



Living Values Education

Rainbow Library Values Activity Series

SIMPLICITY & CARING FOR THE EARTH AND HER OCEANS

Section B Lessons 8 -17 for Children Ages 8-14

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SIMPLICITY AND CARING
FOR THE EARTH AND HER OCEANS
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**SIMPLICITY AND CARING
FOR THE EARTH AND HER OCEANS LESSON 8
The Ocean's Dead Zones**

Begin with a song with lyrics about nature.

Please read Chapter Four of the *Green Values Club* below.

Share a Story: We Can Make a Difference

Katie talked to some of her friends at school on Monday. They were amazed to hear about the whale, felt sorry for the little gull, and totally didn't know about the gyres.

"Why don't you talk to the teacher?" asked Carol. "Let's see if she'll let you tell the class about the gyres and the poor animals that die because they eat plastic. Maybe we can all get involved in helping."

"You really think everyone will want to?" asked Katie.

"Well maybe not everyone," said Kinesha, "but kids our age have really good hearts. We care about our planet – and our animal friends."

The girls talked to their science teacher at break and she was delighted. "Great," Ms. Bennett said, "we're starting our unit on the environment today. Katie, it would be great to have you share your story, and then let's see what ideas everyone comes up with. Learning about things is good, but doing something for our Earth is proof that we care."

Katie shared her story about the whale, the seagull and learning about the gyres with the whole class. She was a little nervous, and kept clearing her throat. She shared the ideas she and her family had come up with about reducing their use of one-use disposal plastic by 90 percent. Katie was amazed at the interest and the willingness of most of the students to commit to using less plastic.

"No more plastic bottles for me," offered Dana.

“My aunt brings her own cup when she travels on planes,” offered Ta.

“No more plastic cups or straws when I’m out,” said Maria, “I can ask for a real cup or bring my own.”

“Great ideas,” said Todd. “If it’s going to help, I’m willing to not buy plastic bottles of stuff. But, what if it’s really, really hot and I really want a soda? What if I buy it in a can?”

“Well, using an aluminum can is taking something you don’t need from the Earth,” said Ms. Bennett, “but IF you recycle it’s not so bad. It’s much better than using plastic.”

“Well, I don’t know,” said a girl named Pam in a doubting voice, “why should we even try? If just a few of us do this, it’s not going to help. We can’t affect thousands of square miles of toxic plastic soup.”

“Think of the one whale and the one seagull,” said Katie, all of the sudden feeling confident. “It was a small group of people that made a difference for them. Small groups of people can make a difference – and imagine what would happen if kids all over the world did this. Some adults are really into this already. What if all the kids got all their parents to help?”

Katie shared her parents’ idea about going to city council to ask for a ban on using plastic bags and plastic straws in the city. “I asked if I could invite some friends to go with us. Would anyone like to help?”

“Me,” “me,” “me” was heard all around the room. Katie, Carol and Kinesha beamed at everyone and Ms. Bennett looked pleased.

Ms. Bennett divided them into three action groups on Friday. One group was going to make posters to support the ban on plastic bags and straws and another group was going to make up banners with slogans on respect for the ocean and the Earth by reducing the use of

disposable plastic. The third group was going to create a petition to the superintendent to ban all Styrofoam and reduce the use of plastic.

Katie told Ms. Bennett that the city council meeting was going to be on Tuesday night and they were on the agenda. And Ms. Bennett told the whole class. “Everyone, if you want to go, you’ll need to have an adult with you as it is not a school event.”

“I’d love to go with you, Katie, to the city council meeting,” said one of the girls shyly. Tanya rarely spoke to anyone and usually looked a little sad, “but I have to go home right after school and then I can’t leave. My Mom is ... sick.”

Katie looked at Tanya carefully. Interesting, she had never noticed before but Tanya’s eyes were the same as George’s friend Tom and her hair was the same color and texture, a soft, thin brown. “Tanya, are you Tom’s big sister?” she asked.

“Yes, I am,” Tanya softly. “Do you know Tom? I hope he behaved himself around you,” she said, looking worried.

