



Institute of Sathya Sai Education Australia
National Education Conference 2011

Sathya Sai Education in Human Values and the Art of Surviving as a Teacher

Please note: The text from the powerpoint slides is in *bold italics* and the explanatory notes are in normal font

Workshop Objective: To give the teachers an opportunity to be exposed to the principles of SSEHV in their own lives, so they will see the difference in themselves and become motivated and equipped with strategies to use it with their pupils.

Teachers need to be nurtured. We ask a lot of Educare teachers and even the best of them have times when they need support. Recently I was observing 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 peace to her class. I commented to her about how impressed I was and 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! The purpose of this workshop is to use Educare principles to touch their hearts and make them feel that they are loved too! In this workshop we can't promise to solve all of your problems with teaching-related stress, but we hope to help you to find your own solutions and particularly to suggest some ways in which Sathya Sai Education in Human Values can help you to deal with work-related stress.

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 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.

What are the challenges associated with teaching?

Think about what causes stress in your teaching situation (Individual brainstorming followed by group discussion)

What are the challenges associated with teaching?

- **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.**

What is my stress doing to me?

- **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**

- **depressed, don't enjoy teaching, no enthusiasm, disillusioned**
- **personally devalued, broken spirit**

- **excessively frustrated with self or others**
- **impatient, overly demanding**
- **feel hopeless, feel helpless, can't see a positive solution**
- **feel panicky**
- **difficult getting out of bed in morning**
- **cynical, pessimistic, negative, sarcastic**
- **feel driven by “musts”, “shoulds”, “gottas”, ...**
- **feel out of control**
- **try to be “superhuman” – scramble like crazy to have it all, do it all, be it all**

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!

What is my stress doing to my STUDENTS?

- **'general irritability and bad temper'**
- **withdrawal from and cynicism towards pupils**
- **lack of enthusiasm for teaching means students not being encouraged and challenged to learn**
- **low pupil/teacher rapport**
- **pupil anxiety**
- **negative effects on achievement.**

Source: Borg, M. (1990). 'Occupational stress in British educational settings: A review'. Educational Psychology, 10, 2, 103-126.

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?

- **Other activities?**
- **Medication?**
- **Alcohol?**

Notes prepared for workshop presented at 2011 Education Conference, Murwillumbah, 20-21 August by Dr. Margaret Taplin, Institute of Sathya Sai Education of Hong Kong

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

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 some discussion] the fact is 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 today's workshop – to help you bring about your own personal empowerment*

The teaching experience I really want

- **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**
- [Personal brainstorming followed by discussion]*

The values I want to use to guide my teaching

- **reflect the kind of person you want to be known as**
- **values you want to live by on a daily basis**
- **values that empower you**
- **come from within and reflect who you really are**
- **enduring values that have stood the test of time [e.g. is wanting lots of money an enduring value?]**
- **truth-based values**

[Personal brainstorming followed by discussion, then share the following examples from Newman:]

- **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 seed is what I get.**

- **Be cool, calm and collected when dealing with problems and stressful situations.**
- **Be loving, compassionate, caring, giving and forgiving.**
- **Be bringing out the best in me and in others.**
- **Be mentally tough and focused. Be emotionally resilient.**
- **Be spiritually strong, vibrant and joyful.**

Source: John Newman (1992). How to stay cool calm & collected when the pressure's on. NY: Amacom.

When we summarise the values that you have listed, we can see that they are a very close match to the following set of universal values that have been very prominent in most religions and most cultures.

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

Be honest with yourself about what's stopping this experience

If teachers do not follow the normal ethics of truthfulness etc., how can they instill good habits and values in children?

Sathya Sai Baba

This quotation from Sathya Sai Baba emphasises how important it is to be truthful with ourselves! Be honest with yourself and think about anything in your behaviours, your interactions with your pupils – that is, anything within YOUR power to change – that are stopping you from achieving your ideal teaching situation and the values that are important to you.

Newman's first step in stress management:

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

And this quotation from Sathya Sai Baba emphasises how important it is for teachers to be in control of these things.

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

Notes prepared for workshop presented at 2011 Education Conference, Murwillumbah, 20-21 August by Dr. Margaret Taplin, Institute of Sathya Sai Education of Hong Kong

Sathya Sai Baba

Let's have a look at some theory about why it is important to control our thought, emotions and actions. The International Director of the Institute of Sathya Sai Education, Dr. Art-Ong Jumsai, is a very famous former NASA scientist – he was in fact the inventor of a component of the first device to land successfully on Mars – and in recent years his research has focused on understanding how the mind works. He has developed a simple model to explain it. 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 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.

How can I control:

- **How I see my pupils?**
- **How I hear them?**
- **What I say?**

How we see them: A well-known American psychologist, Leo Bascaglia, 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 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, Terry Stoddard, who didn't meet any of these expectations. 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 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.

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.

Bascaglia 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.

[Group brainstorming about examples of different ways to see, hear and speak to our pupils that make us and them more empowered.]

This is what Sathya Sai Baba means when he talks about 3HV, harmony of head, heart and hands – that 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.

Newman's second strategy:

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

- **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.**

Sathya Sai Baba

These quotes from Sathya Sai Baba emphasise how important it is to have this inner peace that doesn't get disturbed when you are under any amount of pressure.

Choose to approach problems in a calm, collected manner

- **Children have the ability to receive messages from the thought energies of others –so we have to be very careful that the teacher's mind is calm and full of peace – because they 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 subconscious minds to have quietness and freedom from external chatter so they can take in information more easily and enable us to function more effectively.

Choose to calm my mind, be centred and think clearly under pressure

- **What practical and realistic things can you do during your school day to bring this about?**
- **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 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 judgement 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 they 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 bubble of positive thoughts. 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.

