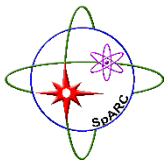


The Value of Acceptance



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STARTING NURSERY OR SCHOOL TO ACCEPT SEPARATION FROM THE FAMILY

ACCEPTANCE AND EDUCATION

Acceptance means to develop the quality of equanimity because we as educators, need to accept EACH child as he is; no matter what his colour, his physical or mental skills, his social, cultural, religious background are: no matter what his personality is like, whether according to adult expectations or not: no matter what his state of mind is (sad.

angry) Of course this is an ideal educational situation, but, if we discover and draw on our own love and strength from within we will then be able to recognise and to respect each child as an individual of equal worth.

To reach that step means to accept that we are quite often very far from what we would like to be ourselves and also that the children in our care are very far from what we would like them to be As educators. if we accept the child as he is. we enable him to accept himself and open a door

for a positive change. Acceptance is a new beginning. In order to accept each one as he is, we as educators need to recognise one main point:

AT BIRTH, EVERY HUMAN BEING POSSESSES A TREASURE STORE OF POSITIVE QUALITIES - LIKE LOVE, PEACE, HAPPINESS, GOODNESS ETC.

His inner qualities cannot disappear, but as the child grows up, these are very often overlaid by acquired negativity through destructive influences, which result in educational problems.

So, with this understanding, the task of the educator becomes easier. Rather than imposing qualities on children, we need to help them find the way to let their own inner positive qualities emerge and through daily practice then these qualities become values in their lives. This can be achieved through value-based activities.

In this process we are helping children to regain a whole brain function, that is balancing the function of the left and right brain. In our scientific society

today the emphasis in our educational system is on using the left brain (the logical, analytical side of the brain) to feed in formal information. The over-development of the left brain has led to the neglect of creative activities of the right brain. A minority of children are able to succeed with left brain function and demonstrate a high ability for acquiring knowledge. Many more with creative tendencies (i.e. right brain function) have great difficulty in adapting to the modern scientific and technological stream of

education and very often show low academic results. Emotionally they develop a feeling of failure and hopelessness

A healthy education would therefore help the equal development of the right and left brain function in each child. This calls for a well-balanced curriculum with formal learning and a variety of creative activities. i.e. offered by value-based education. As values cannot be taught but need to be practised and experienced, these

activities can easily be integrated with understanding and a little extra planning into the curriculum. Educators who have worked this way with children have shared enthusiastically the results the school ethos and climate as a whole had changed. The atmosphere was positive, creative and with a respectful interaction between children and children and staff Children were happy, creative, more concentrated and focused Not only did they achieve good results in their formal studies, but their attitudes and their good

spiritual, emotional and social skills became obvious.

As a result of value-based education we gain three main aspects

1] A well balanced left and right brain function. By using both sides of the brain equally, the whole child is educated and each child becomes an achiever. Learning becomes pleasure and not pressure

2] Because of the practice of values in the lives of children, they develop naturally their spiritual, emotional. mental and

social skills. The value of acceptance would be the foundation brick

3]Children growing up this way would certainly create a society with happy, strong and responsible citizens.

Now let us look at the value of acceptance which we consider the foundation brick for the development of other values such as tolerance, respect, simplicity. responsibility etc. Because of over conditioning or exposure to too many adverse

Circumstances, very often there is an accumulation of negative traits or tendencies in children, such as jealousy, hatred, negation, anger and depression which are psychological blocks to developing both self-acceptance and the acceptance of others. We cannot reach acceptance without transforming these blocks :

**Negation - Anger - Depression
- Inability to negotiate**

Only then can Acceptance be reached

- For this we propose a pedagogic process with five corresponding steps :

Negation :- to feel the contrast between acceptance and rejection.

Anger :- to use rituals and space to liberate the tension

Depression :- to give mental representations allowing the child to create dance from the suffering

Inability to negotiate :- to introduce shared vision from all kinds of cultures

Acceptance :- to strengthen this value with octanties and creativity

Until today, in most schools, our main tool or resource has been words, even if we know that information without experimentation is useles. So, what we propose now is to guide the child through this process, which leads from feelings through the sense organs to a positive new attitude, which results in positive words and actions.

