

SESSION 5 . PRINCIPLE 7 : MYTHS AND REASONS WHY NOT

This activity helps students to see the obstacles and limits they place on their potential through the conscious and unconscious repetition of self-perpetuating myths. Our attitudes and behaviour are influenced by many sources, ranging from family and friends, to the media. These external influences shower us with ideas which get repeated many times until they gain mythical status. These myths grow inside us, as a result of pressures of all kinds, and once in place they repeat endlessly, limiting our outlook. Most people's quality of life is affected by such myths, which form imaginary obstacles that gain power and importance through repetition and reinforcement within family relationships, cultural settings and peer group relationships. Such myths are often characterised by a sense that something is lacking and they become embedded into our patterns of behaviour.

Such patterns do not, however, inhibit our ability to create. Everyone has the power to create, whether they are young or old, kind or unkind. Behaviour patterns and misplaced ideas of good and bad, right and wrong do not stop creativity occurring. Creating happens whether we choose it or not. The only difference lies in the self-belief and the intent behind the creation. Most people know someone who has been successful late in life, despite being "too old", or someone who achieves success at an early age despite being "too young" or inexperienced. Being overweight or not conventionally attractive, being pushy or aggressive or being "not nice" hasn't stopped people creating wealth, success, knowledge, advances in the arts, medicine or science. "Niceness" is not a barrier to creativity. What limits creative potential is the incremental damage caused by negative internal chatter and false ideas of the self. Ultimately, the negative aspects of creativity lies beneath self-destructive beliefs, lack of self-esteem, bullying behaviour, arguing etc..

We can prolong disappointment and a sense of failure by repeating that we "are not good enough" or we can examine the truth behind circumstances and events and use it to build on our experiences and create success. The quality of life for every individual can be changed and improved through the creative process.

We start by looking at the myths that limit our growth. Students should respond to the questions, listed in detail on page 18 in their journal. They may add their own variations to the list.

MENTOR GUIDANCE NOTES, P7 : MYTHS AND REASONS WHY NOT

This is a very revealing activity for students, indeed for anyone. It examines specific beliefs – we'll call them myths - that are used to prop up our emotional status quo. These myths are great excuses for inactivity; they underpin the crippling “can't be bothered attitude” that creates stagnation and apathy and they drain our motivation and self-esteem. We embed them into our own psyche whenever we repeat them, whenever we allow them to gain weight and force. They are challenged by examining the mind-set that lies behind them. We then use the EFT process to help shift that mindset.

It is fairly obvious that most people can be held back in life by a combination of factors. Not knowing what practical steps to take keeps us stuck in one place; being bound by negative thought processes is another major constraint. Students should shed light on the ideas that undermine their growth. This begins with them working through the list and modifying where necessary. Chance remarks from parents, family or friends, the relative strength or success of an older sibling, bringing unfavourable comparisons, a fear of failure that is masked by some other excuse and many more examples of what are often minor occurrences sew a seed of doubt. Then the feeling from the original event surfaces again whenever similar situations occur, and so a pattern emerges. Students' personal experiences of such occurrences are the vital ingredients they can work with to alter their inner emotional landscape and no recollection is too trivial or unimportant for this stage in the Game.

This is the first time that students will be using EFT process, described in detail in the Appendix. They will be unfamiliar with the process but should be encouraged to overcome any initial reservations, since EFT is extremely effective and is an easy process to work with. EFT is an effective tool for identifying and eliminating habitual reasons and excuses. There are examples in the students' journal that will stimulate detailed personal responses.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY : MYTHS AND REASONS WHY NOT

A short script for mentors:-

Personal Myths

1. I am not good enough.
2. I am too stupid.
3. I am too old.
4. I am too young.
5. I am not clever enough.
6. I am a girl / boy.
7. I am too fat / too thin.
8. I am not beautiful.
9. I don't deserve it.
10. I deserve to be punished.
11. I don't love myself / I am not loveable.
12. I am second best.
13. I am not nice enough.
14. I am not spiritual enough.
15. My family is too poor / too wealthy.

