befriend or help a child who is being bullied, or even to be kind to the bully.

Peace

“The treasure that is unmistakably precious is the quality of peace, equanimity, unruffledness. Practise this and make it your natural reaction.”

“The flower of peace should not be interpreted to mean that you should be silent whosoever is attacking you, or whoever is blaming you. It is not that. If you are unmoved and unperturbed in spite of anyone finding faults in you, this can be called real peace.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

One of the reasons why bullies are bullies is because they lack inner peace (Bullies: A Serious Problem for Kids). During a school trip once, we decided to use the opportunity to take our city kids into the bush to experience this feeling of complete solitude. We did this exercise twice: first thing in the morning and again just as it was getting dark. We asked the children to each find a place where they could feel completely alone, where they could not see or hear anybody else, and we asked them to sit there and experience the aloneness for ten or fifteen minutes until we called them back. The child on whom this exercise had the most significant impact was Robert, who was a very big child and a bully who frequently terrorized other children, and quite often the teachers as well. In a very small voice, he made the comment: “I could feel the power of the universe and it made me feel very small but safe.”

In a case where a child is the victim of somebody else's anger, or bullying, or other abuse, it is particularly important to help that child to equip herself with skills and strategies to maintain a sense of inner strength to help her to cope with the situation. This is of course often a difficult thing for a child to do. The search for inner peace is a difficult one because it is so easy for us to slip back into our angry or fearful ways. We need to develop strategies to prevent ourselves from doing this, and we can play games with children to practise this art. For example, you can take them to a place where they feel peaceful and ask them to try to make themselves

feel angry. Afterwards, you can talk to the children about the physical effects of the anger and why it is important not to allow the fears and pains to eat them up, but rather to transform these to more positive feelings.

It has been suggested (Bullying at School: Advice for Families, 1997) that one way to stand up to bullies is to let them know that you are not too much afraid of them to let them have their way. To be able to do this, it is important to have a foundation of inner peace that cannot be shaken even in unpleasant situations. With such a foundation in place, it is unlikely that the person being bullied will either show fear to the bully or, even worse, resort to retaliating with violence.

- Help your pupils to find ways to be able to feel a constant state of peace themselves. If they find themselves in a situation where somebody is trying to bully them, then just by simply being firm and maintaining their own centre of balance they are creating a feeling of peace that will have an effect on the other person as well. You can help pupils to create inner peace within themselves by introducing them to the value of silent sitting - that is, sitting for a few minutes in a state of complete outer and inner silence.
- If you respond to pupils with gentleness and do not allow yourself to disturb your sense of inner peace by becoming angry then you will provide a model that will help them in the development of their own inner peace.
- When dealing with a bully, make use of a “time-out” place where the child can “cool down” to a state where it is more feasible to reason with him/her. When the child has settled down, the teacher is able to discuss the reason for the conflict and the consequences of being angry.
- Make pupils aware of the physical damage to their own health that can be caused by excessive anger and by suppressing it - teach them strategies for releasing it effectively but without harming others.
- When it is necessary to punish pupils, use punishments that require them to reflect on the causes and the consequences of their conflicts or anger, and to suggest more positive alternatives.
- If pupils have been in conflict with each other, set them a joint task on which they are required to work co-operatively together.
- Teach children how to resolve arguments without using violent words or actions (Bullies: A Serious Problem for Kids).

Love

“The weapon of Love disarms every opponent. Love begets Love; it will be reflected back, it will have only love as a reaction. Shout, ‘Love’, the echo from the other person’s heart will also be Love.”

“You can teach love to students only through love.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

The state of unconditional love is one that will help children to relate better to other children and adults. No matter what others do or say to them, if they are able to maintain this state they will find that they are not easily hurt or distressed by what is going on around them. In some instances, it may even have the effect of changing the situation simply by sending the right kind of energy to their attackers. It is a significant component of a balanced, harmonized classroom and a value that ought to be instilled in all children from a very early age. This can help not only the child who is being bullied, but also the bullies themselves, since bullying behavior can often arise from the bullies feeling pain inside, perhaps because of their own shortcomings (Bullies: A Serious Problem for Kids).

- When you need to correct your pupils or tell them when their behavior is inappropriate, try to do so with compassion rather than anger. If you are angry, you are demonstrating that it is ‘OK’ to be angry, and the pupils are more likely to respond to their own frustrations with anger.
- For a minute at the beginning or end of the lesson, ask the pupils to sit silently and think about a favorite toy, pet or person. Extensions of this activity can be to sit in pairs and practise projecting love to each other, or to think about a person or place that needs it and concentrate on projecting love to that person or place. This not only has the effect of helping the children to become more settled, it also encourages them to become more aware of the needs of others to receive unconditional love.
- Do not be angry if a child cannot understand something or makes a mistake, because this can lead to low self-esteem that often characterizes a bully. Show the child how to recover from the mistake and try again.

Tell him/her about a famous person who was not afraid to make mistakes, or about some of the mistakes you have made. But at the same time it is also important to encourage accuracy and patiently ask them to correct their careless errors.

- Spend time with children every day. Show affection and make them feel special and needed (Safeguarding Your Children at School, 1997).
- Seek help for a child with learning difficulties, as repeated failure at school can lead to bullying behavior (Safeguarding Your Children at School, 1997).
- Recognize that bullies may be acting out of feelings of insecurity, anger or loneliness, and help them to deal with these emotions (Bullies: A Serious Problem for Kids).
- “Giving friendship [to a bully] is the greatest magic of all” (Mackie, 2000).

Non-violence

“One should desist from causing pain to any living being, not only by deeds, but even by words and thoughts.”

