

CEILING ON DESIRES

Objective: To stimulate thinking about the difference between what we need and what we want, and strengthen the ability to choose more carefully

Key words: desires, ceiling, expanding, photographs, restless, condescending, detached, dissatisfied, discontented, brooding, leisurely, maintenance, mansion, business, wants, needs, money

QUOTATION/THEME FOR THE WEEK

DESIRES START WITH OUR TENDENCY TO COMPARE



PUT A CEILING ON DESIRES OR THEY'LL GO THROUGH THE ROOF!

Brainstorm and discuss the difference between what I need and what I want.

SILENT SITTING

Step 1 (See page 40 of the introduction)

Steps 2, 4 (optional)

Step 5: As you listen to the music imagine.

You are walking in your favourite place. It is very beautiful.

The birds are singing and you feel happy and contented.

Look at the blue sky. How much space there is.

Imagine yourself expanding and becoming bigger, like the sky...

See how the sun shines brightly over the earth sending out rays of light and love

Everything in nature around you is beautiful and free for you to enjoy.

You have everything you need when you know this.

Send out rays of love and peace to the world around you: the people ... the animals ... the plants ... the fish ... the rocks.

Sending this love and peace to everyone and everything makes you feel happy.

Step 6.

STORY TELLING

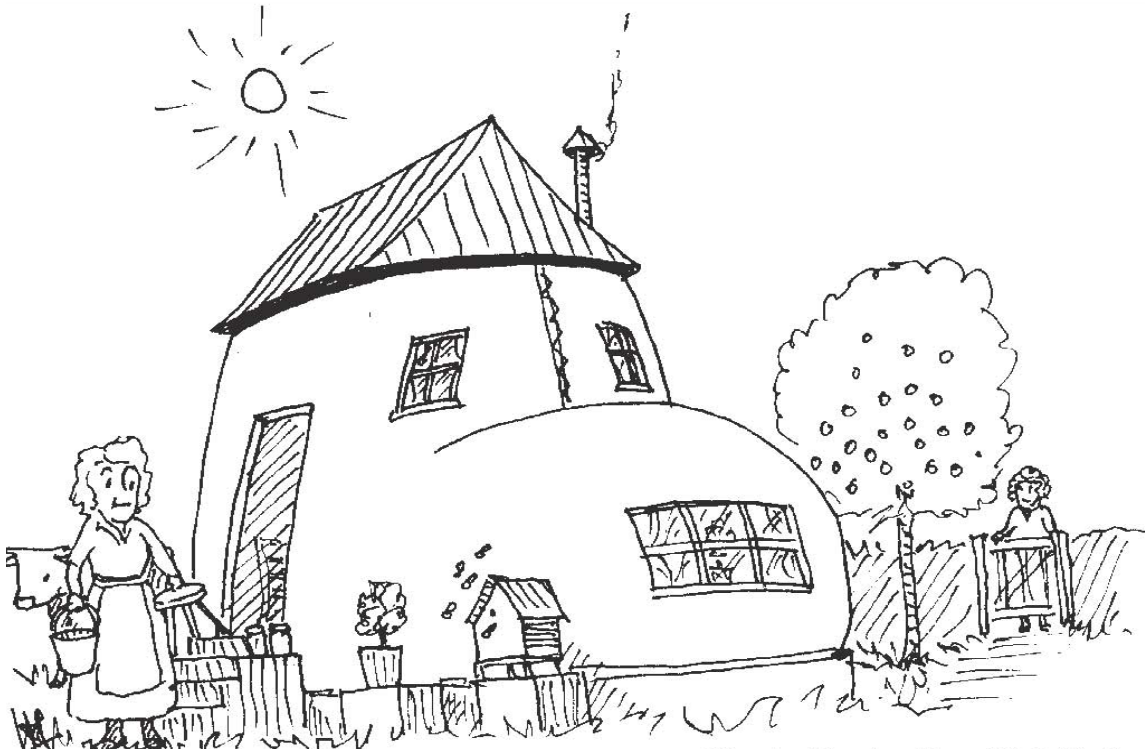
THE OLD WOMAN WHO LIVED IN A SHOE

by Carole Alderman (adapted from a traditional story)

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe.
She didn't have very much housework to do.
She enjoyed making jam,
With fresh fruit from the trees,
She had milk from the cow and honey from bees.

She was happy for a time until her cousin from the town visited her and showed her photographs of what seemed to the old woman, a fine, large residence. When her cousin went home, the old woman began thinking and comparing her shoe to her cousin's home.

"Of course," I wouldn't want a big place like that," she thought. "But I wouldn't mind something a little bit bigger than this."



The more she thought about it, the more she started becoming restless, until one day she began to look out for a bigger place to live. She wished she could have a box to live in, instead of the shoe. In time someone told her of some boxes nearby, one of which was empty, so she left her shoe and moved into the box.

The box was much bigger than the shoe, so there was more housework, and it was further to walk to the cow for her milk, but she still had plenty of time and reasoned that the exercise would do her good, so for a while she was happy with her new box. Until, one day, hearing she had more room, her cousin from the town came to visit bringing a friend along. The old woman enjoyed their company. She found

them great fun with their bright clothes and laughter. She liked her cousin's friend, although she *was* a little condescending. She was quite well off and had a big detached house.

After a week or so, her cousin and friend went home. Again the old woman became restless and was dissatisfied with the box.

"This is not much of a box for me to be living in," she thought. "I felt quite ashamed of it, when my cousin's friend showed me a picture of her lovely house. I don't want much, but I wish I could just have a nice cupboard to live in. Then I would be happy."

