

UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

Eastern Cape Education Department

## ***Distance Education Project***

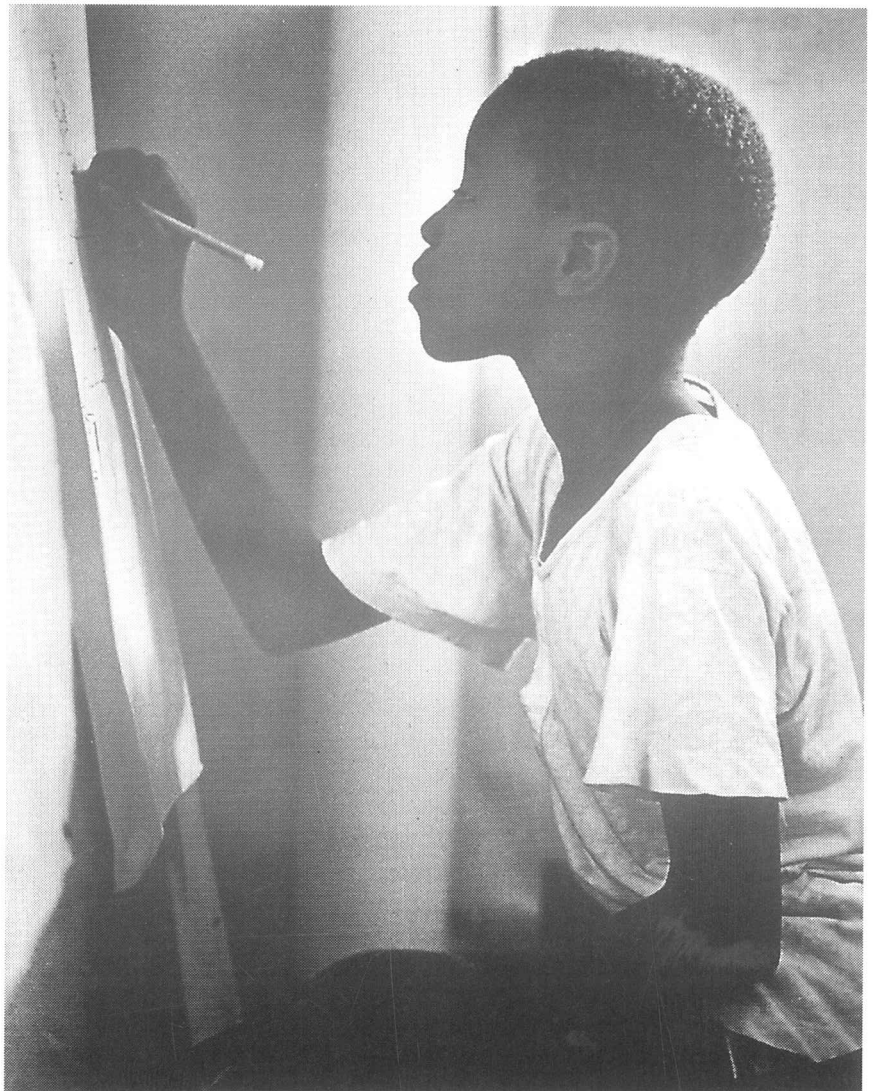
*Core Education Studies Course*

*Learning about Learning*

*6th Umthamo*

# ***What's the difference that makes the difference?***

Pilot Edition  
May 2001



***Emotionally secure, confident, creative***

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## Introduction

This is the sixth umthamo in the Learning about Learning strand of the Core Education Course. The focus of this umthamo is **emotional intelligence** and the part it plays in our learning. You will remember that in Umthamo 26 you read about Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory. More recently, people involved in education and the well-being of learners have focused on this 'new' intelligence and its importance in learning.

You will find that as you work through the ideas and activities in this umthamo, that you will revisit ideas you first thought about in Umthamo 2 and Umthamo 10. We will look at the role that homes, families and also the school play in developing emotional intelligence.

We have included a number of Readings which come from a variety of sources. You will see that the ideas which we ask you to think about, reflect on and work with are being discussed in the popular media (newspapers and magazines), as well as in academic texts (books and journals). These Readings are important, and support the activities you are required to carry out.

Throughout the umthamo we ask you to **reflect on** and record your reflections in your Journal. These opportunities to reflect and write in your Journal are important. As we mentioned in Umthamo 41, in Year 4 of the course you will be expected to use your Journal to provide evidence of your professional development and growth. We would urge you to write in it regularly and often.



The **Key Activity** in this umthamo is in several **parts**. There is a part in each Unit. And at the face-to-face session where the umthamo is concluded, you will need to hand in something from **each** part for your umkhwezeli to appraise.

Unit 1 considers why some people seem to be strong emotionally, and other people are not so strong. We ask the question, *What makes the difference?* and introduce the notion of **resilience**. You will interview somebody you know who is resilient for Part A of the **Key Activity**.

In Unit 2 we look at how families, homes and other significant (important) people can grow and support **resilience** in young people. For Part B of the **Key Activity** you will write a report on an activity you set your learners to identify somebody important to them, who has helped them develop **resilience**.

Unit 3 focuses on how schools can help learners develop this important attribute, so that they are able to cope with

the difficulties which occur in life. Part C of the **Key Activity** requires you to draft a plan for a school policy at your school which helps develop and extend your learners' **resilience**. This is taken further in Unit 4.

Unit 4 looks at the role of emotional intelligence and the future. All over the world, teachers and schools are realising the importance of helping learners to develop emotional literacy to enable them to deal with problems in their daily lives. You will see that one way you can do this is by working together with colleagues at your school to create the kind of nurturing environment so necessary for the education of the emotions. The last part of the **Key Activity** involves writing what you and your school can do to make a **positive difference** to learners living in child-headed homes.

### Intended outcomes

When you have worked through this umthamo, you will have

- read and reflected on the importance of developing emotional intelligence in learners
- thought about what makes people resilient
- thought about how teachers can make a positive difference
- tried some activities with your learners which help them develop their emotional literacy
- drawn up a draft school policy for your school to grow and develop your learners' emotional literacy.



15 *Werkersvrouw met slapende jongeling*, 1932 • *Woman worker with sleeping boy*  
litografie/lithograph



## Unit 1 – What makes the difference?



*People are all different, but what is the difference that makes a difference?*

In Umthamo 10 we asked you to think about your own life and the people that encouraged you. There we said “sometimes one person’s loving trust can make all the difference” (p35). In this umthamo you will begin to explore what makes a difference for learners, and how you can become and/or further develop yourself as a teacher who makes a positive difference.



Sometimes teachers feel very discouraged and wonder whether all their best efforts make any difference at all. When researchers and Journalists speak to adults who are famous or successful, they often discover that these people mention a teacher who made a real difference to their lives. Sometimes it was not something the teacher did, but was more to do with the kind of person the teacher was. It was the special qualities of the teacher that inspired the child or teenager to strive to rise above their difficulties and to make a good life for themselves and others.

Nelson Mandela spoke as follows about the importance of developing these qualities at a conference held in February, 2001 in Cape Town. The conference was called “Values, Education and Democracy”.



Our capacity to rise above differences, discuss and settle conflicts of interest, and peacefully establish a democratic system, despite the well-known and extraordinary inequality of our people, captured the imagination of the world. We were admired for having social qualities that took us out of and beyond apartheid.

Core social values such as justice, rule by constitution, peaceful resolution of conflict and inter-racial harmony are at the heart of the institutions we have created.

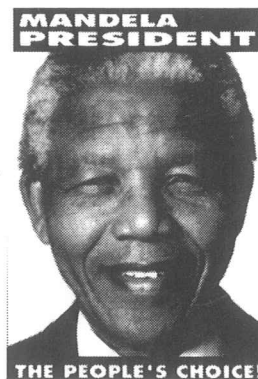
We cannot take these values for granted. We cannot assume that because we conducted our struggle on the foundations of these values, continued adherence to them will be automatic in changed circumstances.

Adults have to be reminded of their importance, and children must acquire them in our homes, schools and churches. Socialisation is the primary vehicle of human learning. In simple terms, it is about our younger generation making values a part of themselves and

their innermost being.

One of the most powerful ways for children and young adults to acquire values is to see individuals they admire and respect exemplify those values in their own being and conduct. Parents and educators who say one thing and do another send mixed messages to those in their care, who then learn not to trust them.

The question of leadership generally, and in the educational sphere particularly is therefore of vital importance. There is



a passage in the Values, Education and Democracy Report that reads as follows:

"Teachers and administrators must be leaders and set the example. Children learn by example, consciously or unconsciously. What parents or teachers do is much more important than what they say they do. If teachers do not want learners to be absent they must not be absent. If teachers expect homework to be completed, they must complete their preparation. As the dedicated teacher

knows a relationship of trust and fellowship develops when educators and learners become partners in the vocation of schooling."

I would like to see the various participants in the educational sector take this powerful moral injunction seriously. The development of the leadership potential of our education community, instilling these values in all spheres is one of the greatest challenges and opportunities of our time.

I have in my own way tried to be of some

help in education by finding businesses and donors to build schools. But, as you well know, schools are living communities of people, young and old, and not buildings and infrastructure only, important as these may be.

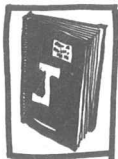
We are all partners therefore with everyone having something worthwhile to contribute. We must focus our minds on how to convert our core social values into educational practice.

*Edited version of an article that appeared in Cape Times*

A vocation is a calling to a certain career.



An injunction is a command.



### Activity 1

After reading Madiba's words above, reflect on the questions below and record your responses in your Journal under the heading, *First thoughts on teachers who make a difference – my personal experience*.

- Can you think of a teacher who made a difference to you?
- What did they do? How did they do it?
- What was it about them that inspired or helped you?
- How did they influence you and your life?
- How would your life have been different if they had not been a part of your life?

Follow up your reflection by doing one or both of the following activities.

### Option 1

Write a list of words and phrases that describe the person who made a difference in your life. Underline any that are similar to what Madiba mentioned in his speech.

### Option 2

Write a short letter to the person, describing the effect they had on your life and thanking them for what they did. When you have finished, decide whether you would like to give or post the letter to the person.

*If you can't think of a teacher, think of any other person who was significant for you (preferably not someone in your family). It could be a preacher, a shop-keeper, a neighbour, anyone you learnt from informally.*

*If the person is late, you could give this letter to a relative who may appreciate such a remembrance.*



## Introducing resilience

In Umthamo 10 on page 33, you read that there are many different forms of learning. Some examples given were:



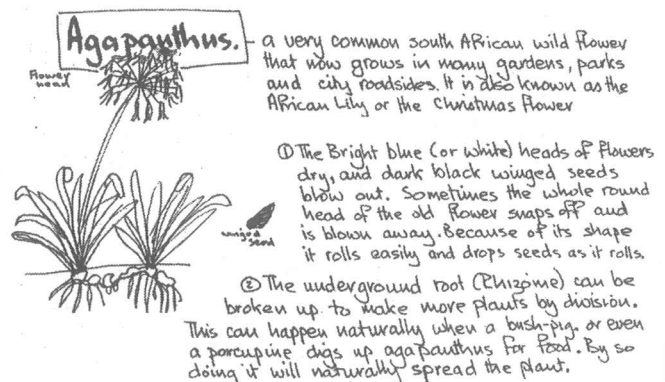
- social learning – to show interest in my classmates, to form friendships, to help one another, etc
- emotional learning – to develop a strong self-image, to become confident, to feel safe and able to explore new ideas/skills, to be sensitive to another person's feelings, etc
- cognitive learning – to imagine, to plan, to formulate questions, to problem solve, to talk about thoughts, etc
- moral learning – to identify and talk about personal values, to identify values and behaviour that I admire, to respect other opinions, to be a responsible citizen, to want to contribute to the collective good, etc
- creative learning – to express ideas and feelings in different ways through dance, music, art, talk, writing, etc.

You may have noticed that Madiba said in his speech "Socialization is the primary vehicle of human learning". In this umthamo we will be exploring learning that helps learners develop **emotionally, socially, and morally**. We will highlight the seminal role that educators play when they form relationships "of trust and fellowship" with their learners. You will be introduced to ideas about **emotional intelligence (EQ)**.

Developing **EQ** is one of the most important tasks of growing up. We become mature adults by learning and growing from our experiences. As we learn from our experiences we become emotionally fit and are more and more able to keep ourselves moving through all the ups and downs that life can bring. This emotional fitness is also called **resilience**.

