

Silent Sitting

A Resource Manual



“Sitting silently, doing nothing, spring comes and the grass grows by itself.”

...A Zen saying

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Do not demean your talents.
When you dive deep into yourselves,
you can discover the source of all strength.
- Sathya Sai Baba

Introduction

*T*his booklet has been written to provide support for teachers who would like to utilize the technique of silent sitting. It is intended to be a simple, practical guide that gives a range of samples as well as some reflections from students and teachers about its effectiveness as a tool in the mainstream classroom. Since silent sitting is a fundamental component of the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) model, we will first explain a little more about this model.

Currently there is a belief that all teachers should be teachers of values education, whether it be directly through teaching about values and morals, or indirectly by their own appropriate modelling. This was reiterated by *The Report of UNESCO Commission on Education for the 21st Century* (1995), which describes the four pillars of education critical for an economically productive and socially rich life:

1. learning to be: the right to self identification, self definition, self esteem, etc.
2. learning to know: the right to self knowledge, learning to learn, etc.
3. learning to do: the right to self development, employment, etc.
4. learning to live together: the right to self determination, to work in groups and teams, to resolve conflicts, etc.

Traditionally, education systems have been concerned primarily with 'learning to know' and 'learning to do'. However, it is only comparatively recently that 'learning to be' and 'learning to live together' have been acknowledged as important missions. This is despite the fact that some writers have been advocating the importance of this for several decades, for example John Dewey (1956):

When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership with such a little community [ie a microcosm of the world a child would inhabit as a citizen, not just as a worker], saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with the instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guarantee of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious (pp.43-44).

There is undoubtedly growing pressure on teachers at all levels to become teachers of values, through modelling, discussing and critiquing values-related issues (Jennings and Nelson, 1996; Lockwood, 1993; Noddings, 1991; 1995a; 1995b; 1995c). Education can no longer be concerned solely with academic achievement because even this is not possible if children do not know how to care for others and be cared for by others (Noddings, 1995c). In fact, while the survival of society is dependent upon people who are literate, numerate and able to cope with solving the problems of day-to-day life:

Our society does not need to make its children first in the world in mathematics and science. It needs to care for its children – to reduce violence, to respect honest work of every kind, to reward excellence at every level, to ensure a place for every child and emerging adult in the economic and social world, to produce people who can care competently for their own families and contribute effectively to their communities (Noddings, 1995a, p.365).

With breakdowns in traditional family structures, it is no longer the case that commonly-accepted values are passed from one generation to the next (Carr, 1997). Therefore, the responsibility is falling more and more on schools to fulfil this role - and yet it continues to be difficult for them to do so, particularly with increasing pressures to achieve high test scores even in primary schools (Noddings, 1995a).

Nevertheless, many teachers are expressing concern that, even though they acknowledge values education as being important, it is difficult to 'add on' anything more to their already jam-packed curricula. Therefore, it is necessary to explore ways in which it can be incorporated into existing curricula without needing to make too many changes or becoming just one more extra thing to do. Doing this has the added advantage that the schools do not have to abdicate in any way their responsibility to teach the academic skills but that they will be rethinking the ways in which they do so (Noddings, 1994).

A framework that enables teachers to integrate values education into their existing programmes effectively is Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV). This programme was founded in India by Sathya Sai Baba and now operates successfully in more than 160 countries, being supported by national education department policies in several. It is a secular programme that is concerned with putting back character development and values into education, and developing all domains of the student's personality: cognitive, physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. It is based on five human values that are universal and inter-dependent: Truth, Right Conduct, Peace, Love and Non-violence, and is concerned with eliciting these values that are already inherent in all of us. The fundamental principle of SSEHV is that all teaching is based on love and that the teacher's example in living the values is the most critical component.

Specifically, the goals of SSEHV are:

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

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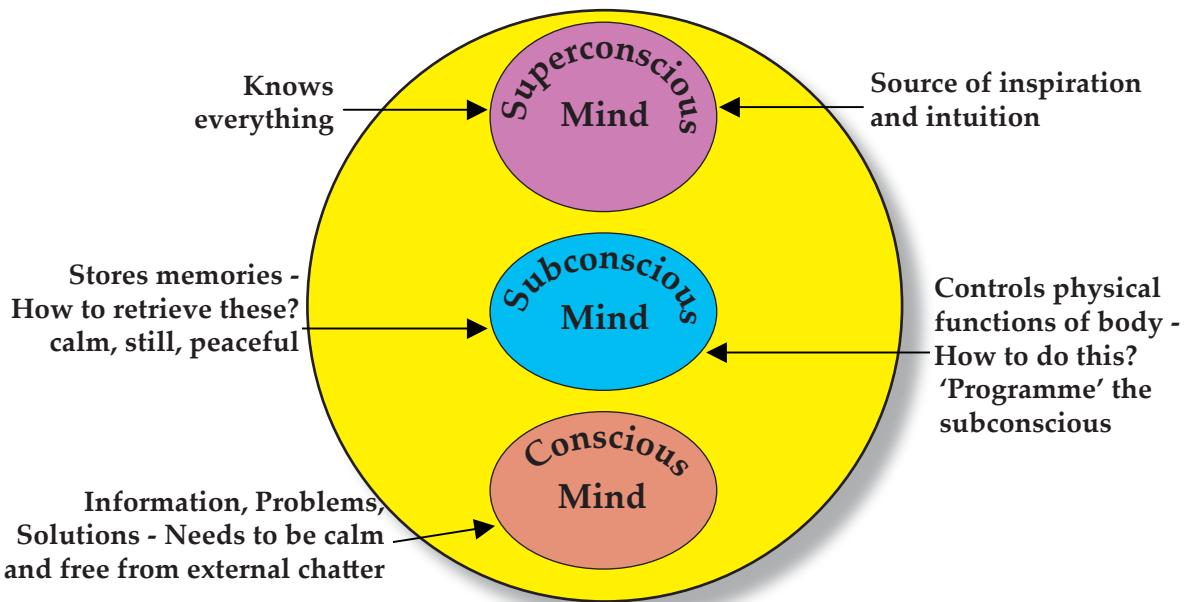
Chapter 1

What is silent sitting and how does it work?

Background

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

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



This diagram represents the human being's physical body (large circle) and the three levels of the mind: the conscious, the sub-conscious and the superconscious. Through the five senses, the conscious mind receives and processes information from the environment in order to create awareness and understanding. The 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 superconscious mind is the source of our wisdom, knowledge, conscience and higher consciousness.

In a holistically-balanced person, these three levels of the mind interact together to contribute to physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. Jumsai proposes that there are two important ingredients for this healthy interaction to occur. The first is to free the three levels of the mind from extraneous 'chatter', to enable enhanced concentration and memory. The second is to ensure that the information that is stored in the various levels of the mind is 'clean', positive and constructive, since its retrieval will have such a significant effect on the individual's thoughts and actions, which in turn contribute to the presence or absence of holistic well-being.

