

2009

Toward a Pedagogy of Giving

Dr. Thomas William Nielsen

2009

A student quote...

“...the whole world is not nice, man!”

2009

Problems with wellbeing

(Fiona Stanley 2008)



- The most common disease in contemporary Australian adolescents is depression
- A third of all young Australian deaths are owing to suicide
- Around twenty percent of Australian teenagers have a significant mental health problem affecting their lives
- A quarter of Australian children between the ages of twelve to fifteen years drink alcohol weekly
- A quarter of Australian five-year olds are overweight/obese
- Diabetes and asthma are on the rise
- By the time they are eleven, US children will have seen on average 8000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence on television (Huston et al., 1992) despite close to 3500 studies world-wide showing a clear correlation between violent behaviour and watching screen violence (Grossman & DeGaetano, 1999)

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Values education



- Australia is a world leader
- 2002-present: The Values Education Initiative
- 2003: The National Framework for Values Ed
- 2004-6: VEGPSP Stage 1
- 2006-8: VEGPSP Stage 2
- 2009- : VASP
- Final Reports: www.valueseducation.edu.au

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10 principles for good VE

(final report VEGPSP Stage 2)



- Establish and use shared values language across the school
- Use pedagogies that are values + student-centred in the curriculum
- Develop values education as an integrated curriculum concept
- Explicitly teach values
- Implicitly model values and explicitly foster the modelling of values
- Develop relevant and engaging values approaches connected to local and global contexts and which offer real opportunity for student agency
- Use values education to consciously foster intercultural understanding, social cohesion and social inclusion
- Provide teachers with informed and sustained professional learning and foster their professional collaborations
- Encourage teachers to take risks in their approaches
- Gather and monitor data for continuous improvement

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Key-finding re agency



“Develop relevant and engaging values approaches connected to local and global contexts and which offer real opportunity for student agency”

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Example

- Two grade 3-4 classes: *Cool Kids 4 a Cool Climate*
- Goal: help students take responsibility and act for an environmentally sustainable future
- Step 1: empathetic link
- *Dear Diary, today is Friday, another busy day. The earth is all dry and very deeply cracked. The poor old sheep dog is too thirsty to round up the sheep and the cows are so skinny you can see their rib bones. I have to shoot them tomorrow. I am out of water to feed them so I think it is best... I don't know what to do...*

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Example (cont.)

- Step 2: sending drought relief
- *The culminating activity was for the children to list ways to show that they care about the effects of drought on our community. From this list they chose, as a group, one idea to put their words into action. They chose to collect tinned food, blankets, toys and books to donate to the Country Women's Association (CWA) to go to drought affected farmers in our area. Over the space of five weeks they developed a plan, allocated jobs, and organised posters and newsletter articles. They collected over 350 tins, numerous blankets, four boxes of clothing, as well as toys and books. A representative from the CWA collected the donations and the children received a letter of appreciation. I wish I could include the photo we took of the children with their collections so you could see the look of pride on every face...*

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Example (cont.)

- Step 3: whole school recycling project
- *At present the two classes are responsible for the recycling for the entire school. They have taken full responsibility for this process and are quite forthright when letting people know if recyclables are placed in the wrong bin.... parents commented on the positive impact this unit of work was having on their family as a whole. Many reported being 'nagged' if they left lights or appliances on. Emptying the recycling into the bin was not a chore anymore and every television in the house wasn't on at the same time. One parent reported that their daughter was monitoring the packaging of the products they bought. Turning off lights, reporting dripping taps, using the fan rather than the air conditioner, using less plastic wrap, walking or riding if possible, etc, have all become part of their daily lives.*

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Example (cont.)

- One of the teachers concluded:
- *At first I wasn't sure if the explicit teaching of values was going to feel forced, as if tacked onto the integrated unit as an afterthought. It quickly became obvious that the inclusion of the values enhanced the unit... the extremely high level of engagement of the children over the 15 week unit is a testament to the connectedness they felt... the thought of teaching about climate change and its effects on people without looking at the values of care, compassion and responsibility now seems quite shallow.*

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Analysis

- Learning new information via guided constructivism (cognitive)
- Creating empathetic links (affective)
- Putting care and compassion into action (physical)
- Synergy of head, heart and hands learning
- What is the mysterious synergy that seems to be created when head and hands seem to be connected in 'heart-activity'?

