

## What is Journeywork?

### Extract from:

Beattie J, Dowd S, Leeder-Morale S, George C, Henderson J, Carne A. (August, 2010). *Releasing children's shining potential. Improving the social and emotional wellbeing of primary school children through Journeywork. Journey into Schools Report.* Flinders Human Behaviour and Health Research Unit, Flinders University of South Australia and Jill Beattie Performance Enhancement Consultancy, Victoria.

### Journeywork: Approach and theoretical framework<sup>[1]</sup>

Journeywork is a process of guided introspection and is used with both adults and children<sup>[2, 3]</sup>. Journeywork is suitable for children and their parents, other family members, as well as for teachers themselves. Like cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and its many techniques and strategies<sup>[4]</sup>, Journeywork acknowledges that there is a relationship between thought, emotion and behaviour. Journeywork differs from CBT and has more in common with other mindfulness-based therapies such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)<sup>[5, 6]</sup> in that it accepts and allows thoughts that arise in the mind, without evaluating, or judging them, or trying to reduce them; a thought is simply that, a thought (words in the mind) – it may not be concrete reality or absolute truth. By noticing that the mind is continually making commentary, the person can acknowledge thoughts, seeing them for what they are without judgement; then they are free to release the thought – to 'let it go'. As emotions arise, they are accepted, and through guided introspection, the person can identify where in the body these are felt. The person is guided through these layers of emotion, for example hurt, sadness, scared, until they reach a 'core' state or peaceful emotion and quiet within. During guided introspection, stored or repressed memories may be accessed, resolved, understood and let go. People find their own inner stillness and wisdom, allowing them to work through their own challenges<sup>[2, 3, 7-10]</sup>. Journeywork facilitates people tapping into a knowing and resilience deep inside themselves, and draws on mindfulness, imagery and forgiveness techniques to free themselves from self-limiting thoughts, the residual effects of painful memories, unhelpful emotions and uncomfortable or painful bodily experiences.

Mindfulness is widely accepted today, and can be described as paying attention with flexibility, openness, and curiosity<sup>[11, 12]</sup>. Mindfulness is an awareness process, not a thinking process. Mindfulness can be used as an approach to living our daily lives, and also practiced as an approach to meditation (mindfulness meditation). Being aware and paying attention to what you are experiencing in the present moment is about focusing attention on what you are doing right now, leaving little room for worry about the past or future, or getting caught up in thoughts. Mindfulness cultivates a way of being in a harmonious relationship with what is, whether that's nagging thoughts, uncomfortable feelings, external stressors, or physical discomfort. Through fully opening to what is present in your internal experience and being curious about it, rather than resisting or pushing it away, a deep acceptance and ability to rest more fully in the present moment is cultivated<sup>[13]</sup>. In mindfulness meditation for example, the person can be resting in awareness itself, often reaching a thought-free stillness<sup>[3]</sup>. Mindfulness can be used to increase our awareness of how we feel, think, and react – it can assist in the development of emotional resilience.

Imagery entails the use of imagination to review and change perceptions of events, surroundings, and experiences. During imagery, visualisation, as well as the formation or recall of smells, tastes and internal feelings are engaged. Imagery occurs in all people, and especially in children. Guided imagery techniques have been used in adults, for example to improve breast cancer survivors' quality of life<sup>[14]</sup>, to facilitate relaxation and insight in people with diabetes<sup>[15]</sup>, and in the emergency department to assist in decreasing pain and reduce anxiety<sup>[16]</sup>. Guided imagery techniques used in children have been shown to be effective in situations such as separation anxiety, test anxiety, ADHD, abuse, low self-esteem, and exposure to trauma, violence, and loss<sup>[9]</sup>. Guided imagery is also used as an additional mind-body modality in current health care systems to increase children's coping skills for example in releasing and reducing anxiety, stress and fear associated with illness and hospitalisation<sup>[17]</sup>, reducing pain<sup>[18]</sup>, migraine headaches<sup>[8]</sup>, and in children with asthma<sup>[19]</sup>. Following guided imagery sessions, children experience increased self-esteem and confidence because they can gain some control over the complicated feelings arising from everyday living<sup>[8]</sup>. The approach to guided imagery in Journeywork moves beyond traditional guided imagery processes, in that the person is also guided to create their own 'scripts'; providing an opportunity for the adult or child to find their own resolution to their problem by identifying what it is that they need to reach a state of wellbeing.

It is widely recognised that as people go about their daily lives, they experience a variety of environmental, physical and emotional stressors that affect their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. While short-term stress can be motivating, for example triggering a child into studying for a spelling test, prolonged stress can lead to physical illness and/or emotional change such as anxiety and depression. The theoretical underpinnings of Journeywork are based on research findings from the field of psychoneuroimmunology (PNI). It is not within the scope of this report to elaborate on this complex field; however, evidence has demonstrated that our brain and nervous system, endocrine glands and immune system are in constant communication via a series of neuro-chemical responses<sup>[20]</sup>. PNI evidence suggests that thought, emotion and behaviour affect body systems at the cellular level – this is referred to as mind-body communication<sup>[21-24]</sup>. PNI operates from the premise that the mind and body are indivisible. Journeywork supports the theory that through mindfulness and imagery, people can modify the images they produce, and as imagery changes, so do emotions and behaviours, as well as changes in physiology and biochemistry, resulting in reduced stress and improved mood<sup>[14]</sup>. Journeywork assists people; children in this case, to get access to the deeper level of mind-body interaction, to uncover emotional (i.e. neuro-chemical) blocks, and through awareness, feeling and imagery processes, impact on the neuro-chemical response to release these emotional blocks that are often the root cause of the behaviours that parents and teachers so often find challenging<sup>[2]</sup>.

Journey Programs and Journeywork provide practical, user-friendly tools in the form of step-by-step processes, guided meditations, imagery, therapeutic metaphors (specially designed healing stories/story intended to create change), group exercises, play and activities (drawing, role play, journaling), to facilitate the release and expression of children's shining potential. *The Journey Classroom Process* by Brandon Bays for example, is a simple classroom process of guided introspection which takes each child on a guided tour within themselves. On this very special adventure of discovery they uncover a time where they experienced an upsetting issue or past trauma for example when then felt scared, lonely or sad, and are guided to discover the reality of that time for themselves, thereby creating empathy and understanding of the given situation(s). They imagine resources such as being able to tell an adult, finding courage to speak etc, that will enable them to see, hear

and feel things differently. By releasing stored emotional blocks children are able to balance their previous perception of what happened, leaving them free of the negative experiences and emotions of the past, and free to utilise their new resources in the future, thereby facilitating a change in their behaviour. Thus, the child's skill level in dealing with issues such as bullying, lack of self confidence, poor social skills, and defiant or unsociable classroom behaviour can be improved.

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