“If you cannot help another, at least avoid doing him/her harm or causing pain. Even mosquitoes can pride themselves on the capacity to injure and harm, and cause disease! So if you feel proud of the skill to harm, you are only demeaning yourselves.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

Since the value of non-violence refers to the ability to live together in peace and harmony, respecting others’ points of view and respecting life and property, it is clear that instilling this value in children will go a long way towards overcoming problems of bullying. This is particularly true for those bullies who engage in their behavior because they want power over others or find it difficult to see things from someone else’s perspective (Bullies: A Serious Problem for Kids).

- Work with teachers, principals and other students in developing a community service programme, where students give back to the community in a positive manner (Action Steps for Students, 1996).
- Stand up to bullies. If enough people stand up to a bully, eventually the bully will be forced to change (Safe and Caring Schools Project, 1997).
- Assess the situation. In dangerous situations, students should protect themselves and others by going for help immediately (Safe and Caring Schools Project, 1997).
- Tell the child that it is sometimes possible to make things better with a joke or a question such as, “Tell me what I did wrong and I’ll apologize”, as most bullies back down when they don’t get the response they expect (Safe and Caring Schools Project, 1997).
- Ensure that students understand what bullying means, what behaviors it includes, how victims, bullies and bystanders might feel, and what students should do when they or others are being bullied (Safe and Caring Schools Project, 1997).
- Encourage students to discuss bullying behavior and positive ways to interact with others (Safe and Caring Schools Project, 1997).

References

Action Against Bullying: A Support Pack for Schools (1992).
<http://www.scre.ac.uk/bully/scenario3.html>

Action Steps for Students (1996).
<http://www.uncg.edu/edu/ericcass/bullying/DOCS/action.htm>

Bullies: A Serious Problem for Kids. <http://www.ncpc.org/10adu3.htm>

Bullying at School: Advice for Families (1997). <http://www.scre.ac.uk/bully/bother.html>

Mackie, D. (2000). Preventing Childhood Bullying. Valley News, 11/14/2000.
http://www.cary-memorial.lib.me.us/bullyweb/reventing_childhood_bullying.htm

National Association for the Education of Young Children (1997). Teaching Children Not To Be – Or Be Victims Of – Bullies.
<http://www.uncg.edu/edu/ericcass/bullying/DOCS/teach.htm>

Noll, K. (2001). Empowering Kids to Deal with Bullies and Low Self-Esteem. Wysiwyg://168/http://www.mathgoodies.com/articles/empowering_kids.shtm

Safe and Caring Schools Project (1997). Bullying – Everyone’s Problem. http://www.uncg.edu/edu/ericcass/bullying/DOCS/safe1.htm

Safeguarding Your Children at School: Helping Children Deal with a School Bully (1997). http://www.pta.org/programs/sycsch.htm

South China Morning Post. Anti-bullying Drive Urged as 70% of Pupils Claim to be Victims. (March 10, 2001, p.3)



CHAPTER 9

3HV: THE HARMONY OF HEAD, HEART AND HANDS

“Harmony of head, heart and hands symbolizes the true human life.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

The aim of education in human values is to bring out human excellence at the levels of character, academic performance, and “being”. This means the all-round development of the child - which in turn means that we aim to develop the heart as well as the head and the hands. If we are to achieve this, one of the most important ingredients is to help children to automatise the process that “whatever thoughts come into their heads they think about and examine in their hearts before they act” (Sathya Sai Baba). Sathya Sai Baba refers to this as 3HV, the harmony of head, heart and hands.

Recently, during a professional development seminar in China, several teachers observed that in moral education classes the pupils will do and say what is necessary to please the teacher and pass the exam, but there is a big gap between what they are saying in class and what they are practising in their lives outside the moral education classroom. It seems this is a valid concern and that it is happening around the world, so we need to find ways to fill the gap. During a trip to India I discussed this problem with a very gracious spiritual teacher who is actively involved in training teachers in values education around the country. I asked him what he does to help to bridge this gap between children’s beliefs about what is ‘right’ for the moral education classroom and what is ‘right’ for life. His reply was, “It’s easy - all you have to do is to reach into their hearts and unlock what is already there.” To him it may be easy but to me this seemed like quite a difficult task, and I have been pondering on his reply ever since. Most people agree that this is WHAT we have to do, but the question of HOW to do it in today’s schools is another matter. So in my search for an answer I have been observing teachers and pupils closely, and the purpose of this article is to share some of these observations about what teachers can do to bring about real, and lasting, harmony of head, heart and hands in their pupils.

One way is to use a direct approach, to make children aware of the importance of running their thoughts and words through the filter of

their hearts before putting them into action with their hands. One such activity is a game called “Gatekeepers” (Institute of Sathya Sai Education, Thailand, 2002). Three children are selected to be gatekeepers. One holds a sign saying, “Is it true?” The second holds a sign saying, “Is it necessary?” and the third holds a sign saying, “Is it said with love?” Children take turns to think of a statement that will enable them to pass by each gatekeeper. After they have passed through, they tell the statement to their classmates, who become the judges of whether all of the criteria have been met.

Another example of the direct approach is through the use of storytelling. In most cultures there is a rich history of folk tales that address the moral and spiritual values of the culture: the Panchatantra of India, Aesop’s Fables and the Australian Dreaming stories are just a few examples of these. In these tales the values are not preached directly, but they are implicit and the reader or listener is invited to make his/her own decisions about what is right and wrong. This has been a powerful tool for facilitating the harmony of head, heart and hands, and can still be used as effectively today as in the past.

A further example is the direct discussion or enactment of moral dilemmas. These are tasks that aim to develop pupils’ ability to “act upon commonly shared ideals or principles, even in situations when they are under pressure to acquiesce to non-moral factors like majority’s opinion, prejudice, abusive authorities, or just laziness and low mood” (Lind, 1986). Lind advises that, in order to have maximum effect, these dilemmas should pose two or more moral principles that are of equal importance but that lead to mutually exclusive courses of action.

