

Whitemore D.: A Guide to the Joy of Learning. Psychosynthesis  
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Psychosynthesis in Education is practical manual for teachers and parents who want to enrich traditional education with often neglected elements. It shouldn't be treated as an alternative but as a supplement. D. Whitmore stresses the importance of a holistic, balanced process of learning and growing as well as the role of the educator (teacher or parent) with pitfalls and opportunities. The book includes both theory and practical exercises to use at home or in the classroom to foster psychological and spiritual development of the young and to eliminate the blocks on the way to it.

Techniques and exercises can sometimes seem unusual or strange but they are neither mysterious nor complicated. They are lively and playful with an emphasis upon creative expression: drawing, imagining, interacting with others both verbally and nonverbal, concentrating on topics, dancing, moving etc.

Although play and expression is stressed here, the techniques must be used carefully and consciously, so educators are advised to try them out upon themselves before using them with others. If used properly they are powerful and can be of a great help.

To: start using techniques and methods one is asked to read some basic theories of Psychosynthesis, Each chapter starts with them. In a simple and very clear way D. Whitmore describes models of personality, complex view of a person (body, emotions, mind), subpersonalities and the formation of the adult psychological structure.

What D. Whitmore has written in the book describes children and teenagers' struggle: towards maturity and ways of helping them to reach what to some people seems impossible.

### **Chapter 1. What is Psychosynthesis?**

Psychosynthesis is a global approach to human development. It attempts to harmonize both psychological and transpersonal levels. On the psychological level it aims to build a well-balanced personality which is free from emotional blocks, has command over all its functions (physical, emotional, intellectual and social) and has a clear awareness of its own center. On the transpersonal one it enables a person to explore the regions beyond individual awareness (which is called superconscious): intuition, illumination, ecstasy.

### **Chapter 2. The Techniques of the Work**

A child learns faster and more effectively when his whole being is engaged in the process of education. So, it is very important to integrate both cognitive and affective elements in learning.

The integration is essential to meaningful education which evokes intelligent and mature behaviour, responsibility and creativity. The more modalities (body, sensation, imagination, intellect) are included in the process, the deeper and more productive the learning is.

The imagination is used in Mental Imaginary, Evocative and Reconditioning techniques. Like imaginary, Drawing technique builds a bridge between conscious and unconscious, between rational and intuitive elements. It provides a way of expressing feelings and emotions. Contribution to mental development can be Techniques of Meditation like: Reflection, which is concentration on the chosen topic, Symbolic Imaginary, which is visualization and Silence. As important as an exercise itself is the time spent for grounding it. To gain the deepest effects the content and results require elaboration and interpretation. Each child should be encouraged to share and discuss his experience.

### **Chapter 3. Growing up Whole**

A child's development is not complete until the development of each aspect (body, mind, feelings) is complete, too. Naturally, the growth of the body is the first phase of development. The farther back in time we reflect the more physical memories are. A fully functioning body is vital as a mean of expression, communication with others enjoyment of physical sensation and experience. But these functions are usually less developed than they might be. The exercises are to heighten and refine sensory awareness, consciousness of the body.

Every adolescent passes through the fire of emotional development so he should have some understanding of emotions and feelings to make the distinction between them and to realize how they can help cognitive learning. The educator who can engage the young person's feelings will be rewarded in terms both of exam results and of the quality of his own relationship with pupils. To integrate the affective domain into the educational process means first to become aware of feelings, to define them, to take them seriously and accept them. It is important not to deny feelings, not to repress or limit their awareness and expression. However, they must be released in appropriate ways without destructive consequences. So the child must learn to evaluate the situation and to choose a proper behaviour. Choice is a key factor. The possibility to choose expression brings inner freedom. Sometimes the educator must help the child to deal with very strong feelings by dissolving, transforming them or directing their attention away from them.