The technique of silent sitting is a useful way to quieten the chatter and hence promote a feeling of inner peace, while 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, emotional and spiritual health. Silent sitting can be a useful strategy to settle them down when they are restless or when they have come back into class after recess or lunch breaks. You can ask them just to 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 for it if they are feeling the need to settle down or relax. If you want to, you can give them some guidance by asking them to focus on slow, steady breathing or even to visualise a silver-white light moving steadily through their bodies, bringing relaxation and positive thoughts wherever it touches.

Children only need to practise silent sitting and inner listening for a few minutes each day 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.

A key step in establishing a sense of inner peace is to learn to be happy with our own company, rather than always looking for other people to be around us. 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 been completely alone out of the sight and hearing of another person. During a school camp once, we decided to use the opportunity to take our city kids into the bush (an Australian term for forest) to experience this feeling of complete solitude. The first time we did it was during the day. First thing in the morning, before breakfast, we went to the bush area behind our hostel and asked the children to each find a place where they could feel completely alone, where they could not see anybody else, and 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."

Creative Visualisation

As mentioned earlier in the description of 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 logically 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.

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 on a cold day. If you repeat this message often enough then eventually your body will really begin to feel warm. Similarly, if you are constantly telling yourself that you are unhappy or unlucky, then your whole mind and body will become convinced that this is the truth and you will then start to attract more and more situations that make you unhappy or unlucky.

In the 1970s and 80s an Australian doctor, Ainslie Meares, did some pioneering work using creative visualisation with cancer patients, using it to programme their sub-conscious minds to send out the message to their bodies to defeat the cancer. 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. Later in this booklet we will look at some examples that your students can be led through in just a few minutes, to help to facilitate this positive programming. These include some examples of creative visualizations for specific purposes, for example coping with stress or preparing for an examination or to solve a mathematics problem.

Learn to get in touch with the
silence within yourself and know
that everything in this life has
a purpose.

(Elisabeth Kubler-Ross)

Chapter 2

Evidence about the effects of silent sitting

Several studies have explored the effects of utilising techniques such as those described above regularly in the classroom. In particular, positive benefits have been derived for disruptive or inattentive pupils (Bealing, 1997; Redfering & Bowman, 1981). One study found that regular silent sitting helped to improve children's decision making and put them in touch with their deeper core values (Rozman, 1994), while others found that it helped them to cope better with stressful events (Manninen, 2000; Rickard, 1994), reduced anxiety (Margolis, 1990; Semple et al., 2005) and reduced anger and hostility (Benson et al., 1994; Manninen, 2000). Further benefits have included decreases in levels of impulsivity, increases in attention spans and general improvement in behaviour (Kratter and Hogan, 1982). Even health effects have been reported, such as the reduction of blood pressure in teenagers (Benson et al., 1994).

A study by Devi (2002) focused specifically on the silent sitting techniques used in SSEHV and found positive effects on children's achievement and behavior, as well as their self-reported feelings and emotions. When Devi discontinued the silent sitting for a month, there was observable deterioration in all of these factors, and the children themselves asked for it to be resumed because they were missing the positive effects.

Children's comments

A total of 62 primary school teachers in China, who had been using silent sitting in their classes as part of an SSEHV programme at least three times per week for a year, each interviewed 5-6 students regularly during the year about how they perceived the silent sitting to have affected them. Valid interview data were returned for 348 students, ranging from grade 2 to grade 6. Qualitative analysis was used to identify patterns in the students' comments, as indicated in the table below with some typical examples of their actual comments. Of the 348 students, 339 (97.4%) made positive comments. It is interesting to note that the effect mentioned most often is improved concentration (115 students mentioning this).

In all, 749 valid positive comments were analysed, and these have been classified into five categories: **feelings, thoughts and emotions**, which accounted for 293, or 39%, of the total comments; **better study habits** (241, 32%); **improved school performance** (110, 14.7%); **physical effects** (73, 9.7%) and **behavior** (32, 4.3%). It is encouraging to see a spread in the comments between affective factors (feelings of relaxation, calmness and peace, improved moods); general behaviours (not getting angry, irritated or impatient as easily) and academic behaviours (improved study skills and attitudes, better understanding and retention and improved academic scores). The children's comments have been translated from the original Chinese, but with their expressions left as close as possible to the original.

Feelings, thoughts and emotions	
<i>Number of comments (39% of all comments, N=749)</i>	
Effect	Relaxed/comfortable mind
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	63 (26.1%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It makes me reduce stress. • That feeling is very comfortable. I don't want to open my eyes.
Effect	Calmness
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	43 (17.8%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can make my heart feel calm. • In my life a lot of matters vexed me. Now I will calm down to think when I meet these matters. It really has worked very much. • I understand the teacher lets us sit in silence before the lesson to let us study with a calm mindset. • I can adjust my panic mood and feel full of confidence to have class.
Effect	Improved mood
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	30 (12.4%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can adjust my own mood. • My mood is at ease. My heart is smiling. • If I am in a bad mood at home I will do silent sitting by myself. My mood changes very quickly and I recover my equanimity.

Cont'd.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The other day I was very angry, anxious, in no mood to go to class. After silent sitting I became more peaceful. It's unbelievable a little silent sitting can become my psychological doctor, make me shift from worried to peaceful, and from anger to happiness.
<i>Effect</i>	"Forget agony"/take mind off unpleasant matters/reduce worries/able to cope with nervousness or anxiety
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	30 (12.4%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After a period of time silent sitting, I slowly forget some worrying matters, concentrate on learning mathematics. During the process I feel I am entirely free of worry, which I have never felt before. It removes your worries and adds some fun.
<i>Effect</i>	Feeling of happiness
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	28 (11.6%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone has times when we are not happy. If you have this kind of mood for the whole morning or the whole day it is difficult to have your class. Then you get "half the result with twice the effort". The silent sitting makes me feel I am with the clouds to enjoy sightseeing of beautiful scenery in different countries, and my whole body feels totally relaxed and happy, no worries at all. Now I get "twice the result with half the effort". Since I learned silent sitting, life for me is not sad or miserable anymore. It's happy. I feel I enter a world without suffering or sadness, only happy and smiling faces, a world of wonderful fantasy.
<i>Effect</i>	Peaceful
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	19 (7.9%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Even if I am in a noisy environment I can settle down to do my homework well.

<i>Effect</i>	Don't get as angry now – e.g. when in conflict with other people, I don't lose my temper as easily
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	26 (10.8%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was trying to do a painting at home but it was not going well. I became angry and destroyed the painting. My father saw me and reminded me to do silent sitting. After silent sitting I became calm and I did a very good painting. • I no longer become angry with my mother. Mother says I am lovely. • When I am not happy with a classmate over some small matter, silent sitting makes me settle down.
<i>Effect</i>	Light and free
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	19 (7.9%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	Whatever I like, I can think.
<i>Effect</i>	Emotions
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	13 (5.4%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When I meet an unhappy situation I seek a place of calmness to calm down. • ...marvelous feeling. • I feel easily pleased. • I feel very happy. • When the teacher describes some scene to us I get up in good humour and feel happy to hear the lesson. • Often in silence I feel exultation.
<i>Effect</i>	Kinder/more considerate
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	1 (0.4%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	I am more concerned about other people, I do not humiliate people. I know I was wrong before.