## The resilience of Eastern Cape plants

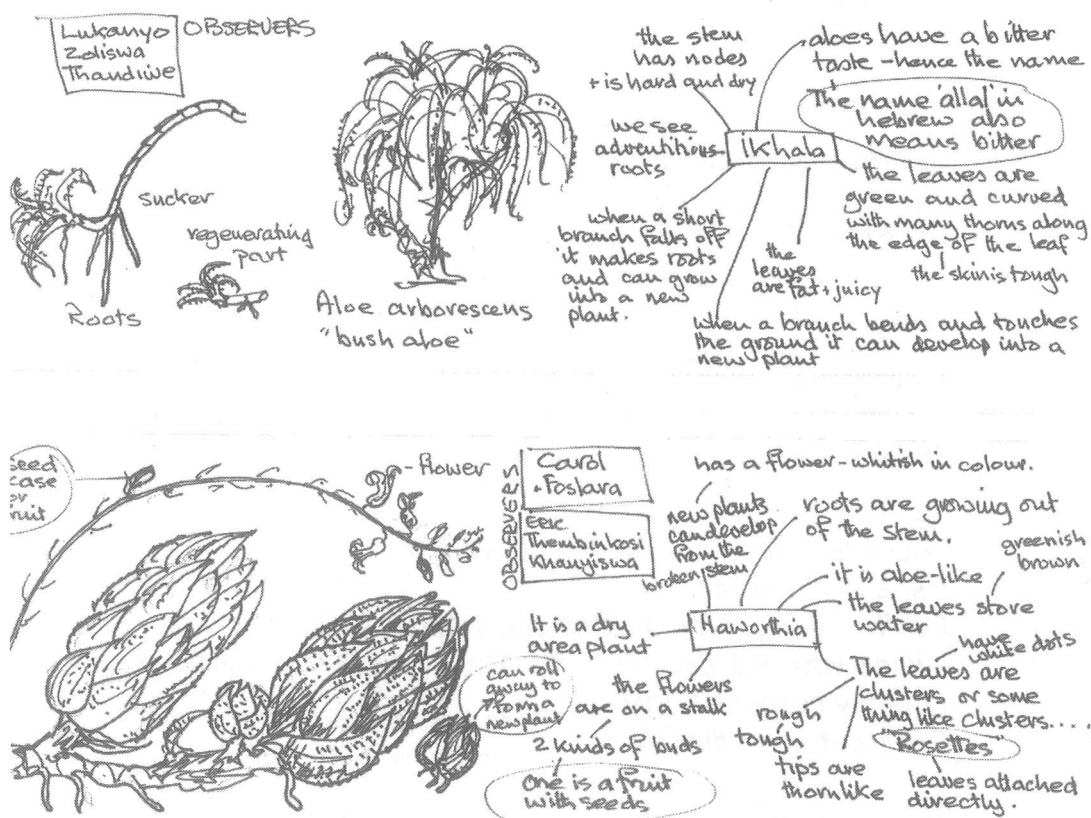
The conditions of the Eastern Cape can vary a great deal, and the plants have adapted to survive a range of difficulties. This means that many plants of the Eastern Cape are very resilient and tough, and can survive despite difficulties. Think of how tough and hardy the Aloe (*iKhala*) is, and the Euphorbia (*uMhlontlo*). Many Eastern Cape plants have been grown successfully by people all over the world. Geraniums, Agapanthus, Strelitzia, Arum Lilies, Aloes, and Cycads, to name but a few.



You can look at almost any Eastern Cape plant and work out the story of how it is adapted to survive the bad times and thrive in the good times. They protect themselves from many dangers in many ways. Some are hairy, or waxy. Many are thorny. Lots have tough thick dry skin, and most have special ways to store or keep water and food. Some survive bad conditions by lying dormant (resting), ready to burst into green live and thrive when the conditions improve.

The Valley Bushveld will be dealt with in more detail in the next umthamo, number 43. Something to look forward to!!

These resilient plants often have more than one way of reproducing, and don't just rely on seeds. If bits break off, or are knocked off, they regenerate and grow in new places. Many have parts that are cylindrical, or roundish, so that they can roll easily to a new spot. The part eventually puts down new roots, and a new plant develops.



## Activity 2 - Resilient plants

Plan a learning unit in which you tell your learners the stories of resilient plants. Talk about the idea of RESILIENCE and ask them to write about or draw examples from their own lives of people who they think show the qualities of being resilient. Allow some group discussion about their stories and drawings. Collect all your learners' work and bind it into a book for your library or the reading corner in your classroom.

## **Learning from experience**

The following poem by Portia Nelson illustrates how we can learn from our experience. You will notice that at first it seems as if she is just doing the same thing over and over again. However, by the end of the poem you will notice that there is a spiral of development.

### ***Autobiography in Five Short Chapters***

***by Portia Nelson***

#### ***Chapter One***

*I walk down the street  
There is a deep hole in the pavement.  
I fall in  
I am lost .... I am helpless  
It isn't my fault.*

#### ***Chapter Two***

*I walk down the same street  
There is a deep hole in the pavement.  
I pretend I don't see it  
I fall in again  
I can't believe I am in the same place.  
But, it isn't my fault  
It still takes a long time to get out.*

#### ***Chapter Three***

*I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the pavement.  
I see it is there  
I still fall in ..... it's a habit you see  
I know where I am.  
It is my responsibility  
I get out immediately.*

#### ***Chapter Four***

*I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the pavement.  
I walk around it.*

#### ***Chapter Five***

*I walk down another street.*



Read this poem to your colleagues and to your learners. Ask them for comments which you can record in your Journal under the heading, *People's responses to the poem*. It might inspire your learners to write a similar poem in isiXhosa.

## Introducing wisdom and cleverness

Schools are places in which cleverness is usually highly prized and rewarded. "Clever" is what many learners want to be. However, we need to stop in this umthamo and think about whether there are other qualities that we might wish to help our learners develop. As you read the piece below, think about the qualities that you think learners need to develop in order to grow into mature adults.



Stephanie Vermeulen, in her book *EQ: Emotional Intelligence for Everyone*, describes 5 stages of emotional development. They are,

- acceptance
- rebellion
- transparency
- contribution
- wisdom

You will notice that these stages are both things we move through from youth to maturity but also, that whenever we face a new challenge or the unknown we spiral through these stages.

### Acceptance

When we are young or inexperienced at something, we tend to accept what we are told, and what we are told forms the foundation of our self-image. Things that are told to us over and over again are very powerful and we are likely to accept them as facts. This is why what teachers and parents say to children is so important. It also explains why saying positive things can make a difference to a child's self-image and his/her beliefs about others and the world.

Even more important is that children watch what adults do, and tend to copy what they see. Many teenagers rebel against parents who tell them not to smoke or drink when they see these same adults smoking and drinking themselves.

In order to develop emotional health, children need to see adults taking responsibility for their emotions and relating well with other people. If children are absorbing from a healthy environment, they tend to grow up healthy. If they are growing up in an unhealthy environment, there is a danger that they may grow up polluted. Developing and supporting resilience in people is one way to prevent such pollution. One of the great gifts we can give our children is hope. We do this by being motivated and excited about our lives and their lives.

Remember the story  
of Ityesi kaSiphokazi?  
What was the last  
thing to come out of  
the box?

## Rebellion

In this stage we question things and develop independence. It is like doing a review where we start to compare what we have been told with what we ourselves think and feel. This is very similar to reflection which you have been developing as a skill while working through the imithamo. "Instead of taking other people's opinions at face value we start reshaping our own character and begin exploring life for ourselves" (Vermeulen, 1999:96). For some people the gap between what they were told and what they see for themselves is very big. When this happens they may feel lost or cheated. Many adolescent rebellions are rooted in these feelings of being betrayed. Adults describe the same feelings when they have believed an employer only to discover that things are very different from what they were told, for example, during retrenchments or when a promised promotion never happens.

Going through this rebellious stage is essential to emotional development. For teachers and parents it is difficult to be patient sometimes as we are usually the targets of the rebellion. However, finding ways to tolerate the rebellion and allowing the person to work out better their own values and beliefs is a gift to them. This does not mean that we should allow ourselves to be badly treated or abused.

What happens if people never rebel?

When a teenager is growing up in difficult circumstances, they may decide not to rock the boat and continue to be the "good boy or good girl". They may then grow up not having tested their conflict-solving abilities and so may try to avoid conflicts. This could lead to them being timid or being abused. Teachers can be very important in providing opportunities for these teenagers to be challenged and to rebel without allowing them to do harm to themselves or others. Debate, classroom discussions and openly solving differences of opinion or conflict are very useful to help learners with this stage of emotional development.

What happens if people never stop rebelling?

People who are stuck in rebellion are often seen by other adults as lacking perseverance, or being unreliable. Usually they are not good at taking instructions from others and/or fail to be organised about things like paying their bills.

They often think that they are unlucky or that life is not being kind to them. Sometimes, being stuck in rebellion can cut a person off from feeling supported spiritually. They might say something like "Yes, I think God exists but I don't think He has time for me." They develop a mistrust of life itself.



**Convicted and sentenced  
for protest against  
injustices of Apartheid  
(The Guardian - 1987).**

*"If we question our  
own thoughts and be-  
haviours our growth  
is turbo-boostered"  
( Vermeulen ,  
1999:99).*

Some people make their rebellion work for them. Richard Branson, the head of Virgin, was described as follows.

He revolutionised many industries and made his rebellion work constructively for him. He didn't give in nor did he fight against anyone. Instead Branson's rebellious energy became his point of leverage. Staid competitors can't compete with his innovative ideas and he's used these successfully to work his way to the top. (Vermeulen, 1999:98)

In 1997 the work of a German artist was exhibited at the Grahamstown Festival. The artist was Käthe Kollwitz. Her father and grandfather had both given up secure middle-class academic careers to live and teach according to their Christian beliefs and convictions. Käthe adopted this independent commitment to go her own way, and live according to her inner beliefs.

After studying art in Berlin and Munich, she went to live in a working-class area of Berlin as the wife of a doctor. She was troubled and disturbed by the tragedies that she observed in that community, and made them the focus of her art. She said, "The real reason I chose from now on to depict working life almost without exception was that the subjects picked from this environment simply and unconditionally gave me what I felt to be beautiful . . . ."

Look at the etching below entitled, *Outbreak*. The woman in the foreground is urging the people to rebel. (Rembrandt van Rijn Art Foundation, 1997)



## Transparency

The more we build an understanding of how the world works, the less confusion and uncertainty we experience. The less confusion and uncertainty we experience, the less we feel overwhelmed, and the more manageable life becomes. This does not mean that we do not have challenges and difficulties to face. However, we face these challenges and difficulties with more confidence in our ability to survive them. This is why developing the ability to think about the big picture is so important.

“People in the transparency stage are emotionally robust, they can take knocks because they know how to bounce back and revive themselves” (Vermeulen, 1999:100). This ability to bounce back is a sign of resilience. You can see that resilience is not something that people develop by having stress-free lives. Rather, resilience develops as people face life’s challenges and deal with them creatively **WHILST GETTING THE APPROPRIATE SUPPORT THEY NEED**. One of the ways for teachers to play an important role in developing the learners’ resilience is in providing this appropriate support. Look at the words of the song below. They are the words of somebody at the transparency stage of emotional development.

*I can see clearly now - Johnny Nash*

*I can see clearly now, the rain has gone.  
I can see all obstacles in my way.  
Gone are the dark clouds that had me blind,  
It's going to be a bright, bright, bright sun-shiney day.  
It's going to be a bright, bright, bright sun-shiney day.  
  
I think I can make it now, the pain has gone,  
All of the bad feelings have disappeared.  
Here is that rainbow I've been praying for,  
It's going to be a bright, bright, bright sun-shiney day.  
It's going to be a bright, bright, bright sun-shiney day.*

## Contribution

This is the stage in which we can be outwardly focused and can start making a difference. We know ourselves reasonably well and have built an understanding of the world that helps us to deal with our life experiences.

If you glance back at the poem by Portia Nelson, this is the stage where you do not fall in the hole anymore, and do not blame falling in the hole on anyone else.

You have learnt from your experiences and developed some resilience. You can now pay attention to your own life and to improving the lives of others. Usually people have developed



**Pyramid of Mothers  
by Käthe Kollwitz**

a whole range of skills by which to anticipate and deal effectively with potential stressors. So, while their lives may not be easier, the impact of life's difficulties on their lives is less. They also recover more quickly.

## Wisdom

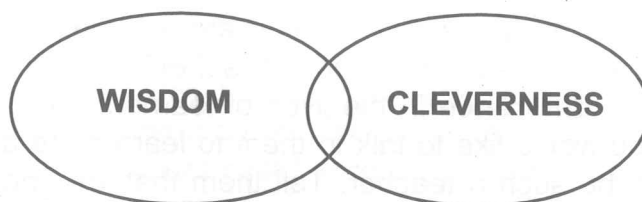
Seeing things in perspective and providing guidance are the most important activities in this stage of emotional development. In many cultures, the older person is revered. On the other hand, our modern lifestyle tends to devalue wisdom and prefers to place a high value on youthfulness. However, while the rebellion of youth provides the momentum for change, it is the stability of the elderly that provides a sense of continuity.

*"People at this stage of life know better than to dictate or prescribe. They merely share what they have learnt so that others may gain from their experiences" (Vermeulen, 1999:102).*

Knowledge + experience = wisdom

Life offers a university of experiences; and the more we learn from our own experiences or those of other people, the higher the qualification we get. (Vermeulen, 1999:103)

For years in education, we have been encouraged to strive to be clever and have been rewarded for this. The learner who gets things right is admired and when we fail, we often feel ashamed. The activity that you did in the face-to-face session where this umthamo was introduced hopefully gave you an opportunity to clarify your ideas about the similarities and differences between CLEVERNESS and WISDOM.



In Unit 2 you will have an opportunity to compare your findings with the responses from your learners.



Before you start the first part of the **Key Activity**, you may wish to review the notes you made at the face-to-face session where this umthamo was introduced.

Now that you have done some reading, some reflection and Journal writing, it's time to begin collecting your information for the **Key Activity**. Remember that the **Key Activity** for this umthamo is divided into 4 parts. Therefore you need to take care that you keep written notes as you do each part.

The first part of the **Key Activity** involves interviewing an adult. You have had experience of interviewing adults. If you still feel unsure about how to do this, go to the end of this unit where you will find some tips on interviewing.



**Key Activity (Part A) - A teacher who made a difference** (Interviewing an adult)

Interview an adult who has succeeded, despite adversity (difficult circumstances, hardship). The person you choose can be a colleague, a friend, a family member or a person from your neighbourhood or community. The interview should take about 20-30 minutes. Make sure you won't be interrupted and that you can pay full attention.