“He’s a good lad,” said Katie. “He was one of the boys who helped George and me with the gull.”

“I’m glad,” said Tanya with a little smile. “He could use a good experience.”

Katie had a feeling that Tanya could use a good experience, too.

George didn’t talk to his teacher, but he did talk to Tom, Hank and Kevin, his friends that had helped capture the seagull. They were amazed about the huge areas of toxic plastic soup in the ocean and appalled that so many animals were getting hurt.

“I want to help,” Tom said.

“Me, too,” said Hank and Kevin.

“Terrific,” said George. “I have an idea.”

George and Katie talked on the way home. Katie told all him all about Ms. Bennett’s science class on the environment.

“She told us,” said Katie, “that there are dead zones in the ocean where there is little or no oxygen due to fertilizer-run-off and nitrogen pollution. She said that there are 405 reported dead zones and that they are doubling every ten years!”

“That’s terrible,” said George. “So what happens in these dead zones?” asked George. “There isn’t enough oxygen for most fish to live?”

“Good thinking,” said Katie. “Unfortunately, the fertilizer-run-off and nitrogen pollution and pesticides kill the kelp. She showed us some pictures of these really cool kelp forests. They are so beautiful. The kelp forests provide food and shelter to thousands of species – and 50 percent of the world’s oxygen! Ms. Bennett said it’s just as important to keep the kelp forests healthy as it is to keep the rain forests healthy!”

“So how do we stop the fertilizer-run-off and nitrogen pollution?” asked George.

“George, that’s a really great question, and we didn’t ask it,” said Katie. “Let’s ask Mama and Papa when we get home.”

Katie’s mind flashed back. What had Ms. Bennett said?

“The chemical fertilizers and pesticides pollute the rivers and ocean,” Ms. Bennett had said. “Unfortunately, this can also impact the ground water and negatively affect the quality of the soil. Food grown with pesticides has been shown to have harmful effects on humans, contributing to many different kinds of disease.”

Ms. Bennett had assigned different groups to research specific components of fertilizers and pesticides. Tanya was part of the group Katie was in. “Wow,” Tanya had whispered to Katie, “no wonder we have dead zones in the ocean! Gyres and dead zones. We humans are not taking good care of our world.”

Ms. Bennett had overheard, “You’re right, Tanya,” she smiled. “It’s important to take care of our world.” Tanya blushed at the positive attention.

Ms. Bennett continued, “I want each of you to really think over the weekend – and the next couple of months – about what one thing you can do that would have the most beneficial effect on the Earth and Ocean. What would happen if everyone on the planet did the same thing?”

Discuss

- Would anyone like to share their reaction to the story?
- What actions did the three groups take in the story?
- What do you think you can do to help solve this problem of plastic pollution that contributes to the gyres?
- Do you know any place that uses Styrofoam?
- Would you like to help encourage them to stop using it?
- How can you do that?

Lesson Content

Source: The following excerpts were taken from the website of One World One Ocean.

<http://www.oneworldocean.org/pages/why-the-ocean>



The ocean is in trouble

90% of the big fish are gone. Tuna, swordfish, halibut, cod, and flounder populations have been devastated by overfishing. Many of the fish caught today never even have the chance to reproduce.

Discarded plastic bags and other trash have formed a **toxic "plastic soup"** that is gathering in five massive ocean gyres around the world. As the plastic breaks down, it is eaten by sea animals, birds, and fish, causing illness and death. It eventually enters our diets, too.

There are a reported 405 ocean "**dead zones**" – areas where there is little to no oxygen due to fertilizer run-off and nitrogen pollution. Dead zones are doubling every ten years.

Our oceans account for 71% of the planet, but **less than 2%** of our oceans are protected. We have protections in place for nearly 12% of all land (through areas like national parks).

The ocean is at a tipping point. Oceanographer Sylvia Earle says human actions over the next 10 years will determine the state of the ocean for the next 10,000 years.