Effect	Sense of awe/appreciation of the beauty of the scenario being described
Number of comments (% of total comments in category)	10 (4.1%)
Typical examples of pupils' comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beautiful music makes me think of the great universe in play. • It lets me imagine several beautiful pictures. I can feel my life is full of interest and beauty, a very wonderful life. • I feel wonderful inside my heart. • I feel there is a bright spot in my mind that turns round and round in front of me and takes my soul away to the forest, over the sea, over the endless grassland, etc.
Effect	Less impatient
Number of comments (% of total comments in category)	5 (2.1%)
Typical examples of pupils' comments	-
Effect	More tolerant of others
Number of comments (% of total comments in category)	4 (1.7%)
Typical examples of pupils' comments	In the past I always liked to report to teachers, saying, "Xiao Hung, Xiao Lan, Xiao Dung won't lend pens to me, Xiao Ker knocked me down and didn't say sorry..." Silent sitting has made me forgive others actively. I never thought that silent sitting would have such powerful charm. It changed me, made me become more peaceful.
Effect	More understanding of others
Number of comments (% of total comments in category)	2 (0.8%)
Typical examples of pupils' comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If somebody is criticized by a teacher or another person I will tend to comfort them – I have a greater sense of forgiving others. • Every time in silent sitting I feel in my heart there is an ideal kingdom. People there get along well with each other, they help each other, they are always "ready to help others for a just cause" and also sacrifice their own interests for the sake of others. What a peaceful and calm picture.

Better study habits <i>Number of comments: 241 (32% of all comments)</i>	
Effect	Concentration
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	115 (47.7%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silent sitting helps me to settle down to study very quickly and will not let other matters interfere with my thinking. • When class begins I am still thinking of the bubble-gum I bought before class and thinking of buying another one. After listening to the teacher read the silent sitting willing to participate in the study activity with the teacher. • Before class I was thinking about when I went to McDonalds last week with my mum. After listening to the teacher I think less distracting things and I can concentrate on my study. • In class, no matter who interrupts me I won't be influenced. I just concentrate, then I can make progress.
Effect	Review of classwork for understanding and memory/clear thinking
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	43 (18.7%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I usually do silent sitting before sleeping, quietly remembering what I learnt that day. • I can think of a lot of knowledge.
Effect	Improved study habits and attitudes/more active participation in class
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	38 (17.0%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My father thinks I have become more conscientious with my study. He doesn't scold me now. • I can learn more quickly. • I can cope with learning harder knowledge. • I have more interest in study than before.

Cont'd.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We can get “twice the result with half the effort”. • At home there is now no need to fight because of my study – there is more happiness. • I can learn more easily. • I had a habit of talking in class. Now I am much quieter and more motivated to study. • Before I would rush ahead and not think carefully. Now I have changed my way of going about things and will now do a couple of minutes of silent sitting first.
Effect	Better listening skills
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	13 (5.4%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	-
Effect	Less careless
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	5 (2.1%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before I was careless. I understood everything while learning mathematics but could not get a high mark and was always making mistakes in my homework. After doing silent sitting I pay more attention and am more earnest. The teacher says I have progressed. • In every exam I made mistakes because of my carelessness and Mum and Dad scolded me, but I still did it again. I just could not get rid of this bad habit. After silent sitting my heart calms down. I become patient so I do better and won't be careless in my exams again.
Effect	Settle down after play or excitement (or returning after a holiday)
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	27 (11.2%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	After PE class every time I come back to class sweating all over. It makes me feel agitated about coming back into the classroom. But now we have 2 minutes silent sitting I calm down “without ripples”.

Improved school performance <i>Number of comments: 110 (14.7% of all comments)</i>	
Effect	Stimulated imagination, e.g. easier to think of what to write
Number of comments (% of total comments in category)	38 (34.5%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I imagine an outside matter in the classroom, imagine a past matter, also imagine a future matter. The imagination makes my self-confidence increase. When a teacher from another class asked me to make a model for the class I couldn't think of an idea, so I closed my eyes and got good ideas.
Effect	Improved problem solving/easier to find an answer
Number of comments (% of total comments in category)	32 (29%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can answer a problem very quickly. It can help me to resolve mathematics problems. The teacher teaches us to do silent sitting at the time of exams. I took first (place) in the exam. Silent sitting makes me more confident and I like to think of problems. We can get solutions by silent sitting with eyes closed when we meet with difficulties.
Effect	Improved academic work
Number of comments (% of total comments in category)	28 (25.4%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am quicker to think of an answer. Time slows down when my eyes are closed, so I have more time to find a solution. I can remember mathematical formulae quicker than before.

Silence is the true friend that never betrays.
- Confucius

Effect	Improved academic work
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	28 (25.4%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Especially during composition – I used to get a headache – now I can write anything to order. Silent sitting reduced my study pressure and let me have excellent results.
Effect	Strengthened memory
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	9 (8.1%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes I would forget what I had learned but when using silent sitting, I am reminded of the knowledge. Remembering the formulae for chanting (i.e. rote learning by chanting) also isn't so difficult.
Effect	Improved academic work
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	28 (25.4%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am quicker to think of an answer. Time slows down when my eyes are closed so I have more time to find a solution. I can remember mathematical formulae quicker than before.

<h3 style="text-align: center;">Physical effects</h3> <p><i>Number of comments: 73 (9.7% of all comments)</i></p>	
Effect	Brain refreshed, stimulated or clear
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	39 (53.4%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	The brain is very quiet, it can expel miscellaneous things.
Effect	Easier to go to sleep at night
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	4 (5.5%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	-

Effect	Body refreshed if tired/more energetic
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	23 (31.5%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can remove fatigue. • I feel my spirit aroused – I have a lot of vitality. • It can eliminate my tiredness/fatigue and I can continue the third and fourth class [of the morning] full of energy. • Every day we have five classes before we can have a break. So I feel very tired, especially during the third and fourth classes in the morning; tired and hungry, dizzy and with a heavy head. Since we have had silent sitting, when I feel hungry I imagine there's a roast duck in front of me. • When I feel tired I feel I become a bird flying in the sky or a fish swimming in water. Then all hunger and tiredness goes and I can finish my classes happily. When I feel perplexed or annoyed and worn out, absolutely exhausted, I will do silent sitting as our teacher tells us. • I can take a short rest for a while.
Effect	Good for the eyes to give them a rest
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	4 (5.5%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	-
Effect	Helpful in sport, to calm down before competition
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	2 (2.7%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	-
Effect	Can make me more healthy
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	1 (1.4%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	-

<p style="text-align: center;">Behaviour</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Number of comments: 32 (4.3% of all comments)</i></p>	
Effect	Initiates conscience /helps to get rid of bad habits
Number of comments (% of total comments in category)	12 (37.5%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I changed some bad habits. • Silent sitting makes me understand my shortcomings. • Silent sitting stories have told me a lot of morals that I can think about. • It is silent sitting that makes me think about a lot of morals, for example to be honest and to be open-hearted.
Effect	Improved self-behaviour/self-discipline
Number of comments (% of total comments in category)	11 (34.3%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother said, "Child, you have really improved. You should appreciate your teacher's guidance." I said with a smile, "It is not only the teacher but also silent sitting". • If I get angry or fidgety I use silent sitting. • I have realized that you cannot be so noisy otherwise you will interfere with other students. • In class sometimes I talk, so after class I sit silently for 5 minutes and try to find out the reason why I talk in class.
Effect	Improved class behaviour/class spirit
Number of comments (% of total comments in category)	8 (25.0%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those very naughty classmates also changed. • They don't affect others as much. • It brings control much better than if the teacher scolds the class.