You need to plan your questions and prompts before the interview. There are some examples below. You need about 5 questions. **Record these questions in your Journal.** After the interview, tick off whether you asked them all. If you used different questions or prompts, add these to your list.

Explain to the person whom you are interviewing that you are interested in being a teacher who makes a **positive difference** in the lives of learners. Tell them that you would like to talk to them to learn more about how to be such a teacher. Tell them that you may be taking some notes during your interview. Tell them that you would like to use the information that they give you at your face-to-face sessions and in your assignments. But assure them that you will respect their privacy and maintain their integrity. One way in which you will do that is by not revealing their name to others.

The focus of the interview is to track the influence of a significant person (a teacher or somebody else who affected that person's life, ideas and behaviour), and to **reflect on** what it was about that teacher that made the difference.

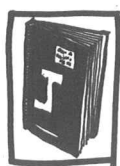
Ask about

- what s/he did that made the difference,

- what were the qualities that were admired.
- how they think their life would have turned out if they had not known the teacher they are describing.

Later on the same day, re-read the notes you made during the interview. Go over the interview in your mind, rather like watching a movie. Then write down what happened. Include a summary of what you heard from the person you interviewed. Check whether the person you interviewed mentioned anything similar to what was mentioned in Nelson Mandela's speech on pages 3 and 4. Notice and record anything that the person told you that you were surprised by.

When you have written up your interview, go back to your notes you wrote for Activity 1 on page 5. Re-read what you wrote. Then write some comments in your Journal about whether you notice any similarities between your personal experience and the experience of the person that you interviewed.



### **Report on an Interview**

I asked the woman who works at my daughter's Creche if she could remember a teacher who had influenced her life. She immediately told me about her Standard 5 Maths and Science teacher, who was also the Principal's wife. This is how her story started.

"I was still in Standard 3 when I realised this person was very special. My mother had run away from the farm with us to Fort Beaufort, leaving my father working on the farm in Middleburg. She did this because she was a victim of cruel punishment by the farmer's family for defending the truth in a court case." (transcript from tape)

She went on to explain that there was a time when she had only one school shirt. It had become very threadbare and even the patches had patches. She was losing hope at school because of the teasing and victimisation. One day she was called aside after school by this Mrs Dlepu, who gave her a parcel, and said only, "I think you need this!". The woman explained that inside the parcel was a shirt, almost new, and just the right size. The shirt was a much needed gift. But the greater gift was the fact that it showed that somebody outside the family had noticed her plight, paid attention to her problem, and quietly done something caring to help her. This encouraged her to dedicate herself to her studies.

What I learned from this part of the interview is the

importance of caring, and how much children benefit if somebody pays attention to them and their problems.

The woman at the Creche told other stories of the goodness of this woman. What impressed me was that when the person I interviewed reached Standard 5, she found that the teacher did not have a cane. She did not make the learners copy and memorise notes off the board. She put them in groups with a leader, and they had to work for themselves to find things out.

"Some children complained that she was lazy, making us do all the work. And we were frightened when the Inspectors came and we had no books of notes to show, only rough points in classwork books."

She went on to say how Mrs Dlepu was not fearful of the inspector. She told him to ask the learners for the facts as their notebooks were in their heads. "There was not one question which the Inspector asked that was not answered clearly."

Sadly Nolili did not have the means to train as a teacher after passing Matric, but she was able to do a short course on pre-school work at a centre in Grahamstown. You can see the influence of Mrs Dlepu because Nolili is always attentive to the pre-schoolers' needs, and she is the kindest helper at the Creche.

#### **Tips on interviewing**

- Aim to have a conversation with the person. Avoid your time together becoming an interrogation.
- Most of the time you will be LISTENING and prompting the person to talk more. THEY should do most of the talking. Resist being tempted to start talking about your own life and experiences.
- Start off by explaining what you would like to discuss with them so that they can focus themselves on what you are interested to find out about. If you feel very nervous or are shy, you may wish to write out the words you will say and then practice them by saying them out loud a few times BEFORE you do your interview.
- Ask the person for about 30-30 minutes of their time AND THEN STICK TO IT. Trust that whatever you hear from them in the time you are together will give you information, even if you feel you still have hundreds of things you would like to ask them.
- Write down some sample questions to use as guides. When developing your questions remember to include

open-ended questions (see below). These are more likely to lead to a conversation whereas closed questions often result in an interrogation or the interviewer talks more than the person being interviewed.

- Keep an ear open for the person starting to give you a vague or abstract speech; what you want is a story from their own experience. You can help them to do this by asking specific details, for example, “how old were you when you met this person?” and “what is the one thing you remember best about this person?”
- One of the last things to ask before you end is whether there is anything else that the person thinks you should know about the person who they have been telling you about.
- End your interview by thanking the person for their time.

### **Designing questions and prompts**

#### **Closed questions**

These are questions to which people respond with facts or with one word or short answers. For example:

- How old are you?
- Do you teach in a rural school?

Using closed questions does usually not get the conversation flowing. They are useful and necessary to get factual information, or to confirm information, for example, “*Is it correct that you have taught Grade 4 for five years?*”

#### **Open-ended questions**

These are questions that encourage the person to have a conversation. They also allow the person quite a lot of freedom to give you their thoughts and ideas. For example,

- What do you think are the most important qualities teachers need to make a positive difference?
- How can teachers make a positive difference in learners' lives?
- Please tell me about a teacher who made a positive difference in your life.

The last example is in the form of a statement rather than a question. It is designed as an invitation to the person to talk to you. Feel free to include some statements like this in your list of possible questions and prompts.



## Unit 2 – Growing and supporting resilience at home



In Unit 1 we began to explore ideas about resilience and the qualities and values that teachers can demonstrate so that they make a positive difference in the lives of learners. In Unit 2 we will be looking at how the homes that learners live in can grow or obstruct the development of resilience in learners. You will be exploring some of your ideas about families and homes, and have opportunities to investigate whether your ideas are in line with the information that your learners provide you with through the activities in this unit.

*A home that's apparently wealthy, can sometimes be impoverished when it comes to love and care.*

### So what is this thing called resilience?

Richard Sagor, in his article *Building Resiliency in Students*, raises the following questions.

*Richard Sagor is an Associate Professor in Education at Washington State University*

Why do some youths overcome seemingly insurmountable odds during childhood to become productive and happy adults? With so much against them, how do they manage not only to survive but to thrive?

What do you think about the questions that Richard Sagor asks? What is your theory about why some people manage to rise above adversity (difficult circumstances / hardship) and lead productive and happy lives?

Richard Sagor goes on to say,

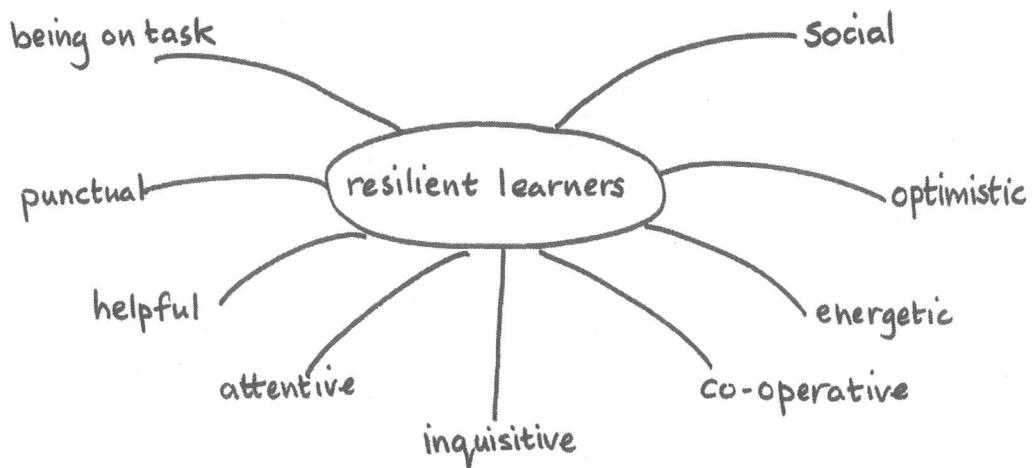
The term used to describe the critical factor that some youths possess is resilience. Resilience can be thought of as an antibody that enables them to ward off attackers that might stop even the most formidable among us. Resilience is the set of attributes that provides people with the strength and fortitude to confront overwhelming obstacles they are bound to face in life.

He underlines the importance of the roles that significant adults can play in developing resilience in children and youth.

Clearly, no one would question the value of developing in children, especially those most at risk, such attributes. But can we realistically do so? In my visits to effective schools, I have ample evidence that we can. More important, these visits have convinced me that all schools should commit themselves to building resilience in their learners.

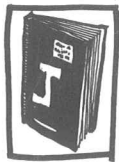
So what are the attributes of people who are resilient?

At a workshop with Richard Sagor, teachers brainstormed and came up with the following words to describe resilient learners.



### Reflection

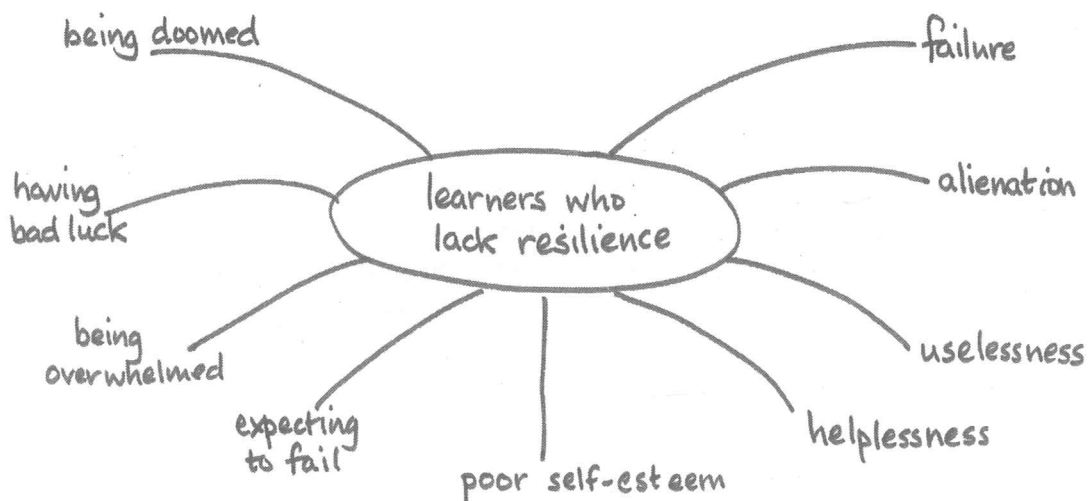
Think about the learners in your class. Identify those to whom you think these words apply. What do you know about their life circumstances? Would you say there are many obstacles in their lives which they manage to overcome? Is there anything about their home lives that helps them to be resilient? Do you think there is anything about their life at school that helps to grow or sustain their resilience?



Record your responses in your Journal under the heading *Thoughts about the resilience of learners in the class I teach.*

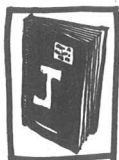
### What is the flipside of resilience?

Richard Sagor described learners who do not develop resilience in the face of adverse circumstances as experiencing some or all of the following feelings.



## Reflection

Think about the learners in your class. Identify those to whom you think these words apply. What do you know about their life circumstances? Would you say there are many obstacles in their lives that they do not manage to overcome? If so, do you think there is anything about their home lives that fails to help them to grow and sustain their resilience? Do you think there is anything about their life at school that fails to help them to grow or sustain their resilience?



Record your responses in your Journal under the heading *Thoughts about the lack of resilience of learners in the class I teach.*

End off by comparing these notes with the ones you wrote on the resilience of learners in your class. What do notice about similarities and differences between the learners you reflected on? Are there overlaps?

## Thinking about homes and families

If we think about plants, we know that there are things a seed needs in order to grow well. Usually, we think of seeds needing good soil and a watchful gardener to provide the plant with water, to keep the area around the plant clear of weeds, and to protect the growing plant from pests and diseases. If we translate these ideas into the world of children, many of us assume that for a child to grow up into a productive adult they need a good home (soil) and loving parents (the gardener).

## Reflection



Stop for a moment and think about your assumptions about the kind of homes and families that children and youth need in order to grow up into productive and happy adults. Write some notes in your Journal under the heading, *The kinds of homes and families I believe my learners need.*

Can you identify where your ideas come from? Your own home and family? Things you have heard and read? Television? Seeing other people's homes and families?

Think about the person you interviewed in the first part of the **Key Activity** (Unit 1). What do you know or imagine about the home and family which that person grew up in? Does the information fit with your assumptions or does it contradict your assumptions? Make some notes in your Journal before going on to read further.

## Unathi's Story



What contributes to **resilience** and a determination and the staying power to make progress against all odds? What gives somebody the **integrity** to say, and mean it, "I am prepared - even - to beg daily, but I will never be a thief!"? Can you glean any insights from Unathi's story? And how does it fit in with what you have been reading and thinking about so far in this umthamo?

For some years now a handful of young boys are to be found regularly begging and directing parking cars at the local supermarkets in East London suburbs. It can't be easy work. They are there in all weathers, from after school at about 3 pm, until about 7:30 pm, making anything from only a few cents on a bad day to as much as R15 between them on a good day. When you ask the cashiers at the till what they buy, you discover it's bread, milk, amasi, or toiletries. For the past few years, I've given the odd apple or carton of milk, depending on my change when I see them.

