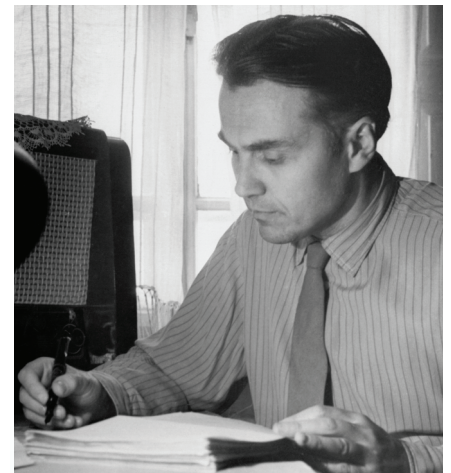


# Sukhomlinsky News



## Educating goodwill

*In this issue we are continuing the translation of Sukhomlinsky's One Hundred Pieces of Advice for Teachers. This month's extract is the fourth piece of advice, and discusses the education of goodwill. The newsletter also includes a brief report on a new article about similarities between Sukhomlinsky's approach and that of Rudolph Steiner. As usual, we have translated some of Sukhomlinsky's miniature stories for children*

*Best wishes,*

*Alan Cockerill*

## ***Sukhomlinsky and Steiner: new online article***

The online journal *Research on Steiner Education (RoSE)* has published an article by Alan Cockerill that notes some similarities between Sukhomlinsky's approach to education and practices common in Steiner schools.

The article suggests the following similarities between the educational approaches practiced by Sukhomlinsky and those practiced in Steiner schools:

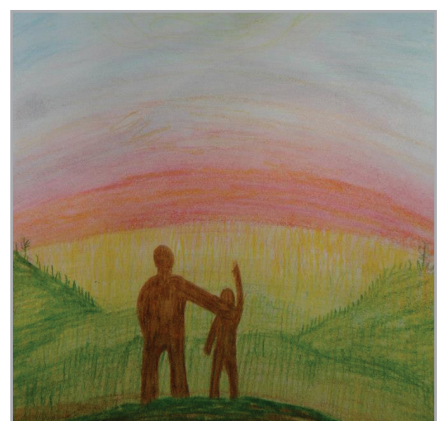
1. A view of education as a holistic endeavour that should involve not only the head, but also the heart and the hands.
2. A view of the teacher as a mentor, and the need for schools to nurture the development of their staff as well as their students. This is combined with a strong sense of collegial responsibility for every child.
3. The need to study students' lives in detail in order to understand them and support their development. The regular practice of examining individual students at staff seminars, in a similar fashion to the child studies that take place at meetings of the college of teachers in Steiner schools, and the maintenance of close contact with students' families.
4. A recognition that, especially in the primary school, children should be engaged at an emotional level, through stories, imaginative play, artistic creativity and physical activities, and that learning should be inspired by a sense of wonder.
5. A strong connection with nature and a strong emphasis on aesthetic development.
6. The linking of early literacy with oral language development and with drawing.

The full text of the article can be viewed at:

<http://www.rosejournal.com/index.php/rose/article/viewFile/331/315> .

Information on the journal, including the full text of the current and previous issues of the journal, can be found at:

<http://www.rosejournal.com/index.php/rose> .



# Goodwill

The fourth chapter in Sukhomlinsky's collection of advice for young teachers is about mutual goodwill between teacher and students, and the education of goodwill.

This piece of advice relates to the ABC of educational practice in general, and to the emotional side of educational practice in particular. To have goodwill means to relate to each child as if they were your own son or daughter. A child is struggling and falling behind in their studies; a child has difficulty studying at the same level as their classmates; a child or adolescent commits an act of vandalism—all of these things are misfortunes... How would you behave if your own child met with such misfortune? You would hardly be likely to suggest such measures as exclusion from school, or lowering their marks for behaviour... Of course an intelligent mother or father would see the sense in such measures, but their heart would prompt them to do whatever was necessary to save their child, and would realise that punishment alone will not save a person. Their heart would demand something that would morally cleanse their child's soul and create beauty there; that would make them a true human being. This heartfelt wish is what we mean by goodwill. A teacher's goodwill is expressed first and foremost in an ability to prevent a child from going down the wrong path, to protect them from evil. To wish goodness in a motherly or fatherly way means to protect a child's heart from evil, to bar its way. If your heart feels such a deep concern for each child, if each child is not just a line in your mark book, but a living human being, a personality, a unique human world, then you may be sure that your heart will tell you what needs to be done if a child is in trouble. Such heartfelt impulses are goodwill in action.