While the direct approach is necessary and important in raising awareness, I have observed, however, that the teachers who are really bringing about 3HV in their pupils are those who utilise every opportunity, in every aspect of their teaching, both planned and incidental. They succeed because they are constantly responding to three important questions that are fundamental to 3HV:

- √ Does it go to the child’s heart?
- √ Does it transform?
- √ Does it have practical application?

In one school I visited there was a recurring problem with litter. The children were repeatedly asked not to drop rubbish. They were given explanation after explanation about why it is important to look after the environment. But still they dropped their rubbish. One group of Grade

3 teachers had the idea of appealing to their consciences. These children had a very great love of nature, so the teachers asked them to draw pictures of what might happen to the animals and plants as a consequence of littering. They thought deeply about this for a while, then began to draw: a monkey with its feet cut on broken glass, a snake with its head caught in a discarded soft-drink can, small plants that could not grow because of the rubbish on top of them. Suddenly a change began in the children - their hearts had been touched by the plights of the animals and plants they loved, and their attitude to littering changed completely so that, even several months later, they were still reminding others not to litter.

A similar thing occurred in a village school in India. There is a sacred lake near the school. Frequent visitors and pilgrims had left behind their rubbish, and the area had become seriously polluted. As an environmental science activity, one of the teachers engaged her class in a clean-up campaign. They were very proud to show off their 'before' and 'after' photographs. But what made them even more proud, the teacher explained, was the long-term effect - because the children remembered how hard they had to work to clean up, she could see that they had definitely changed their attitudes about littering. Again, it was because the activity had become a way of touching their hearts rather than only their heads and hands.

In another incident, a teacher called Miss Wright had been offended because Anthony, one of her students, spoke truthfully - but negatively - his feelings about her class, so she demanded that he write a letter of apology. When Anthony's mother, herself a teacher, read the letter she realised that he was really not sorry at all - in fact he was indignant to think he was being punished for telling the truth. After much discussion, Anthony's mother was able to reach the core of the situation and help Anthony to realise that, while he was not sorry for speaking the truth, he did feel sorry that he had hurt Miss Wright's feelings, and he was able to apologise sincerely for that. In this case, Anthony's mother was successfully able to engage the 'heart filter' to link his thoughts to his actions.

A secondary school principal told the story of a student who was caught cheating in an examination. Upon questioning the girl, she found that the underlying reason for her cheating was her lack of confidence in English, which was the language of the exam but not her first language. Of course the girl had to accept the consequences of her actions, and had marks deducted. But the principal told her that this brought the matter to a close, that everyone deserves to be given a second chance, and that she was now forgiven and could start again with a clean slate. Some time

later, when that student had left school, she wrote a letter to the principal, telling her that this incident had touched her deeply and that she had not been tempted to cheat again in any aspect of her life - not because she had been caught, but because she had been given a second chance after facing the consequences.

This incident reminded me of an experience that happened to me when I was a young teacher. In my class there was a twelve-year-old boy with severe emotional and behavioural problems and a history of stealing, vandalism and lying. One day some money had been stolen from another child's bag, and since all the evidence pointed to this particular boy, I confronted him. Of course he denied the theft. I felt powerless to know what to do next, and the only thing I could think of was to deliver a lecture on conscience. I told him that I would have far greater respect for somebody who was prepared to admit to having done wrong, and talked at length about how uncomfortable it would be for somebody to have done something wrong and to be carrying that knowledge in his conscience. Through the whole discourse I was careful not to accuse him of the theft or even to suggest that I doubted his denial. The following morning he came to me before school and confessed that he had stolen the money. Of course I had to be consistent with what I had said the previous day, so I made another speech about the respect that I felt for him for having confessed and we talked about how his conscience felt now that he had owned up. Then we discussed the consequences of the theft and he was duly punished for that, but all the time I continued to be careful to let him know that I respected him for his truthfulness. After that incident, we settled into a kind of comfortable truce. He still slipped back to his old ways from time to time and stole or vandalised, but at least he would then come and confess. I lost track of him after he moved on to secondary school, but I like to think that our experience during that year made some contribution towards touching his conscience and that, perhaps at some time in the future, he might have remembered to run his ideas through his conscience before putting them into action.

A well-known longitudinal study conducted at Johns Hopkins University is a good example of one teacher's ability to help students to bring about harmony of head, heart and hands. The study predicted that 90% of a group of students in Harlem would end up in jail within a short time of finishing school, but when they were followed up years later it was found that only 4% had actually done so. Further investigations revealed that all of those who had been expected to become criminals but had not done so traced their change of direction back to one teacher who had loved them and believed in them - who had touched their hearts and modelled for them the concept of 3HV.

The teacher of a Grade 3 class was concerned that his pupils were not listening to him or to each other. So he set up an experiment with the help of the Grade 2 class. He took his children to read stories to the Grade 2 children, but before they arrived the Grade 2 teacher had instructed the younger children not to listen or to pay any attention to those reading to them. The Grade 3 children became frustrated very quickly, so the lesson was stopped and the teachers discussed with them how it felt not to be listened to. The activity was then repeated with the younger children listening attentively, and the class was able to make comparisons about their feelings. This was a practical example of 3HV in action, with the Grade 3 children being given their own first-hand experience of feelings that they could remember and draw on when weighing up future decisions to talk in class.

Even in the regular curriculum subjects there are plenty of opportunities to facilitate 3HV. In an Art lesson, the teacher wanted to encourage the children to develop their own criteria for determining their actions, so she asked them to think very deeply about themselves and to paint a picture of “Who is the real you?” One Grade 4 boy drew a monk. A Grade 2 boy drew himself inside the universe. A Grade 2 girl drew herself as a star sending light to nature, the world, and the moon and giving love to everyone. The teacher utilised this exercise as an opportunity to remind the children to reflect on who they really are before they put their thoughts into action.