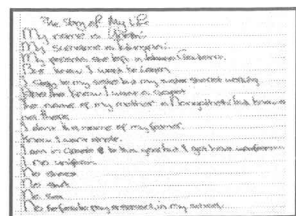
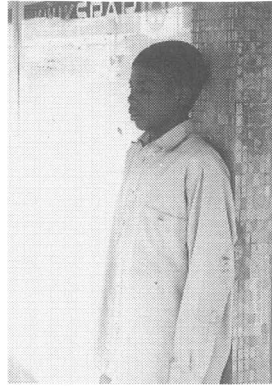
Early in 2001, one of the group, Unathi, was hanging nervously around my gate during school time in the second week of term. He had this problem. He needed R20 to pay a backlog of fees to his primary school before they would release his Grade 7 report, so that he could enroll at the high school.

I let him wash my car and trim the pavement grass. I didn't give him the R20 directly, but asked to go to the school with him to ensure it was properly spent, and that his story of being one of the top learners was true. It wasn't R20 he needed - a late fee of R40 was now demanded. A sympathetic teacher confided that there were others in the same boat. How long would the primary school have withheld his report and prevented his progress?

At the high school R80 was needed, and so it went. A sympathetic principal ascertained that Unathi lived with "his sister" and her 3 children in a shack. He learned that there was seldom food, and no money for his support and fees. Unathi kept himself going by begging. He often got kicked out, and had to sleep where he could find a place. No social workers had ever seen him or his family.

Later other elements of his story emerged. Unathi was born in 1984 in Peulton when his mother was still a school girl. She soon ran off to Gauteng and he was raised and cared for until he was eight, by his grandfather Khetese. He enjoyed school at Majali Lower Primary, where everyone was "good to him and serious".

When his grandfather was buried in 1995, there was no-one who wanted Unathi. But an elder sister to his mother was persuaded to take him to live with her 3 boys. Since then, life has been a struggle for him. He does not feel cared for or secure. He does have strong friendships with Gcobani and Vuyo, whose families sometimes look after him temporarily when he is stuck.



Unathi hopes to complete his schooling and become a social worker so that he can prevent other children suffering as he has done. Gcobani says he wants to be a policeman because he knows what it is like to have his money stolen by other older 'tsotsi boys'. What are their realistic prospects?

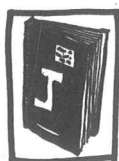
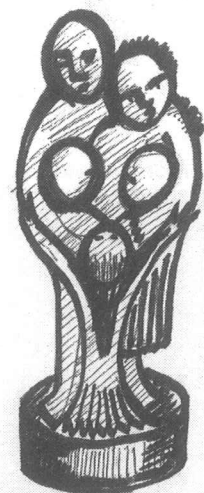


### Different kinds of family structures

Children and youth grow up in a wide variety of homes and families. Generally people have quite fixed ideas about what kinds of homes and families are "good" and what kinds are "bad". How often have you heard people say things like "Well, coming from the home that s/he does, what else can you expect?". Often teachers and schools let themselves off the responsibility hook by blaming the learner's home and family or by telling themselves that whatever they do will make no difference anyway.

At many flea markets, shopping malls and tourist destinations, there are people making a living by selling wooden or soapstone statues of families. If you have a chance, check and see what sort of families these statues represent. Mostly you will notice that they depict families consisting of one or two parents and one or more children. However, there are many other kinds of families that learners live in. For example:

- 2 parents with a number of children
- 2 parents with an only child
- 1 parent families – a family headed by mother
- 1 parent families – a family headed by father
- caretaker families – a family headed by a grandparent, a relative, a neighbour
- children living in hostels
- stepfamilies
- sibling families - a family headed by a child, usually an older child looking after their brothers and/or sisters



Can you think of any other types of families? Make some notes in your Journal about the types of homes and families that the learners you teach live in. Notice whether you know something about each learner's home and family. Are there some learners that you know very little about? Generally, how much do you know about your learners' homes and families? Make your notes under the heading, *What I know about the homes and families of my learners without getting feedback from them.*

In the British magazine, NOVA, dated July, 2000, there was an article about some of the types of families that children live in. Some teachers and schools in the United Kingdom were troubled about the government's instruction that

learners should be taught about the value of living in traditional families. The teachers who objected said that not all learners lived in homes and families which were traditional, that is, two parents who were married to each other. They were concerned that children would feel ashamed or become alienated from their families if they were told that the family in which they lived was wrong or not good because it was not the traditional married family type.

This is some of what the article said,

The traditional nuclear family, headed by a breadwinner father and tended by a dependent mother, is only one option among many. School teachers protested about teaching children about traditional families only because they thought it would be entirely wrong to suggest to children with single, gay or living together parents that there was something wrong with them.

Every institution that touches family life – every school, every bank, every employer – designs its services for traditional families. This means that people in unconventional families are forever being caught out. An example is that housing structures almost always are designed to accommodate only traditional families.

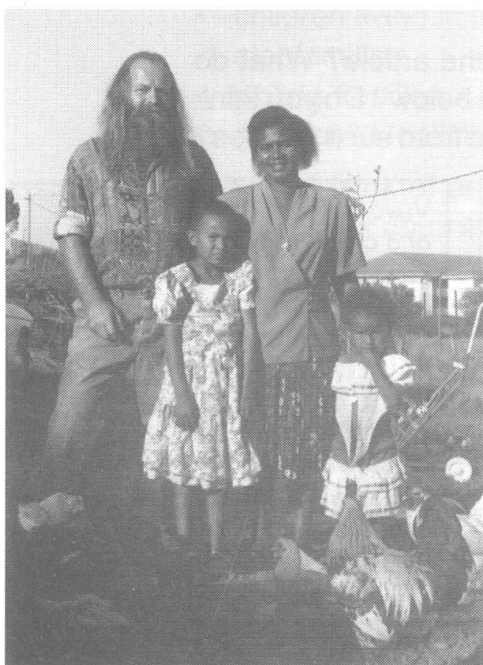
The way forward many family policy experts believe is to look at all the diverse families we see today and to think about what they all have in common, namely, a complex web of relationships and family obligations. We should then find ways to support all families in their attempts to raise resilient children who go on to become productive and happy adults.

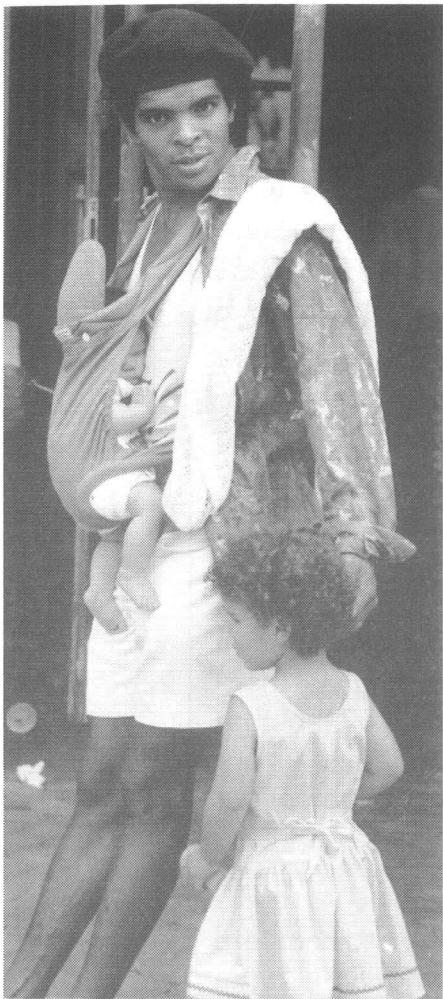
What do you think about the ideas in the article? What do you think about the examples of families below? Do you think that children could grow up to be resilient from such families?

Robert is 24 years old and is raising his son, Matthew who is 4 years old. Matthew's mother left the family to go to another city where she can earn better money. Robert's mother and father live nearby and help to look after Matthew.

Liz is 63 years old and is raising her 6 grandchildren. Her daughters have all gone to big cities to find work and send some money when they can. Liz tries to support her grandchildren and herself on her meagre pension but it's not easy.

Vuyo is the eldest of 5 children. Their parents both died of Aids last year. She has left school to try to find work and to care for her younger siblings, one of whom is only two. Their relatives are reluctant to help.





Most pictures on these pages are from the ELRU Malapa (Families) Picture Pack.  
Sets of Picture Packs can be ordered from ELRU, 19 Flamingo Crescent, Lansdowne 7780.



### Activity 3 - Homes and families, and the people who are important to us

Tell your class that you are going to explore homes, families and the people who are important to them. Ask them to draw a picture of the people they live with, showing everybody doing something. They can include family members and anyone else who is very important to them.

Alternatively, ask them to write a short scene or story describing the people who they live with. In the story or scene everybody should be doing something. Remind them to include anyone who is really important to them.

Build a display of the drawings and/or pieces of writing, under a heading such as, *The homes and families we live in and the people who are important to us*. Discuss with your learners the idea that there are many different types of homes and families that we live in, and that there is no one right or wrong family. Discuss also that sometimes the people who are most important to us are family members, and sometimes they are not part of our blood family.

#### Reflection

Go back to your earlier reflection in this unit and compare what your assumptions were with what you have discovered about the homes and families of your learners. Write your Journal entry under the heading, *What I learnt about the homes and families of my learners after getting feedback from them*.



### What role does the home and family play in growing and sustaining resilience?

Families and homes are the places which can provide us with opportunities to develop resilience. When families and homes have problems, this is not necessarily a sign of a "bad" home or "family". All families and homes face obstacles and challenges. But it is the way in which they go about trying to deal with these life challenges that makes the difference between families and homes which grow resilience in their children and those that do not.

According to psychiatrist, Dr Eric Berne, all people, including children, have three basic needs:

- stimulation
- structure
- recognition.

Take some time to think about these 3 basic needs before you read on.

Children look to their homes and families to get these needs met. Once they go to school, they also look to teachers to meet these needs whilst they are in the classroom. If adults meet these needs, the child feels contained and respected, and in turn learns to trust and respect others.

Psychology and medical research has shown that young babies in orphanages and institutions who do not get picked up, looked at and handled (**stimulation**) quickly get sick and even die. Children need stimulation to grow and thrive.

When teachers provide their learners with activities, they are providing stimulation.

When children do not get guidance and limits (**structure**), they experience the world as a chaotic and unreliable place. Some children respond by “running wild” and others become withdrawn and timid, as if to stay out of the way of the world which seems out of control. Guidance and limits are not the same as punishment and criticism. You can tell the difference because guidance and limits will be stated in **positive** language.

In the table are some examples. See if you can think of a few more.

| Criticism / punishment  | Guidance / Limits   |
|---|---|
| “Don’t come late again tomorrow.”   | “You need to plan to be here at 08h00 tomorrow to be on time.”                    |
| “Don’t make such a mess. You always leave everything for me to clean up.” | “Eat your food at the table, then wash up your plate and cup, and put them away.” |
| “You are so rude and unkind.”   | “If you are angry, tell us how you feel. Don’t call the others names.”            |

You can see from these examples, that criticism and punishment very seldom tell us what to do; they usually just tell us what NOT to do. Guidance and limits on the other hand tell us clearly what we need to do in order to co-operate.

Some examples of how teachers provide structure are

- giving instructions about how to do activities
- working according to a timetable
- drawing up “rules for our classroom” with their learners
- seating learners in groups.

## Recognition

All people look for affirmation/**recognition** from significant others. In order for children to get the recognition they need, there need to be significant people in their lives, and these people need to communicate with them.

Too often we are stingy with praise while we give criticism freely. Also, different children need praise for different things. Some want recognition for effort. Some seek recognition for what they produce. And some seek recognition for their personal qualities.

When homes and families meet children's need for stimulation, structure and recognition, they encourage the development of resilience. They also do this when they help children to solve problems and deal with obstacles that they come across in their lives.

Salvatore Maddi and Suzanne Kobasa wrote a chapter called "The Development of Hardiness", and had the following to say.

Children will attempt to satisfy their needs and potentialities in many ways. When the parents meet these efforts with approval, interest and encouragement, the child feels supported and comes to view themselves and the world as interesting and worthwhile. If the parents are generally hostile and disapproving, or neglectful towards expressions of needs and potentialities, the child may come to view themselves and the world as empty and worthless.

When children succeed they have a sense of mastery – and when they fail, they have a sense of defeat. As they develop, it is best for children when the tasks they encounter are just a bit more difficult than what they can easily perform. If the task is too easy, then succeeding at it will not bring a sense of accomplishment or mastery. Conversely, if the task is too hard, the child is likely to fail and feel powerless or useless.

Why do some people expect life changes to be frequent and stimulating, whereas others expect stability and regard change as disruptive of security? This difference in a sense of challenge reflects the degree to which a person's early environment (home) changed and whether that change was regarded as richness or chaos.

### **The home atmosphere that breeds hardiness**

The social and physical environment changes frequently, and includes many moderately difficult tasks. Parents encourage their children to see changes as richness and support efforts to perform the tasks successfully. Parents are warm and

*Stingy means to give grudgingly. It's the opposite of generous.*



helpful towards the children. In this atmosphere, children are likely to develop hardiness, taking it with them as they become older and leave their homes and families. Having confidence in their capabilities, they approach life's tasks and events as problems they can solve and as situations they can influence – with control, not powerlessness.

### **The irrelevance of socio-economic background**

Is the development of hardiness restricted to economically and socially advantaged families? *Atmosphere* is something established for children by their parents, and it bears little or no relationship to economic and social advantage or disadvantage. In fact, some wealthy and powerful parents neglect their children beyond all hope of developing hardiness. In contrast, some parents who are relatively poor and socially marginal are nonetheless successful in constructing environments for their children that are developmentally beneficial. Parents can construct an atmosphere supportive of hardiness without having much money or social position, as long as they love and admire their children, believe in the importance of what they are doing, and are willing to spend some focused time on their children's development.