- Read and discuss the examples on the following page. What myths are being created by these people?
- Go through the Three Part Breathing and body awareness process.
- Look at the list of myths that hold people back. Which ones have the strongest hold on you? Which ones stop you from doing something? Add any private myths of your own to the list.
- What events, situations or people make the feeling behind the myths flare up in the first place? Write down all the examples that you can think of.
- How much do you reinforce your myths? How often do you say " I am too young, old, silly, noisy...etc. " to do something? Is it whenever a problem occurs or do you find yourself repeating them at other times?
- What do you actually say to yourself when repeating your personal myths?
- Score each myth on a 0-10 basis. If you are constantly reinforcing a myth through your thoughts or actions it should be graded high (10).
- Choose the strongest myth then work with it through the EFT process (see Appendix).

EXAMPLES : MYTHS AND REASONS WHY NOT

Example 1. Aaron was a skateboarder. He was naturally strong and agile and skateboarded gymnastically and adventurously with the same group of friends. He was also naturally stocky and put weight on easily. He bought pies and crisps for snacks and though he knew these were low quality foods that might be ok for occasional treats, he indulged in them most days. He justified this by saying he walked to the shop for the food instead of just going to the canteen, and that he ate salad too (in sandwiches, along with a cake or some other sugary treat!). Of course, he put on weight, so he made promises that he would buy an exercise bike to help burn off some pounds or that he would do circuit training, but he never did. The pounds continued to pile on. Eventually he became four stone overweight and the skateboarding became harder, so he stopped doing it. But all the time the problem wasn't the food; it wasn't what he was eating, or how much; it was because he had "always been heavily built". So he continued with his personal myth, stopped being a skateboarder and became a heavy young man with a potential health problem who never saw the friends he'd had many happy times with because they might nag him to loose weight.

Example 2. Danny's parents had recently divorced. His mum, Susan, was struggling financially and she was angry and bitter towards his dad, Peter for leaving the family. She had stayed on in the family home after the divorce, but she'd had to re-mortgage to buy his dad's half of the house. Danny was at the receiving end of a lot of her frustration and anxiety about making ends meet. Susan wanted Danny to get a weekend job and help pay the bills and also help her around the house. Danny's older brother could have helped but he'd left home some time before, so he was off the hook as far as Danny was concerned. The trouble was that a) he didn't want to work yet and b) there weren't any weekend jobs anyway. Susan thought Danny was making excuses –he usually did, and Danny thought Susan was exaggerating everything like she always did. Danny was stuck. He missed his dad but was angry with all the mess he'd left behind. He was disappointed that his mum never appreciated the bits of housework he did manage to do. She didn't seem to realise that he was still a teenager who wanted to be out with his mates having a great time and not having to play the homemaker. Things had been all right before and it wasn't his fault his mum and dad broke up. Susan was miserable because Danny wouldn't grow up and be a man. She'd always done everything for him and his brother and now when she needed them they couldn't seem to care less. She never talked about this, nor did Danny. Danny spent most of his time in his bedroom, unable to understand how his parents only seemed to bother about money when everything was ruined by the divorce. Susan couldn't talk to Danny, or his brother and was on the point of selling the house to get something smaller and less expensive rather than finding a way of explaining her feelings to her family and trying to work out a way of managing. Danny just wanted the next few years to pass so he could finish school and maybe get a flat with his girlfriend. Neither of them communicated and both were locked into a miserable stalemate.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM

The following Key Skills, and selected themes from “What is Creativity”, a DFES paper, “Excellence and Enjoyment – Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning”, and from the National Curriculum PSHE standards are addressed by this activity:-

Key Skills / What is Creativity

- Self Esteem – discover things for themselves, open to new ideas.
- Response to opportunity – makes positive response to challenges.
- Inference and Deduction – reflecting on ideas / outcomes, search for trends and patterns from own and others experience.
- Work with others – communicates, work in a group, tell stories using role play, sees qualities in others.
- Communication – recognise and use Standard English, respond using sentences with grammatical structure, record observation using graphs, visualise ideas from stories, describe the continuing effects of past events, recreate sensation / feeling from the past.
- Improving Own Learning and Performance; relate the past to the present, consider other interpretations of events.
- Problem Solving; examine two points of view about events, compare things, look for patterns, similarities, differences, categorise information.

Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning Theme: -

4. Going for Goals; overcoming obstacles to success.
5. Good to be Me; overwhelmed by emotions (graph), fact file.
7. Changes; feelings detective, making the links – difficult changes

PSHE Knowledge, Skills and Understanding

Developing confidence and responsibility, making the most of their abilities, KS 3, 4

Developing a healthy, safer lifestyle, KS 3

Developing good relationships and respecting the differences between people, KS3, 4

MENTOR NOTES
