

A Book for Our Parents and Carers

*A Book for Our Parents was prepared
by the Toogoolawa School as helpful advice
for the parents and carers of our students.*



Chapter One:

The Human Values as the Foundation

This is a book for our parents - the parents of the students attending Toogoolawa Schools.

The motto of Toogoolawa School is "*The most precious gift of education is character*".

The school therefore not only seeks to provide a basic education but also to give the students a convincing philosophy of life: that service, truthfulness and consideration for others lead to a happy, fulfilled and effective life. To this end the students will be taught not only to read, write and spell; to speak, listen and calculate; but also to know right from wrong, and to follow that which is right.

The aim is that students grow into contented men and who are courageous, capable and respectful to themselves and others. In doing so they will have become self-reliant, with a spirit of service to society and to humanity at large.

We say to our students that these good qualities already lie within them, like a diamond hidden inside a mountain. Our task is to help them discover this 'diamond', this inner peace, strength and goodness. That is, to help them to know themselves, to discover who they are really meant to be.

Parenting - How did we learn?

All of us learned about parenting mostly by remembering how our parents behaved toward us. So, when our children came along we tried to take the best of what our parents did to us, and we also did our best to leave the disappointing bits out. This is how most of us learned to be good parents. There were no courses in parenting when we were going to high school, so we did the best with what we already knew.

If we look at what we try to do as parents, and what the teachers at Toogoolawa School aim to achieve, we can see that we have a lot in common: We all try to teach the children to live according to the five universal Human Values of Love, Peace, Truth, Right Action and Non-violence.

Deep down, all of us try to be good people and live our lives according to these Human Values. We can see the striving towards these Values in our own lives today.

LOVE - We are all seeking

To develop compassion, kindness, generosity and greatness in spirit;
To care for our environment, each other and ourselves.

PEACE - We are all hoping

To develop self-respect, concentration, inner contentment and calmness;
To cooperate with and value the contribution of others;
To accept constructive criticism.

TRUTH - We are all trying

To speak and act truthfully, with a clean and clear conscience;
To value and encourage honesty and openness with each other.

RIGHT CONDUCT - We are all learning

To practise acceptance of the good and the rejection of the bad;
To accept responsibility for our own actions and to exercise initiative;
To do our best at everything we attempt.

NON-VIOLENCE - We are all wanting

To avoid harming others in thought, word or deed.
To respect and nurture an awareness of nature.

None of us is a perfect example of these five Human Values, but we recognise their importance. We know that if enough people in the world could live just a small amount of the Values, there would be more happiness, peace and prosperity than we can ever imagine. Let us look a little closer in the next section at what these HUMAN VALUES really mean.



Chapter Two

What are the Human Values?

We can say that living according to the Human Values is how we and our children can find increased happiness together.

Each one of the Values is equally important, and we can try to live by them a little more every day.

The **Human Value of LOVE** can be described as having the following qualities:

We can try to be kind, gentle and thoughtful to everyone we know, and even to strangers.

We can do our best to forgive others for the hurt and harm they have caused us - in the same way that we forgive the blind man for bumping into us.

We can be kind and loving towards ourselves, not allowing thoughts like "I am useless" or "I am a nothing", because such thoughts can only harm us.

We can show concern for others when they are unhappy - being able to listen without interrupting is a very loving gift to another.

We can do all we can to help those less fortunate than ourselves - a smile here, a helping hand there.

We can learn to love without demanding that we be loved in return - some call this 'unconditional love'.

We can practise our religious faith more deeply, really learning to love God.



We can find more of the **Human Value of PEACE** inside ourselves when we take some of these steps:

We can do our best to avoid arguments and getting angry, choosing instead to go away and find our inner Peace again.

We can learn to be calm and steady by sitting quietly without TV or papers, or by praying, relaxing or repeating some good words to ourselves.

We can be satisfied with what we have, even feeling grateful to society, God or fate for everything that comes our way.

We can learn not to react when others are angry.

We can practise thinking before we speak, and then speaking more slowly and gently.

We can decide to always think positively and with optimism.

We can practise patience in all circumstances.



If we want to live more according to the **Human Value of TRUTH** we can try some of these ideas:

We can do our best to always speak the truth, trying not to hurt anyone when we do it.

We can look for what is good in others, even when it seems hard to find.

We can give more importance to being a loving and contented person than to buying this or that.

We can have respect for all religions.

We can accept that others can be right.

We can accept and admit our own mistakes and shortcomings.

We can believe in and stand up for what is right.



When we want to bring out the **Human Value of RIGHT ACTION** in ourselves these ideas might help:

We can develop the habits of being tidy, on time, and eating healthy food.

We can do the things that have to be done as soon as we can, and as best we can.

We can show respect for older people and our parents.