Sometimes adverse circumstances can be overcome just by how people relate to one another. The story that follows is one you can tell your learners in the next part of the **Key Activity**.



### **The story of heaven and hell**

Once upon a time, there was an elderly man who very much wanted to know what the difference was between heaven and hell, before he died. "If only I could know the answer to this, I could die peacefully". He had asked many people, clever people, wise people, old people, young people, people from his own neighbourhood and people who were travellers. No one had yet given him an answer. He had almost given up hope of ever finding an answer to his question.

One day, a stranger arrived in the old man's village. He stood quietly, resting in the shade of a tree. Everyone wondered where he had come from, and where he was on his way to. However, there was something about the man that made people cautious to approach him. Without even talking to him, they all knew he was a man to be respected.

Suddenly, one of the villagers remembered the old man and his question and set off quickly to tell him of the stranger who was standing under the tree. The old man listened intently as the villager told him how wise the stranger looked. "Perhaps he will have an answer for you, and then you will be able to die in peace. Come quickly before the stranger sets off again".

And so, the villager and the old man set off to the tree, hoping that the stranger would still be there. Their luck was in. There he stood, quiet and peaceful. The old man could immediately see why the villager had thought that perhaps this man with his high forehead and deep eyes might be able to answer the question.

The old man stepped politely across to the tree and greeted the stranger. He explained "All my life I have wanted to know the difference between Heaven and Hell. Do you by any chance know the answer to my question?" The stranger smiled softly and then beckoned to the old man. "If you really want to know the answer to that question, you must be prepared to follow me and to see for yourself. Are you willing?" "Yes", replied the old man although he did feel a bit nervous.

The stranger set off with the old man following close behind. They came to a crack in the mountain and without hesitation the stranger entered. The old man hesitated, but only for a moment. After all he had wanted to know the answer all his life, and this was the first person who might be able to tell him what he wanted to know.

They walked for quite a long time along a dim passage, the rocks uneven under the old man's feet. He had to walk carefully to keep himself from stubbing his toes. Just then he heard some sounds, the sounds of human voices. He peered ahead but could not yet see anything except for the stranger. The noise got louder and louder and he realised that he could hear people shouting and moaning. He felt quite afraid at what he might be about to see. Just as he was about to hesitate, the stranger turned and beckoned him to come forward.

Ahead of them the passage opened into a big cave in the middle of which stood a huge cooking pot with stew in it. The old man hardly glanced at it because he was staring at the people in the room. Thin people, starving people, angry and frustrated people stood and sat around in the cave. Some looked barely alive. As the old man looked around he saw a group of people fighting near the pot.

They were trying to grab at some very strange looking spoons. The spoons had very long handles, easily longer than a broom handle. People who had managed to get hold of a spoon, were trying to dip the spoon into the cooking pot and to get some food into their mouths. But they failed every time. They couldn't manage to get the food to their mouths. This is Hell!" said the stranger.

The old man felt very relieved as the stranger beckoned to him to enter into a passage on the other side of the cave. They walked along again and slowly the sounds of the angry shrieks and screams faded. The old man felt quite shaken by what he had seen. They had walked for about ten minutes when the old man became aware of a humming sound.

In front of them the passage opened up into a cave which looked exactly like the one they had left behind. In the middle stood a huge cooking pot with stew in it. The old man saw more of the same strange spoons with their very long handles. However, what he noticed straight away was that here the people were well fed. They looked very healthy. They sat and stood about chatting and smiling.

Just when the old man began to feel really puzzled, he saw three people walk across to the pot. Two stood on one side and one on the other side of the huge pot. The two lifted up one of the strange spoons. They helped each other to carefully dip the spoon into the pot of stew. Then they guided it carefully across the pot to where the waiting man could sip the stew. When he was finished they dipped the spoon into the stew again and waited for him to eat. This they did a few times until the man signalled that he had had enough.

As the old man watched, the men changed places so that the man who had eaten now helped to feed one of the men who had been holding the spoon. And so they continued making sure that everyone got some food. "And This is Heaven!" said the stranger.



### **Key Activity (Part B) - How homes and families can grow and sustain resilience**

Remind your learners of the activity you did to explore their homes, families and important people in their lives. Review the drawings and stories they produced.

Tell them you are going to work together try to answer the following question: *"How have our homes, families*

*and people who are important to us helped us to solve problems? Write the question clearly so everyone can see it. Then write up instructions that each answer should state the problem clearly. Also write up your expectation that each group will explain how the person was helped to solve the problem.*

Tell them they are going to work together in groups to answer this question by

- drawing
- acting out a scene
- telling a story.

Encourage the groups to choose different methods so that some groups draw, some groups tell stories and some act out scenes. Set the time limits and make sure that each group knows which method they will use for their answer.

Once everyone is ready, gather your learners around you and tell them the story of Heaven and Hell. Remind them of the task and the instructions that you have written up.

Then let them work in their groups for at least 30 minutes.

Consider letting one or two groups present their answers each day so that you spread their presentations over a few days. This will allow you and them to absorb and think about what each group presents.

Write up a report on what you discovered from the groups about how families, homes and people who are important have helped learners to develop resilience. Include examples in which your learners spoke about examples of **stimulation, structure and recognition**. Add your reflections about how your assumptions about their homes and families were supported or challenged.

End your report by summarising your most important learnings about how homes, families and important people can grow and sustain resilience in learners.

This Unit ends with an activity which will allow you to explore what your learners think about wisdom and cleverness. Compare what you discover with them, with the notes you made in your Journal after the face-to-face session where this umthamo was introduced.



*By now you should be used to writing a draft, and then giving it to a trusted friend to comment on critically. When you get that draft back, you need to write another draft and you need to make sure that you take account of your friend's comments.*



#### Activity 4 - A wise person is . . . .

Ask your learners to think of a person who is wise and then to write down (or tell you) as many words and phrases that they can think of which they associate with a **wise** person. You can organise the words in a list or in a spider diagram.

Allow each learner to offer one word/phrase and keep going around all the learners until no one has any new words to offer. Tell the learners they each have 3 votes. Ask everyone to decide privately on the 3 words that they think best describe a wise person. Then call out each word on the class list / spider diagram and ask learners to vote by a show of hands for each word. Write down the number of votes for each word.

End the activity by writing down the following sentence and displaying it

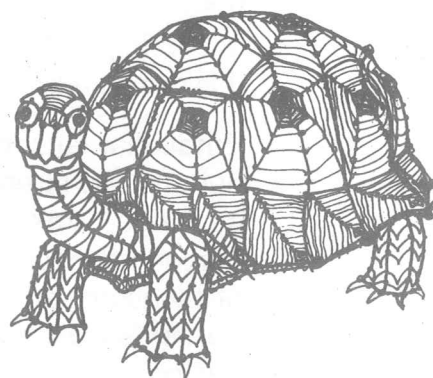
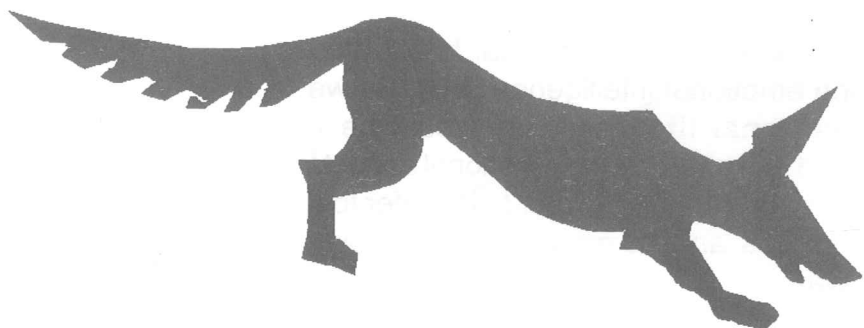
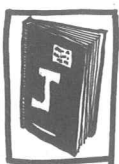
"Our class thinks that a wise person is .....(complete with the 10-20 words which got the highest number of votes).

On a different day ask your learners to think of a person who is **clever**. Repeat the task that you did to gather words and phrases. You might like to do it in a slightly different way.

Finally, compare the lists that your learners made for describing a wise person and for describing a clever person. Which words overlap.

You might like to make a chart like the one you see here.

How do the learners' lists compare with your own ideas about wisdom and cleverness? Open your Journal and write down your observations and thoughts.





### Unit 3 – Growing and supporting resilience at school



In this Unit we will focus thoughtfully on some of the challenges that are part of life. As we saw in Unit 2 all children experience some difficulties while growing-up. As you read on you will realise quite quickly that these situations are not specific to childhood. They are also part of adult life.

Children and adults often respond emotionally to situations in very similar ways. Perhaps the difference between childhood and adulthood is that adults can generalise from similar experiences. Children, however, might be experiencing difficult situations for the first time, and not yet be able to do this.

Learning is often described as a **spiral process**, of repeating or coming back to an experience or idea many times. When we do this, we might think about the experience/idea in a new or different way. Often we deepen our understanding. But sometimes we become frustrated and feel 'stuck' when we do not seem able to find a new angle on our problem. Think back to the poem on page 8. What did this person eventually learn?

Let's think about the concept of **emotional intelligence (EQ)**. In his book *Emotional Intelligence, Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, Daniel Goleman argues that the popular view of human intelligence, is too narrow as it does not account for **emotions**. He proposes that our emotions play a far greater role in thought, decision-making and individual success than is commonly acknowledged, and argues that **EQ** (emotional intelligence) needs to be nurtured and strengthened in children.

Daniel Goleman is a former Harvard University student and teacher.

Goleman believes that the emotional lessons we learn as children, at home and at school, are critical in forming the emotional habits that we use in our lives as adults. In Umthamo 26 you were introduced to Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. You will remember that according to Multiple Intelligences theory, each one of us thinks and expresses our thoughts in different ways.

Emotional lessons from life lead to emotional habits that nurture and strengthen emotional intelligence (**EQ**). So we can also think of **emotional literacy**. This would be a person's capacity to read and interpret the emotional aspects of situations, and to act appropriately. It would also refer to a person's ability to express and communicate their own feelings in a healthy way.

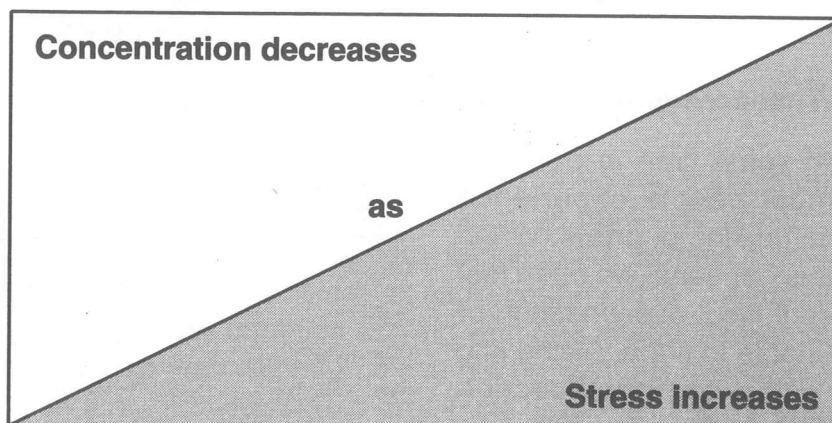
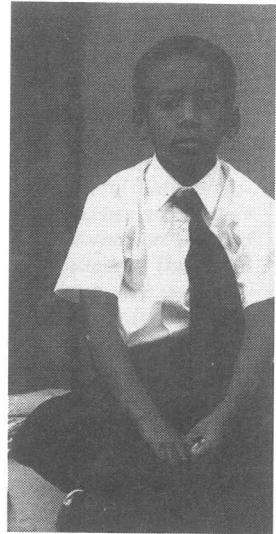
## **Difficulties - potholes, boulders or footpaths**

As we saw in the story, challenges and difficulties are part of the fabric of growing up. As writers of this umthamo we are particularly interested in a perspective that acknowledges these experiences (the difficulties and challenges), and which looks at how children can be helped to understand their experiences, so that they develop skills to take with them in their journey through life.

Perhaps they are the markers of our life journeys. Why are some children and adults able to cope with difficult situations, whereas others fall apart? How do some children become happy and productive adults in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds?

Some may question whether teachers need to consider these issues, and believe that they are best dealt with at home or by health care professionals. This may be true. Where children are in loving homes, teachers may not need to provide support in times of crisis. Yet sometimes even parents can be uncertain of how to deal with difficult situations. Some communities can draw on experts to provide professional support when a traumatic event occurs, But not all communities are as well resourced. Teachers are often regarded as important people in community life. Despite not being able to heal or change a situation, especially one beyond school, understanding and quiet responsiveness to a child's situation may go a long way to help.

There is a well-documented area of research that points to the effects of stress on the ability to concentrate, to think or retain information. Stress has a direct influence on a child's academic, emotional and social life at school. You need only think of your own lives, and how difficult it is to focus when you are grappling with a really difficult problem.



## Looking more closely at the difficulties we meet

**Stress, crisis** and **trauma** are terms that social workers and psychologists often use to describe the way we respond to some of the difficulties we face in life. Although it is not always easy to distinguish each term, it is useful to think of these experiences as being on a continuum, from less to extremely severe.

Stress → Crisis → Trauma

**Stress** is something we all know. We feel stressed when we feel we cannot cope with a physical or emotional situation. Children, like adults, can experience stress. Examples include too much homework, being teased by other children, exam time, when parents fight, pressure from parents or teachers. Spend a minute or two remembering when last you felt stressed. Then spend some time thinking about times when you felt stressed as a child.

