

A Quiet Place- A Holistic Approach

For over 30 years now I have been fortunate enough to have been practising yoga and teaching yoga. In fact some of my class have been with me for all that time and I have one student who is in her 90s. I never cease to be amazed at how beneficial these ancient practices are at every level.

An opportunity was offered to me to train as a psychotherapist when my children were young and I was a single mum with little money. Sue Washington who was running the training, encouraged me to take the course and bake cakes for lunch towards the cost factors. I can tell you that I became very creative with cakes and my rough icing (used to stick the cakes back together from their destructive journey) was renowned. I also had a class on alternative medicine in the local college in the early 80s which was packed out with people hungry to learn at this early stage in the development of complementary approaches.

Meanwhile I was bringing up 2 boys on my own and teaching in school to keep a roof over our heads. How quickly the time goes. They are adults now and I have a grandson to entertain me occasionally.

I had been using a variety of approaches, nutritional, homeopathic, hypnotherapy all sorts with myself and my children and wanted to share my positive experiences in my work. Then in 1991 I was asked to develop and manage the Early Years Behaviour Team for Liverpool City Council working to support families of children with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. My usual client base was often from a more deprived section of the population with the common denominator of a child with severe behavioural problems. There was a higher proportion likely to have both literacy issues and mental health problems. In my role I was not in a position to offer treatment to children and families so I designed an educational package which could be differentiated and apply for all ages and abilities. The **Parent Pack** introduced a variety of non-judgmental approaches for this group of families who may not have had the initial interest or wherewithal to try out these techniques.

The Parent Pack was designed deliberately not to look like a book but a series of attractive work cards for differentiation and choice according to the interest of the individual. We found this to be very successful but hard to say what specifically had caused the changes as the emphasis had to be on client participation and a variety of approaches; in other words an educational approach rather than a medical model. We therefore used a spiral action research paradigm which allowed for this but wasn't specific to one method, eg: relaxation, and therefore it was difficult to introduce it to groups who only use one methodology at a time. I felt the issues were more urgent and therefore, taking care to use techniques that did no harm, we continued our successful path. Mothers who have no energy because of stress factors will be unlikely to have the resilience to make lasting change so small steps were always crucial to success. It is very tempting if the doctor offers you a pill to make Jamie 'good' and then money is added to the mix when you have little enough and are exhausted not to go down the route of least resistance and dose your child on speed, otherwise known as Ritalin!

I learnt much from the families I met of courage in the face of dreadful odds and background and I hope we helped a lot of people a little way along their journey. Now adapted to schools to provide effective interventions where parents who are unable to access support for whatever reason. The research shows the best evidence for change in behaviour nationally in a short term inclusive programme. It is designed as a personal development programme to be differentiated at an emotional level for all ages and abilities. A positive approach which has a faith that everyone has inner resources that can be tapped and built upon without being held as victims of the past. Onwards and upwards!

Penny Moon

Penny Moon has been a school teacher for over 40 years. In particular her interests lie in Special Needs and Behaviour Management. She is a UKCP registered and BRCP senior practitioner in Hypno-psychotherapy. She has been involved in training others in different fields over many years bit nationally and internationally. For 12 years she developed and co-ordinated the Early Years Behaviour Team for Liverpool Local Education Authority developing effective interventions to support families of children with severe emotional and behavioural issues. Based on this work she started A Quiet Place to work effectively with children whose parents couldn't or wouldn't engage actively in the parenting support process. She was a founder member of The Cheiron Trust based at the University of Liverpool Department of Education which has since closed. For the past 7 years she has run A Quiet Place through a small not for profit company www.aquietplace.co.uk

In particular she is interested in :

- 1. Holistic education and its practical implementation within mainstream education. The development of emotional and spiritual intelligence will enhance the general ability to learn and help create a well rounded individual. This is most relevant in our present state of society.*
- 2. Complementary Therapy and it application to a broad range of conditions of the mind, body and spirit.*
- 3. Parenting and the delicate issues surrounding the successful initial engagement and long term sustainability of support for families under stress*
- 4. Creative writing and guided Visualisations to support relaxation both for specific issues and more generalised relaxation*

Based on the concept of 'wholism' in its fullest sense, A Quiet Place utilises both traditional and complementary approaches in support of the whole child – mind, emotions, body and spirit, in the context of their whole life, environment, culture and society including and incorporating support for family, child and school staff.

A story from A Quiet Place...

The little girl smiled up from the chair, eyes luminous in the softly lit room. She was tiny and undernourished, blonde hair tied back harshly but her smile lit up her face and warmed you deep inside. The chair, a big recliner seemed somehow to enfold her, safe at last. She was playing quietly with some fuzzy felts, her feet contained in the hands of the reflexologist, quiet music played in the background to the accompaniment of the water fountain. The room was filled by a lovely fragrance and an Aladdin's cave of treasures to delight children of all ages.

"Hello, do you mind if I come in and look at A Quiet Place?"

"No, come in" she replied

"What is happening to you" I asked

"I am having my feet massaged" she said, "it's lovely."