Our goal is to help the child become his own master. He then accepts and uses his own inner qualities for positive responses. One who has learnt to love and

accept (respect) himself becomes good company for others, no matter what his physical condition is. If we guide each child in this way, we will definitely fulfil the responsibility of an educator to help children to grow up to be strong, responsible and constructive members of society.

ACTIVITIES IN THE CLASSROOM FOR CHILDREN 5 TO 11 YEARS OLD

Based on the value of acceptance

The following activities are merely suggestions to show how

we can programme them within the school curriculum. Each educator is obviously invited to create the programme according to the children, his/her personality and of course according to the whole education community we give some more directions with the following modules.

Stage	Objective	Activity
1	To accept his/her own physical appearance to enjoy.	To look at myself in a mirror and tell others what I see.
		To change his/her own appearance, cutting and exchanging parts of the photograph with the partner. <i>Each child has got own photograph. He cuts it in 4</i>

		<i>parts and exchanges two of them with a partner. Both put the photographs together with two pieces of their own and two pieces of the partner's photograph and in this way everyone can see that the best association is the original one</i>
	To accept others physical appearance	To draw and cut silhouettes and stick them on the wall.
		To carry out an interview within the school. <i>What is your weight? Your age? Your nationality? etc.</i>
	To experiment that we are not always able to understand each other	Mime
	To accept guidance To accept responsibility	In pairs. One guide/one blindfolded child <i>The guide leads the blindfolded child in the classroom, in the school. outside</i> <i>They change roles.</i>
		Living puppet - in pairs. 1 puppet/one operator.

2	To discover a great variety, of situations showing acceptance	Stories e g. Jungle Book, Boucle d'Or Puppets
		To make puppets. To imagine another end to Story.

Stage	Objective	Activity
3	To express what I have inside.	During Circle Times 1. <i>If I were a.... I would like to....</i> 2. <i>Open discussion.</i>
		With cards : To recognise 2 qualities within myself and 2 qualities I would like to improve
	To accept emotions and be able to transform them	Where is your good mood? Whenever a child gets angry or impatient the teacher can ask the child, "Where has your good mood gone?" The teacher will search in his pocket, under his arm, under his chin etc. Like magic the face of the child will lighten up and he will forget his anger.
		Modelling with clay.
		Drawing with large crayons
		Speak aloud to yourself
4	To accept differences.	To make all kinds of meals from the different cultures of the children in the classroom.

		<i>To get recipes from the family and invite the mothers to help us.</i>
		To listen to the music brought by the children from their background - to dance--games-stories-songs-dresses.
	To invite people from other backgrounds for a meeting.	
	To meet other children from other schools. including sick and handicapped children.	
	To discover some huge event like multicultural programme	
Stage	Objective	Activity

5	To realise that each one has his own unique part.	Example of a creative visualisation. <i>Imagine you are drinking a magic drink which makes you smaller and smaller until you have become very tiny, almost invisible. You can move fast and jump high. You want to listen to the thoughts and feelings of different people. The first person you meet is an old man. Quietly you jump onto his shoulder and then hide in his ear. There you sit and listen to his thoughts and feelings. Next you jump onto the shoulder of a young man and quietly you enter his ear and listen to his thoughts and feelings... Carry on with this exercise to cover at least four people and then let every child share.</i>
		To transform drawings I don't like. <i>To cut them to stick the different parts, to add colours, materials.....</i> I accept that in everything there is something good hidden To plan a party

		both together, with sweets, songs.....
	To experiment with acceptance that creativity is a process that leads us to progress	

