


Topic: FORGIVENESS AND GRATITUDE

Objective: *To encourage an understanding that resentment will poison us, but forgiveness will give us strength and well-being*

Key Words: *decision, offspring, outskirts, penniless, population, rickshaw*

Materials needed: The Manual or copy of lesson plan
Silent sitting exercise from the Manual
CD/Tape player
CD/Tape with music for silent sitting
CD/Tape with music for the song
Photocopy of Forgiveness Questionnaire

QUOTATION/THEME FOR THE WEEK

<p>FORGIVENESS IS THE FRAGRANCE THE VIOLET SHEDS ON THE HEEL THAT HAS CRUSHED IT <i>Mark Twain</i></p>		<p>GRATITUDE IS THE HEART'S MEMORY <i>French Proverb</i></p>
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What are the meanings of these two quotations? Can you think of any connection between forgiveness and gratitude?

SILENT SITTING

Step 1 (See page 36)

Steps 2, 4 (optional)

Step 5: Think of a particular person who has been unpleasant to you in some way. Imagine any uncomfortable feelings you had about them.

Think of those feelings dissolving.

Think of something likeable or worthwhile about this person.

Think of yourself forgiving that person.

Imagine yourself asking this person to do something for you which will help you get on with them better. Feel grateful for your friendship.

Step 6.

NARRATIVE

DENG ZHANG

by Tessa Hillman

As a child I lived with my parents in a village not very many miles from the outskirts of Beijing. They were only allowed to have one child because it was feared that the population would expand too rapidly if families had more than one offspring. After I was born my father went to Beijing to work in the city. He had a rickshaw and he would work very hard to earn money to send home to us. We did not see him very often.

When he came back for one of his short visits, he was always overcome with joy to see us. The tears would roll down his face as he embraced us. My mother would make a very special meal. She never stopped smiling when my father was around.

As I grew older, I asked my father why he did not stay at home with us. He could work on the land, as mother did, growing vegetables. We could sell them and make enough money so that he did not have to go away.

“No, no, my son,” he would say. “If I were to stay at home, your mother and I would argue. We would not be happy. She would have more children and we would be in trouble. This is the best way for us all.”

I did not understand my father. Mother was always happy when he was at home. Why did he think they would argue? She was always smiling when he was around and when he went away she grew quiet and sad.



One day I decided to ask mother why father did not stay at home. I asked her if she thought they would argue if he was there every day.

“Deng Zhang, my son, sometimes it is difficult to explain your feelings to your child. I love your father very much, but before you arrived when there were just the two of us, he would spend some of the time working in Beijing, just the same as now.

When I asked him why he said. 'I cannot live with one person all my life. I need time alone, time to think. Although I love you, and I do not have eyes for any other woman, to be with you all day, every day, would be too much for me. I told you this when we married and you agreed that you would be happy to let me go away at times. When our child is born I will go away and work in the city. I will send you money to bring up our son or daughter, and I will visit you sometimes, but do not ask me to stay. This I cannot do'."

My mother said she was sad about not having father around, but she accepted his decision. She had agreed to living separate lives, even before they were married, although she would have preferred not to. She was not alone - many of the women in our village had husbands who worked away from home. It was very common. None of mother's friends had husbands at home. Some of them never came back at all after they left for Beijing. Some sent money regularly and some did not. Some would return, penniless perhaps once a year and their wives would feed them and mend their clothes. They in turn would help with the heavy work of mending the roof or adding another room to the house. Then they would be off again.

My mother forgave my father for his long absences and was grateful that he returned to see us when he did. She learnt to live with the situation and forget her sadness when he was away.

Unlike many of the women, she was not bitter about him not being there for us. She did not scream and shout at him in anger on his return, nor did she plead with him to stay when he decided to leave.

She could laugh and joke with the other women in the village and they supported each other in times of trouble. I grew up knowing that my father loved me and the times my family spent together were very happy. I would have liked to have seen my father more, but it was not to be. If mother had been harder on my father, he may never have come home at all, like so many of my friends' fathers. Her forgiveness made it possible for him to keep returning and she was grateful for the happy times they had together.

Unfortunately my mother died when I was twelve years old. My father was away from home at the time. I decided I would try to find him and his rickshaw in Beijing. I haven't found him yet, but I am still looking.

QUESTIONS: *Support answers to questions 2 to 6 with evidence from the text.*

1. What name would you give this story?
2. Why had Deng Zhang's father left for Beijing?
3. What good qualities did Deng Zhang's mother have?
4. Why was she able to remain happy?
5. How did she feel when her husband first left?
6. What explanation did her husband give for staying in Beijing?
7. How did you feel when you heard the story?
8. Did the story remind you of anything in your own life?

GROUP SINGING

OPEN YOUR HEART

*(lyrics by L. McCartney, Scotland 18.7.97
music by Stuart Jones)*

Nurture the love that's within.
Open your heart, let it sing.
Nothing but joy can it bring.
Virtues are values of truth.

*Chorus: Now sharing with peace, love and truth
Consider your actions as proof.
Now sharing with peace, love and truth
Every virtue's a value of truth.*

Impatience is not good to share.
Only brings others despair.
Look to your heart to be fair.
Every lesson in life is kept there.

*Chorus: Now sharing with peace, love and truth
Consider your actions as proof.
Now sharing with peace, love and truth
Every virtue's a value of truth.*

GROUP ACTIVITY

1. Brainstorm definitions of peace.

The following definition has been given for peace:

Peace is equilibrium of the mind, emotional stability and inner poise

Discuss.

2. Missing Person Game

The class sit in a circle. One person leaves the room and waits outside.
Another person leaves by another exit, or hides.

The first person is invited back in and has to say who is missing.

To make the game more difficult, the pupils may change places in the circle.

Extension exercise: Survey on Forgiveness

Give each pupil a photocopy of the questionnaire on the next page to carry out a survey. They may like to add other questions.

Their findings can be analysed as both quantitative and qualitative evidence and displayed.

A variety of types of graphs can be used to display the evidence such as bar, line, flow, scatter and pie diagrams.

Links to Other Subjects:

Chemistry Link: Forgiveness can be compared to adding alkali substances to acids, such as adding dilute potassium hydroxide with sulphuric acid. It could be likened to forgiveness neutralising the effect of acid relationships.

Social link: Research the Chinese law regarding the number of children families are allowed.

Geography link: Research the life of a Chinese husband and father in Beijing.

IT link: Make your own questionnaire, adding further questions and tick boxes.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please tick the relevant boxes

1. If you cannot understand or do something straight away, do you forgive yourself?

Yes No Sometimes Never

2. Do you think that it is important to forgive yourself and others when mistakes are made?

Yes No Sometimes Not sure

3. How do you feel when you have forgiven someone for something?

OK Not sure Very happy Excited Proud of myself

(You may tick as many boxes as you want)

4. Are you reluctant to forgive?

Yes No Sometimes Never

5. If you answered Yes in above question, is this because you are

Only thinking of negative things

Don't value myself or others enough

Have not been shown how to forgive

(You may tick as many boxes as you want)