

Lesson Plan Exercises

Introduction

Theme: This month's lesson plans revolve around the theme of being oneself.

Values covered:

TRUTH: Accuracy, Curiosity, Determination, Discernment, Fairness, Intuition, Purity, Reason, Self-analysis, Self-awareness, Sincerity, Spirit of Inquiry, Trust, Unity of thought, word and deed.

RIGHT CONDUCT:

Self-help skills - Self reliance

Social skills - Good Relationships

Ethical skills - Code of conduct, Courage, Initiative, Respect for all.

PEACE: Attention, Calm, Concentration, Contentment, Dignity, Equality, Equanimity, Happiness, Harmony, Inner Silence, Reflection, Satisfaction, Self Acceptance, Self Confidence, Self Control, Self Esteem, Self Respect, Understanding.

LOVE: Acceptance, Compassion, Empathy, Friendship, Humanness, Thoughtfulness, Sympathy, Tolerance, Trust.

NON-VIOLENCE:

Psychological - Benevolence, Compassion, Concern for others, Consideration, Happiness, Universal Love,

Social - Appreciation of other cultures and religions, Brother/Sisterhood, Equality.

QUOTES:

“Of all the trails in life, the one that matters most is that of the TRUE HUMAN BEING.”
(American Indian Sioux)

“Know that you are a blessing to yourself...and you will be a blessing to each other.”
(adapted from Samson Raphael Hirsch)

Background to the Theme: For Teachers and Parents

“First BE, then DO, then SAY.” (*Sathya Sai*) As adults we find this advice very hard to put into practice; we accept it as intellectual knowledge, but do not always live our lives accordingly. Often we are afraid to be who we are; express our thoughts, share ideas, challenge another person’s behaviour, dress differently or act in a manner that is different from the so-called norm. Refusing to drink alcohol, for example, may cause us some embarrassment in front of our peers.

Children and young people are deeply affected by social pressure and often find it harder than adults to be themselves. It is important that teachers are aware of this because this can effect the pupil in many ways and is often reflected in classroom behaviour, ability to concentrate, work performance and school attendance. When children come to school they often feel that they are entering an arena where everything they say or do is being judged. Most children worry about their self-image because they are increasingly exposed to media propaganda, which encourages them to dress or behave according to fashion. Even young children try to model themselves on media idols, such as pop-stars, actors and presenters and may spend a large amount of time choosing what they wear to school and modifying the appearance of their school uniform. The most expensive labels and designer clothes are considered to be necessary items in order to pass close scrutiny from peers. Children who cannot get their parents to support them actively with this social challenge, are often victims of teasing, or even bullying. Any child that looks or behaves differently from the accepted norm may find him/herself a social outcast. Skin colour, race, religion, social background, accent, size, shape, hobbies, beliefs and numerous other criteria are used as yard sticks for social positioning.

It is important to recognize these pressures and to be aware of how they may effect pupils in different ways such as classroom behaviour, ability to concentrate, academic results and above all, in the way they feel. Children may become withdrawn, oversensitive, aggressive, volatile, moody, self-abusive, destructive, apathetic or even physically ill, with for example, eczema, anorexia and bulimia.

The Sathya Sai Education in Human Values programme can play a very important part in helping children to understand that it is the inner person that counts, as opposed to the outer image. Positive role models should be promoted so that children can be inspired by their good actions and correct behaviour. Children should be encouraged to look closely at prejudice in all its forms and should be made aware of its potential destructiveness and divisiveness. They should be taught the value of being themselves and encouraged to experience this first hand through activities such as value games and silent sitting exercises.

Story:**Being Yourself****by Kay Challenor**

She plunged into the water and diving deep, began to walk along the bottom of the riverbed. Her movements were slow as she moved against the current, similar to a space man walking on the moon.

Life just was not fair!

The water around her was cool and soothing after being in the heat of the day. Calming to her emotions as well, which were running high.

It was so unfair being a hippo. Running out breath Lady lifted her head, kicked her feet and returned to the surface. Immediately she could feel the sun scorching on her back so she made her way to the muddy bank and covering herself with wet orange clay, stood amid the reeds half submerged in water.

She was soon joined by Pee, a very smart looking Oxpecker with yellow and grey marking his feathers.