Activities

As a whole group, ask the students to decide on two, three or four actions that they could implement locally that would help the environment. Help them decide on actions that are practical, sensible and appropriate to their age and skill level – so that they are likely to succeed in fulfilling those actions. A few of the actions could be implemented in the classroom. For example, ask them to think of ideas or ways to conserve in the classroom such as setting up a recycling bin, using paper on both sides, and saving magazines and little sticks to be

used for art projects. At the school level, they could generate ideas about how to be careful about not wasting water, pick up litter or plant trees and bushes. They could research environmental concerns to do with the school. They could question whether we are polluting or wasting our water. For instance, if the grass is being watered in the afternoon, they could ask the school principal to change the watering schedule from the afternoon to the morning to conserve water.

Thirteen to Fourteen Activity: In addition to the above activity, you may wish them to further research their action. For example, if they decide to ask the school/school district or city to ban the use of Styrofoam, they may wish to know more about the negative effects on the environment and human health.

Close with a relaxation/focusing exercise.

SIMPLICITY AND CARING
FOR THE EARTH AND HER OCEANS LESSON 9
One Thing Effects Many Things – Systems Thinking

Begin with a song with lyrics about nature. Ask how they are and if they have been thinking about the last lesson. Allow them time to share their thoughts and any related actions. How is it going with your class conservation efforts? Listen and acknowledge.

Please read Chapter Five of the *Green Values Club* below.

Share a Story: To the City Council!

School was fun, but it was nice to get home. At dinner time, Katie shared what Ms. Bennett said about the dead zones in the ocean as they sat around the kitchen table. The sunlight was still softly lighting the trees and flowers outside. Birds were chirping their last calls of the day and flying through the skies as they did every night at dusk. Katie took another bite of corn bread.

Papa nodded. “Yes, Katie, all of this is connected. What we do as human beings ripples out with all kinds of consequences for the world. One thing affects something else and sometimes many things, and each one of those things affects other things and those things affect something else. The artificial fertilizers and pesticides affect the soil, the plants that grow and add pollutants to the water. Those are like small amounts of poison.”

“If we just take the effect on the water, then we could look at the effect on health of humans, the need for water purification systems and the effect of the run-off that your teacher described when it goes down rivers and into the ocean. In some rivers the fish are dying off and mutating as a result of the pesticides. When rivers with a lot of artificial fertilizers and pesticides go into the ocean, it kills kelp, coral and fish. When the kelp dies off in those areas there is not enough food and oxygen for many fish to live. Added to that, the kelp is affected by overfishing as the kelp needs the waste products of fish to live. One thing affects another thing.”

“As human beings in this age,” said Mama, “we are just beginning to learn that we have to look and see the effects of something before we act. It is called systems thinking now. But native cultures understood

it well hundreds of years ago. They would say, think ahead for seven generations.”

“George thought of a question I wish I’d asked Ms. Bennett,” said Katie. “George?”

“So how do we stop the fertilizer-run-off and nitrogen pollution?”

Mama smiled, “Stop using artificial fertilizers and pesticides.”

“Go organic?” asked Katie.

“Yes,” said Mama. “It takes work because the soil needs to be made healthy again, and crops need to be rotated, but it would sure help our Earth and its oceans immensely, and all of us humans and animals!”

“Wow,” laughed Katie. “Maybe you just gave me my homework answer!” She told them about Ms. Bennett’s homework assignment.

Papa laughed. “That’s a great homework assignment. “Shall we all think about that one?”

“It’s good we’re having this discussion,” said Mama. “I buy organic vegetables when it isn’t so expensive because I know it’s better for us, but I never thought about how it is much better for the earth and the ocean.”

“Mama, Papa, could we have a little organic garden?” asked Katie.

Papa looked at Katie with a little frown. “It’s a great idea, Katie, but it would take some work. You know your Mama and I both spend a lot of time working and your Mama already has enough to do.”

“I could help,” said George.

Katie flashed him a smile.

“Are you sure?” asked Papa with a little frown.

George nodded seriously.

“Consistently?”

Both George and Katie nodded.

“Okay,” laughed Papa. “I’ll help too. I’ll help with the first deep dig.”

