

## A Foundation for Life

The importance of this project, in my opinion, lies in the fact that it leads you right through life's real time challenges and urges you to ponder, discover and rediscover things that you have known bits and pieces about though you have never given them the attention and contemplation they deserved.

Perhaps at the fore of benefits you are likely to gain from this work - whether you are a small pupil or bracing yourself for going to university- is that it helps you build awareness step by step and develop a well balanced personality capable of gaining knowledge easily and smoothly. This way, you will be able to see life simpler, richer and more beautiful, and to reach out to people and establish relations built on love and mutual respect, free from discrimination, suspicion, lack of confidence and over sensitivity.

A further benefit the project offers those who have grown old is the opportunity to live a 'second childhood', not in the sense of pathological relapse but of probing an effective way of rediscovering life and savoring all fruits of knowledge at high season, cooperating with others and consolidating relations based on cordiality and mutual respect. Some of the ideas in this work took me 70 years back to relive my childhood and early adulthood, probing into my inner self and my relations with others, and examining in detail my personality structure. I wouldn't hesitate to confess that I have begun to live a new rhythm in all aspects of my life, built on the principles of love and respect and harmonious interaction with my physical and human environment. I have developed a new perspective of life, a convivial one if I may say.

Sara is presenting a novel approach to education and knowledge building that aims at building a well-integrated model for human awareness through the art of understanding and cognizance. This model is based on self-awareness and self-confidence, confidence in others, and building on the positive and kind aspects of humans and life, away from coerce, prejudice and dictation. The project covers three basic stages in the student's life, from age six to 18, through which the student's personality develops easily and takes shape, building its learning base through spontaneous initiative, free conversation, and innocent play with self and with others.

As the title eloquently suggests, Sara's project demonstrates a conscious effort to build a novel framework for awareness-building based on the art of understanding and cognizance. She has coined a novel educational method that we can read for personal interest but can also use it as a helping tool in education, through an educational system that is flexible, ambitious and always open to further development and rethinking.

Every human being comes to life armed with five senses, which play a pivotal role at the early stages of learning and cognizance. Thus sensual perception of things and of words and communication with family and people around us represent the launch pad on the life journey. As students continue their awareness-building and learning journey at school, and even at their leisure time, their cognizance faculties develop and mature.

'Nothing is good or ill but by comparison' so the adage goes. Indeed, through comparison and contrast, we appreciate the importance of senses in building life and selecting the right course, away from harm, risk and abuse. Through senses, we appreciate the difference between using our eyes to see around and masking them; between applying our hearing sense and plugging our ears.

This applies to all the five senses. Perhaps learning proper breathing is one of the most important and interesting practical exercises that eloquently demonstrates the importance of senses. Taking a deep breath by inhaling through the nostrils and exhaling it back through the mouth is the proper healthy way of breathing. Yet we seldom remember this simple fact, thus missing its immense benefits. One practical benefit of proper breathing is that it is very effective sometimes in putting you into a deep sleep in a few moments. This is an invitation to those who suffer from insomnia to try this method: It might prove itself for many, if not most, of them.

Of equal importance is learning words and understanding their role in interpersonal communication. At this stage, it is vital that we select positive, kind words and avoid as much as possible negative, offensive ones. We can learn injurious words at a later stage by learning their antonyms from dictionaries, rather than using them in our daily conversations to avoid hurting others' feelings and ours as well.

On the matter of taste, we do not stop at appreciating the sweet, salty, sour and acrid, but go beyond that to artistic and aesthetic taste in literature, art, architecture, and music.

The project presents a methodical approach to building students' awareness through their stages of development, and preparing them through the art of understanding and perception (sensual perception first, then intellectual perception at later stages). To this end, the work deals with three stages of the students' development: from primary all through to high school.

After learning about our senses through highly informative and amusing exercises, we come to understand the importance of food and water in building sound health. We also learn that the face, the voice, and the sound all have an effective symbolic language of their own. Through all this, we remain mindful of the importance of the environment and what we have to do in order to protect it. So we join forces with others in voluntary work and help inculcate a volunteering culture spanning our health, social, cultural and civil life in general.

From these basic rules, our senses help us shape up a positive self-image of each one of us. In this context, it is vital that we shun away negative ideas and injurious comments. We need also to train ourselves on writing letters, starting from writing to ourselves. It would be great, in this case, to mix reality with imagination. This way we will be able to develop our creative power and discover that words have meanings and connotations far beyond their lexical interpretations.

At the third - and final – stage, we come to knowing the self. Here we remember Socrates' aphorism: 'Know thyself'. Through knowing ourselves and understanding our personalities, we learn how to shed off arduous burdens and expectations. Perhaps the most important lesson at this stage is learning to think carefully and patiently before uttering a word that might be offensive or injurious to others as well as to us. Here comes the role of mutual respect in boosting communication, love and peace, particularly since "communication" – as Sara puts it – "is the key to everything".

**Ali Kana'an**