- **Re-look at the situation in a way that empowers you.**
- **Clear mind of distracting, stress-producing thoughts**
- **Bringing mind totally into 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 focussed on the child with whom they are interacting at the moment, even if it is only for a few seconds, no matter what other things are on their minds that have to be done in the next moment.

- **Refocusing mind on something peaceful and empowering**
- **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.

- **Focus on thinking about your guiding values every day**
- **Do one thing at a time.**

Newman’s next technique

Mental toughness and emotional resilience

You can consciously create mindsets and use them as *extraordinarily powerful tools* for producing the results you want

The subconscious 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. For example, there has been a lot of research to show the effects of positive programming of the subconscious on healing physical and emotional diseases. In the 1970s and 80s an Australian doctor, Ainslie Meares, did some pioneering work using positive programming to help cancer patients. As a student we did a psychology experiment where we each took turns to “programme” one of our friends – who was feeling perfectly well – that he looked unwell. After three or four people had told him how bad he looked, he was beginning to really feel unwell.

Start a collection of powerful, productive quotations or affirmations

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

[Individual brainstorming and group discussion]

- **“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.”

Low 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

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.** *You have probably heard that it requires far fewer face muscles to smile than to frown!*

Low stress behaviours

- **Treating the other person 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*

- *emphasise 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 of 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 shortcomings:*
'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 you 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, and you will find that you become more enthusiastic too.*
 - **Being totally present with the person; no distractions.**
 - **Smiling, greeting positively.**
- Low stress behaviours**
- **Using nonverbal 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.**

Newman talks about the importance of:

Choosing to think calmly and go within myself for the answers to my problems

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 would like to suggest that 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.

In Jumsai's model we can see that the third level of the mind is the superconscious. 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 superconscious, we can find solutions to our problems very easily. Sathya Sai Baba tells us that there are three things we need to do to be able to tap into our superconscious mind: concentration, contemplation and finally meditation, the state when we are really in touch with this level of the mind. In Sathya Sai Education in Human Values we use a technique called "Meditation on the Light" 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. I would like to share with you a version of the Light Meditation that has been adapted slightly to focus on problem solving – at another time we can practise the full version.

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 hands and your feet so they will lead you to meet with good people and do good things. Next take the light to your mouth and surround your mouth and tongue with light so you can speak wisely and with compassion. Let it fill your ears so you will hear the truth in what they are saying. Then take it to your eyes and let it fill

your eyes so that you can see only the good qualities in your students. Then 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.

The next strategy that Newman suggests is the first and foremost principle of Sathya Sai Education in Human Values.

Add love to everything I do.

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

A colleague with whom I was discussing this point raised her eyebrows and said, “Are you kidding? My students are disrespectful, refuse to do any work in class much less their homework, and you expect me to love them?”

Well, loving them doesn’t necessarily mean we have to be thinking loving thoughts about them all the time, although it’s much less stressful for us if we can.

Loving unconditionally also 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 you 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.**

There are many different ways that we can show love.

Different ways of adding love

- **Acceptance**

– **Quiet acceptance is the best armour 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

- **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 the inner beauty on the inside. 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.

- **Brotherliness**

- **When the behaviour of some one person or some one family disrupts life and breeds fear, faction and fighting in the community.... 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

- **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 of 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

A student teacher wrote about her former teacher's decision to become a primary support person when she was a child battling against leukemia, visiting her in hospital and at home. She reflected that the teacher's support at this very vulnerable time of her life had influenced her profoundly.

- **Forebearance and tolerance**

- **Forebearance is truth, righteousness, right living, Love, non-violence , all virtues rolled into one.**
- **Tolerate all kinds of persons and opinions; all attitudes and peculiarities.**

Notes prepared for workshop presented at 2011 Education Conference, Murwillumbah, 20-21 August by Dr. Margaret Taplin, Institute of Sathya Sai Education of Hong Kong

Sathya Sai Baba

When Mrs Thompson became more tolerant of Teddy Stoddard, in the story I told you earlier, she made life much less stressful for herself and probably for Teddy as well.

- **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

A Sathya Sai 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 needed for the exam. 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. For the principal too it was an effective strategy for de-stressing because there was no further tension between her and the child, and both were able to forget the incident and make a clean start.

- **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 practice 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 practice he called me over and said, "Rikki, this is your time to shine!" I couldn't let him down, so

I practiced 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.

This student recognised that the teacher trusted her to do the job well and in turn she placed their trust in the teacher and strived to do her best. The teacher knew about the student's weakness (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.

Once we have their respect, life becomes much easier!

However, as I mentioned earlier, the best solution is to be able to project love continually – if we can do that, it is very difficult to become stressed no matter what chaos is going on around you. One strategy is to programme yourself to project love. The following visualisation can be very effective in programming the subconscious mind. If the subconscious 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. 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, and can be done at the end of the Light Meditation that we did earlier.

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

Insights and Action Plans

[Individual brainstorming followed by group discussion]

Implement your action plan: *I would like to contact you in a few weeks to find out if the implementation of your action plan has helped you to survive better as a teacher:*

- **How does it help you to cope better with your teaching?** *And also whether, there is any spin-off effect on your pupils:*
- **How does it bring about changes in your classroom atmosphere and in your pupils themselves?**

Sathya Sai Baba talks about a process of education that he calls Educare:

Educare

[Educare] 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 Educare is when we have sensitized ourselves, when we sensitize our children to begin to respond and become caring people.”

- **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 sense 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.”**

What we have been trying to do together today is Educare – to bring out the “real-you” teacher that is within you. Please remember that if you are able to really be the teacher that you want to be, and to bring out the best in your pupils, the first thing you need to do is to take care of YOU!

- **Educare for teachers – bring out the “real-you” teacher within!**