It is easy to say: have goodwill. But goodwill has to be educated, and this state of mind can only be educated when it is mutual; that is to say, when the teacher wishes the student well, and the student wishes the teacher well. This is a most subtle aspect of school harmony. Mutual goodwill is educated in an atmosphere of emotional refinement. I always considered it one of my most important educational objectives to teach children to apprehend the world with their hearts, to feel with their hearts the emotional states of other people—

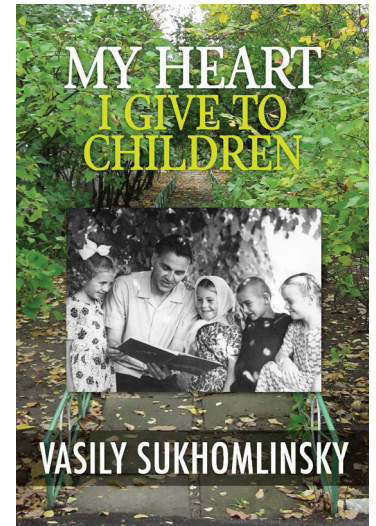
not only those who are near and dear, but any compatriot they encounter on their life's journey. To teach little children to sense when someone they meet is heavy of heart, when they have met with misfortune, is one of the most subtle educational skills. I want to share an experience of how a teacher can educate this ability in themselves, how to educate emotional refinement in children, and how this refinement can provide a foundation for mutual goodwill.

It is spring, and in a field neighbouring the school women from the collective farm are working on a crop of beet. Each morning, as soon as the sun's red disc peeps above the horizon, the women walk to the field one after another. At this time my grade one students also come to the school grounds. We meet the sunrise in our Nook of Beauty, in a green classroom under the open sky. This is a large green shelter covered in grape vines that protect us from the heat of the sun. At a distance of only two or three metres from us the farm women pass by. We can see their eyes and every feature of their faces. If we sit very quietly, holding our breath, we can even hear their breathing. They do not see us. I teach the children: look into the women's eyes, learn to feel and understand what each of them is feeling—a serene peace of mind or the dark cloud of sadness. Each day we observe the same women, young and old. We are already accustomed to the way that one young woman, with blue eyes and thick plaits of red hair, a mother of two young children, always sings one song or another on the way to work. She often stops on a rise in the path, gazes at the blue sky, listens to the song of a lark, and smiles. "She is enjoying life, she is happy," I tell the children, and at the sight of human happiness we all experience joy as well. Another woman, as she turns onto the narrow path to the field, picks a few wildflowers each day, and we read in her eyes thoughts of something bright and joyful. Two young women approach a spring, flowing into the meadow, and look into it as into a mirror, rearranging their hair and admiring their beauty. Look children, in their eyes you can see

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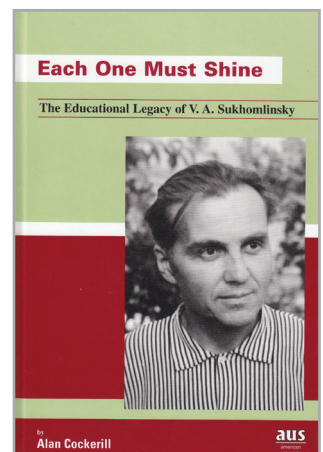
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a bright dream of the future. And that dark-eyed woman has not only picked some wildflowers, but has sat down on a stump and woven a garland from them. Of course such garlands are only made for little girls. Look into her eyes, children, and you will see the warmth of a mother's love. But look carefully, children, at that grey-haired lady. Look at her eyes, how sad they are. There is so much grief and longing in her eyes. Now she has stopped and looked at the sun, and at the village with its green orchards, and she sighs deeply. She is not following the path to the field, but is taking the road into the centre of the village. She picks wildflowers along the side of the road, and takes them to the war memorial, honouring those who died here in a battle with the fascists. She lays her flowers on a grave and weeps.

Children this is the greatest grief in the world: a mother's grief. Now she is coming back past our Nook of Beauty. Look carefully, once more, at her eyes. The children sit, holding their breath. Not a leaf stirs, not a blade of grass. Everything around us is quiet. Now we can see the sad eyes of a mother. We hear her sigh deeply as she turns and looks once more towards the war memorial...

No words or explanations are necessary for the children to see that the mother has lost a son during the war. I tell the children about this mother's great misfortune: she has lost both sons and her husband...

One after another there are new lessons in coming to know people with our hearts. We set off towards the field and sit by the side of the road, and from time to time people pass us by.

Studying people's faces, looking into their eyes, the children feel their inner worlds. One experiences the joy of existence, another dreams of something exciting and dear

to them, a third appears just tired and indifferent—no, that person is not feeling well...; a fourth person appears preoccupied—it may be just some insignificant, everyday concerns, or it may be anxiety about something important. Then we see an old man who is experiencing real grief. The children sit up with alarm. They have never seen such grief in human eyes. 'He is suffering... He is in real trouble... We need to ask him how we can help,' the children say.

They approach the old man and ask, 'How can we help?' The old man places a gentle hand on the blonde head of my little Zina, sighs deeply, and says, 'You cannot help me, my dear children... My wife has just died in hospital... I'm going to get a car... We lived together for forty-seven years... You cannot help me, but I do feel a bit better, knowing that you are good people...'