Cont'd

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In our class Li is the most impatient one. After silent sitting he has “cultivated his morality and temperament” and is not naughty any more.
Effect	Self direction
<i>Number of comments (% of total comments in category)</i>	1 (3.0%)
<i>Typical examples of pupils' comments</i>	Lets me ascertain my direction for achieving my goals.

Only nine of the 348 students made negative comments about silent sitting – one of these, whose initial comment was “how boring” was giving positive comments six months later. Their reasons included:

Inability to put the skills into practice:

- I can't focus – I think hard but again and again my mind turns to what I saw on television last night... I can't attain inner peace.
- I can't be quiet, I look at other classmates secretly, being almost asleep.

The belief that the time should be spent on studying:

- I still don't like it because I feel dull. It does not seem to give me any important help.
- I think it's not necessary – it takes a lot of time, doing not much.
- I think having it very often wastes our precious time but I'm very interested in occasional silent sitting.
- I feel very annoyed, much precious time spent not in study – why do we have to spend it sitting in silence?

Teachers' Comments

The following are typical of the comments made by teachers in their personal reflections:

- It calms down the children's minds. When they close their eyes they can try to recall previous knowledge – not just in class but also things they have done right or wrong, i.e. self-assessment.
- Silent sitting is a way of thinking, gives people a sense of quiet, and they are very free to think about anything and escape temporarily from reality – therefore it decreases the pressure of work. I use it personally to have a break mentally or physically.
- I have found myself able to control my own mood easier.

- Silent sitting is very good to nurture their study habits. It encourages the students to think, try new things and change their attitudes towards their studies. They are now beginning to see that they are studying for themselves, not for their parents.
- Silent sitting brings real benefits to students – it reduces pressure, concentrates their minds, improves their thinking, changes naughty behaviour, and improves imagination and quality of writing.
- Sometimes students give up when facing difficulties but after silent sitting they are more persistent.

Benefits to the family

After we had introduced silent sitting to the schools in the SSEHV projects in Mainland China, the teachers asked their pupils to share it at home with their families. After some time, the children made comments, such as those below, which indicate clearly that families have benefitted from doing this activity together and that it has contributed to building a sense of community within these families.

- My father does not get so angry with me. He knows I have changed and he loves me very much.
- We do not fight any more in our home because of [silent sitting] – now it is more fun.
- We sit at the same table to do silent sitting. My family members say it is very helpful to a person's mental state. Mother says it is so very good.
- I tell my family that when they meet difficult times using silent sitting will help them to look before they leap.
- I can think of my mother's pain and can also help her with her life. After silent sitting I do not want to fight with my mother. She says I have changed.
- My mother likes to do silent sitting very much, getting me to do it every evening.
- My father and mother both say it is very interesting and they would like to do silent sitting with me, together. The nights when mother does silent sitting with me I am able to fall asleep very quickly. Father's mother likes it too. My elder sister and elder brother also like it very much and use it.
- When my mother saw me using silent sitting she was a bit shocked. Now, under my influence, when she is in a bad mood she will also listen to music and do silent sitting.
- Having once seen me doing silent sitting at home, my grandmother thought I had

been learning to follow some religion from the television and told me not to learn such things from television. After I explained she has no objection. Sometimes grandmother is very tired so I teach her also to do silent sitting.

- Now when my father meets difficulties in his life he can do silent sitting like me – sometimes it really can solve a problem.
- Every evening my mother will tell a silent sitting story to me. I like to do silent sitting with my mother.
- The change in me seems to have had an influence on my father. Now he will sit down with me and have a conversation, unlike before when he always wore an angry face and scolded me.
- I have been doing silent sitting at home with my mother. Now I feel that the number of times that mother and father fight are fewer.
- Every evening my grandpa also does silent sitting before going to bed.

In the attitude of silence the soul
finds the path in a clearer light,
and what is elusive and deceptive
resolves itself into crystal clearness.
(Mahatma Gandhi)

Chapter 3

Different ways to use silent sitting

Different types

There are many ways in which you can use silent sitting in your classroom:

- simple concentration exercises
- listening to silence
- listening to breathing
- listening to suitable music
- listening to a visualisation led by the teacher or a student
- using the “Light Visualisation”.

Gender preferences

According to research conducted in the U.K. by Devi et al., there are gender patterns in students' preferences for different types of silent thinking:



- Short activities
- Light Visualisation



- Stories and imaginative visualisations
- Light Visualisation

When to use it

Silent sitting can be used:

- at the beginning of a lesson to settle the pupils
- at the beginning of a lesson to introduce the topic
- in the middle or at the end of a lesson to reflect on what has been learned
- before tackling a problem, exam etc.
- if a student/students are feeling stressed or unhappy
- to help pupils get in touch with their inner computers
- to encourage pupils to reflect on themselves, and whether or not they are showing good values in different situations in their lives.

How it can be used

Different uses of silent sitting:

- to improve concentration
- to relax in times of stress
- to imagine things as we picture them inside our heads
- to get in touch with our own “inner computer” to solve our problems
- to recall something we have learned
- to reflect on the values that are important to us
- to reflect on a behaviour that we may need to change
- to open our hearts or understand ourselves better.

Music for silent sitting

“As humans we have a physical response to music because our biological being is a rhythmic entity. That is, our breathing, our digestion, even our individual cells, appear to have an intrinsic rhythmicity, as do our nervous system and brain. Some researchers believe that music stimulates the brain at lower levels, especially the emotional brain, to help stabilize impulse control. Because it appears that music can influence human response in a variety of ways, it should not surprise us much that music can influence many factors associated with school performance.”

(Chalmers & Olsen, 1999, p.43)

There have been many research studies into the effects of different music types on feelings, emotions and behaviours. Some of these findings are presented in the two tables below, and might be useful guides to selecting suitable music for your silent sitting for different purposes. Chalmers & Olsen (1999) recommend letting the students have some ownership in the selection of the music, within the limits set by you.