ACCEPTANCE: A THOUGHT FOR EDUCATORS

Why is it so easy not to accept others, but to want to change them? Basically, because I cannot accept myself Without realising, we often try to gain acceptance from others and even as adults feel hurt and rejected when we

do not receive it. So what is my deep-rooted need? It is the need to belong, to be loved and accepted. Can I visualise belonging not only to my physical family, but also the communal, national and the whole global family like brothers and sisters? This acceptance develops a sense of unity and wholeness as well as acknowledgment of diversity and individuality. Make the aim to achieve this ideal situation in today's fragmented and conflict-torn world. Begin by allowing thoughts of love, peace, trust, tolerance and patience to

blossom in the mind - by having the courage to understand that, "I am OK just as I am in this present moment. I am a unique personality. and so is everyone else. What unites us is the innate qualities of love, peace, happiness and wisdom which we all possess." Such an insight creates acceptance, security, contentment and inner stillness maybe initially for only a few seconds, but it is a feeling that cannot be denied. Nurture this good feeling until it grows into something beautiful and special, and comes into words and

actions. Then as an educator, teacher, parent or caregiver, this feeling and attitude will be transmitted to the children in our care. Everything we do then teaches values.

In today's society there is so much violence, anger, rejection, dishonesty and abuse which can wound a child for life Whereas loving, caring and appreciative words and actions would make an indelible impression on the child! to develop self-acceptance as the child grows up There is an urgent need to recognise and

nurture the inner qualities of the personality, seeing the beauty, value and greatness of the positive qualities within, as mentioned above. Then the destructive discrimination involving gender, race, colour, religion, social class or disability will no longer mitigate against acceptance. For a teacher or parent to accept even the difficult behaviour in a child with his innate qualities of love and patience reveals his acceptance and helps the child to let go of the hurts and barriers from within and frees the child to express the

loving and peaceful aspects of his personality There is the example of a child who was blinded in the first year of life and was so loved by her parents that she did not consider her blindness to be a disability - just a natural part of life. Then at the age of nine she came into contact with a person who could not accept her blindness and for the first time she felt different and awkward.

Another seven year old boy, who was failing in his primary school education was assessed and transferred to a school for

children with learning difficulties, During the next four years his innate abilities were nurtured so that he gained enthusiasm for making progress He was re-integrated into mainstream education at the age of eleven and was able to maintain self-respect and finish school successfully.

ACTIVITIES TO HELP CHILDREN TO ACCEPT DEATH

All the suggested activities and ideas are just a start. You might want to develop your own ideas

and activities as well Please do so! It's great!

Many parents and educators may feel uncomfortable when it comes to answering children's questions about death Death is for many people a mystery What we have found as a possible answer to death being accepted by many people of different cultures and beliefs is that the living being leaves the body. The living being is called the spirit. The spirit, after leaving the body is still connected to our spirit through thoughts and feelings

and because of this connection we feel a loss when that being has gone. In this part we want to show a possible way of dealing with these feelings of loss in a positive way. We base our suggestions on the fact that death is not reversible, but that we can help the departed spirit and ourselves to keep the happy, constructive memories alive, as we understand that even though the spirit has departed, it is connected with the spirits of those left behind on the level of thoughts and feelings.

Family

The attached story could be the basis of a series of activities within the family to remember the departed spirit in a positive way. For our examples let us:

Step 1

Come together as a family once a week for ½ hour to remember the departed spirit in a positive way Create a rule not to slip into negative remembrance. *Accept however that that might happen and try to transform it to positive.*

Step 1A

Give respect to the departed spirit. Look at all the things that the departed spirit has left behind, clothes, toys, etc. and ask, "What would he/she have liked us to do with these things? Respect each member's answer and then act upon it accordingly. *If one member is not yet ready to do that. then have patience with that person and wait a little before the action is carried out*

Step 1B

Give love and happiness to the departed spirit. During the family meetings, create a booklet in

which each family member writes down his or her positive, happy memories of the departed spirit. eg draw, write poems, etc. Just let your creativity guide you to use your positive memories.

Step 2

Once all the family members have constructively accepted the departure of the spirit, short celebrations could be arranged for the birth and death anniversary of the departed spirit.