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Meaning vs pleasure

(Seligman 2002)

- The pleasurable life (fun)
- The good life (engagement)
- The meaningful life (purpose)
- The latter creates higher and more stable levels of wellbeing/ happiness

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The science of giving

(Post & Neimark 2007, pp. 8-10)



Giving in high school predicts good physical and mental health all the way into late adulthood. Paul Wink of Wellesley College studied nearly two hundred individuals who have been followed ever since the 1920s. They were part of a special study, interviewing them every decade.

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The science of giving

(Post & Neimark 2007, pp. 8-10)



Giving reduces mortality significantly, even when you start late. Dough Oman of UCB followed almost 2000 individuals over the age of 55 for 5 years. Those who volunteered for two or more organizations had 44% lower likelihood of dying. This is a stronger predictor than exercising 4 times a week (30%).

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The science of giving

(Post & Neimark 2007, pp. 8-10)



Giving reduces adolescent depression and suicide risk. Studies by Post and Neimark, David Sloan Wilson, Peter Benson and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi all show that generous behaviour has a significant impact on teen's mental health, increasing levels of happiness, hopefulness, and social effectiveness.

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10 ways of giving

Post & Neimark 2007



- Celebration/ gratefulness
- Generativity (helping others to help themselves)
- Forgiveness
- Courage
- Humour
- Respect
- Compassion
- Loyalty
- Listening
- Creativity

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Celebration/gratitude

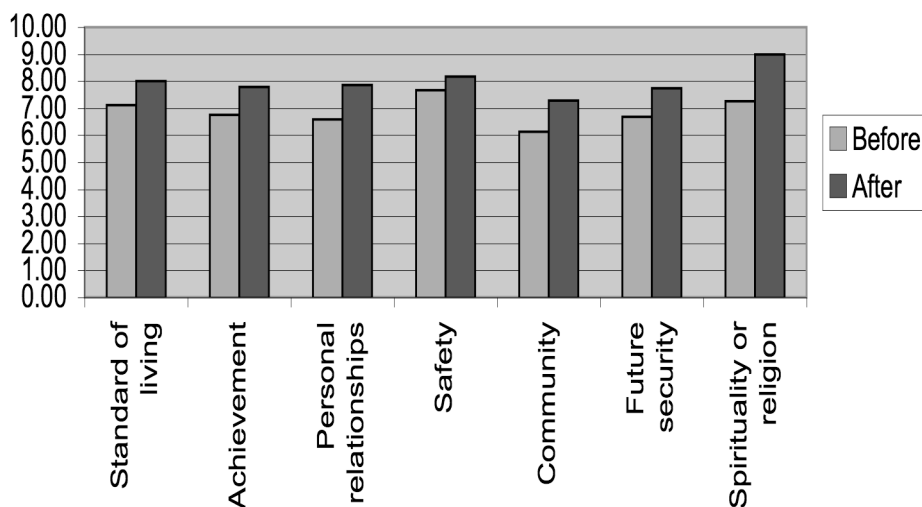
(Post & Neimark 2007, pp. 28-32)

- Just 5 minutes of gratitude can shift the nervous system toward a calm state, parasympathetic dominance, which is where heart, breathing, blood pressure, brain rhythm and electrical potential of the skin are synchronised (Rollin McCraty 1995)
- After a month of a daily 15 minute practice of appreciation, 30 individuals had a 100% increase in a potent hormone called dehydroepiandrosterone, as well as a corresponding 30% reduction in the stress hormone cortisol
- The 2008 PPLE study...

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PPLE WELL-BEING SURVEY

How satisfied are you with ...



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Giving as a living principle

- A state of mind that determines the quality of an action
- Something we can do every day
- “Love is all you need” (Beatles)
- “Unconditional positive regard” (Carl Rogers)
- “Self actualisation is possible only as a side-effect of self transcendence” (Victor Frankl)
- Love as a driving force in our lives - yet has received hardly any credit until now

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Why is giving so beneficial?

- E/evolution
- In some ways it doesn't matter!

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Toward a pedagogy of giving

- "...but the whole world isn't nice man".
- "You can't cover the whole world in soft leather to make your journey smooth and effortless - but you can wear leather sandals" (Buddhist saying)
- VE makes all knowledge *human* knowledge
- Paradigm shift needed

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Main references

- Post, S. & Neimark, J. (2007) Why do good things happen to good people.
- Seligman, M. (1990) Learned optimism; and (2002) Authentic Happiness.