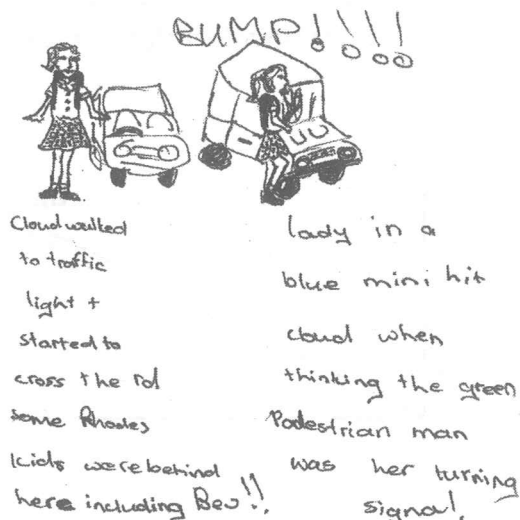
**Stress** is not a sign of individual incapacity but has to do with the relationship between the person and their environment. In particular it is about their perception (how they view the problem). Remember the story, *Heaven and Hell* in Unit 2? Both groups of people had to deal with the same difficulty - spoons with very long handles. But the way they dealt with the situation made all the difference.

When someone experiences stress we need to check.

- What is the demand, or threat, they perceive? How realistic is their perception?
- What is their view about available resources?
- How do they feel about access to the resources?

### What counts as a crisis?

At some time in our lives most people experience some kind of **crisis**. When this happens, we often feel confused, overwhelmed or unable to cope. Going into crisis is a **normal reaction** when faced with an experience that is very difficult to cope with.



In her book, *An Adult's Guide to Childhood Trauma*, Sharon Lewis says

A crisis is a turning point and it does not necessarily have to be a negative experience. The crisis may present a new opportunity, e.g., having to move to a new city for a new job. Events which may be perceived as a crisis by children include starting school, changing schools, divorce. A crisis does not have to be an external event, it can be caused by development e.g. reaching adolescence .... An experience that puts one person into a crisis may not be as hard to deal with for someone else – what is stressful to one child may be experienced as a crisis by another.” (Lewis, 1999:6)

*This recent and well written book is written to assist parents, caregivers, teachers, health care professionals and criminal justice personnel to better understand childhood stress. Useful lists of resources and contact information are also included. This could be a very useful resource in your staff library.*

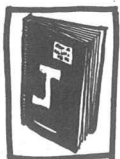
Some **crises** pass quickly, whilst others can last many weeks. Some resolve themselves. Others require outside help. An unusual and interesting way of engaging with a crisis is to consider what opportunities a crisis opens-up. Think of your own life. Can you recall a crisis? Spend a few moments remembering the circumstances of this situation. Did the crisis open-up opportunities for you, or the other people involved? Sometimes it can take quite some time before you became aware of the opportunities a crisis opens up. For example, people who experience “burn-out” can take 18 months to three years before they recover sufficiently to see the learning opportunities in the experience.

Perhaps crises and difficulties are like potholes (spaces that one falls into), or are rocks on the path (preventing one from moving forward), or: stepping stones; a footbridge over a river; a drawbridge; a detour; a turnpike; a toll road; a cross road; a blind alley; a cul-de-sac!



What image (picture) comes to mind when you think about tough difficulties and crises? Relax, sit back and spend a few moments allowing images to rise to the surface in your mind. Several might emerge; allow your mind to flow freely. If you find your attention staying with one image, allow this. But should your attention move on, go with this movement. After a few minutes take a pencil and draw the image in your Journal. If you would like to accompany your image with words, write words or phrases or ideas beneath your image.

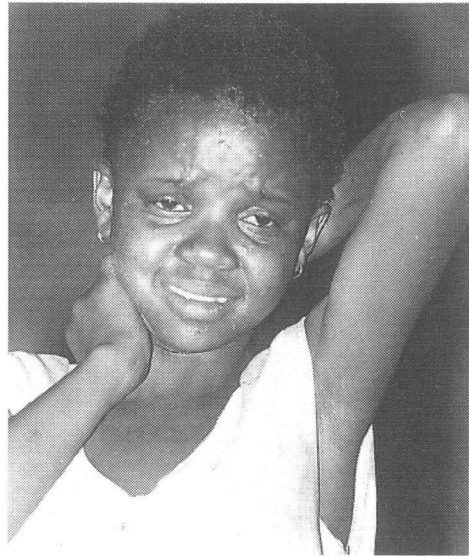
*If the image that comes to you is one from childhood, spend some time thinking of another from your adult life. If the image is from adulthood, spend time thinking of another from your childhood.*



## When can difficulties be described as traumatic?

Sometimes an unexpected experience causes such hardship that it is difficult to cope with each day. This situation can be referred to as a **trauma**. Sharon Lewis explains a trauma in this way.

A traumatic experience differs from stress or a crisis. A trauma is an experience that is sudden, horrifying and unexpected. During a trauma the person believes that they or others around them will be killed or seriously harmed. The person feels fear, and is helpless and out of control. A trauma is not part of a child's normal experience. The event is so intense and frightening that it overwhelms the child's ability to cope. A trauma is always regarded as negative and damaging to the child's mental health. (Lewis, 1999:6)



Examples of trauma include human caused disasters (civil unrest, war), natural disasters (floods, fire, earthquakes), and unintentional or intentional violence (bus accidents, violent crimes such as assault, sexual violence or domestic abuse). The trauma may be linked to a single event, or can be continuous, as in verbal, physical or spiritual abuse.

It is important to realise that a child who witnesses a trauma, can suffer in similar ways to those directly involved. Families and relatives whose loved ones have been traumatised are likely to be affected by trauma. People who come into contact with stories of violence or trauma can also become traumatised. Examples of secondary victims include journalists and those in helping professions, and second generation trauma survivors, such as the relatives of those who have been traumatised.

The psychological needs of child witnesses are often neglected unintentionally. This is because the caregivers might not recognise that a child is struggling to cope. Or if the child is behaving in a strange way, they might hope the behaviour will pass, by itself.

Each child will respond to a traumatic event in his or her own way. Although we sometimes notice the child's behaviour changing (the child gets into fights, or is heard swearing a lot, or doesn't spend time with friends), we might not realise that this behaviour is linked to how the child is experiencing the trauma. Usually the child is unable to control her or his behaviour.

*Second generation trauma survivors include children of the Holocaust, Vietnam veterans, South African citizens brutally killed during the struggle against apartheid. Many experience severe social and psychological difficulties.*

Psychologists and doctors often use the word 'symptoms' to refer to the unusual behaviour of people grappling with trauma. Sharon Lewis groups symptoms in this way.



### 1. Intrusive symptoms

Re-experiencing the trauma: adults and children find they are thinking about the event often, even when they do not want to. Without warning memories can suddenly come to mind, accompanied by painful emotions, like feelings of anger, fear, loss, sadness. If you watch children at play, often they play out the traumatic event over and over again. Fantasizing about revenge can also take place.

### 2. Avoidance

Alternating between having strong emotions and feeling numb or trying to block out memories. The person tries to avoid anything that is a reminder of the trauma because this may bring back painful feelings. Sometimes the person may become so fearful of certain situations that their lives are ruled by trying to avoid them. In adults feelings of being emotionally distant, of rejecting family members, and having no or little sex is not uncommon. Stopping to care for oneself, e.g., not washing or taking care of clothes or appearance; of loss of interest in favourite activities and feelings about hopelessness about the future may arise. Some children feel that the 'bad things' will happen again, or that they will not live for very long, marry or have a career.

### 3. Hyperarousal

Feeling and acting as if constantly faced with more danger. Feeling frightened, jumpy and experiencing sweating and a rapid heartbeat. Mood swings, becoming suddenly explosive or irritable, even when there seems to be no reason to become angry. Struggles to concentrate, trouble sleeping, headaches, sore tummies etc. Feelings of guilt and self blame for not having done more can arise, as well as losing confidence and self esteem. We can have a number of these responses together, or one after the other.

It is important to realise that a child's responses, that often are so uncharacteristic of normal behaviour, **are normal responses to an abnormal event**. They are **not a sign of weakness – any person who has been exposed to a trauma** is very likely to experience them. They will pass. It is very important to share this information with the child. (Lewis, 1999:13-14)



## Do children talk about trauma?

A child's thoughts, feelings and behaviour are affected during and after a traumatic event. Sometimes the adults will know about the experience, especially if it is a death or an accident. But this is not always so. Adults may be unaware of the cause of the trauma for some time. Children often do not spontaneously disclose that they have been part of a trauma, and may not talk it or about how it is affecting them. Even when asked, they may be reluctant to talk. Perhaps they don't know how to put names to their feelings. They could be frightened or ashamed. They could also fear they will be blamed, or feel threatened, or fear that the adult they tell will not be able to protect them.

A child may try to draw attention in a roundabout way. For example, as one mother explained,

When she came home she was not specific, she was just telling me that she doesn't like that school, the boys are silly, and I did not take any notice. She was just talking, saying, "I don't like that school and those boys they were patting their thighs when they go to the tuck-shop" . . . I wasn't sure, and I was just worried . . . I asked her, "How old are those boys?". She said they were high school boys and I was puzzled – high school boys and preschool girls. And after that the principal called us and told us (about the rape) and I was shocked. And then I came to realise that she was trying to tell me about the abuse. (Lewis, 1999:19)

Although most children do not talk about their experience, they can almost always remember the events of the trauma. If the child is old enough, they will usually be able to give a clear detailed account of the experience, although fear and anxiety may prevent them from doing so. There is some debate whether children younger than 2 years can remember a trauma, but it seems they do remember at least some parts of the experience. Even children younger than 12 months who have been exposed to a trauma and who have no verbal memory, can experience physical sensations that evoke their experience.

Children may see images of the trauma in their mind, or less often, re-feel the sensations. If you watch carefully you might see their memories surfacing in their play.

An interesting bit of research to do with your learners would be to find out the extent of their feeling vocabulary.

*Peter Sharp, a principal education psychologist for Southampton City Council in Britain, says that when pupils arrive at school they will have a feelings vocabulary of only up to ten words. (The Economist Feb 2001)*

## Ways to introduce the language of difficulties in the classroom

Very often adults find it difficult to talk about the hardships they face. When this happens there is often a silence around such events, and children 'learn', through observing the adults, to be quiet. They learn not to talk about these struggles. And so the children often feel alone, and do not know that their experience might be shared by others. The activity below suggests a way that teachers can begin to develop children's this language for coping with feelings. It can also shine a light onto some of the challenges we find in our lives.



### Activity 5 - What would you do?

You need a container for each group, pens and as many small pieces of blank paper as you have learners.

This activity can be done by any age group. It will work better if the learners have already discussed stories - and the difficulties the characters in the stories face. Begin this activity by discussing some well-known *iintsomi*. Ask your learners to recall some of the tough situations the characters faced. Then start talking about how each one of us often has to make decisions when we face tough situations.

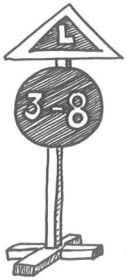
Like the characters in the stories, we all meet challenges and difficult moments in our lives. Sometimes we have time to think before we need to act. Sometimes talking to friends might help, especially if we feel paralysed, or unable to think or act. Sometimes it seems as if there is no solution to the problem. Usually something can be done.

We can find at times, that we have a new situation on our hands. Sometimes our actions can make a difference, and be effective. We can do things to resolve the problem. But not always. Hopefully the more we find ourselves making wise decisions, and responding successfully to difficulties, the stronger we will become.

Ask your children to sit in small groups of 3 or 4, or pairs, and to think of two or three difficulties and challenges that might come their way. One child should record the ideas of the group. This list can then be shared with the rest of the class, and recorded by you on the chalkboard.

The next step is for the learners to sit in larger groups, depending on the size of your class, and for each group to write down the problems on the small pieces of paper,

in very clear writing. Each difficulty needs to be written on a separate piece of paper. Then they need to fold the pieces of paper and place them in the container. The container is passed around, and each child takes one piece of paper, reads it aloud, and then comments on, *What I would do if I was faced with this difficulty*. The activity can be made more interesting by asking the next child to comment on, *What could a teacher do that would really help?* You could conclude this activity by talking about what our sources of knowledge are.



### **Adapting the activity for Grades 1 – 3**

Encourage your children to think about some of the stories they know, especially the problems the characters face in a story. You will probably need to write for the Grade 1's and 2's. Write clear simple words, for example,

*She was lost in a forest.* Or

*He saw a Zim near his home.* Or

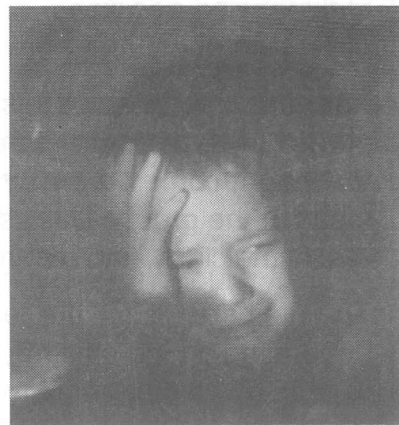
*She fell into the river.* Or

*His father wanted to hit him.* Or

*She was feeling very sad and didn't know what to do.*

You can decide whether to work with the whole class, or whether to work with smaller groups of children.

After identifying some of the challenges/difficulties, talk about the situation the characters faced. Ask your learners to think about how it must have been for characters. For example, *What do you think they felt?* Continue by asking your learners to think about what they would do if they find themselves in a similar situation. For example, *If you were walking in the forest, and you saw a Zim, what would you do?* Or, *If a Zim came to the door, as in the story of the Demane and Demazane, and sang the magic song, would you let him in?* You could extend these discussions in later language lessons.



