

Journeys in the Spirit

Children



Sheet 9.A Engage 'On sitting still' – a story by Mary Test



Anyone can wiggle and anyone can make a noise; even the smallest babies do. When you were a few weeks old you were only quiet when you were asleep, and even then you sometimes made queer noises and clenched your tiny fists. All young creatures like to keep moving, as you will remember when you think of a kitten playing ball with a scrap of paper or chasing its own tail. But little animals soon learn that, more important than chasing their tails is the art of sitting perfectly still. They know that often the only way to be safe is to be so quiet no one knows they are there. Have you ever watched a young rabbit on the lawn or field at dusk? He comes out of the shadows and starts across the grass to nibble a few of the lettuce leaves in your garden. But he catches a glimpse of you as you come around the corner

to put away your bike and suddenly he sits as still as a statue, not even twitching an ear. As soon as you have vanished toward the garage he starts slowly hopping again until—bang! The door closes after you, and he "freezes" again. Only when his world is quite still again does he finally dare to cross the grass to the vegetable patch and start his dinner!

Maybe you have read the book or seen a film called *Bambi*, which tells the story of the life of a wild deer in the forest. When Bambi is a little, spotted fawn his mother leaves him alone in the undergrowth while she goes off to eat, and Bambi lies so still that his spots look just like sunshine filtering through the leaves. The American Indians learned to walk through the woods when hunting without stepping on twigs that snap, or crashing into bushes that crackle when they break. The next time you are in the woods you might try to walk silently and you will see how hard it is. And the Indians even learned to paddle their canoes silently so that there was no gurgle or drip from the paddle to warn game of their approach.

Sometimes it seems as if the most wonderful things in the world happen in stillness. Great storms of wind and rain and lightning that destroy houses and forests make tremendous noise, but the most astonishing miracles of creation happen without a sound. Did you ever hear the sun rise in the morning or set at night? Do you hear seeds push up through the earth, or apples grow round and fat?



Do you hear even the faintest rustle when a rosebud opens on a summer morning?

When you go to a shop and buy a new pair of shoes, you find that your feet are bigger than they were the last time, but did you hear them grow? Of course you didn't, but all the time in the silence you are growing, and when you stop to think of it, it is a most wonderful thing.



When we go together to a Quaker Meeting, we must learn to sit still, too, to give our souls inside of us a chance to grow, and to help us to find God. Many people used to think that their gods spoke to them in claps of thunder, or in the roar of forest fires, but the early Hebrews learned that God spoke to them in a "Still, small voice."

We who are Friends sit quietly in Meeting, when nothing seems to be happening, so that we will be able to hear that small voice when it speaks to us. We don't always recognize it when it does speak, but sometimes as we sit quietly watching a patch of sky through the window hoping that an airplane will go past, or swinging our feet just far enough to miss the bench in front of us, something pops into our hearts or into our feelings. "I really *could* be nicer to Johnny (Sally) if I tried, and the next time it is my turn to be helper, I'll choose her (him) to help me and see what happens." Just that way miracles of friendship begin to grow! Or, "Now I know why mother was cross yesterday. She was very tired, and if I had only picked up my pyjamas without being reminded, it would have made her so happy." Or, "I like to look at that man who sits on the facing bench each week. He has such a gentle, quiet face. I wish I could look like that when I grow up. Maybe I can find something in Meeting that will help me to be like him." (Continued overleaf..)

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Sheet 9.B Engage 'On sitting still' – a story by Mary Test



Even if we can only see the branch of a tree through a nearby window or watch a patch of sunlight on the floor, or hear the insects drone on a warm summer day, we can thank God for the wonderful world he has given us for our home, and make up our minds to thank Him by being more loving every day. So the miracle of love, and God is love, takes root in us.

But let's be clear about it that this is not an easy thing we are setting ourselves to learn. It would be much easier to whisper and giggle with our neighbours than to keep our mouths, hands and feet quiet for perhaps a whole hour at a time. But it is a skill which we can learn with practice just as we learn to swim or ride a bike.

At first it seems as if you could never stay up in the water, doesn't it? Or it seems just as hopeless to balance a bike long enough to catch your breath. But after you have practiced and practiced, falling off the bike until every inch of you hurts, suddenly something happens and you can ride! As you keep at it, you get better and better and then comes the glory of doing something difficult really well. Why did you stick at it so long? Because you wanted more than anything else to know how!

Suppose you try learning to sit still the same way, as a skill to be learned, just as little rabbits and Indians have learned. If you keep on trying each time you go to Meeting it will get easier and easier, and some day you will say, "Why Meeting didn't seem long at all today." And you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are one member of a fellowship of girls and boys and men and women near and far, that is growing in understanding of the silence, and that is listening in the silence for the still, small voice of God.

One of the best ways to help us guide our thoughts in Meeting is to say over to ourselves Bible verses that we have learned by heart. An especially beautiful one comes in the Ninety-First Psalm which compares the love of God for us, His children, to the care of a mother bird for her nestlings. The fourth verse reads: "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust..."