“Why Lady whatever is the matter?” Pee inquired, seeing tears slowly roll down the hippo’s cheek.

“It’s miserable being a hippo” replied Lady with a sigh.

“Why?”

“Well look at me. I’m big and fat, ugly and clumsy, destined to spend my life waddling around in the mud to stop this grey hairless skin of mine from burning in the sun.”

“Why Lady...”

“Don’t call me Lady, some Lady, look at me! Now they are ladies, look at them.”

Lady paused to watch a group of gazelles darting across the sandy earth. Their golden and cream coats gleamed in the sun and they leaped this way and that, higher and higher into the air.

“They look so light, so beautiful and so carefree,” moped Lady, “just like dancers, so graceful.”

A family of giraffes followed the gazelles. They too had beautiful coats that glistened with health. Their long necks gently moved as they took slow deliberate strides on their long legs. They looked completely at peace with the world around them.

“Wish I was a giraffe,” whispered Lady.

...cont.

“You are funny,” laughed Pee. “Do you know why the gazelles leap and dart from one spot to another as they run?”

“For fun?”

“Hardly! They are running away from predators, lions, leopards or hyena. They leap to confuse their pursuers, in an attempt to put them off the chase. It is not so much a dance as a fight for life, even if it is beautiful to watch. You wouldn't really want that would you?” said Pee, “After all what are you afraid of as a hippo?”

“Why nothing really,” replied Lady. She paused and gazed up at the blue sky in deep thought.

“I guess the only thing is the occasional hungry lion, but I just charge to see them off and then come into the water. Nothing bothers me in the water, not even the crocodiles. Actually I do love being in the water it is so, well, calming and comforting. She waded deeper into the river until just her eyes and nose were showing above the surface. The water moved around her body, caressing and soothing. Feeling happier, Lady kicked out her legs and began to swim. Pee flew onto her head for a free ride.

“Have you any idea how gracefully you swim?” he said, “quite the expert.”

“Just watch,” said Lady as she dived to the bottom of the river. She began to move her legs and head, moving and turning, a picture of skill and expertise. Looking a bit like a small grey submarine in the hand of a master helmsman. She came back to the surface and was rejoined by a chuntering Pee.

“You nearly drowned me diving like that with no warning.”

“Good though aren't I!”

“Yes, yes, very good, so why don't you start to believe in yourself. We all have our own individual skills. Time you began to enjoy yours rather than comparing yourself with others. Comparing only makes you miserable.”

“Hum.”

The two swam to the opposite side of the river where the giraffes were enjoying their afternoon drink. With their long necks they had to splay open their legs to enable their mouths to reach the surface of the water. It was a very tricky procedure and in this position the giraffes were very vulnerable, open to an attack from a predator.

“Oh Lady, you made me jump!” one startled giraffe remarked. “Thought you were a crocodile for a minute. I could only see your eyes and nose and that is just how they sneak close before they make an attack.”

“Sorry” said Lady. “Do you know I have always wanted to be tall and elegant like you, but it isn't very easy for you to drink is it?”

...cont.

...cont.

“No we have to be very careful. You wouldn’t want to be us Lady. You would miss your water too much. We often see you swimming and diving in the cool water and it looks so much fun. You are very lucky you know.”

The giraffe’s words remained in Lady’s head and she thought about them for a long time. She thought about them all that day and all the next day as well and the day after. In fact, she remembered the words for the rest of her life and from that day on she was never sad or critical about who she was or what she looked like. She spent her days rolling in the orange mud to keep cool and having long conversations with Pee and often at night, she would lay half submerged in the water, gazing up at the stars and thinking just how lucky she was to be alive.



Lady by the riverbank.
Illustration by Kay Challenor

Talking Points: Self-acceptance, Happiness and Contentment.

Why was Lady miserable?

What were the gazelles good at?

Why did the gazelles leap?

What was Lady good at?

What made Lady happy?

What did the giraffe say to Lady?

POEM**FOLLOWING MY HEART** *by Zita Starkie*

I did it, I did it, I really, really did it;
For once I didn't follow like a sheep.
I did it, I did it, I really, really did it
And now I'm ready for a good night's sleep.

You see I followed blindly
Not questioning how I should be.
You see I followed blindly
Even though I felt so guilty.