And so she worried and wished and wished and worried until eventually she got a cupboard.

At first, she was happy with the cupboard. She cleaned and painted it and made new curtains. It really was rather nice, although it was a lot of work. She had no time to make jam now. But she was quite proud of the cupboard.

She lived in the cupboard happily for a year or two and then she had a letter from her cousin saying she was moving into a big house near her friend. Suddenly her cupboard did not seem so big.

"This cupboard really is not big enough," she thought to herself angrily. "I do not really like it in here. I would prefer something outside in the garden. A small shed perhaps. Yes! That would make me happy."

Again she moved. This time into a lovely shed in a small garden with a pond, a beautiful lawn, flower beds, a herb garden and big, shady trees.

"Oh, this is heaven!" she thought. "This is what I've always wanted. I'll train the red roses round the door. It's so pretty, I'll be happy for the rest of my life."

And for a while she was. She trained the roses round the shed door and had to admit she was pleased with herself. It *was* a lot of work keeping the shed clean and with the extra gardening, she no longer had time to get honey. But she didn't mind, as she was very pleased with the beautiful shed. She admired the garden with its pond, lovely lawn, flower beds, fragrant herbs and trees.

Then, one day, when she was taking tea on the lawn, her eyes began to look to the far end of the garden at the fine stone house and she became discontented with her shed

"I want a house. I'm tired of this gloomy shed. Why shouldn't I have a house like some others have?"

She again became restless and brooding. Time went by and she got a house. She was delighted with it and busied herself making it beautiful. She soon found that the leisurely life to which she had been used, was over, as she now had to go

out to work to earn extra money for the upkeep and maintenance of her new home. Now she came home tired in the evenings. There was a lot of housework and with the extra expense of a bigger house, she could not afford to pay anyone to help her. But at least she had a house like her cousin.

Then one weekend, while she was out taking a walk, she saw in the distance a beautiful mansion. "I'd love to live in a mansion. Then my life would be complete. I'd want nothing more."

Eventually she *did* live in a beautiful mansion.

"This is the life," she cried with joy. "I'm so happy. I'll never want more again."

But the day-to-day business of running a mansion, with so many callers coming and going, so many people staying there, meant she never had a moment's peace.

"Out of all the places I've lived in, I'm most unhappy here. It's a beautiful place -*to visit*. But I don't feel at home. I can't afford the rent and I'm in debt. If only I'd been contented and stayed in the shoe, or even the box or cupboard. How foolish I have been. I've wasted my life worrying about what I hadn't got, instead of enjoying what I had. How I wish I was back in the shoe. I used to love picking fruit and making jam. I had free milk and honey. I shall work to pay off my debts and I shall go back to the shoe."

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe.
She didn't have very much housework to do.
She enjoyed making jam,
With fresh fruit from the trees,
She had milk from the cow and honey from bees.

Like us, the old woman who lived in a shoe
When plagued by desires, what could she do
But give them full rein, but the pleasure was short
And she never found the peace that she sought.

But then the old woman who lived in a shoe
Took up silent sitting and knew what to do!
Controlling her senses, and with inner view,
She found peace and contentment,
Perhaps *you* can, too!

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the old woman want to move from the shoe?
2. What made her decide to move from the box into a cupboard?
3. What made her discontented with the cupboard?
4. Why didn't she stay in the shed?
5. At last she found a house to live in.
Mention the reason why she left it for a mansion.

6. Did moving house make her happy in the end? Why?
7. What did you feel when you heard this story?
8. Does it remind you of anything in your own life?
9. Is it important to be contented with what we have?

10. Should we live our life according to what other people do or have?
11. How do we know what we really need?
12. What does 'ceiling on desires' mean?
13. What does this story mean to you?

GROUP SINGING

CHEERFULLY SING *(A traditional German round)*

Cheerfully sing a song,
All through the day.
Though things seem dark as night,
Smiling can make them light,
Harmony turns us right,
Brightens the way.

(Repeat x 3)

GROUP ACTIVITY

Discussion questions: Ceiling on Desires: Money

(The questionnaire on the next page can be photocopied and handed out to the class).

Extension exercise/Links to Other Subjects:

The Ceiling on Desires Project can be linked directly to many problems in maths, e.g. I have £A.

If I buy a branded CD player, it will cost me £X.

If I buy an ordinary CD player, it will cost me £Y.

How much money would I save if I buy the ordinary CD player?

Which is the better option?

I decide that I don't really need a new CD player.

How much money will I now save?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Ceiling on Desires: Money

A. What are some ways you can help to save money? Discuss the following topics:

1. Clothes

Do you have enough clothes?

How many clothes are in your wardrobe that you have only worn once or twice?

2. Fashion

Why do you prefer certain makes or labels?

If you have a fashionable make, does it make you happy?

If it does, for how long does it?

3. Television

Do you let the television advertisements control your thoughts, or are you in control of your own thoughts?

Do you often want things you see advertised?

4. Games, toys, etc.

Do you use/play with them all, or did you just want them because other people had them?

What can you do with the ones you no longer use/play with any more?

5. Household products

What are some ways of using the following household products carefully?

i) Electricity, heat, water -in your home/at school.

ii) Household goods (like paper towels, toothpaste, paper, Sellotape, etc.)

iii) Food

What are some ways they can be wasted?

6. The Car

How can you save petrol? How is petrol wasted?

B. Wants or Needs?

What things do I have that are real needs?

What things, that are not needs, do I have because I want them?

Should I always have everything I want?

Why?

What can I do without?

(Link: 'Our World, Our Rights' by Amnesty International pp 23-26 Activity 1: Needs and Wants)