Often when we see birds in their nests we are standing on the ground and looking up to a high branch or ledge where we see a bundle of twigs with a sharp bill showing on one side and long dark tail feathers on the other. We know the mother bird is keeping her babies warm and safe under her wings even when we can't really see her doing it. But one day we really saw a mother duck covering her babies with her wings, and it happened this way:

We went to the duck pond one evening, but by the time we got there it was nearly dark, and all the birds everywhere were getting ready for bed. A mallard had settled herself comfortably on a flat rock in the middle of the pond, and was waiting quietly for her ducklings to come to her. Ten or more of the little brown babies were swimming happily around her, and we could almost hear them saying, "Just *once* more, please!" Then all at once they began to scramble upon the rocks and hide under her wings, which she had stretched out to make room for them. Just as the last one tucked herself underneath, and we thought they had all gone to bed at last—pop! out came one in front to drop into the water, swim around to her mother's tail and crawl under the wing again. Every time one went under, another popped out in front and the little ducks kept at their game till it was too dark for us to see. But we knew that when the last streaks of light faded from the sky and the stars shone down on the duck pond, all the little ducklings would be safe and warm under their mother's wings. 'He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust'."

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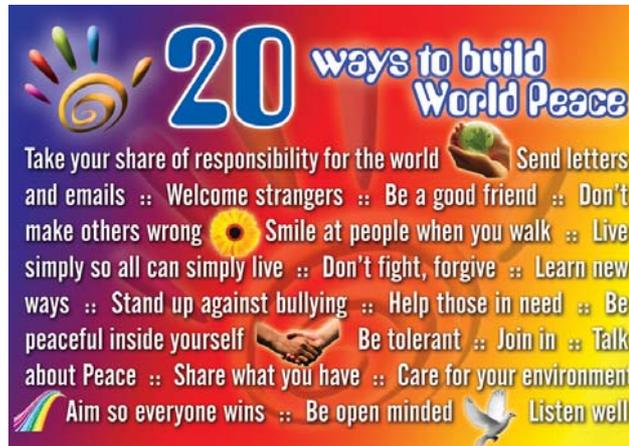


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Sheet 9.C Engage Peacebuilders - 20 ways to build world peace



Copies of this card can be downloaded and printed for everyone from the Peacebuilders website www.peacebuilders.info/

Take your share of responsibility for the world	Send letters and emails	Welcome strangers
Be a good friend	Don't make others wrong	Smile at people when you walk
Live simply so that others can simply live	Don't fight forgive	Learn new ways
Stand up against bullying	Help those in need	Be peaceful inside yourself
Be tolerant	Join in	Talk about peace
Share what you have	Care for your environment	Aim so everyone wins
Be open minded	Listen well	and...

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Sheet 9.D Respond 'I am a Quaker; I like Quakers because..'



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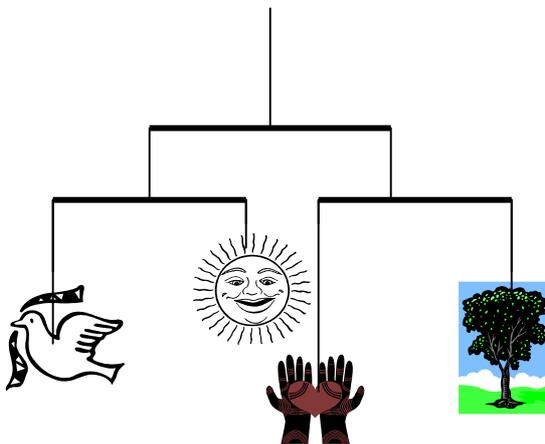


Sheet 9.E Respond Peacebuilders mobile

Making a peace mobile

You will need:

- Paper or card
- Pencils
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- Pipe cleaners
- Thread
- Large upholstery needle
- 3 Twigs or green gardening canes (about 1 ft long each)
- Markers or crayons
- Pens, crayons, PVA glue, glitter, sequins, coloured tissue paper etc.



- ❖ Working individually or together everybody draws, cuts out, decorates words, pictures or patterns to represent the peacebuilding ways they have chosen
- ❖ Using a needle, pull a short length of knotted thread through the balancing point of their cut out (near its middle). Tie the other end of the thread to the end of a twig or cane.
- ❖ On the other end of the twig, attach another cut out in the same way.
- ❖ Tie a thread to the middle of this twig and attach it to the end of another twig
- ❖ Attach a cut out to the other end of this twig.
- ❖ Using a short length of thread, attach what you've made to the end of another twig. If you want the twigs to remain horizontal, tie the thread where the mobile will balance (but this is not necessary).
- ❖ Attach a cut out to the other end of this twig.
- ❖ Tie a longer length of thread to the top twig. If you want the twigs to remain horizontal, tie the thread where the mobile will balance (but this is not necessary). You now have a beautiful peacebuilder mobile to hang and display.
- ❖ Practice first!

Respond Friendly biscuits:

- ❖ Have enough plain biscuits for everyone to decorate - Marie or Rich Tea.
- ❖ Lots of 100's and 1000's sprinkles and other cake decorations
- ❖ White icing made from icing sugar and water
- ❖ Enough little bottles of primary food colours – red, yellow and blue – to share
- ❖ 2 bowls and a plate for each person – one for practicing mixing colours (one drop of red is enough for pink!)
- ❖ Teaspoons or small knives or lolly sticks for spreading and mixing icing
- ❖ Possibly aprons
- ❖ Quite simple really – everybody practices mixing colours and then applies icing, sprinkles and other decorations in their own design
- ❖ Make enough to share with meeting and have one for themselves and family not present

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Sheet 9.F Ongoing activity A peace picture.



What does peace look like?

Please send any pictures to: 'Journeys in the Spirit', Children and Young People's Staff Team, Religious Society of Friends, Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