Positive effects of different types of music	
Reduction in negative emotional states	
<i>Music type</i>	Self-select or classical
<i>Study in which effect was identified</i>	Labbé et al. (2007)
Increased positive feelings and decreased negative feelings	
<i>Music type</i>	Designer (i.e. music designed to have specific effects on the listener)
<i>Study in which effect was identified</i>	McCraty et al. (1998)
Increased quantity of students' writing	
<i>Music type</i>	Classical
<i>Study in which effect was identified</i>	Koppelman & Imig (1995)
Positive effects on lunchroom noise level and the numbers of children requiring intervention from a supervisor for behavioural issues	
<i>Music type</i>	Classical and popular
<i>Study in which effect was identified</i>	Chalmers & Olsen (1999)
Enhanced learning of spatial tasks	
<i>Music type</i>	Mozart's sonatas
<i>Study in which effect was identified</i>	Ivanov & Geake (2003) Jausovec & Gerlic (2006) Thompson et al. (2001)

First and second grade pupils calming down after recess period	
<i>Music type</i>	Music from classic Disney films, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calming: "When You Wish Upon a Star" from Pinocchio, and "Candle on the Water" from Pete's Dragon. • Reassuring: "Give a Little Whistle" from Snow White or "Chim Chim Cher-ee" from Mary Poppins. • Invigorating: "Zip-a-dee-doo-dah" from Song of the South or "Bibbi-di-Bobbidi-Boo" from Cinderella.
<i>Study in which effect was identified</i>	Giles (1991)
Relaxation and focused attention	
<i>Music type</i>	Any music played at 60 beats per minute (perhaps "because the 60 beats approximates the ideal resting heart rate for the human body, a type of entrainment occurs that allows listeners to slow down their heart rate to match the musical beat, [which may in turn] promote focus and concentration")
<i>Study in which effect was identified</i>	Chalmers & Olsen (1999), p.45
Negative effects of different types of music	
Increases in hostility, sadness, tension and fatigue/significant reductions in caring, relaxation, mental clarity, vigour	
<i>Music type</i>	Grunge rock music
<i>Study in which effect was identified</i>	McCraty et al. (1998)
Significant negative effect on students' writing	
<i>Music type</i>	Top 40 music (perhaps attributable to their familiarity with it)
<i>Study in which effect was identified</i>	Koppelman & Imig (1995)

Chapter 4

Some examples of silent sitting for classroom use

This chapter includes a range of guided visualisations and other activities that have been used by teachers. Some are for specific purposes, such as to help students find their own inner strengths or to improve their problem-solving abilities. Others may be purely for relaxation. Some teachers have even invited students themselves to select suitable music or to compose appropriate visualizations to share with their classmates. A particularly effective one is the visualisation on the light, which has been included in this section.

Please note that it is important to discuss with your pupils regularly how the various types of silent sitting are beneficial to them. In some places in this chapter, specific values messages have been suggested for visualizations, to guide your discussions. It is also effective for them to see you using it as a tool for various purposes.

To improve concentration (Contributed by Anita Devi, U.K.)

Pebbles in a jar

Standing at the back of the room (or where the pupils cannot see you), drop (at varying speeds) pebbles into a jar. Encourage the children to close their eyes and count the number of pebbles dropped into the jar. Ask the children how many. Then repeat the exercise.

Time

Ask the children to sit comfortably and close their eyes. When you say, "Start", they need to start counting the number of seconds that pass until you say, "Stop". Ask the children to share their answers and strategies. Repeat the exercise.

Tip: Avoid having a clock at the front of the room or one that ticks loudly.

Breath control

Ask the children to close their eyes and count how many breaths they take in one minute (timed with an egg timer). Repeat and try to reduce the number of breaths by one or two. Over time, encourage the children to breathe slower and deeper, making

full use of their lungs. The discussion that follows can relate to our emotions, e.g. when we are angry our breaths are short and shallow.

Feather

The purpose of this exercise is to make each pupil aware of his/her own breath. Give all the pupils a feather each and ask them to breathe in and out slowly onto the feather. Ask them to share what happens.

To start a lesson

To encourage class co-operation

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

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

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

To start 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 stored. Think of that place in your brain as being like a flower. As you breathe in, imagine the breath is caressing the flower like a soft gentle breeze. As it is touched, 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.

To introduce the lesson topic

Mathematics Topic: Circle

Example 1:

We can use the idea put forward by a number of experienced psychologists (described by Phyllis Krystal in her video series *Cutting the Ties that Bind*), of enclosing hyperactive children in a golden circle that helps them to define their boundaries. The golden colour represents security and purity.

Imagine that you are inside a golden circle. You can move around anywhere you like inside your circle and you feel very safe and happy. The other children are in their circles too. Sometimes you bump gently against each other but you are inside your own circle and nobody else can

come in. Your golden circle is your own special space where you can go whenever you like. (Note that you can also do this exercise using a sphere).

Values message to draw out in follow-up discussion: What is the difference between the circle and other shapes? A special property of the circle is that it is complete. We need to try to be like the circle – strong and complete in ourselves and not needing to rely on outer things to make us happy.

Example 2:

Visualise the sun, giving life and growth to all people and plants.

Values message to draw out in follow-up discussion: The sun is a circle, so it fits the theme of the lesson. The sun also represents strength, purity and wisdom. If we allow ourselves to be filled up with the light from the sun we will be strong, pure and wise and dark thoughts or actions will not be able to exist in us. Also, the sun gives life and growth to all people and plants, regardless of the colour of their skin, their wealth, etc. We can be like the sun, giving and sharing with everyone.

To relax in times of stress

To focus on breathing

We close our eyes to help us stop thinking about other things and just BE [with ourselves]. One of the best ways of improving our state of relaxation is by focusing on our breath. Our breath is the source of our life and our energy, and if it doesn't flow freely through our bodies then toxins can build up and these chemicals can prevent us from relaxing. Also, if we focus on our breath it helps our mind to settle and to release all the thoughts that buzz around and keep us awake.

You can do a simple exercise to focus on your breathing. First make sure that you are 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 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 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.

Inner peace

Imagine yourself floating in a boat on calm, smooth water....nothing that happens stops you from feeling calm. If you do something good and others praise you, you just smile and accept, without becoming big-headed. If somebody shouts at you or hurts you, you do not feel small, you just keep on floating in your boat.

(The golden bubble can also be used for this).

To imagine things as we picture them inside our heads

Close your eyes and relax. I am going to take you on a short journey. Before we begin, I would like you to take 3 deep breaths. 1...2...3... Good, now we can begin.

Imagine it is a warm day, a very warm day. The sky is clear and blue, and you can see whispers of clouds floating along like fluffy cotton wool or candyfloss without a stick.

You are walking along the beach barefooted. You can feel the sand between your toes as you take each step. In the distance you can hear the waves swishing in and out, in and out.

The sun is shining down on you. You feel joy in your heart. Walking over to the water, you place your toes in. The water is cold and refreshing. You can feel little bits of seaweed float around your toes. You stand there, still in the moment, while the waves swish in and out around your ankles. Your feet feel cold, but the top part of your body is warm from the sun's heat. You step out of the water and back onto the sand. The wet sand sticks to your feet. You can feel every grain as you walk.

You continue walking, until you see a small shell on the sand. Picking up the shell, you place it next to your ear. What can you hear? Enjoy the sound for a moment.

You decide to take the shell back with you as a memory of this moment. Slowly you turn and walk back across the sand towards home. The sun is setting and it is beginning to feel a little cold. The joy in your heart has changed to a contented feeling of peace and tranquility. You are happy. You smile to yourself as you open your eyes and return to the room.

Turn to the person next to you and smile at them. Now stretch, and we are ready to begin the lesson.

(from Anita Devi, U.K.)