So, what is the intended outcome of this kind of focus on 3HV? Hopefully it is children who are able to examine their thoughts critically within their own hearts before putting them into action, not because they are told this is what they need to do to pass their moral education exam but because, as the Indian spiritual teacher mentioned earlier in this article described, we have been able to reach into their hearts and help them to open up the conscience that is within, so that they are doing it because they want to rather than because they will be rewarded for it. Recently I have had two very touching experiences with children who have developed this harmony of head, heart and hands. Both were in the Sathya Sai School of Thailand, where 3HV is the underpinning philosophy of the school. In the first incident I was walking back to my room in the dark after dinner and had forgotten to bring my torch. A Grade 6 boy came along and walked with me so we could share his light. When we reached the boys’ dormitory he was very concerned that I should not go on without a light so he gave me his torch. That in itself was a kind act. But when I reached the door of my room, I heard a voice call out, “Goodnight, Teacher.” Not only had he given me his torch, he had waited until he saw me safely reach my room before he went inside his own.

On the second occasion I came across an area in the playground that had been left littered and dirty by some workmen. There were children playing nearby but I decided not to ‘force’ them to come and help me, but rather to just start cleaning by myself and see what would happen. After a while, one little girl appeared, assessed the situation, went off to get a broom, and came back to help. We worked together for a while, then she put down the broom and disappeared. I felt a bit sorry that she had not completed the task, but glad that at least one child had come to help for a while. Then I looked up, and saw her coming back, with two other small girls, struggling to carry a big bucket of water. Gradually more came and joined in. Somebody found some soap and they washed and scrubbed for two hours until the area was spotless. They divided the labour and when one became tired another one would step in and take her place. And in the whole two hours I had neither asked anyone to help me, nor given any instructions about what to do. In both of these incidents it was the children’s spontaneous and caring acts that touched me - there was no reward or benefit for them, they just did it because it came from their hearts. This to me is what Sathya Sai Baba means when he says “Harmony of head, heart and hands symbolizes the true human life”, and it is heartening to see that there are so many ways in which teachers are able to bring about 3HV without making it an ‘add-on’ to their programmes.

Some Questions for Reflection or Action Research

√ Examine your own teaching on the ‘head-heart-hands’ scale below.



How much emphasis is on the two ends rather than distributed across the three?

√ Use the same scale as a criterion for evaluating children’s social/emotional/moral development. Are there any surprises? Ask the children to use it for their own self-evaluation.

References

Collins, P. (2000). "ESL grammars: An evaluation." Paper presented at Applied Linguistics Association of Australia, www.arts.usyd.edu.au/departs/langcert/alaal/proceed/p.collins.html

Lind, G. (1986). *The psychology of moral competence*. Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum. <http://nceet.snre.umich.edu/activities.html>



CHAPTER 10

RAISING TEACHERS' SELF-ESTEEM: AN EDUCARE APPROACH TO CARING FOR TEACHERS

“Human values cannot be learnt from lectures or text-books. Those who seek to impart values to students must first practise them themselves and set an example.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

“The place to improve the world is first in one's own heart and head and hands.”

- Robert M. Pirsig

While I was spending some time in an Indian village a friend from this village underwent minor surgery. Because the public hospital was seriously overcrowded, he was sent home early. There was some complication with the healing process, so the doctor who treated him told him to come back each day as an outpatient. For him and his wife, this daily visit involved a 15km journey by taxi from their village to the hospital, over badly-formed roads. The jarring of the roads caused him a lot of pain, they needed to make arrangements for their three young children to be looked after. The expense of the daily taxi trip was putting a huge financial burden on the family. On more than one occasion they made the journey and waited at the hospital for several hours, only to be sent home again because the doctor was too busy - and probably over-stressed himself - to see them. The patient was distressed and his wife was in tears. Luckily after some negotiating he managed to see a different doctor.

This second doctor could see that he was dealing with human beings whose lives extended beyond the recuperating body. He made arrangements for the patient to visit the local clinic, and only every three days rather than every day. This time the couple returned smiling and in a much better condition for the patient's healing to happen. The difference in the perceptions of the two doctors was only small, but to this couple it made an enormous difference to their mental and emotional well-being, and especially to their self-esteem. Of course, we can't blame the first doctor entirely for his attitude, because he was overworked and

overstressed too, but it shows how small acts of seeing the client as a human being can make such a lot of difference.

This incident caused me to reflect on the similarities to teaching. Like the doctors in this hospital, most teachers these days are also over worked and over stressed, but, like the doctors, some are still able to see the human beings in their clients and do small things that enhance their well-being and self-esteem, while others see only the faces and not the human beings behind the faces. Like patients with their doctors, students do not expect their teachers to be perfect but they do know those people who are helping and giving of their time, and are genuine people interested in their welfare (Gratch, 2000).

Teachers and doctors both know that it is their professional duty to behave in this way, but often they find it difficult to put into practice even if they want to. And if, because of the expectations they have of themselves or others have of them, they do it in a way that is forced or not coming directly from the heart, it can be very stressful and even damaging for them. Recently I observed a very good, committed teacher who has a wonderful rapport with her class. I was very impressed by her smiling face, her calm, unruffled manner, and the way she projected patience and peacefulness to the children. I told her how impressed I was and she grimaced, then replied, "I have to be like this because if I am not the pupils will complain to their parents and then the parents will also complain." When I probed further she admitted that there is often a mismatch between the calmness she is expected to show on the outside and the stress and pressure she is feeling on the inside. McCreary (1990) describes this contradiction as the 'forgotten dimension', that pressure is put on teachers to 'perform' for the benefits of their pupils' self-esteem, but that the self-esteem of the teachers themselves is often forgotten. It is important for teachers to take time to reflect on and nurture themselves. McCreary (1990) notes that in the research on teacher-self-esteem, the word 'self' is often absent in relation to teachers. She comments that, "This verifies my long-held conclusion that educators are among the most selfless of professionals. I mean selfless in the sense of less self-serving, and primarily other-serving". It is clear that if teachers are to continue to give selflessly year after year for the benefit of their pupils, there also needs to be some opportunity for their own rejuvenation. This, I suspect, was what made the difference between the first doctor mentioned above, who made the patient's whole family feel worthless because of his own stress, and the second doctor who was able to make them feel worthwhile.