“Yea!” chorused George and Katie.

“I had an idea,” said George. “You know how our family and our friends at school are promising to cut our disposable plastic use by 90 percent? Well, that helps stop the gyres from growing, but what about all the plastic trash now? Shouldn’t we be picking that up and recycling it so it doesn’t go into the ocean?”

Katie gave George a tap on his shoulder. “You’re totally cool for a nine-year old.”

“Smart, I’d say,” smiled Papa.

Papa said he wouldn’t have time to dig for a couple of weeks. The gull was doing quite well in his new home and getting stronger. Mama said he would be ready for a test flight in a week. He was getting fatter and healthier looking, much to Katie’s and George’s relief. They had named him Captain.

On Tuesday night, the family went to the city council meeting. Katie and George were really pleased to see so many of their friends and classmates. Even Ms. Bennett came. They all gathered outside with their posters, greeting each other and introducing their parents.

There weren’t enough seats for them all in the city council chamber, so some stood at the back, holding their posters so the council members could see them. When their turn to speak came, Mama stood at the microphone and asked the city council members to approve a ban on plastic bags being offered to customers at stores in their city and plastic straws in restaurants. She suggested paper bags

be offered instead or that people bring their own bags to carry away their purchases. She suggested uncooked pasta noodles as a substitute for plastic straws if restaurants wanted to provide them. She spoke about gyres and how it was important for the health of marine animals, our ocean and humans to stop the toxic plastic waste.

When Mama finished, all the students and their parents applauded. The city council president looked around the room and said, “It looks like this suggestion has a lot of support – and it would certainly be good for our Earth. Would any of you young people like to speak?”

Carol and Kinesha looked at Katie, and Katie shook her head no. All of the sudden, Katie saw Tanya out of the corner of her eye with a woman who looked too old and frail to be her mother, and then there was Tom stepping up to the microphone.

“I think George’s and Katie’s mother is right,” said Tom hesitantly. Then in one long breathe he said a bit louder, “There was a seagull the other day down at the beach that had an old plastic bag around it that must have been there for a long, long time and he was really hurt and we have to think about the ocean and the gyres or whatever they are called and the animals that get hurt and the Earth and stop being so selfish.”

Everyone applauded. They clapped again when all the members of the city council voted for the ban on plastic bags and plastic straws.

Tanya gave a radiant smile to Katie before quietly slipping out with her mother and Tom.

Discuss/Explore

- What good ideas did the people in the story have?
- What do you learn from the story?
- What values do you think Tom used in the story?
- What other values did you see?
- What effect did those values have in the story?
- What effect would they have for us in our current environment?

Activity

Ask the students to make a flow chart of the effects described in one of the paragraphs of the story. (The paragraph from the story is below.) If needed, model how to do that, placing the word “water” at the highest point on the whiteboard, drawing three downward arrows, and then continuing to show how one thing affects other things.

“If we just take the effect on the water, then we could look at the effect on health of humans, the need for water purification systems and the effect of the run-off that your teacher described when it goes down rivers and into the ocean. In some rivers the fish are dying off and mutating as a result of the pesticides. When rivers with a lot of artificial fertilizers and pesticides go into the ocean, it kills kelp, coral and fish. When the kelp dies off in those areas there is not enough food and oxygen for many fish to live. Added to that, the kelp is affected by overfishing as the kelp needs the waste products of fish to live. One thing affects another thing.”

Ask the students, and help them as necessary, to add other factors to the flow chart. For example, some fish dying off results in less fish for consumers and less recreational fishing; it may also result in poorer

health for those who eat sick fish. Where does “dead zones” go in the flow chart?

Now do two more flow charts, one for “Using Pesticides” and another for “Organic Farming”.

Eight to Eleven Activity: Ask the students to write a poem or a song about any one of the topics in the story. Invite those who wish to do so to share their poem or song with the class. Perhaps choose one to recite or sing together.