It's taken quite a lot of strength
To make sure I do not stray.
It's taken quite a lot of strength
To follow my conscience all the way.

It's not that I don't like you
But what you're doing's wrong.
It's not that I won't be your friend
But I'm singing my own song.

I'm not going to hurt another
By my thoughts, or words or deeds.
I'm not going to hurt another
Just to fulfil your needs.

I'm not impressed when you don't care
And make another sad.
I'm not impressed when you don't care.
I think your behaviour's bad!
You don't make me feel happy.
I don't want to follow you.
You don't make me feel happy
And you're not happy too.

I used to feel so unlike myself
When I went against my inner voice.
I used to feel so unlike myself
Now I know I have a choice

So why don't you just copy me?
And hear what I have said.
So why don't you just copy me?
And do some good instead!

POEM**BEING ME IS BEING FREE** *by Zita Starkie*

Been watching all the adverts
 So I know who I must be.
 First I've got to lose some weight
 Then grow an inch or three.

I wish my nose was much, much smaller.
 My teeth are not quite straight.
 And once I put that brace in
 I think I'll lose my mate.

My eyes look really puffy.
 And my face has pimples. Look!
 I think I'd better spend my time
 Hiding in a book.

I wish I wasn't who I am.
 I wish I were a movie star
 Brad Pitt or Catherine Zeta Jones
 You know I would go far!

My hair needs undercutting
 And that bleach has got to go
 'Cos this season's fashion
 Says hair bleach is a big, big no.

It's hard to keep the image.
 It's changing all the time.
 And now my wardrobe's out of date'
 Cos the colour is peach and lime.

I worry what you think of me.
 I want to be admired
 But keeping you all happy
 Makes me feel so very tired.

What's that! You like me anyway!
 You really, really do?
 You mean I'm free to be myself?
 I don't need to look like you?
 What's that? I'm OK as I am?
 It's all right to be just me?
 You think that I am special?
 Not a clone from the TV.

Well...

Don't want to be like Robbie Williams
 Or have a figure like Kate Moss.
 Won't waste my time impressing.
 I want to be the boss!

Don't want to be in prison
 Looking outside all the while.
 I'll go within and find myself
 And then I'll find my smile.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

ENGLISH

Lower years: The poems that have been included in this newsletter can be used as stimuli for discussion leading to other work such as writing their own poem or essays on the topic of either being oneself, or accepting others for who they are. Children could also participate in activities that involve the appreciation of the good qualities of a friend or family member and even of someone who they do not particularly like. This too could take the form of a poem or an essay or even the form of a Certificate of Appreciation. SSEHV Book 1 for ages 6 to 9 years, Book 2 for ages 9 to 12 years and Book 3 for ages 12 to 13 years, provide stimuli for Junior level on this topic:

Book 1, lessons 1.9 Consideration, 1.10 Friendship, 1.15 Self esteem, 1.19 Good Relationships, and 1.26 Universal Love.

On Page 124 there is a form on the topic, Why I Love My Friend.

Book 2, lessons 2.6 Unity in Diversity, 2.7 Caring, 2.8, Friendship, 2.10 about Kindness, 2.18 Being a Good Example, 2.23 Human Rights, 2.24 Kindness and Concern for all and 2.25 Living Without Violence.

Book 3, lessons 3.3, Friendship, 3.7 Integrity, 3.8 Tolerance, 3.19 Racial Harmony, 3.11 Unity of Faiths, and 3.12 Spirit of Inquiry.

On page 120 there is a Job Reference on Partner's Good Qualities and on page 186 there is an example of a Certificate of Appreciation.

Higher Years: Many of the texts and poems used at G.C.S.E. and A/S level deal with the subject of prejudice in different forms.

'To Kill a Mocking Bird', by Harper Lee, explores the irrationality of adult attitudes to race and class in the Deep South of the nineteen thirties.

'Of Mice and Men', by John Steinbeck, looks at the way people are positioned in a social hierarchy during the nineteen thirties in California: George and Lenny are homeless itinerants and, therefore, low down in the pecking order, but the old man Carlson and the black "stable buck". Crooks are even lower. Curly's wife is shown little respect, as she is a woman.