## Bereavement and Grief

Sometimes children who have lost a loved one feel different from their peers, and they can become withdrawn or aggressive. It is very likely that the child's attention and investment in school work will also be affected.

How do children respond to death? Are they too young to understand death? Should they be protected from it? In many cultures dying and death is kept away from children. Sometimes adults avoid talking about the death because they worry the child cannot cope with the information and want to protect the child. In more recent times, however, psychologists believe that 'protecting' the child often makes the bereavement harder, not easier. They argue that as with any trauma, the effects seem to be worse when children are not helped understand their loss.

Bowlby, in his work on separation and attachment, writes that a child can resolve loss more easily if the child receives information about what has happened, is allowed to ask all kinds of questions, takes part in the grieving rituals of the family and has the constant, reliable comforting presence of an adult whom the child trusts. (Lewis, 1999:15)

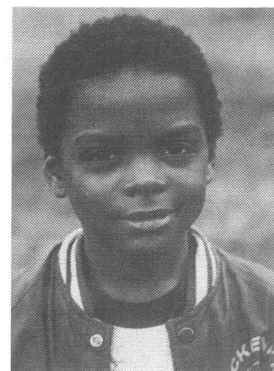
Many psychologists and social workers recommend that adults need to explain the death to the child.

It is not helpful for the child to be left without an explanation of what has happened. Children learn their responses by observing important adults in their lives. Adults are seen as models for dealing with grief and for recovery. If the adult is withdrawn or aggressive, the child may copy this behaviour and learn to deal with emotions in this way. If the child senses that the adult wants to avoid talking about death, she may do the same. Every child needs to be told the person has died, and the facts about death, avoiding gruesome details. If not, children can imagine their own version of events: often these are worse than the reality. (Lewis, 1999:159)

Judith Kremetz, has written a book for children called, *How it Feels When a Parent Dies*. It is a collection of interviews with children who have lost a parent, in which they describe how they feel, and how they cope. Here is what a young African-American boy had to say about how he felt when his father died.

### Jack Hopkins, age 8

My father died last year on Easter Sunday. He was twenty nine years old. He had been real sickly for a while - dizzy and tired and aching in a way that made it hard for him to walk around. The



doctor had told him to take some pills and stuff. So he was just staying around the house and relaxing. That's what he had been doing ever since summer.

I was playing a game with my three sisters in the living room when we heard a loud bang, the shot of a gun. My mother went into the room and she saw him lying in the bed. She screamed and told us not to go in there. We were so frightened about what had happened, and then she was on the telephone and when we heard her talking, that's when we knew for sure what had happened. We all started crying. Some policemen came over and the ambulance came and a whole bunch of people came over.

The last time I spoke to my father was about fifty minutes before it happened. I asked him if he could help me lift up my barbells and he said, "Yeah," but then he went back into the room and the next thing I knew he was dead. He must have known what he was going to do, because the day before he killed himself, he paid all of his bills.

We buried him in his hometown of Thomasville, Georgia, because that's where my grandmother lives. That's a long ways from here. We went out onto the bank by the river and the minister preached some stuff from the Bible and then people who had flowers to bring put them on top of the coffin. Most of the stuff we heard made us cry, especially my mother and my aunt. I was just sitting there listening and trying to keep my tears back. It's the only funeral I've ever gone to.

For about three months after my father died, I didn't talk to anyone. I'd just go to my room and lay down and stare at the walls after I'd done my homework. Or I'd take a nap or just relax downstairs and do no talking. Sometimes my grandmother would call on the telephone and I'd talk to her for a few minutes, but then I'd just hang up the phone.

When my father died, we put his clothes in some boxes and put them up in the attic. I keep some of his colognes on my dresser for decoration. They remind me of him - the way he used to smell. My mother says that when I grow up she's going to give me some of his pens and pencils.

I still have dreams about my father. Sometimes I dream that I've died and my father's died and we're both in heaven and God just tells me why my father did this. My grandmother and my Aunt Theresa said that he did it for us, but I'm not sure that is true. I was just thinking it over last night and it might be right and it might be wrong.

Since my father died, I've had to take care of my mother. She used to have backaches and stuff like that. My father would massage her back for her, but when he died I started doing it. I used to give

my father back rubs too, so it makes me feel like he's there beside her. I have some extra responsibilities around the house - chores like trimming the hedges, keeping the driveway clean, mowing the lawn. My sister usually helps me push the mower because I don't have enough muscle to do it myself.

I don't really talk about my father very much. I talk to my mother once in a while, but I usually keep my feelings to myself. I don't want my mother to start crying because if she starts crying she starts coughing and stuff and then I get worried that she'll have to go back to the hospital. She's had kidney stones about four times, and when that happens we have to stay with Aunt Bessie or one of our grandmothers. So I worry that her kidney stones are going to get worse and worse and the next thing you know - pop! There she goes too.

We have family meetings about once a week and talk about anything that's on our minds. When he first died, me and my sister Cecilia we said, "Why in the world did they ever invent knives and guns and all that stuff? Guns shouldn't have been invented."

It's better for me not to think about it too much because when I think about my father I know there's nobody like him and I don't know why he did what he actually did. So I just say, "Jack, you might just as well relax and don't think about him and just live your life." So that's what I try to do. I can't say it isn't hard, because it is. When he first died, it was harder, but after a couple of months it started being easier on me. After about six months I felt a lot better and started playing again. I started getting more active and doing things I used to do when my father was alive. Like playing baseball. Only now I practice with one of my sisters instead. He could really throw a fastball - like you couldn't even see it, it went so fast. My sisters can't throw the ball as well, but they're getting better. And I like soccer better now anyway.

(in Krementz, 1981: 8-15)



## Helping children preserve the memory of somebody who has died

When a death is unexpected, children are unable to prepare, or say goodbye. Below is the story of 15 year-old Palesa who was helped to cope with her friend's death. We think this is a creative and caring way to help a child come to terms with death. You might be able to use some of the ideas in your own way.



Palesa was 15 years old when her best friend Busi died suddenly after the two girls had been to a party. Palesa had been devastated by the loss of her friend. The two had been inseparable and had spent every afternoon and most weekends together (usually at Palesa's home). Palesa also felt extremely guilty because the girls' parents had not known they were going to the party. In her mind she went over and over what she could have done to save Busi, and was plagued by thoughts of how her friend must have suffered. Palesa became withdrawn, and disinterested in her other friends and hobbies she had previously enjoyed. She started to carry around a picture of Busi, and told her mother that she too wished she was dead so that she could be with Busi. Her mother was very sensitive to Palesa's grief, and she too missed Busi as she had regarded her as a member of the family. She suggested to Palesa that she write a letter to Busi, explaining how she felt about losing her, and how she wished she could have had a chance to say goodbye. Palesa wrote the letter on her own one evening, and later asked if she could read it to her mother. She had also included her thoughts on why she loved Busi and why she valued her so much as a friend.

After writing the letter, Palesa seemed relieved and she thought about her friend's death less often, although she still carried her photo with her. Palesa's mother asked her if there was anything else she would like to do in memory of her friend. Palesa decided to make a 'memory box'. In it, she placed her letter, some notes the girls had written to each other during school and some of Busi's favourite possessions that Busi's parents had given to Palesa. When she was feeling sad, Palesa would go through her memory box, and this would make her feel closer to her friend. (Lewis, 1999:167)

We can see from this account that a child needs to experience these emotions in order to heal. Talking about feelings is an important part of recovery. It isn't helpful to tell the child they should not have certain feelings, or not to cry, to be brave and that the deceased would expect them to 'act like a grown-up'. When talking to the child, it's acceptable to show sadness and even to cry. This shows the child that it is normal, acceptable and healthy to have these emotions.

## What role can schools play

Below are some suggestions found in the book, *An Adult's Guide to Childhood Trauma*.

Children can benefit from learning about the concept of death at school, even if they have not experienced bereavement. Animals and plants provide opportunities for talking about the cycle of life and death. Older children are often interested in death rituals and traditions in other cultures. You could invite people to come and talk to your children about what they do when someone dies. Here are other suggestions.

- Respond to loss with awareness and sensitivity.
- Find out the facts from a reliable source; ask the child about their beliefs around the facts and cause of death, and correct misconceptions. Rumours tend to develop quickly and can frighten.
- Affirm that it is normal and healthy to grieve and express emotions; that each of us has different emotions such as sadness, anger, denial, fear or even guilt.
- Explain it is helpful to express these feelings, not keep them silently inside one. As time passes, they will eventually go away. Crying, talking to friends, physical exercise, drawing, writing all help us express our grief.
- Model these ways of coping by giving the children opportunities to write and draw. This includes songs, stories, poems, composing music etc.
- Give children an opportunities to talk about the good memories and sad memories of loved ones.
- Help the class deal with grief in an active way e.g. sending a card to the family, raising money to send a donation or flowers. It is best to let the children decide in their own way how to express their sadness and support
- Make sure the class has books, songs or poems on loss and death for the children to read.

Children should be told about other resources available if they would like to talk further e.g. making an appointment with a respected, wise person in the community, or by phoning Childline (toll free: 0800 055 555).

You will find copies of a Reading called, "How do children understand death" at your Centre. If you want to think and learn more about this topic, we would advise you to borrow a copy to study. It would be a good idea to find a group of other teacher-learners who are also interested. Then you could make time to meet to discuss the Reading.



The text provides information on

- How children understand death (developmental ages)
- How children grieve
- Guidelines for helping children cope with grief
- Suggestions for dealing with bereavement in schools.



Do you remember reading Madiba's speech in Unit 1? He spoke of how one of the most powerful ways for children to acquire values is to meet adults who exemplify those values in their own conduct. Turn back to the beginning of this umthamo and think about what you have read. What have you found interesting? Is there an idea that really interested you? How have you dealt with some of the more difficult issues of life in your classroom? Has this unit given you encouragement to be more open to bring these issues into your classroom? Open your Journal and write one page in response to these questions. Head the writing, *My reflections on Unit 3 - Promoting hope and fellowship at school*. Remember to date your Journal entry.

The **Key Activity** for this umthamo has developed in stages. In Unit 1 you interviewed an adult who has succeeded despite adversity. The question you explored was to find out whether a significant teacher had influenced your interviewee. And if so, to reflect on what it was about that person that made the difference.

In Unit 2 you worked with your learners, and explored how homes, families and people who are important to us help us to solve problems. You wrote a report on what you discovered about how families and people who are important helped your learners to develop resilience. You also added your reflections about how your assumptions about their homes and families were supported or challenged. The report ended by summarising your most important learnings about how homes, families and important people can grow and sustain resilience in learners.

Throughout this umthamo we have argued that schools need to be places where relationships of trust and fellowship can develop. We have also suggested that learners and teachers become partners in the pursuit of learning, and that schools need to be places where wisdom is spoken about and nurtured, and has currency.

In this Unit we have focused on the challenges that each one of us will face in our lives, and have recommended that this too needs to be part of the curriculum.



### **Key Activity (Part C) - Being a school that makes a difference**

In this part of the **Key Activity**, you will develop a plan for how you, and perhaps some of your colleagues, can become a school that makes a difference. First of all, spend some time reflecting on the emotional challenges your learners face. Take your Journal and re-read your



Reflection after you did Activity 3 with your learners. Then re-read the Report you wrote for Part B of the **Key Activity**.

Next, take some paper and make a rough mind-map of what you and your school could do to support learners facing emotional challenges.

- What could **you** do to grow and support their resilience?
- How could you foster and grow a “safe” environment in your class?
- How could you encourage learners to accept and support one another?
- How could this become a regular part of classroom life?
- What aspects could become a whole-school policy?



Now write a first draft of a possible plan of what you and your school could do to become a teacher (and school) that makes a difference. What will you need to do first? Then what will be appropriate steps?



Take this draft to the face-to-face session where this umthamo is monitored. Make notes of the comments and suggestions other teacher-learners give you. After you have shared your draft plan, make time to re-draft and re-write your plan. Use the comments and suggestions of the other teacher-learners to help you improve on your first draft.

Now you need to do some preparation for the face-to-face session where this umthamo is concluded. You will need your Report on an Interview with an Adult (Part A of the Key Activity), and you will need any notes you made about the similarities and differences between CLEVERNESS and WISDOM.



Take a piece of paper, and write a list of words and phrases which you think describe **a teacher who makes a difference**. Spend about 3 minutes doing this. Then read over your Interview, and add more words and phrases to build on list. Try to get at least 12-15 phrases. Finally, have a look at your list, and underline the **4 words or phrases** that you like the most. Take this list along to the face-to-face session where the umthamo will be concluded.





## Unit 4 – Emotional intelligence and the future

In this umthamo you have been exploring the way in which adults can make a positive difference in the lives of learners and in particular how they can help them grow and sustain resilience. In this last unit, we will be looking forward to a particular problem that many people are extremely worried about. As you will read, we are seeing articles about this concern in magazines and newspapers, already.

### A future with child-headed homes and families

In Unit 2 you read about and explored activities which were focused on different types of families. You discussed with your learners the ways in which different sorts of homes and families could provide environments for children to grow strong and resilient even if the home was not always the traditional one. You may already have come across some children who are living in homes or families where an older brother or sister is the head of the family. The following articles focus on a future in which deaths due to HIV/Aids are likely to increase drastically the number of learners growing up in such homes.

In Unit 3 you read about grief and bereavement. It is likely that many learners in your classes will be having to grieve the deaths of people close to them and that you will need to find ways to help them with the grieving process.