The purpose of this article is to offer some support to teachers to rediscover this forgotten dimension of 'self'. It raises some discussion questions in the hope that teachers and school leaders will reflect upon

some or all of them, either alone or in collegial groups, to help them to remind themselves of who they are and why they are in the profession, so that while they are keeping sight of the holistic well-being of their pupils and their colleagues they can also keep sight of their own well-being. The renewal that can be initiated by this kind of self-reflection can be invigorating for teachers (Craig, 1991; Noddings, 1991) because through re-examining they can become able to renew their sense of worth of their profession, and themselves within this profession (Lumsden, 1998).

In addition to the questions for teachers, there is also a section included for school leaders, since these people have such a significant role in the well-being of their staff. In some cases the teachers are seen as 'whole people' with lives and problems outside of the workplace, and in other cases they are expected by their leaders to carry the burdens of their duties without any special support.

The questions have been based on the Sathya Sai Educare philosophy, which promotes the development of human excellence. In Educare pupils and teachers:

- √ are encouraged to appreciate the five basic human values of Truth, Right Action, Peace, Love and Non-violence as essential to the development of character,
- √ learn to accept the cultures, customs and religions of other people along with their own, in order to appreciate the brotherhood of man,
- √ acquire decision-making skills which helps to facilitate development of moral learning,
- √ develop a sense of responsibility for the consequences of their actions and act with regard for the rights, life and dignity of all persons,
- √ develop self-discipline and self-confidence necessary to promote the fulfilment of their potential - by enhancing their moral, physical, social, and academic achievements,
- √ develop value skills needed for personal, family, community, national and world harmony,
- √ develop a caring attitude towards all forms of life and to value the need for preservation, conservation and general care of the environment.

When we talk about values it is of course a personal thing. Part of the philosophy of Educare is that rather than trying to teach or impose a given set of values on children - or on teachers - we try to draw out the values that are already inherent within them. Nevertheless, it is useful for us to

have a framework to draw on to help us understand what human values really are, and the following set of universal values inherent in most cultures is a useful point of reference:

- Truth:** accuracy, curiosity, discrimination, honesty, human understanding, integrity, self-reflection, sincerity
- Right Action:** courage, dependability, determination, efficiency, endurance, healthy living, independence, initiative, perseverance
- Peace:** calmness, concentration, contentment, equanimity, optimism, self-acceptance, self-discipline, self-esteem
- Love:** compassion, consideration, forgiveness, humaneness, interdependence, selflessness, tolerance
- Non-violence:** benevolence, co-operation, concern for ecological balance, respect for diversity, respect for life

Question 1: The purpose of this exercise is to help teachers identify which of their 'values' in becoming a teacher have been sustained through their careers and which need refreshing. Craig (1991) and Noddings (1991) have both suggested that reflection on these questions can be very invigorating for teachers who may have lost the initial enthusiasm with which they started on their careers.

- √ What were the values that made you decide to become a teacher in the first place? Make a list and discuss which of these values still hold true and which have changed. Have you been disillusioned in any way? Have your values been particularly inspired in any way by your teaching experience?
- √ What do you want your pupils to gain from having been taught by you?
- √ Has there ever been an incident in your classroom that you've regretted or that you wish you had handled differently?
- √ How does your teaching affect your health?
- √ Create a vision statement for yourself, for your colleagues or for your classes (create together) - not where you are but where you want to be. Use "I am"...

Question 2: Values conflicts as causes of teacher stress. One of the biggest problems for teachers and their pupils can occur when there are conflicts in values. To address this kind of issue, Gratch (2000) recommends the technique of problem-based discussion, in which one

teacher shares issues and concerns and the group of colleagues works to help this teacher better understand and resolve the problem:

1. Teacher presents problem.
 2. Facilitator and group try to help teacher gain deeper understanding of problem and generate alternative interpretations through asking information-seeking questions and pushing for clarification and further refinement of problem.
 3. Group brainstorms possible solutions and develops initial plan of action.
 4. At subsequent meetings, teacher reports on success of plan.
- √ Write about 3 incidents (in the classroom, in the wider school, with pupils, colleagues or parents) that caused you to feel stressed or distressed.
- ◆ Describe the incident in detail. What, if any, effects did this incident have on how you define yourself as a professional? As a person?
 - ◆ Describe your feelings as accurately as possible. Why do you think the incident caused you to feel this way?
 - ◆ Describe the action you took and why you took this action. How did others respond (i.e. the student/s involved, other students, colleagues, senior staff) and how did their responses affect you?
 - ◆ Reflect on and describe what you think were the feelings of the other people involved in the incident.
 - ◆ Were you able to draw on your awareness of your own values in any way to help in this situation? If so, describe what you did and how it helped.
 - ◆ Could you have dealt better with the situation? If so, what would you have done? What might have been the consequences of this different action?
 - ◆ What support did you really need in this situation?

√ Brainstorm: 2 columns

- ◆ Column 1: What are the worst problems you face as a teacher?
- ◆ Column 2: What do you perceive to be the worst problems faced by students these days?

Examine any items from the two columns that are related in some way. What are the matches or mis-matches in values that are evident here? Are there any mis-matches that could be addressed by looking at the situation from the pupils' point of view?