*Silence is more musical than any song.
- Christine Rossetti*

To get in touch with our own “inner computers” to solve our problems

It is important to teach children to go within themselves where they will find their inner resources. A teacher in the Sathya Sai School in Thailand used the metaphor of an “inner computer” to represent the children’s inner knowledge, wisdom and intuition. She told them that if they used silent sitting they would be able to get in touch with this “inner computer” that can help them to solve their problems.

One day during a test, the teacher noticed that one of the boys in the class began to look very worried and started to scratch his head in concern. Suddenly he put down his pen and tapped at his chest, after which he happily picked up his pen and continued to write. When his teacher asked him later what we had been doing, he answered, “I forgot one of the answers, but I remembered that you told us about the inner computer. So I was tapping on the computer keys [i.e. his chest] to get the answer from it.” “Did it work?” asked the teacher. “Yes,” smiled the boy happily – and when the teacher marked the papers she found that he DID have the correct answer for question he thought he had forgotten.

(Story told by Loraine Burrows, Institute of Sathya Sai Education, Thailand)

Problem solving

First, read the problem. Then put it aside. Close your eyes and just listen to the inner silence of your mind for a few moments. Focus your concentration on the back of your closed eyelids at the point where your eyebrows meet. Don’t try to think about anything – just allow your mind to be still and empty, and concentrate on the blankness behind your eyes. When you feel that your mind is completely still, think for a moment about the problem you need to solve. You can either repeat the whole question in your mind, or you can simply say, “I need to find the solution to the problem I am about to tackle.” Once you have asked this question, return your attention to focusing on the silent, blank emptiness of your mind behind your closed eyelids for a few more minutes. Then visualise your sub-conscious mind working like a computer. First it sorts the knowledge you already have that can be used to solve the problem. Then it sorts out what else you need to know. Next it puts this knowledge together in a logical way. Finally it sends the output into your conscious mind so you can work on the problem. Take 3 slow, deep breaths, then open your eyes and start to work on the problem.

Problem solving

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

Now imagine that you are going down a long, dark tunnel, right into the deepest part of your mind. This tunnel leads you to your inner mathematician, deep inside your brain. This is the

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

To recall something we have learned

At the end of a lesson

Sit silently and reflect on what you have learned in this lesson/in the past 15 minutes/today.

Before taking an exam

You can do this visualisation the day before and again on the morning of your exam, but it can also be a good idea to take 2-3 minutes when you are actually 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 jump down from the shelf and move out, ready for you to use it. Repeat to yourself, "I have the wisdom and the common sense to use this knowledge in the most appropriate way to answer the questions". Take three more deep breaths, and begin writing.

To reflect on the values that are important to us

Being helpful and supportive

Be like a bee going from flower to flower, taking nectar and spreading it to the next one, helping each one to get better and stronger. Don't be like the mosquito that sucks others' blood and spreads disease and suffering.

Reflecting on a particular value

Sit and repeat one of the values silently to yourself (e.g. peace) over and over again.

Friendship

Imagine that you are a dolphin in the bright blue sea, swimming up and down. You're looking at all the fishes, crabs, starfishes, dolphins and octopuses. They are all of different sizes, shapes and colours. All the fishes are playing together and all the other living creatures in the sea. You go with the dolphins. The sun is shining on you. You make friends with them and start playing. Then you see another dolphin that is alone. You remember how you felt when you were alone and somebody let you come with them. So you tell your friends to go on and you go to that dolphin and say "Come and play with my friends and me". He becomes so happy and starts playing with you and your friends. Friends are for playing with, when you or they are alone, for helping you when you get hurt and a lot more things. In your own time come back to the classroom, slowly open your eyes and shake hands with someone you don't normally play with.
(Omar, Year 4, Welldon Park Middle School June 2002, from Devi, 2002)

Love and Peace

As you listen to the music imagine you are strolling on the seashore. It is very beautiful and you feel happy and contented. Look at the waves as they gently lap against the beach. Everything around you is beautiful. Look at yourself – inside, you are beautiful too. You are lovable and beautiful and so are the others around you. Seeing this you feel happy and you send out silent messages of love and peace...out across the sea...out across the world...to everything...to everyone.

(Sathya Sai Education in Human Values: An Introduction and Lesson Plans: SSEHV Trust, UK, 1995, p.103)

Breathe out any unpleasant and uncomfortable things that upset you...Know that you have the courage inside you to do what is right...People around you are not your enemies...The uncomfortable things that you breathe out are your real enemies...See the feelings that upset you drift away...As they go you feel peaceful and loving to everyone and everything.

(Sathya Sai Education in Human Values: An Introduction and Lesson Plans: SSEHV Trust, UK, 1995, p.169)

Environmental Protection

The purpose of these two visualisations is to remind children that each one of them is empowered to make a difference to the state of the environment and that each one has a responsibility to do so.

Earth

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

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

Water

Equipment: water music

Close your eyes. Imagine the river as you listen to the water music.

What can you see? Hear? Smell?

What does the water look like?

What are the plants like?

What else is there?

What life is there?

How is the river used by the plants and the animals?

What are the rules for humans using the river?

What can you do to make certain the river is kept clean and healthy?

Ask children to open their eyes and share their visualisations with a partner.

To reflect on a behaviour that we may need to change

Removing worries or fears

Visualise a golden wheel with a black hole in the middle. Breathe all your worries and fears into the black hole, and breathe in the golden spokes to replace it.

False faces

Imagine a balloon with your “false” faces that hide who you really are, e.g. if you act like a clown, imagine a clown face on the balloon. Imagine that you squeeze the balloon and let go. Every time you let go imagine that now you don’t need to be that false face any more. Keep doing this until you have squeezed all the energy out of the balloon. Then let the balloon go or burst it.

Resolving anger

Think of a time when you felt angry with someone....Feel the anger....Look carefully at what made you angry....Is it because you wanted something and did not get it?....Is it because there was some injustice involved?....Imagine yourself telling the person gently that you felt angry and why....Or if you think it would be better, just walk away from the situation. Imagine yourself drinking a cool glass of water and the heat of anger leaving you....You feel calmer....You were able to resolve the situation without shouting, insulting or hitting the person. So congratulate yourself on your self-control....You begin to feel more peaceful and happy.

(from Alderman, 1996, p.155)

Resolving violence in thought, word or deed

Think of a time that you regret because you were violent in thought, word or deed....See yourself doing that action....See the consequences of your action for the other people....And for yourself....Silently say sorry to everyone involved, including yourself, for all the hurt you caused....Feel yourself surrounded with love and forgiveness....Imagine yourself acting differently in this situation, so that no one, including yourself, is hurt....Think of a time when you did something to reduce conflict....or stop something hurtful happening....or imagine something you would like to have done....See yourself doing it....Feel the pleasure of achievement....Imagine goodness spreading out from your action like ripples in a pond.

(from Alderman, 1996, p.205)

Correcting inattentiveness

Close your eyes and focus your attention on the darkness behind them. The reason for this visualization is to help you to improve your concentration in class. This will enhance what you learn and it will also enhance your consideration for your teacher and your classmates.

Focus your concentration behind your eyes for a few moments. This one-pointedness will help you to concentrate better. Now take your concentration to your ears. Allow them to be filled with a sensation of warmth, like warm salty water. This will help to make your ears more receptive to what is being spoken in class. Now allow the feeling of warmth to fill your whole head, while still focusing your concentration behind your eyes. When you open your eyes you will find that your mind and your ears are more focused and you will no longer feel the need to talk in class.