In Umthamo 38 you focused on school policy. You may want to revisit this umthamo and start discussing how your school will go about developing a policy to deal with learners who live in child-headed homes and families.



### Key Activity (Part C) - Being a school that makes a difference *(continued)*

In this part of the **Key Activity**, we want you to think about a current issue impacting on schools. We are including two extracts about children growing up in child-headed families. Think about how you (and your colleagues) can develop a caring school policy.

Although the HIV/Aids crisis may seem like a very depressing topic, it is critical that teachers maintain a sense of hope and demonstrate qualities and values which build resilient, caring classrooms and schools. As Madiba said in the conference speech quoted in Unit 1, “we are all partners with everyone having something worthwhile to contribute”.

As you read these extracts think of ideas about how you personally, and your school collectively, could make a positive difference to the learners facing these challenges.



The sun is dropping in the sky, lengthening the shadows across the valley. Muted cowbells ring as the cattle jostle, secure in the knowledge of food and rest to come. The mellow tones of the choir at practice seem to welcome them home.

But the wattle and daub homes in the village are not the sanctuaries they once were. A subtle yet devastating change has crept across thresholds and hearths.

The end of the day should be a time of happy homecomings, of men alighting from the battered mini-bus taxi which plies the twisting road, of sturdy women totting mielie bags on their heads and humming songs, and of barefoot children happily cutting short dusty games to race home for dinner.

But, at the Pongolo household, like other households in the district, things are strangely quiet. In the doorway, three year old

Bongani stares at you silently. This child's parents will never return home. They have both died of Aids.

Shouldering a burden weightier than his 15 years, Themba picks up a cast-iron pot and, seemingly without a second thought breaks centuries of tradition. He walks outside into the sun-baked centre of the kraal, squats on the earth near a hollow and, gathering his domestic tools about him, lights the cooking fire.

This is exclusively women's work, and Themba has trespassed, breaking the gender barriers which still define social roles in his rural village. But the swathe that HIV/Aids is cutting through the South African landscape has changed the old rules forever.

As the oldest son, Themba suddenly found himself the head of the household and responsible for putting food into the mouths of his younger brothers and sisters. "After

my mother died when I was 13, I stopped going to school and instead had to learn how to cook meals" he said matter-of-factly, resigned to his role as mother. "I also sweep, and fetch water, all the things that woman usually do. But there was no one to help us. After my parents died and it became known that Aids had killed them, all our neighbours drifted away.

"At first my school friends mocked me because I was doing girls' work, but now I hardly see them anymore. One of my brothers ran away and we don't know where he is. I make sure than Phumzwa still goes to school. She is very clever and we hope that she will be able to study and become the new father of our family. I have paid her school fees out of the money we collected at my parents' funerals but that is nearly run out. I worry what will happen when I can't pay. She says the school will put her out if I don't pay."

Nonthando (14 years) lives in another area and has also lost both her parents to HIV/Aids. "My father was like a skeleton. He was covered in sores and suffered from diarrhoea and vomiting. Eventually he was too ill to even eat. Even though it was terrible, that experience made me decide I wanted to become a nurse. But I can't return to school because I have to look after my brothers and sisters, so I don't know if I'll ever be able to study nursing."

### **Extracts from an article in the Sunday Times of 18 March, 2001**

In Kwazulu-Natal, Dumazile cannot stop her tears. They fall silently, hopelessly, unchecked. She turns her face away, looking far younger than 13. But 11 year old Lungile shows none of her sister's raw emotion, and assumes the position of family spokesman explaining their meagre needs.

"We would be happy if we got food and some clothes. We have some clothes that our parents bought, but they are getting old." Their mother died of Aids in 1996.

Since 1998 when their father died of Aids too, the five sisters have been living alone. Bongiwe, 16, now heads the family, helped by 15 year old Khanyisile. Their youngest sister is 9.

Heavy rain has made the track to their home impassable by car, but the girls hardly notice the streams, mud and stones as they tramp the two hour journey to school, barefoot.

Donald Mthembu, the principal of the school that the younger sisters attend, says there are about 50 Aids orphans at his school of 1 242 learners. "We may not even know until a teacher sees a child without a uniform. When the teacher tells the child to go back home to get the uniform, the child might cry and we discover that there is no one at home".

So what sources of help are there?

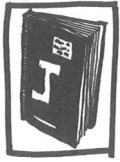
"Many people just think about putting these children in orphanages. But it is important for them to remain in their communities with relatives and on their land, which is often their only heritage" says an Aids project worker.

They have targeted 15 of the poorest families for help. They are being helped to apply for child-care grants and to start food

gardens. But a serious stumbling block lies with the Department of Home Affairs. Most orphans lack birth certificates, which they need before those who care for them can apply for child-support or foster-care grants. A child's primary care giver can apply for a child support grant of about R110 per month, but this applies only to children under the age of 7 and will only be given for up to six children.

Foster care grants of R450 per month a child are also available for people caring for children that are not their own. All grants are available only to care-givers over the age of 21 years which excludes child-headed homes.

Churches are trying to step in to provide interim assistance to Aids orphans. In addition the entire family benefit system is being reviewed by a special Cabinet committee.



Think carefully about these reports. Are there learners in your school who are being raised by their older brothers and sisters? Then open your Journal and write down what you think your school could do about being a school that makes a positive difference for learners who are living in child-headed homes and families. What support could you offer as a teacher who is making a difference? What could your school possibly do to help such learners grow and develop resilience?



Then take some paper and start to draft a plan of what you and your school could do. (This will be an Appendix to the plan you drafted in Unit 3, and shared with your peers at the face-to-face session where this umthamo was monitored.) You will need to focus specifically on learners who come from child-headed families. When you have written a rough first draft, leave it for a day or two.

When you come back to this rough draft, re-read what you have written. What is missing? How could you improve on what you have written? What else could you do? Is your plan realistic? Could you put it in to practice? Then write out a second draft. Make sure that you include any revisions. Now you are ready to give this draft to a 'critical friend' to read. Ask that person to read what you have written and to write down any questions they have.

When you get your second draft back, make sure that your *critical friend* gives you her/his questions, too. Now you can write your third draft. Make sure that you take account of your *critical friend's* questions. Make sure that you have written clearly and in detail.

At the face-to-face session where this umthamo is concluded, you will need to hand in to your umkhwezeli

- your interview,
- your report on what your learners said about the importance of family and homes growing and sustaining resilience, and
- your revised plan for a school policy which enables a school and its staff to make a difference.



### **Activity 6 - Developing emotional literacy in your classroom**

We are including an article that appeared in the *Economist* in February, 2001. It provides examples of how a whole school system has gone about developing emotional literacy in learners and teachers.

## Reflection

Read the article carefully. Then spend some time thinking about how you and your school could use these ideas in developing your response to the HIV/Aids crisis. For example, how could you use a discussion on “contempt” to help learners develop non-discriminatory attitudes towards Aids orphans?



## The feelgood factor

### **Britain is getting touch with its feelings: emotional literacy has arrived in primary schools**

This week is “jealousy and contempt” week at Mason Moor primary school in Southampton. For about 30 minutes, groups of pupils have been discussing these feelings with a teacher, using role-play, picture books and classroom displays. The same period is set aside every week to examine another feeling. The aim is to make the pupils more emotionally articulate. Ultimately, according to Sue Nicholson, the head teacher, the school hopes that they will “use words instead of hitting each other”.

Emotional literacy is, not surprisingly, an American import, born of Daniel Goleman’s 1996 bestseller, “Emotional Intelligence”. Mr Goleman’s central premise was that the ability to recognise, understand and handle emotions was at least as important a determinant of a person’s life-chances as the logico-deductive thought processes commonly measured in schools. Not only could emotional intelligence be measured, but, to an extent, it could also be taught. (On one such test for this article, your correspondent’s emotional IQ was found to be only just above average. The official assessment was, “Not bad, but practically this still means that you are not taking full advantage of your potential.” Suitable reading material was recommended.)

In Britain, Antidote, a campaign group, was set up in 1997 to promote the spread of emotional intelligence. Suzie Orbach, Princess Diana’s psychotherapist, was one of its co-founders. Business has already latched on to the concept of emotional intelligence, as practitioners have sold it as a way “to help us to help ourselves to work more effectively”. The second World Summit on Emotional Intelligence was held in Britain last year, and was attended by representatives from corporations such as American Express, the BBC and Tesco.

But Southampton is the first local education authority (LEA) to have tried out emotional literacy in schools, piloting programmes in 90 schools over the past 18 months. This week was crunch time for these programmes, as the LEA received its latest report by Ofsted, the government’s educational-standards watchdog. Ofsted

has never been known to pull its punches when reporting on innovative teaching methods. So education chiefs in the city were delighted by the comment that the emotional-literacy strategy is “highly valued by the project schools and is contributing to improved levels of behaviour management in schools”. This gives the green light to other LEAs to implement their own emotional literacy classes.

With 54% of pupils on free school meals and lots of single-parent families, Mason Moor school is in what is called a “challenging catchment area”. Ms Nicholson argues that emotional literacy is an important counterweight to the relentless drive to raise low academic standards. To do better, pupils have to “risk failure”, “understand criticism” and “accept target-setting”. Exploring a wider emotional vocabulary allows children to come to terms with what is emotionally required for doing better academically.

Peter Sharp, principal education psychologist for Southampton City Council, argues that when pupils arrive at a school such as Mason Moor, they will have a “feelings vocabulary” of only up to ten words. And when they want to extend it, all they do is add a four-letter epithet. Emotional literacy equips these pupils with more appropriate words and responses. Ms Nicholson claims that it has helped reduce playground violence at the school, and has raised the standard of work in the literacy hour.

Southampton LEA’s policy is . . . to try to include as many difficult and disruptive children in mainstream education as possible. But the council argues that this part of a wider “inclusion” strategy that pre-dates any attempts at emotional literacy. And the Southampton schools argue vigorously that emotional literacy works only if it is combined with a normal exclusion policy, not as a substitute for it. The Ofsted report shows that far from using emotional literacy to skimp on costs, Southampton still delegates a higher-than-average proportion of money to fund its special needs and out-reach programmes.

As Ms Nicholson at Mason Moor school acknowledges, emotional literacy “does not work with the extremes of children’s behaviour”. She sees a more modest role for it, as “a practical way of ensuring that the class functions properly”. That would be good enough for most heads now considering emotional-literacy classes for their schools.



*The Economist* - February 17<sup>th</sup> 2001 page 43.



## Conclusion

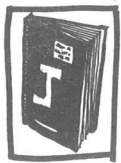
### Endings and beginnings

You have come to end of this umthamo but not to the end of exploring emotional intelligence we hope. The challenge now is to take the ideas you have and to find ways to diffuse these into your teaching on a day to day basis. By doing this you will be a teacher who grows and sustains resilience in your learners and who makes a positive difference to their lives.

In order to keep on being a teacher who makes a difference, you need to make sure that you also look after your own well-being. There is a saying that warns that “someone who tries to be everything to everyone, soon becomes nothing to no one”.

So as you do the final activity, be realistic and settle for doing what you can do well, rather than aiming too big and then being disappointed. We wish you well in your ongoing journey to being a teacher who makes a difference.

Earlier on in this umthamo, you wrote a short letter to a teacher or significant adult to thank them for what they had done or for being who they were/are.



In the face-to-face session where this umthamo is concluded, you heard the poems/praise songs that you wrote as a group about the teacher who makes a difference. You might like to end off this unit by writing a short letter to yourself about the following.

Imagine it is about 15 years from now, and you receive a letter from an ex-learner who you taught years ago. What would you like to read about yourself in the letter? (Write this letter from the learner's point of view). What would you need to do, how would you need to behave in the classroom, and what qualities would you need to show people, to make it likely to that one of your learners could write you such a letter in the future?

|                       |                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Nyanisile             | Ukuba ebengakho        |
| ndicinga              | ndicinga nge singa     |
| adi senamama          | fundi kodwa            |
| owamumama             | nge sicucalaza emizini |
| wa shona              | sihlelikabuhlungu      |
| Utatolwamandlazi      | ndicinga ukuba uho     |
| ucinga ukutini        | kundibisa senzen shoni |
| aka angizihlangu      | ngotata ukuzesitu      |
| andimazi ucinga htoni | mele izihlangu         |
| umntu osicedayo       |                        |
| gumakhulu             |                        |

**A page from Nyanisile Ngxiya's Journal - Grade 1 (2000).**

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***The body expresses what the mind believes and the heart feels, and adjusts itself accordingly.***

*The body is a graphic expression of one's total physical, emotional and mental state. Its tone, colour, posture, movements and tensions are an expression of the Self. These signs are a clear language that, when given space to emerge and be understood, offer the possibility for healing, growth and meaning.*

*It is in this sense that physical signs and symptoms, whether viewed as part of a recognised illness or not, are in fact the body's form of speech. More recently, with the advances in Western science, strict research is confirming age-old beliefs that the body and mind are not separate but rather one, a Body-Mind system that operates as a whole, a microcosm within macrocosm.*

*(taken from a flier for a seminar/workshop convened by The South African College of Applied Psychology in Cape Town in 1998)*



***Secure, confident, creative. "Lindsay" by Anne Coop.***

**UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE**  
**DISTANCE EDUCATION PROJECT**

**CORE EDUCATION STUDIES COURSE**

**Learning about Learning**

**6<sup>th</sup> Umthamo - What's the difference that makes the difference?**

First Pilot Edition - 2001



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Co-ordinated, illustrated and edited by Alan and Viv Kenyon

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