- √ Recall occasions where comments made by others affected your self-esteem. Use a piece of paper to represent your self-esteem. As the sentences are read, if the statement applies tear off a piece according to how much it affected your self esteem (spoken and unspoken messages).
- √ “Self-esteem is based on those values and goals which individuals consider most critical to their feelings of worth. While perceptions of others’ appraisals of our worth impact importantly on our self-esteem, our own comparisons of actual performance with ideal self-standards are equally important” (McCreary, 1990). Write a group story about the perfect teacher who was able to create a perfect classroom environment:
 - ◆ What did he/she do?
 - ◆ How did the pupils react?
 - ◆ How did the parents react?
 - ◆ How did the teacher’s colleagues react?
 - ◆ What were the outcomes (include positive or negative)?
 - ◆ How many people do you know who fit this? How realistic do you think the ideal is? How does it affect your self-esteem to try to live up to this ideal? What can you realistically do to live up to the ideal without placing undue strain on yourself?

Question 3: Effects of your own teachers. The purpose of this question is to examine your own experiences as a pupil at school, the way your own former teachers taught, punished and reacted to mistakes, and the effects these behaviours have had on ‘programming’ you as a teacher.

- √ Reflect for a few minutes on your own teachers. Who was your best teacher? What was he or she like? What did he or she do?
- √ In this activity, we would like to examine some of the negative emotions - anger, envy, guilt, fear - and the effects that these might have on you as a teacher.
 - ◆ Make 3 columns.
 - ◆ Brainstorm: What are the things that can make a teacher angry? List these in the first column.
 - ◆ Think about some of your own teachers and the way they acted or reacted when they were angry. List these reactions in the second column.

- ◆ Next, try to remember how you felt when this was happening, either because you were on the receiving end, or because you were a pupil in the class witnessing the incident. Make a list of these feelings in the third column.
 - ◆ What about some times when a teacher might have been expected to become angry but didn't? Discuss the circumstances and whether or not these led to a satisfactory outcome.
 - ◆ A similar exercise can be conducted with the other emotions that are relevant to you. Some alternative approaches to promote discussion might include:
 - Ask somebody in the group to describe a negative interaction and then roleplay it. Discuss the participants' feelings and then find a possible alternative and roleplay that.
 - Write down your reflections on the scenario and pass them around (without names) for others to read and respond to.
 - Examples of the questions: Was there ever a time when one of your teachers was untruthful about something? How did this make you feel? Was there any time when a teacher was bitterly truthful in a way that hurt you or another pupil?
- √ List some words that describe the classroom environment that you remember the most from your own schooling. Analyse each word and categorise them according to whether they are 'positive' or 'negative' characteristics. What are the words missing from this list - for example, how many of the following are missing from your list: 'inner peace', safety to make mistakes, unconditional acceptance?
- Discuss: These days, what are the obstacles to achieving this kind of environment?

Question 4: Teachers as models of values.

"Teachers are remembered more for what they were than what they taught."

"A teacher is the shining light to the world, but only if this light is shining all the time will it be able to light up other lamps."

"The teacher must not teach with any ulterior selfish motive, for money, name or fame.

The teacher's real fulfilment comes when the work is simple out of love, out of pure love for mankind at large."

- Sathya Sai Baba

The above quotes by Sathya Sai Baba suggest that a teacher's impact on pupils and colleagues can be enhanced if he/she becomes a model of the values that are important to him/her and to their particular society. In this section we suggest that the teacher is able to examine the extent to which he/she becomes not just a role model for the human values but is able to live his/her own values in the classroom context.

- √ Consider the list of universal human values given above. In what ways do you see yourself as being a model of the above values to your pupils? to your colleagues? And in what ways do you feel you really live any of these values in your classroom and collegial interactions? If you are discussing this question with colleagues, please include some specific anecdotes.
- √ In what ways do you think, upon critical self-reflection, that you fall short of being a model/living example of these values?
- √ What are your feelings about modelling these values. Is it something that comes easily to you and makes you feel good about yourself, or is does it cause you stress because it's expected of you, rather than being the real you. What, if anything, can you do to change things so that it becomes a part of the real you, and not something you have to strain at?
- √ Do you think it is important for teachers to be constantly examining and developing their own values, or do you believe this is something static which cannot be changed? Perhaps you might wish to share your experiences with your colleagues.

Question 5: Interacting with parents.

- √ What causes the most anxiety about meeting with a parent or parents?
- √ What are the main reasons why parents come to see you?
- √ Have you ever had an angry or unpleasant incident with a parent? If so please describe it. In what way was this brought about because of a conflict in values?
- √ What do you see as being your personal values that you have drawn on to deal with this kind of situation? Are there any other values that you could have drawn on that you did not?

Some questions and comments for reflection by school leaders.

- √ What strategies can you use to find out what people do well, enable them to continue to do it, praise them, and then help them celebrate their accomplishments? (Blaydes, 1995)
- √ How can you affirm that, as educators, they can and do make a difference in children's lives? (Blaydes, 1995)
- √ How can you draw on your own values to help staff members know that they often achieve miracles, even under the most trying conditions and restraints? (Blaydes, 1995)
- √ How can you create a professional environment that enhances collegiality and team-building, and reinforces the teachers' self-esteem so that they can, in turn, reinforce the students' self-esteem? (Blaydes, 1995)
- √ How can the way in which you are a model of human values influence the climate you create in your school? Our daily moods create the 'weather' in our schools-sunny, bright and positive or cloudy, stormy and negative. (Blaydes, 1995)
- √ How can you demonstrate caring and compassion by stressing the importance of individuals? We can create rewards and recognition that show we care about a job well done. We can build trust by using no-strings rewards (taking yard duty, providing release time on birthdays) (Blaydes, 1995)
- √ In what ways can you work with teachers to write personal and professional [values] goals? (Blaydes, 1995)
- √ How can you build a sense of belonging and co-operation by creating a team of teachers that works collaboratively to improve its school, to build a feeling of *esprit de corp* and respect for each others' strengths and talents? (Blaydes, 1995)
- √ Positive feedback and reinforcement enhance teacher self-esteem. What can you do to celebrate individual achievements, let teachers know what a good job they are doing, and that you appreciate their dedication. (Blaydes, 1995)
- √ Principals need to let parents know how important it is to give teachers positive feedback. Meet with parent groups and brainstorm ways to honour the teaching profession. (Blaydes,1995)
- √ √ "Challenge, control, freedom, respect, success, and warmth are necessary for the development of students' healthy selves (Tonelson, 1981). For the students, teachers and principals are supposed to provide