Improving listening skills (a series of visualizations)

Monday

Close your eyes and take three slow, deep breaths to make yourself feel calm. Then imagine that you are a tree with roots that go deep into the ground. You can feel your toes digging into the warm soft earth and you can feel your arms reaching high up to the sky. It is wonderful to be a tree because you can enjoy the sun, the breeze and the rain, and you can give people shelter and all sorts of help, and you don't have to worry about anything at all. One of the greatest strengths of being a tree is that you can watch and listen to everything that goes on around you, so your ears are very sharp.

Imagine for a minute that you are listening to the sound of the breeze whispering in your branches. Now listen carefully for the chirping of a baby bird in a nest high up in one of your branches. If you listen very carefully you can hear the sounds of the children playing in the schoolground – you can hear them laughing because they are having a lot of fun. In the distance you can hear cars going along the road and far above your head you can hear an aeroplane flying (note to reader – pause after naming each of these to give the children a chance to focus on each thing). Now just listen very carefully and try to find other sounds that you can hear. When you are ready you can open your eyes and come back to being a person again – but remember to keep your ears open and sharp for the rest of the day.

Tuesday

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

Wednesday

Today we are going to use the light of the sun to help us to improve our listening. Imagine that you are sitting in a special, peaceful place and the sun is shining down on you. You are wearing a hat so you are protected from being sunburnt, but the good effects of the sunrays are coming through your hat and into your head. Just enjoy sitting there with the warmth and the sunlight filling your head, until it is also a ball of light just like the sun. [Pause for a moment to let them reflect on this]. Now imagine that the sunlight is running along the passages that connect your brain and your ears. You can feel the warmth and see the brightness lighting up all of these passages so the connection between your brain and your ears is clear and working well. Maybe there are some places where the passage is blocked. If there are, you need to get rid of them because these can stop you from listening well. So let the sun melt any blockages, and then the passage is completely clear. (Pause for a few seconds).

Now imagine that somebody is talking to you. It might be your teacher, or your parent, or one of your friends. Imagine that you can see their words as they come into your ear and then travel along the sunlit passage that you have just cleared and into your brain, where the message is received and you can hear exactly what the person said to you. After you open your eyes and we start our work, keep remembering that you have these two sunlit passages and that whatever the person who is speaking says will now go straight into your mind.

Thursday

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

Friday

When we are listening to somebody who is speaking to us we cannot close our eyes – so today we are going to do silent sitting with our eyes open so we can see how it can help us to listen better to somebody if we also look at them. As I am speaking I would like you to look at me with all of your concentration. Imagine that there is a thread going from your eyes to my eyes. You can make the thread any colour that you like and as thick as you like, but just be careful to make it connect from your eyes to mine for the whole time I am talking and don't let it break. This is very important – whatever you do, don't let that thread break.

Now I would like you to send some feelings along the line from you to me. First please send me the feeling of respect, because it is very important for us to respect the person we are listening to if we are going to be good listeners. (Pause). Next, please send good thoughts along the line from your eyes to my eyes because this will help me to be able to say good and useful things. (Pause). Next, imagine that you are sending a smile along the line – let the smile start in your mouth but then send it up through your eyes and along the line to my eyes so I can see it. (Pause). Last of all, please send me some support – imagine that the support you are sending me along the line is making me stronger and stronger so I can be a better and better speaker for you.

Today, whenever I am speaking, I would like you to try to remember about the thread from your eyes to mine and to try as hard as you can not to break it. And when other people in the class are speaking, you can try to do the same thing with them.

Coping with delays and becoming more patient (May be useful for children with ADHD)

(Research has indicated that children with ADHD can benefit from training in coping with delays and also that they may have different conceptions of time, for example five minutes can feel like an hour to them).

This is an exercise especially for you, to help you to train your brain to be more patient and not to lead you into being restless. Close your eyes and imagine you can see a big clock in front of you. The numbers are large and clear to read, and it has just one hand that moves smoothly. The clock has the numbers 5, 10, 15, 20 etc. all the way up to 60, and it takes one minute for the hand to move all the way around and back to the top. Sometimes it seems to you that a minute takes forever to finish. So we need to train your brain to be more accurate. Your leader will tell you when to start, and when 5, 10, 15, 20 seconds and so on have passed. Watch the hand on the clock pass each number as your leader calls it. When the minute is over, you feel surprised how quickly it has passed. Now, whenever you are feeling anxious and find it difficult to concentrate, you can think about the minute clock with the big sweeping hand, and that will help time to pass at a more normal rate.

Changing a bad habit

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

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

To open our hearts and understand ourselves better

What are my special strengths?

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 brain. It looks like a library, with lots of shelves and books. Inside the books are all the things you have ever learned. You walk along the shelves until suddenly you find what you are looking for. It is a big book on a very high shelf. You take it off the shelf and look at the cover. On the cover it has your name and it is called "My Book of Special Strengths". Imagine that you open the book. On the first page there is a list of all the special strengths that you have, and all the things that you are good at. It might be words, or it might be a picture, or it might be like a movie. If you can't see anything don't worry because it will pop into your mind later. Have a good look at what is on

the page and make sure you take careful notice of the information that is given to you. When you are ready, close the book and put it back on the shelf.

For follow-up sessions:

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

Also, get the children to imagine themselves in situations where they are “helpful”, e.g. a tree growing up and giving shade to others, a lighthouse shining light all around to help others, a staircase or ladder or bridge to allow others to climb higher etc.

Getting in touch with your true self (to be used on a daily basis)

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

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 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.

Opening the heart connection

As usual, take some deep, slow breaths and feel yourself relaxing. Imagine you are looking at your own heart. What does it look like? What colour/colours is it? How big is it? Is it plump and happy looking, or is a part of it shriveled up or wrinkled? What kinds of feelings come up in it when you think about your friends your classmates and schoolmates, your family and relatives, and people who you don't know?

Now, think about using your heart for its main purpose, which is to pump out Love, first into your own body and then into other people'. Imagine your heart filling up with loving thoughts and feelings, until it is plump, brightly coloured and full. Watch as it starts to overflow so that the feelings and thoughts of Love start to flow over into your veins and arteries until it is flowing freely through your whole body. After that, allow it to flow from your heart towards the other people in the room. Try to keep the habit of doing this all through the day.

Courage in the face of a challenge

With your eyes closed, imagine a tiny ant at the foot of a large rock that looks like a towering mountain. The ant needs to find a way to cross to the other side of this mountain, but it seems to be too big and the task seems to be hopeless. It takes in a big, long, deep breath full of courage and as it breathes out, it lets go of all the doubts and anxieties that are the obstacles getting in its way. Imagine the ant, filled with courage, taking the first step forward. Watch the ant as it continues its journey up the mountain. Sometimes the path is rough or slippery and it stumbles or falls, but when this happens it picks itself up and finds a better path. It doesn't give up. Every time it has a setback or seems to have failed, it gets up again. If the path it is on looks hopeless, it thinks about what went wrong and changes the plan. With every mistake or setback it gets a little bit braver and a little bit stronger. Step by step, metre by metre, the ant goes forward until at last it reaches its goal.

