

A Short and Simple Book for the Why's



By
Gail Hugman

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This book is dedicated to all those young lives who
have enriched my own and taught me so much,
to all the lovely teachers who believe in the
uniqueness of each child
and to all those yet to be born.

About the author



'A Short and Simple Book for the Why's' draws on Gail's teaching and life experience. She says it took her at least 15 years to understand how children work and think and then another 15 years to work out what they need at core to help them excel. Parents do not have this time advantage. As soon as a child is born, they have to 'hit the ground running' and many are dogged by doubt and worry about the way they are raising their children. Gail's books hold the lessons, tips, reasons and activities that she has found helpful in encouraging children's core development and causing them to excel, giving them a sense of purpose, satisfaction and responsibility. Happy at core.

Gail started teaching in 1974. It was pre-National Curriculum. Teachers were very much left to their

own initiative and devices in the Social Priority Area school where her teaching began in Haringey.

Gail's first classroom had 200 bibles, a stock cupboard which was so full of scrap you could barely move and little else apart from 38 mixed ability year 6 children. This was where she feels her teacher training *really* began. Gail learned very quickly to be resourceful and creative within the dynamic of teaching.

Now forty years later, the whole world of education - and society - has changed beyond recognition. The National Curriculum has set down expectations which increase almost annually; the world wide web is an intricate part of every classroom and teaching methods; there is far more testing than before; children have access to a much greater range of activities and resources than ever and teachers look to parents for motivating and reinforcing behaviour in their children.

This rapid period of change in human behaviour and history, poses a number of complex questions. Why do we teach what we teach? What should we be teaching a developing child, about themselves and their future? Why do so many children disengage from school, lack confidence or have low self-esteem? Why do we have challenges with behaviour and attitude if the young have 'inquiring minds and a thirst of knowledge?'

In the first 30 years, Gail's experience included class teaching, covering the full primary range; she ran a unit for disruptive pupils in Islington for 3 years; worked with children with special needs and held various senior management roles working primarily in inner city schools. Gail's extensive experience in schools includes teaching for one year in the USA and being an observer in schools in Israel, South Africa and Mauritius. (From this she reports that playgrounds sound the same wherever you are in the world!) This, coupled with her more recent private work with children in their homes has given her a unique perspective on the real issues faced by young learners and their parents.

In 2005, Gail created Lessons Alive as a teaching and development service. From her extensive research, experience and observation, Gail creates new and insightful workshops for parents and teachers on topics such as:

- Listening
- Concentration
- Comprehension
- Organisation
- Motivation
- Homework

helping them to motivate, inspire and empower children to take responsibility and engage in a meaningful and purposeful way in their education

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and development. Birth to puberty is the foundation building phase of life and Gail believes it is therefore crucial that parents, teachers and children appreciate as fully as they can the processes involved during this period; how to set expectations and how to do the best job they can for each child.

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Preface

This is a revision of the original 'A Short and Simple Book for the Why's' written in 2001.

Since then, I have established my teaching service, Lessons Alive, which continues to maintain the very highest standard of bespoke 1-2-1 teaching for children up to the age of 11 years.

Using creative teaching and incorporating the messages in this book as well as discovering more, I have met, taught and re-aligned some of the most demanding children leading them to happiness and satisfaction in themselves and independence and success in their schooling.

I believe the world is in a state of change – this is not necessarily 'a bad thing'. We are built to be adaptable and creative and if we strengthen the inner core and educate children about themselves, their purpose and how things work, I believe we can help them stay true to themselves. Showing the children how to develop skills and working with them on the messages in this book will help them remain intact as they grow. As a teacher, I know from experience that these messages form the missing link between motivation and learning and can be a powerful factor in how well a child concentrates, listens, takes responsibility, behaves and performs in school and in life.

Introduction

This writing is intended to offer a way for teachers, parents and carers of primary aged children to perhaps improve the quality of life not only for themselves but more importantly for the children whose futures they are helping to build.

After twenty seven years experience as a teacher – mostly, but not all, in primary education – and twenty five years intensive, deep study of human and self development and psychology, I have come to understand that many of the questions children want to ask they cannot verbalise and so they cry out in their behaviour. Punishment and the increasing use of behaviour management drugs such as Ritalin are clearly not the answer and we are facing an unprecedented crisis in our schools which can only get frighteningly worse.

Parents and colleagues throughout the years have admired my results with children not simply because of their academic achievement but also because of the way the children developed in confidence and stature. Often I have been asked about my classroom organisation, but I do not think that is where the answer lies.

I believe that part of my success lay in the fact that I did not expect children to necessarily realise things that are obvious to me as an adult. They are **learning**

to think, **learning** to draw conclusions, **learning** to weigh evidence and when each child walked through my classroom door, what I was looking at was not just 'another kid', but a young representative of the highest form of intelligent organic life on this planet, trying to assemble itself as best it could and with a most brilliant opportunity and journey ahead of it. I wanted to help that in any way that I could and felt extremely privileged to be in that position.

I have now come to believe that there are fundamental truths and a few simple facts that each child needs to be given in order to properly equip them for their journey through life. This book attempts to put forward a few of these simple truths and if these are given to children, I believe the increasing distress and self destructive behaviour we see erupting in our schools and society in general, may be quelled. I hope that it is not too late, though for some, I fear it may be.

Therefore, if you agree with what you read, next time you are with children and the opportunity presents itself, please, using a little care and sensitivity; pass on some of these messages. They are simple and effective, can only be of benefit in boosting self-esteem, standards and values and the children will love and thank you for making some sense out of the chaos in which they find themselves.

You are the most
intelligent,
talented
and
versatile form of life on
this planet.

You can be very proud of this and let it show
in
your behaviour
by,
for example,
keeping
yourself clean and tidy
and
by helping
others whenever you are
able to do so.

On the next page is a summary of the evidence to
support natural human versatility – making this
conscious in children helps them feel accomplished and
confidence begins to grow.