Classroom

Again the story of The Magic of Acceptance

could be used as the basis of a discussion about death. Use circle time for this:

Step 1

Read the story, maybe in stages depending on circumstances, need, age and time

available :-

- a.** Retell the story with the help of all the children and emphasise significant parts containing vital information
- b.** Ask questions like, "*What happened to Mark?*". "*How did*

Pamela react to Mark's sickness and her Mum being so busy?", "What was the reason?", etc.

Talk about feelings of sadness and what they do and how they show on the face. Create a contrast with happy feelings. Let children experience the difference.

- c.** What did Mark tell Pamela that the family had to do?

Step 2

Let children share their own experiences of a member dying in

their family Connect these experiences with the story.

- a. It was the spirit that left.
- b. What would help the departed spirit?
- c. Remember the spirit that has gone with only good memories, words and actions. Let children suggest positive words that could be spoken and positive actions.

A SICK OR DISABLED CHILD IN THE CLASSROOM

The main aspect is to accept that this child is part of the classroom

and needs to be integrated with the help of all the children. One rule definitely could be that we constructively have to let that child be part of our classroom. but never out of Sometimes it is difficult to accept a sick. disabled or slow learner child in the classroom, but looking at this in a positive way would help us to fulfil the aim of education - to let all children grow spiritually, emotionally intellectually. entally. physically and socially within the classroom setting Since the integration of such children affects a whole class it

would be good to involve children in this process.

Suggestion 1

Visualise with the whole class how the child with special needs could be cared for within the classroom situation. Let the children visualise how they could co-operate Here is an example of a visualisation Commentary Play soft music in the background and while reading the commentary pause after each sentence.

Sit quietly comfortably and listen for a minute to the music body and feel relaxed now listen

carefully.. .. you see yourself walking towards a beautiful building as you come closer you can read the sign above the door "The school of loving children as you go closer and enter the school you feel very special and happy..... now you see yourself sitting in the corner of a classroom what do you see in this classroom? What is the furniture like?... .. How is the room decorated?... .. What are the children doing?... .. Can you see their faces?... .. Are they happy?... .. You see a child sitting in a wheelchair.. .. what is that

child doing?.. .. You watch the other children around the child in the wheelchair are the other children nice to that child?.. .. How are they helping?.. .. What are they saying to that child? How are they working with that child? Can you see your teacher?..... What is she/he doing ?

Having seen such a nice school and having been in such a wonderful atmosphere. Open your eyes now and let us hear your experiences.

Let children freely share their experiences as well as encouraging them to draw what they visualised. You may like to alter the commentary according to your situation and needs in the classroom.

Suggestion 2

Welcome the help of a voluntary assistant or parent into the class.

Suggestion 3

Have a weekly meeting with the children of the class concerning co-operation: -

a. Positive start to the meeting

- sit with the children in a circle and after greeting each other, let the child to the right say something nice to the child at his right. That child says. "Thank you". and turns to the child to his right and says something nice to him, and so on, and so on, until the word comes back to the teacher.

b. Reflect on the progress of the past week- let all the children share their experience of co-operating to help the child with special needs. Look at the progress and also the difficulties.

Praise the progress and give encouragement in finding solutions to the difficult situations Praise every positive word and action of the children involved.

c. Action plan for the coming week-make an action plan together and clearly nominate who is to do what.

Suggestion 4

Keep a book in which you write down all the constructive words and actions of all the children which help the integration of the child with special needs Every

day read out the positive comments you made so the whole class feels inspired to help. This works like magic

Suggestion 5

Keep a little book especially for the child with special needs and mark down his progress. The love, care tolerance, patience and the co-operation the children have for this child will definitely bear positive results.

Suggestion 6

When a child has to move into another class or school. or

another town and school, prepare a big card (preferably A3) with the whole class. During circle time talk about the coming event and encourage all children to say something nice about the child that is moving or to share a happy memory, then write each one's contribution on the card. In this way, the child leaves with good wishes and the card can be shown to the new teacher and new class.