'View From a Bridge' by Arthur Miller looks at an Italian community in New York in the nineteen fifties. The community is isolated on the fringe of New York society because the people are from a different culture.

'Silas Marner', by George Eliot, is a story of a handloom linen weaver living in the late eighteen hundreds. Having been unjustly exiled, he is treated with suspicion because "in that far off time superstition clung easily round every person or thing that was at all unwanted, or even intermittent and occasional merely, like the visits of the knife-grinder. No one knew where wandering men had their homes or their origin; and how was a man to be explained unless you at least knew somebody who knew his father and mother."

'The Merchant of Venice', by William Shakespeare, touches upon prejudice towards Jews.

...cont.

...cont.

At A/S level, **'Pride and Prejudice'**, by Jane Austin, explores middle class attitudes in the early nineteenth hundreds. Satirical ridicule exposes the shallowness of social snobbery.

'She Stoops to Conquer', by Oliver Goldsmith, deals with a similar theme.

'Othello', by William Shakespeare, touches upon prejudice towards a black Moor.

There are many poems that explore the theme of prejudice and of low self-esteem. Maya Angelou writes about black women and their suffering in **'The Caged Bird Sings'** and **'Woman's Work'**.

'I Had Rather be a Woman', by Daphne Schiller, **'At Tea'** by Thomas Hardy and **'Overheard in County Sligo'**, by Gillian Clarke, examine how women feel about themselves and their roles.

The above texts can be used to stimulate discussion. Debates could be set up concerning the topic covered to raise awareness amongst pupils and teachers.

HISTORY

There are many topics and periods that can be explored in history lessons to alert pupils to the dangers inherent in prejudiced behaviour. The Jewish Holocaust, The Arab-Israeli Conflict, The American Civil War and the Bosnia /Croatia genocide are excellent examples.

Pupils could also learn about key historical figures who challenged prejudice, such as Martin Luther King, (S.S.E.H.V. page 194/5), Harriet Beecherstowe, SSEHV Book 3, page 122/3), Emily Pankhurst and Sir Ludwig Guttman.

By studying ancient civilisations, such as Egypt and Greece, pupils can be made aware of how much we owe others for our own cultural growth and scientific and mathematical knowledge.

DESIGN TECHNOLOGY

Pupils can be given tasks involving designing their own clothes, accessories and personal space based on the theme "Dare to be yourself".

MATHS

Pupils could construct graphs, to be displayed in a prominent place, which indicate pupils' responses to the following questions: Do you always follow your conscience? Are you easily led? Are you influenced by what pop-stars/actors/TV personalities or models wear? Do you model your behaviour on hero/heroine characters on television? Do you find it hard to be yourself? Questionnaires with these and similar questions could be given to all pupils in the school. They could tick the appropriate box: "yes", "no", "unsure". Pupils could also be asked to comment and to make suggestions designed to combat any form of prejudice and discrimination in the school and to raise self -esteem.

...cont.

...cont.

GEOGRAPHY

Looking at the diversity and uniqueness of different cultures and countries round the world could lead to positive appreciation of diversity and its value to us all. Pupils can be shown how we are economically dependent on others to supply us with a diversity of food, with fuel, consumer goods and medicines and so forth.

SCIENCE

Scientific analysis of the reasons for the diversity of skin pigmentation, eye shapes and other physical features would be a very positive practice to combat physical prejudices. Students could also be encouraged to invent their own individual models of commonly used objects such as clocks. They can be shown a variety of clocks, such as water and sand clocks to act as a stimulus for thought.

P.S.H.E

Various discussions could be set up on topics outlined above where students are encouraged to explore and challenge certain behaviour such as following a gang leader because of fear or to gain popularity.

MUSIC

The teaching of Harmony as a Musical form could be used to show how a diversity of parts can produce an exquisite and unique sound.

RELIGION

Students can study teachings from different religions that stress the brotherhood of man. Stories such as 'The Good Samaritan' can serve to show how people should not be judged on their outward appearance, but rather valued for their good actions. Students can also study the lives of those who stood up for what they believed was right, despite great adversity and danger to their own lives, such as Jesus, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela.

The work of Amnesty International and other Human Rights groups could also be studied. Discussions could centre around topics such as: What qualities do we need in order to stand up for our own beliefs, to be true to ourselves and to follow our conscience?