We can decide to always keep our promise.

We can try to be honest in all of our dealings with others.

We can learn to be increasingly self-reliant and independent.

We can try to always be true to what our conscience tells us to do.



When we want to live more according to the **Human Value of NON-VIOLENCE** there are a number of things we can try:

We can do our best to avoid hurting others with what we say and with what we do.

We can try not to say or repeat bad things about other people.

We can speak respectfully and avoid shouting.

We can decide not to hurt others even when they hurt us.

We can avoid watching violence on TV.

We can understand that getting angry is really bad for our health.

We can avoid wasting time, money, energy and food.



Chapter Three

Parents and Teachers as Examples.

When we look back to when we were young we see that our parents and teachers set the example for us to follow. If our mother was always patient, somehow we learned to be a little more patient than most people. If our father got angry and talked down to us, we find ourselves doing the very same thing to our own children. If the teachers treated us like an idiot, we tended to behave like one - if they saw the goodness and greatness in us, we showed them even more of those qualities.

So, it is up to us. How we think, speak and behave is what we will see our children do in turn. The more we change our lives day by day, seeking to live according to the Human Values, the more we will see that happening in our children. That is:

If we are firm in discipline with our children, they will be more self-disciplined and take charge of their lives.

If we treat everyone with thoughtfulness and respect, our children will do likewise.

If we never raise our voice in argument or annoyance, our children will speak more quietly and respectfully.

If we give up or cut down on our smoking, drinking, eating unhealthy foods, spending, TV watching, wasting time or gambling, the young ones in the family will find it easier to avoid doing those things too.

If we grow happier and more peaceful day by day, so too will our children.

If we develop a new interest in learning, studying, doing courses, creating things, being active in sport or something else, our children will want to learn something too.

If we become more spiritual this too will affect the young ones.

If we aspire to become an even wiser, kinder, stronger, softer and more self-confident person we will see our children moving in that direction also.

If we want well-behaved, life-loving, respectful and self-reliant children, we have to become those qualities ourselves.

We - the adults, teachers, parents, elders - are like the water tank and the children are the water taps. To have pure water flowing out of the taps, the water in the tank must be pure.

How do we purify ourselves? How do we learn to live according to the five Human Values more and more?

Let us look at the water tank again. The water in the tank becomes pure, not all at once, but drop by drop, little by little. Even if we just change one little drop in our personality, that is enough for today, for this week. Then another drop, then another, and so on.

This is what the teachers at Toogoolawa School are seeking to do, and we are sure that all of our parents are equally sincere in doing so too.



Chapter Four

How to live the Human Values by being Mindful

Even when we decide that we want to change, for the sake of our children, it is so easy to forget. A whole day goes past and we can suddenly remember, “Oh! I forgot to use kind words”; or, “All day I’ve been rushing around, instead of moving steadily, peacefully!”

To remember to remember is the challenge – to remember to be ever-watchful over ourselves: “Am I being peaceful?...Are my words respectful?... What is my conscience (inner guidance) telling me to do right now?” How can I become more mindful?

Being mindful is really just getting to know ourselves. The best way to begin doing this is to watch the breath, even while doing other things. The breath is always with us, going in and going out, all day long and while we sleep. Yet we are hardly ever aware of our breathing – it goes on, automatically.

When we begin to watch the breath – whether for a few seconds or even several minutes – we also begin to notice other things about ourselves. We notice our thoughts; we notice which ones are peaceful and those that are not; we notice which ones keep coming back time and again. And we notice our feelings, and how we react to what people say and do.

Several times every day the boys at Toogoolawa sit or stand still for a while, watching the breath. This gives them something constant and familiar to hold on to. Within a short while they begin to feel more peaceful.

Being ‘mindful’ means having the **mind fully** attending to our internal experiences. If we are noticing the breath, it is the breath that has all of our attention. If we are eating an apple, we are paying full attention to all of the sensations involved – the taste of the apple, the crunchiness, the feeling of the juice in the mouth, the smell, and so on.

Practising mindfulness – particularly in relation to our breathing – allows us to become the observer of this mind and body we live in. Being the observer, we are in a position to make choices. Through the practise of mindfulness, we (and our children) learn that a choice point occurs each moment in our lives. Being mindful helps us to recognise which particular choice can be most helpful to ourselves and to others around them. Seeing clearly in this way grants us the freedom to choose our own life path.

It has been shown in university research that when children and adolescents practise being mindful, they can be helped with even difficult problems (eg. Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, anti social behaviour, school refusal, anxiety and depression).

Children follow the example of the teachers and parents. The more we can be the example of living the five Human Values of Love, Truth, Peace, Right Conduct and Non-violence, the easier it will be for the young ones to discover these fine qualities within themselves.