Twelve to Fourteen: Invite students to form small groups and investigate the effects of using pesticides versus organic farming and list all the factors that are affected. Then ask them to create a large mind map, with pesticides on one side and organic on the other of the central circle. Use the same topic branches on each side and detail out all the effects, using the flow chart effect on the branches and sub-branches to show how one change affects many things. Invite them to illustrate the mind map or create a song or poem contrasting the approaches.

Close with the Sending Peace to the Earth Relaxation/Focusing Exercise.

SIMPLICITY AND CARING
FOR THE EARTH AND HER OCEANS LESSON 10
The Exchange Between Trees and Humans

Begin with a song with lyrics about nature.

Please read Chapter Six of the *Green Values Club* below.

Share a Story: Trees, Oxygen and Hope

Katie felt wonderful the next morning when she awoke. It was gray and overcast with a bit of wetness in the air. She slipped outside to feed the gull. “Did you hear, Captain?” she said softly, “The city banned plastic bags and straws and we’re all going to work together to try and make our oceans and beaches safe again so you and your friends can be healthy and free. We’re going to have our first beach clean-up on Saturday.”

The gull seemed to like her pats now. “And, you get to fly again on Saturday – in only four days! Mama said your wing is almost healed.”

In science class they were now studying about the rain forest, deforestation, the interchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide between plants and humans.

“So, what can we do to help?” asked Todd.

“Well, if humans need the oxygen to breathe, and trees and plants produce that and process the carbon dioxide we exhale, what do you think would help compensate for the deforestation?” asked Ms. Bennett.

“Plant plants?” said Todd.

“Good thinking. And what are durable, long lasting plants?” asked Ms. Bennett.

“Trees!” said Todd, with a few echoes from around the room.

“Great,” smiled Ms. Bennett. “Actually, the United Nations Environmental Protection agency has a project asking people to plant one tree per person to help offset our carbon footprint. There was a one billion tree project in China and they achieved their goal of planting one billion trees. Green helps!”

“Speaking of green,” she said, “Katie asked me if she could make an announcement just before the end of class.”

Katie stood up in front of the class with Carol and Kinesha. “I’ve been talking with my family and Carol and Kinesha. My little brother wants to have a beach clean-up on Saturday. We could do it in the morning and play volleyball afterwards. Anyone interested?”

“Sounds great,” “Sounds good.” “Count me in,” sprang from all corners of the room.

Katie, Carol and Kinesha beamed. “Terrific!”

“Ms. Bennett said maybe we could even do it as a school project,” said Carol. “What do you think about calling it Seagulls?”

“What about the river that comes down into the cove?” asked Pierce. “Don’t we want to clean that up too?”

“Yeah, maybe we need a name that would mean more to more people,” said Megan. “Clean water?”

“How about Green Values Club?” suggested a small voice from the back of the room. Katie was surprised to hear Tanya speak up in class. Everyone else must have been surprised too because they all turned to look. Tanya blushed.

“Great idea,” said Todd, looking at Tanya.

“Yeah, terrific idea,” said Dana.

Katie smiled, and Carol and Kinesha looked pleased. “Everyone in agreement?” asked Katie.

Even Pam nodded yes.

The day of the Green Values Club beach and river clean-up was sunny and bright. A few parents and whole families joined them. Half of the helpers picked up plastic and other things they could recycle, and the other half picked up trash that could not be recycled. The bags

got a little heavy, but Papa and a few other parents would meet them, take the full bags and give them empty ones. Papa had arranged with the city to pick up all the trash bags later.

Some of the kids met at the beach and others who lived closer to the river walked down the river while picking up trash and met them for volleyball at 11:00. The older kids played volleyball and George and his friends went body surfing.

Katie was feeling hot and sweaty after an hour of picking up trash when she heard her name being called. She was surprised to see Tanya running toward her.

“Hi, Katie, hi Carol and Kinesha, I got to come! I haven’t been to the beach in years!”

As Carol and Kinesha went ahead, Katie waited for Tanya to catch up.

“Why haven’t you been to the beach in so long?” asked Katie.