Healthy feelings need healthy mind in order to be whole. Personal evolution would be much easier if the body and the feelings were to cooperate with the mind but very often they are in conflicts. The conflict in adolescence has a tendency to resolve itself in one way or another, either to mind or to feelings, to head or to heart. A young person tends to choose one modality and unconsciously repress the other. The imbalance remains a concern for many adults who had repressed one function at the expense of psychological wholeness one need to realize that both domains are important and useful.

#### **Chapter 4. Each of Us Is a Crowd**

Human behaviour varies according to situations, feelings, social atmosphere. One can easily perceive his own multiplicity by noticing how often perception of others, self-image, outlook on life is changed. SUPERPERSONALITIES are autonomous configurations within the personality as a whole. Each of them has specific behaviour patterns, style, motivation, very often surprisingly dissimilar from those of others subpersonalities.

A great limitation to child's development is when he is with any one subpersonality. He experiences that he IS that subpersonality and consequently loses access to the rest of his personality. Getting to know all subpersonalities, recognizing when and how they manifest is essential and leads to ability to choose behaviour consciously. Some personalities appear negative and distorted. So, it is very important to accept them. Rather than get rid of, repress or control them, the goal is to transform and use them in a positive way. Giving them right to exist means admitting that every part of personality has something to contribute. But trying to throw them away can make them increase in negative, troublesome manifestations.

## **Chapter 5. Adolescent Identity Struggles**

Adolescence is a time of stress and is characterized by several crises, the outcome of which play a major role in the transformation of the adult personality. Mentioned before, the conflict between feelings and mind, emerging sexuality (growing sexual awareness and forming sexual identity), separation from parents (as experiencing own self-image and independence), identity (conformity, subcultures, new social roles). Without creative and healthy means of resolving these painful issues, without practical tools, appropriate attitudes, understanding, empathy and respect, educators can't deal with these crises. Work with adolescence is not only understanding statements and nice words, it rather requires intelligent and compassionate action. Surprisingly enough, when the pain is acknowledged, accepted and met, dramatic positive changes begin to happen almost at once.

## **Chapter 7. Beyond What We Think We Are**

It is only through an awakening of the transpersonal dimension that the answer to many existential questions of adolescence can be found. The main purpose of working in the transpersonal domain of young people is to give them a sense of who they are, where they want to go with their life and to help them develop strength and qualities to enable them to move towards their goals. All children possess the potential for spiritual experience and insight, which unfortunately isn't often noticed and affirmed, so it eventually disappears. When adults disregard, dismiss or ridicule such experiences, the natural reaction of the child is to repress them and learn to deny their reality. The general principles which encourage transpersonal awareness in children or adolescents are: To cultivate sense of beauty, wonder and admiration; to place interest on the inner spiritual aspects of life; to encourage and promote spiritual awakening and understanding.

## **Chapter 8. Educator Know Thyself**

When an educator wants to establish an authentic relationship with a child he must be free from prejudices from the past, aware of his self defence mechanisms and behaviour patterns, anger and aggression. Sometimes teachers become nervous, bored, depressed or frustrated. Rather than trying to forget or push aside such feelings, one needs to examine them and remain aware of them when dealing with children. Otherwise perception can be distorted. But the teacher is not limited to adapting his limitations. He can consciously create a vision of himself and transform himself into this vision. In psychosynthesis the vision of potential is called an Ideal Model. It can be a living symbol of where one can be as educator. It is not an unrealistic dream, it is based on realistic perception of oneself, one's strength, gifts and talents. It is not what teachers DO with the young; it is WHO he is. The answer doesn't lie in better classrooms, teaching methods and tools. It lies in us.

Diana Whitmore is a Chairperson of The Psychosynthesis and Education trust and Director of its Professional Training Programme. She obtained her BA in Mass Communication from the University of Minnesota and her MA in Confluent Education from the University of California. In 1969-72 she was a staff member of the Esalen Institute, California, in 1973-5 she trained with the Psychosynthesis Institute in California and with Dr. Roberto Assagioli in Florence. At present she is a Chairperson and Co-director of Professional Training for the Psychosynthesis and Education trust in London and is a lecturer on psychosynthesis and psychospiritual studies. She has given many public programmes and professional trainings in the UK and Europe.