all of these. Rarely do we ask who is responsible for these same influences on the well-being of teachers and administrators.” (McCreary, 1990)

- √ “Teachers need to have available role models for the standards and beliefs underlying their profession.” (McCreary, 1990) How, as school leader, can you best provide such a role model?
- √ Earned self-esteem is based on learning to tolerate frustration and delay, to care for others, to work hard, and to persevere in the face of obstacles. These tasks of developing relationships and competencies enable one to stretch, to grow and to reach for excellence. (McCreary, 1990) What strategies can enhance this in the school environment?
- √ What can you do to provide teachers with a clear message of respect, encouragement and support? (McCreary, 1990)
- √ “Teachers must develop positive, realistic attitudes about themselves and their own abilities. Many teachers have idealistically unreal expectations for themselves. Outside pressure for accountability based on student test scores has widened the gap between teachers’ perceptions of their competence and the feedback about it from others. People who feel good about themselves need to have congruence between perceived real and ideal selves (Rogers, 1951), and the current educational milieu works against this.” (McCreary, 1990) What can you do to help your teachers to bridge the gap between the expectation to achieve high student test scores and their real perceptions about themselves?
- √ Because of their relative isolation from other adults during the working day, teachers have little opportunity to share their successes with colleagues and administrators. This results in greater reliance on student responsiveness for teachers’ professional satisfaction (Goodwin 1987 in Lumsden, 1998). How can this isolation be reduced so teachers have more opportunity to share with other adults in the school environment?

References

- Blaydes, J. (1995) ‘Strategies for success: 5 steps to building staff self-esteem’. *Thrust for Educational Leadership*, 24, 6, 32-35.
- Gratch, A. (2000). ‘Teacher voice, teacher education, teaching professionals’. *High School Journal*, 82, 3, 43-54.
- Lumsden, L. (1998). Teacher Morale. ERIC Digest, Number 120. ERIC#: ED422601
- McCreary, A. (1990). ‘Teacher self-esteem: A triple-role approach to this forgotten dimension’. *Education*, 111, 2, 234-240.
- Noddings, N. (1991). ‘Values by deliberation or default’. *Clearing House*, 64, 5, 320-322.

CHAPTER 11

FORGIVING AND LETTING GO

“Human beings need appreciation to thrive. There are three aspects to appreciation: the appreciation of life in general, the appreciation of others, and the appreciation of ourselves. We look for it outside ourselves but it’s not going to come from there. It has to come from inside, first and foremost. To be able to appreciate ourselves we need to forgive ourselves for things we have done wrong in the past and congratulate ourselves for the things we appreciate about ourselves.” — *(Dr. Noelle Nelson, The Power of Appreciation: The Key to a Vibrant Life)*

❖
“Everyone makes mistakes sometimes. We all hurt ourselves or others (including the environment). What can we do to forgive ourselves and put things right again?” — *(Source unknown)*

❖
“Forgiveness is a quality that every person should possess. That forgiveness is Truth itself, it is Righteousness. It is the supreme virtue in this world. Hence, all people should develop the quality of forgiveness.” — *(Sathya Sai Baba)*

❖
“Love lives by giving and forgiving. Self lives by getting and forgetting.” — *(Sathya Sai Baba)*

❖
“Without forgiveness life is governed by an endless cycle of resentment and retaliation.” — *(Source unknown)*

❖
“Forgiveness is love in its most noble form.” — *(Anon)*

❖
“Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future.” — *(Paul Boese)*

❖
“You will know that forgiveness has begun when you recall those who hurt you and feel the power to wish them well.” — *(Lewis B. Smedes)*

❖
“When you forgive, you in no way change the past, but you sure do change the future.” — *(Bernard Meltzer)*

❖
“I can forgive, but I cannot forget, is only another way of saying, I will not forgive. Forgiveness ought to be like a cancelled note - torn in two, and burned up so that it never can be shown against one.” — *(Henry Ward Beecher)*

“It really doesn’t matter if the person who hurt you deserves to be forgiven. Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself. You have things to do and you want to move on.” — *(Source Unknown)*



“Get rid of imagined guilt. You did the best you could at the time, all things considered. If you made mistakes, learn to accept that we are all imperfect. Only hindsight is 20-20. If you are convinced that you have real guilt, consider professional or spiritual counseling (with a competent and trustworthy counselor). If you believe in God a pastor can help you believe also in God’s forgiveness.” — *(Amy Hillyard Jensen)*



“Forgiveness is almost a selfish act because of its immense benefits to the one who forgives.” — *(Source unknown)*



“From the perspective of our mask, pain and anger exist only outside the personality. We don’t take any responsibility. Anything negative that happens must be somebody else’s fault. We blame them... somewhere inside, we enjoy lashing out. Letting out the energy is a relief, even if it isn’t clear and straight, even if we are not acting responsibly when we do it. There is a part of us that enjoys dumping our negativity on someone else. This is called negative pleasure. Its origin is in the lower self.” —*(Barbara Ann Brennan, Light Emerging)*

As the above collection of quotations suggests, attachment to old ideas and hurts is difficult to shake off. But just by asking yourself to let go you will start the process.