Spend a few minutes every morning and evening in the silence of your own home; you will come out of the silence nobler and more heroic than when you went in.
(Sathya Sai Baba)

The Light Visualisation: A particularly powerful tool

In SSEHV a particularly powerful and beneficial form of silent sitting is used at least once a day with children of all ages as well as adults. The Light Visualisation is fundamental to the SSEHV Programme. It allows children to progress safely through the three stages described by Sathya Sai Baba as necessary for contacting the superconscious mind: concentration, contemplation and, ultimately, being in touch with their own superconscious minds.

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 encourages the children to visualize that they are dispelling their negative qualities, symbolized by lighting up the "darkness", and purifying their bodies and minds with the light.

I once visited a school in New Delhi where all 5,000 students, from kindergarten to secondary sections, were led through this visualization in their morning assembly. The feeling of peace that was generated by this exercise was overwhelming - it not only got the school off to an exceptional start to the day, it also created an energy that pervaded the whole school for the rest of the day.

In a recent correspondence, a pre-school teacher shared her pupils' feelings about doing this visualization:

I tried it and guess what was the reaction of the children? Each time we did the 'Light Visualisation' the children's response would be "Teacher Dimple, we feel happy after this". Not only that, if on certain days we missed the session due to other school commitments, they would remind me at the time of the "Goodbye song", saying, "Teacher Dimple you forgot to do the light thing today!" So when we had our Parent Teacher conferences, I told the parents about the 'Light Visualisation'.

To my surprise most of the parents had some idea about it as the children had been going home and talking about the "light thing" (as they call it) - and then feeling happy. They didn't know exactly what their children were talking about. So most of the parents were very eager to know more and some of them even requested the format of "Light Visualisation" because they wanted to practise this at home with the whole family. At their request, I gave them the same format that we were using at school. Many of them came back to share with us that they had seen changes in the behavior of the children at home too.

(from Dimple Buxani, Guangzhou, China)

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.

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

One of the first principles of straight living is the practice of silence, for the voice of God can be heard in the region of your heart when the tongue is stilled and the storm is tilled and the waves are calm.

(Sathya Sai Baba)

Making a difference with difficult students (or colleagues): 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, 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 of your pupils.

The tree is held and fed by the roots that go into the silent earth; so also, if the roots go deep into the silence of your inner consciousness, your spiritual blossoming is assured.

(Sathya Sai Baba)

Chapter 5

Doing your own action research

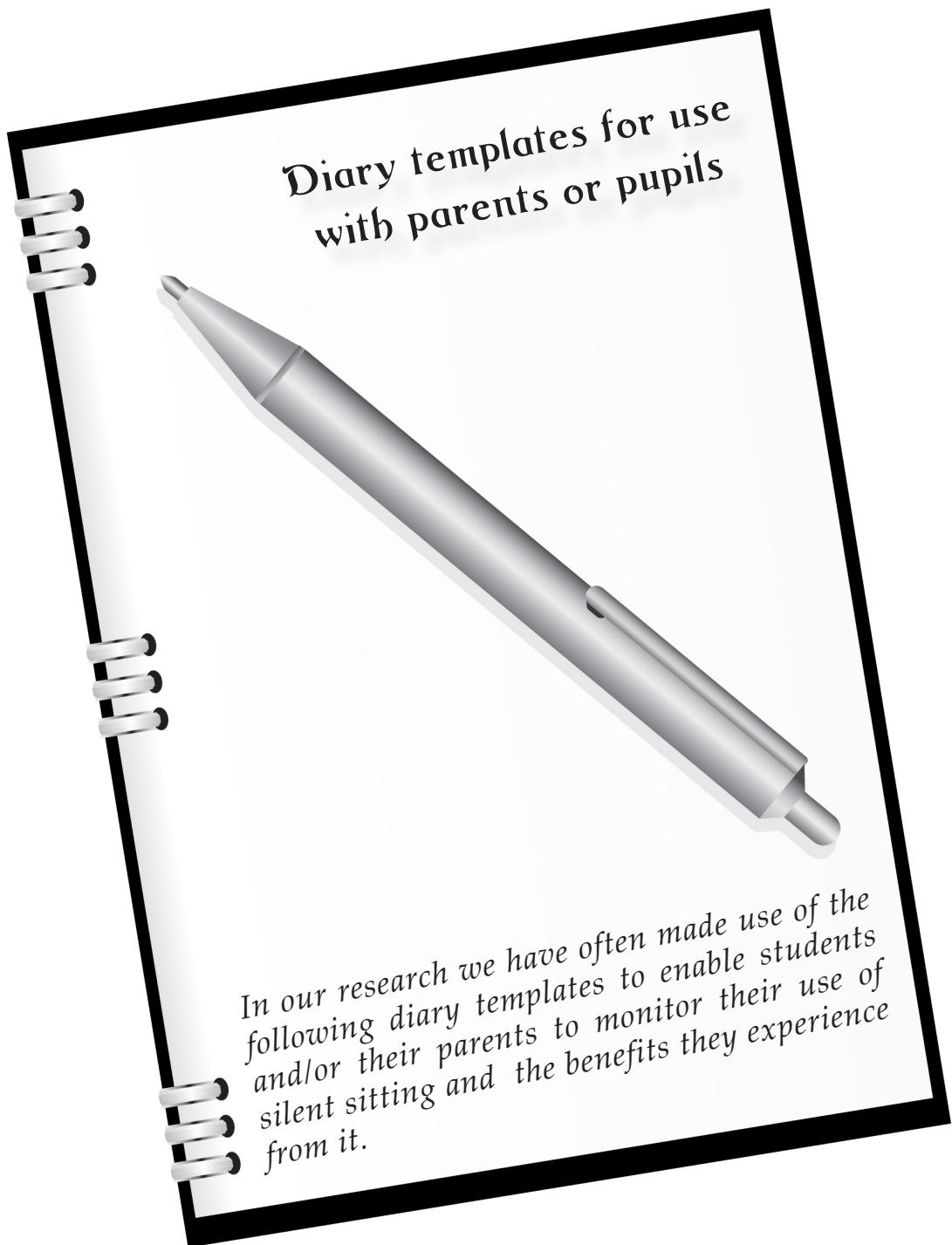
How to set up silent sitting action research in your class

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

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

The less you talk, the more will become your mental power.

- Sathya Sai Baba



Learn the value of silence.
It will stand you in good stead when distress assails you.
- Sathya Sai Baba

Diary for parent

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

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

Diary for children

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

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

Silent Sitting

Silence will charge the battery.

- Sathya Sai Baba

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These days teaching is becoming increasingly difficult due to 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 booklet is to suggest some ways in which the techniques of "silent sitting" and "creative visualization" can be utilised in the classroom to help to address these issues without taking too much time away from other activities. Neither of these techniques needs to take up a lot of time - just a few minutes once or twice a day are enough. Like the grass represented on the cover, children who use silent sitting techniques on a regular basis will also grow - in character, in study habits and academic performance, and in a general sense of well-being.