This is how emotional refinement is educated. It is a very subtle, lengthy process, demanding great tact, attention, thought, and a deep knowledge of the inner world of each child.

Children who learn to apprehend another person with their heart develop goodwill. But it is very important also that they are receptive to the goodwill of the teacher, that they sense it, and repay kindness with kindness. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of this in educational work. A child's soul must be prepared for an education that is transmitted via affection, kindness and heartfelt warmth. You have probably heard teachers' complaints (and perhaps you have had the same thought yourself): 'What can you do? The child does not understand a kind word... I come to him with affection and an open heart, but he heartlessly mocks my kindness.' Unfortunately this does happen, and the roots of such coarseness of heart lie in a lack

of emotional education, in the fact that from the earliest years the child was not taught how to sense another person with their heart.

If you do teach your students how to feel another's feelings with their hearts, your goodwill is capable of performing miracles. To what is the teacher's goodwill directed? First and foremost, at a student's intellectual work. To have goodwill in intellectual work means to understand all of a child's strengths and weaknesses, to sense subtle aspects of their intellectual work. Your goodwill acts as a powerful educational force as long as your pupil wants to be good, as long as they continue to develop a sense of self-worth. In educational work many things are closely connected: children's success in study is reflected in the richness of their spiritual lives, and in a teacher's health. If a student strives to be good, and wants to study well, that already provides half the joy of your work.

Children's sense of self-worth depends on their success in study, and their success in study depends on the goodwill of the teacher, and of course, on how well the child's soul is prepared to be receptive to the teacher's goodwill. Remember that children's success in study, their feelings of self-worth, provide the spark of joy in your creative work, dear colleague. As long as that spark is alive, you will feel the richness of your spiritual life, and the joy of creativity.

But now the question arises, how do you ensure that your students constantly enjoy success in their study? How do you cultivate their feelings of self-worth? How do you inspire them with that enormous spiritual energy: the desire to be good? This leads us to the next piece of advice, which discusses the fact that there is no such thing as an abstract student.





## Stories for Children

### A little bit of summer

Five year old Larissa got up early, at dawn, and went to the orchard. Her mother had told her that it was time to say good-bye to autumn: soon snow would fall and blizzards would swirl. At night Grandpa Frost would outside their windows, and breathe on them with his icy breath, and the glass would be covered in patterns.

The orchard was empty and quiet. All the leaves had long fallen from the trees. The wind rocked the bare branches.

Under the trees dry leaves lay and quietly rustled underfoot.

Suddenly among the grey leaves Larisa saw a big pink apple. It must have fallen recently, because it was whole and fresh.

The girl was overjoyed. She picked up the apple, looked around her, and felt that the orchard had become brighter and cosier. Perhaps Larissa only imagined it, or perhaps it was real, but she thought she heard a bumblebee droning.

Larisa took the apple home. She put the pink apple on the table and said to her mother, 'This is a little bit of summer. Lets leave it here until spring.' Her mother smiled.

From that day on the apple lay on the table: big, pink and fresh, as if it had just fallen from the tree.

Outside there was frost, and the blizzard howled, but it lay on the table. Whoever came into the hut would see the apple and smile.

### I saw you again, sunbeam!

The sun's fiery disc touched the horizon. Little Seryozha watched the sun set. He did not want to part with it.

Already half the sun was hidden below the horizon, then just a thin band of fire, then the last sparks of sunlight flashed and went out.

Seryozha raised his head and looked at a tall poplar. The top of the tree was lit up with purple light.

'From there, the sun is still visible,' thought Seryozha. 'You might be hiding from me, sunbeam, but I am going to see you again.'

The boy quickly scrambled up the tree trunk, and when he reached the top his eyes lit up with joy. Once again he could see a thin band of the sun's disc above the horizon. The band sunk lower and lower, melted, and again the last sparks flashed and went out. 'I did see you again though, Sunbeam!' shouted the boy.

### A letter to dad

Three year old Zina's father fell ill. He was taken to hospital. The girl was sad. There was a heavy January frost. Mum was getting ready to visit dad in hospital. Zina also wanted to see her father, but mum would not let her: the frost was too severe.

'Write a letter to dad, and I will give it to him,' said mum.

Zina did not know how to write, but she could draw, and she drew her father a letter.

She drew herself in bed with her eyes wide open. That meant: 'Dad, I can't sleep at night. I keep thinking about you.'

Then she drew herself in the forest with her father. There were trees all around, and she was collecting flowers with her father. That meant: 'Dad, come home soon, so we can go the forest together again, and collect flowers.'

Then she wanted to write: 'Dad, I love you very, very much.' Zina thought for a long time about how to draw that. Then she drew the sun. That meant: 'I love you very, very much.'