THE MAGIC OF ACCEPTANCE

Not far from here, lived a family. Mum and Dad with two children,

Mark and Pamela. They were a happy family until one day Mark fell sick. At the beginning everyone was thinking that it was only a minor illness, but with time passing by Mark became weaker and weaker and needed a lot of attention and help

Mum and Dad. having hardly any sleep grew tired and irritable. Especially Dad as his job was very demanding and he was really tired already when he came home

Pamela slowly became very quiet and a bit sad. She missed the

laughter and the funny games they all used to play, the long adventure walks in the forest and most of all the little secret talks she and Mark used to have about the things no grown-up would understand. She felt so lonely and above all she could not understand the changes around her, her parents being so different and Mark, whom she always loved, was sleeping most of the time. But when he was awake he could not talk because his pain was unbearable. At school the teacher grew worried about her as Pamela stopped

playing with the other children and lost interest in her school work. She rarely achieved any good marks in her tests. She seemed not to care about it any more. The teacher knew that Mark was very sick and that the doctor said he might die, but every time she thought of helping and explaining to Pamela to make her understand, she herself felt she did not have the answers. At times, because of She thought of that she even felt a bit uncomfortable. But what she always did is to say, "Good

morning Pamela" with a loving voice so that she felt the care.

Day by day Mark became worse and Pamela saw her parents spending all their time looking after Mark. They hardly realised that Pamela needed attention and love too. Sometimes she even wished she was so sick, so her parents would love her as much as they loved Mark. One day, when Mum was preparing a meal especially for Mark. she went to her and said. "Mum. I need you too. you know." Her Mum did not say anything, but started to cry

and left the kitchen Pamela went to her room, slammed the door out of frustration, she felt awful. That night she cried until she fell asleep. When she got up the next morning. Mark had died, he was gone forever.

The whole day Pamela just sat in one corner trying to understand what was going on around her and where her brother had gone. "*What happened to Mark? Where is he?*" The house she lived in was not a happy house any more. Her Mum especially was crying a lot. This went on for days and days

and nobody could answer Pamela's questions. And yet, Pamela needed help, someone to talk to who could explain and make her understand. Deep within her heart she wished that somebody would come or something would happen to make her understand and accept the changes around her.

It was Sunday evening. As usual Mum had come to quickly tuck her in but as soon as Pamela started to ask questions about Mark, her Mum started to cry, got up and left the room. So Pamela

put her arms around her teddy, squeezed him hard and fell asleep. That night she fell into a deep sleep.

It was this night that she dreamt about Mark and an enormous, friendly and magical butterfly. The butterfly flew quietly on her quilt. It had the most magnificent coloured wings with big circles in orange and light green. Oh, it looked so beautiful and immediately Pamela fell in love with this beautiful creature. "*Hi*" said Pamela with a welcoming smile. "*What are you doing here?*"

"I have come to be your friend and to help you to be happy again. Come, sit on my back and I'll take you to a secret place and show you something magical" said the butterfly with a quiet voice Pamela felt that she could trust this butterfly and climbed on its back, and off they flew leaving the house and everything else behind. They flew over fields, rivers, houses and trees, and they flew far, far away!

It was at sunrise when they reached a big garden. As the butterfly touched down on the

ground. Pamela walked around looking at everything carefully. She greeted the beautiful flowers and the singing birds with a smile and watched every step very carefully not to step on any ant, beetle or grasshopper. She felt that this garden was a very magical garden full of surprises. As she sat under one of the big trees to enjoy the beauty around her, she suddenly heard children laughing and singing happy songs. And then she saw the children coming close to where she was sitting. They played happily with a ball and some

played hide-and-seek. When she looked carefully, she saw that all bodies of these children were not real bodies of flesh and bones, they were transparent and she could see a little secret star shining in their foreheads. These little stars were shining very happily and brightly in all these children playing

But then her eyes fell on one child standing alone, not far from where she was sitting. It was a boy who also had a transparent body and a little star shining dimly in his forehead. The way

that boy looked and stood there. Pamela suddenly knew it was Mark. Pamela got up and with light steps she went over, saying with a soft voice. *"Mark, is it you? Why are you not playing with these happy children?"* Mark slowly turned his face towards her and she could see the dim light of sadness reflected in his eyes. *"Pamela"* whispered Mark. *"all the tears Mum. Dad and you are crying every day are like a curse for me, they make me unhappy. I want to move on happily, but your tears and sadness don't give me a chance"*