"I can see that, you lucky girl, I wish it was me. What else happens here?"

"Well, Kathy lets me take a smelly tissue back to class and I have got one for my friend and the teacher too. Oh yes and one for my mum."

"What is that?" I asked

"Kathy lets me choose a smell from her box and put the oil in the foot spa. Then I can have the same oil to take with me in case I feel sad in the day, and it will make me feel like I am back here in A Quiet Place again happy".

"Ah I see, and what are the rest of the things in here for, I can see that Kathy has finished now would you mind showing me around?"

She put on her shoes and socks still smiling and relaxed and took my hand innocently. "This is where I can go and hide and listen to one of the stories. She took me into a tent made of many colours and filled with soft cushions, sparkling lights and soft toys."

Mmmm I thought, I could just stay here myself!

She invited me to sit down and showed me some of her favourite books all full of spirit and hope and fun. Then we came out of the tent and went to the musical instruments, a huge gong hung on a beautiful carved wooden hanger.

"What is that", I asked

"I can only bang the gong on the way out," she looked up shyly at Kathy who nodded permission, "But I can show you now if you like?"

"Yes please"

She picked up a blue padded hammer and shockingly for one so fragile gave it an almighty thwack and the whole room vibrated with a beautiful but hardly quiet sound.

"Wow", I said for there was nothing else to be said

She laughed mischievously at my surprise and took my hand to show me the other instruments, lovely sounding bells, a rain stick, ocean drums and wooden xylophones.

"What do you use these for?" I asked

"Well I see Fran as well as Kathy and if I am feeling a bit too sad to talk Fran talks with me through the drums and we have musical conversations, I usually feel better then and perhaps do a drawing or play with the sand or clay.

"But come and look at these, this is my favourite toy, she is a mummy polar bear with her baby." She picked them up and started to play without any self-consciousness. Mummy bear speaking to baby bear, having a little tea party and being tucked up in bed. Things that go on in most children's lives as the norm but not with this little one.

"What is that?" I asked

"It's a trampoline which Fran lets me jump on when I come in it helps me keep fit."

Keep fit I thought, this fragile little girl?

"I go to ballet ."

She smiled up at Kathy who nodded for her to continue

"I was on stage yesterday and everyone clapped," she looked down shyly.

"I have asthma and cannot always do my practice and so Fran and Kathy have helped me to do this show."

I raised my eyebrows? "Tell me more" and Kathy said "When N first came she was very shy and often felt unwell. Her little brother comes as well and he used to be a bit grumpy with you N didn't he?"

"Yes, he used to kick and punch me very hard all the time but now he has stopped and we are good friends. I don't seem to be so sick all the time and have been able to practise and won my prize and that is what I said I wanted to do when Fran first asked me."

"Yes" said Kath,"N is on her second six week programme because we are making good progress and wanted to support her through this show and there we are. Now it is time to go back to class N."

I thanked her for showing me around she smiled sweetly and taking Kathy's hand they went happily back to class.

I picked up her case notes as I was already fully aware of her case with giving supervision to Fran.

I stood in the room for a while breathing in and enjoying the atmosphere, the sense of stillness and peace I had hoped would be here when the idea first came to me, to be able to share this peace with others who didn't want to sit and meditate, whose lives were a noisy and chaotic simply because that is how they are where there is no privacy to think your own thoughts and just be still. Then those whose circumstances are more nightmarish, living with trauma and violence to learn how to trust an adult again to touch and be touched with care and nurture, to be listened to and respected, to feel love and experience compassion for others. This is what A Quiet Place is all about. It encompasses the whole family because we are not islands floating in the ocean unattached to our families, environment communities and society, we are each a unique flower blooming in the soil of our genetics and nurtured by our experiences. These experiences are soaked in since we were in the womb and before with body chemistry and will inform our behaviour because the body and mind are nothing but a series of rippling connections affecting our immune system and our bodies' ability to fight infections and therefore our ability to respond and learn to the best of our potential.

The unfolding of A Quiet Place into any environment also depends upon the same premise. It has various criteria which roll out into the unique form of a school or whatever environment within which it exists.

I spoke to one of the teachers who had sent a number of children through the programme and made good use of it herself. This woman I knew to be one of the best and most dedicated teachers I had come across had been having her own family problems. So difficult had things become at home with health problems that she had taken time off with stress related issues. We had been able to offer her aromatherapy and psychotherapy which had maintained her in school with her 11 year olds at a crucial transitional phase for the last half term of the year. For her self esteem this had been a wonderful achievement, for the children the least disruption to their learning and the financial costs for the school saved hundreds of pounds of supply cover. A good outcome for all concerned at every level!

A Quiet Place offers bespoke service supporting the public and business sector with Well being in the Workplace programmes which fulfil the 'duty of care' and are very effective in improving job satisfaction and absenteeism.

Expressing interest:

For those who are interested in working with us, please contact

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Further information can be obtained by accessing the web-site:

www.quietplace.co.uk

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