Some exercises for forgiving and letting go

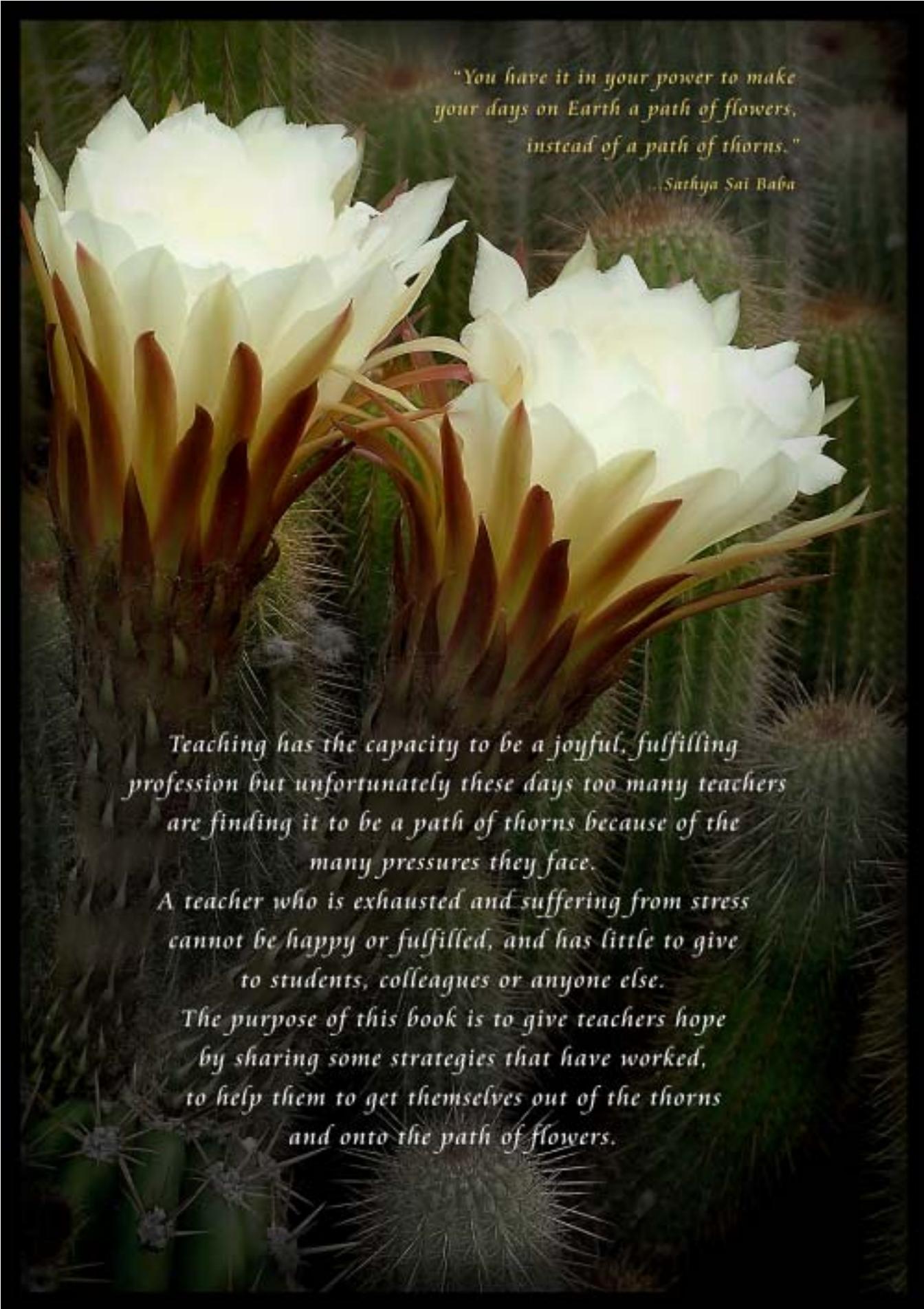
Exercise 1: Creative visualization. Take time often to visualize forgiveness. This will have the most effect if it is repeated often, preferably daily, so your ego will stop trying to fight it. If you are able to forgive, your pain/anger/stress will be truly healed. This is an affirmation which you can use as many times a day as you need to, until you begin to feel that you really are forgiving and letting go.

I forgive myself and I forgive (name of person) for not meeting my expectations. I know that we are all free to be ourselves. I let go of any expectations and release the attachments that are causing me to feel (insert emotion).

Continue to remind yourself that you have forgiven and let go. When you can truly accept that you have done this, then you will be free.

Exercise 2: Consequences of forgiving/not forgiving. Write down the name of the person/people you need to forgive and their deeds or omissions for which you need to forgive them. Write down what the consequences will be for you if you do not forgive. (This can include, for example, the physical, emotional, psychological and other effects on your work, with family, your leisure pursuits or your eating habits.) Write down what the consequences will be for the other person. Now, beside each of the previous two entries, write down what the consequences will be if you **do** forgive. When you look at the list, decide which of the consequences will be more positive for you. Keep the list with you, and look at as many times a day as you need to.





*"You have it in your power to make
your days on Earth a path of flowers,
instead of a path of thorns."*

...Sathya Sai Baba

*Teaching has the capacity to be a joyful, fulfilling
profession but unfortunately these days too many teachers
are finding it to be a path of thorns because of the
many pressures they face.*

*A teacher who is exhausted and suffering from stress
cannot be happy or fulfilled, and has little to give
to students, colleagues or anyone else.*

*The purpose of this book is to give teachers hope
by sharing some strategies that have worked,
to help them to get themselves out of the thorns
and onto the path of flowers.*