"But Mark we all love you and we miss you, that's why we cry." Pamela felt a little irritated. *"To love. Pamela, means to accept and to let go with happiness! Please, please Pamela, go back to Mum and Dad and teach them to remember me with happiness, to remember all the good times we had together and only then can I be happy too!"* He looked at Pamela with love and gave her a hug. His arms felt so light and secure, and she was happy!

When she woke up that Monday morning, she felt different and

happy. She somehow knew that she could keep close to Mark in her thoughts and feelings but the secret was to remember him with happiness. From that day on. Pamela smiled again, spoke only happy things about Mark and she then saw her parents changing too. Slowly, very slowly, the happiness came back into their lives.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS
AND PARENTS ON HOW TO HELP
CHILDREN WHO HAVE JUST
STARTED NURSERY OR SCHOOL**

TO ACCEPT SEPARATION FROM THE FAMILY

Nowadays it is from the youngest child that society asks for the most power of adaptation. From the age of two-and even earlier - the little child has to face a great change in his daily life, without understanding why. It is not easy to accept changes when we understand why they come or when we choose them consciously, so we know what kinds of upheavals arise when change is imposed. When the child starts school for the first

time, we know that these first years are the formative years for the whole life and so our task as educators is to help to make this step an easy and happy transition for the child. We are also aware that this first step is the preparation for integration into society. So the suggestion is to practise deep co-operation based on the objective

**TO BRING BENEFIT TO
EVERYONE BY CREATING A
CARING, CONSTRUCTIVE AND
PEACEFUL ATMOSPHERE FOR
THE CHILDREN**

This means for the parents and the teacher to meet together and to accept that they both have a responsibility towards the children from this meeting could arise a true willingness to co-operate for the well-being of everyone. If this willingness and this understanding is there, then all happens easily

THE OBJECTIVE IS TO WELCOME THE CHILDREN IN THE MORNING WITH THE BEST QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIP WE CAN OFFER THEM.

The quality of relationship is based on total acceptance of the child. It is related to the responsibility we have our ability to listen to their needs and to give the right answer at the right moment. The number of adults available per child is completely connected with quality, so what we suggest is to reserve the very first part of the day for common welcoming in the classroom with some parents, the teacher, the assistant and the children, as a happy family meeting again to begin a happy day It may be one, two, three parents per morning

according to the needs and the organisation of the school. To make this organisation the teacher can put a rota on the wall for the parents to mark their name. In such a context, where the child feels the presence of a parent, whether it is his/her own or not, he feels secure because of attention and acceptance. And as this experience has already been made. we can see the joy of the children when their own parent comes into the classroom

SOME MORE SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS AS HELPERS IN THE CLASSROOM.

The parent's task is first of all TO BE NATURAL. By definition parents are educators. It means that they are able to share their experiences within the classroom. They can :

- Sit and read or tell stories
- Sing songs
- Play in the corners with children, helping them to dress the dolls, to clean the cars and the garages.

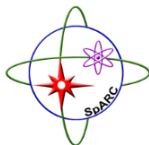
- Sit around a table and do puzzles, educative games, draw pictures
- Simply to listen to them to take care of one child in particular
- Build
- Lead an activity according to his/her own speciality or to discover his/her own speciality

This co-operation gives time for the teacher to meet and discover each child. And that same co-operation allows the class to become a group much more quickly and with much more authenticity, love, stillness and acceptance It also means that the

whole day becomes more peaceful, happy and constructive. The direct consequence is that learning is easier and more efficient.

The following year the next step for the teacher, parents and children is to develop a system that changes every day or week for welcoming all the parents at the end of the morning and at the end of the afternoon. That means the parent could be invited during circle time at the end of the school day. This provides a chance for the parents to observe

the positive changes and enjoy them with the children.



For More Information

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