“Well,” said Tanya, reaching down to pick up some trash, and turning a little away from Katie as she spoke in one long sentence, “the short story is my Dad got into drugs about four years ago, and got really mean, and then got killed in a fight two years ago, and my Mom got really depressed and started taking drugs too and so I had to be at home all the time with her because she won’t let me go anywhere and was crying all the time, only Tom could go anywhere cause she couldn’t handle him and he would just leave, and now with what we are doing with green values it’s like she has hope and I told her about your organic garden you want to make and she used to live on a farm when she was little and loved to garden and when she went to college she was a botanist and she said that if we kids could do something for the world then she had better start getting her own act together and so

she stopped the drugs and is in rehab and said I could come this morning and said if you want her to help she would be honored to help you with your garden because she was going to be okay again.”

Tanya was still looking down.

Katie reached out and squeezed Tanya’s hand. “I’m so glad you told me. . . . I would like your Mom to help me with the organic garden. Would you and Tom like to help too?”

Tanya looked up. “Love to,” was all she could say.

Tom, Hank and Kevin came home with George after the beach and river clean-up to watch Captain being released.

“Do you think he’s ready, Mama?” asked George.

“Let’s see,” smiled Mama.

“We’ll leave the box out with food and water for a couple days just in case he’s not strong enough to go far,” said Papa.

The boys lifted the stones and grill off the box. Katie lifted him out and put him on the railing of the patio and Mama carefully took off the gauze tape holding the one wing.

“Okay, Captain,” she said, “you’re free.”

Captain looked at her, flapped his wings a few times and took off.

Shouts of “Look at him go!” and “Go, Captain!” filled the air as the gull flew into the blue sky.

Discuss

- What feelings did you notice in the story?
- What values did you notice in the different people in the story?
- It sounded like Tanya’s mother was very sad and had lost hope. Knowing that the young people were working to help do something

positive for the environment gave her hope in the story. What is the feeling of hope? Do you think it increases our feelings of courage?

- Most of us have felt discouraged? What helps us feel encouraged again?
- Who remembers what we humans exhale?
- What do the trees and plants do with that carbon dioxide?
- Would you like our environment around here to be “greener”? (If the answer is “yes”, ask, “How do you think we could make that happen?”)

Activity

Explain more about the interchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide between plants and humans, how human beings breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide and how plants take in the carbon dioxide and create oxygen. (For older students, allow them to research this if there is time and they do not yet have this knowledge.)

Then say, “The relationship between human beings and nature is very important. Our life depends on the creation of oxygen from nature and we also benefit so much from the beauty of nature.”

Do something with nature today, perhaps planting a tree or planning to plant one, or taking a walk in a park and writing a poem to a tree or having a tree write you a poem. What would the trees of the world say? Allow those who wish to share a poem from a tree to do so.

Or, ask them to generate ideas for the home or the community. If litter or waste is affecting the clean water supply, address that issue. Perhaps plan to help clean up a local river. Some students may want to research local usage of pesticides and natural (and less expensive)

alternatives which do not pollute the earth or its inhabitants. They could write to their local Mayor sharing their ideas. They could make up respect-for-the-earth slogans and post them at school and at sports-game locales in the community. Allow them time to plan and/or write the necessary letters/proposals.

End with a relaxation/focusing exercise of their choice or a song or two about the beauty of the Earth or ocean.

SIMPLICITY AND CARING

FOR THE EARTH AND HER OCEANS LESSON 11

Growing Organic and Being Vegetarian Effects the Earth and Ocean

Begin with a song with lyrics about nature.

Please read Chapter Seven of the *Green Values Club* below.

Share a Story: An Organic Garden

“A perfect day to dig,” joked Papa the next weekend as they sat and ate breakfast at the kitchen table. “You kids sure do have us working!”

“Papa, I wanted to ask if we could do a beach clean up every week,” said George.

“And never relax another weekend in my life?” Papa joked. He looked at George’s disappointed face.

“George, the clean-up is a great idea and I know you’re enthusiastic,” Papa said more seriously, “but I would suggest once a month. You and everyone else can always pick up trash whenever you see it – but there are other things to do in life so you might get more

people if you do it once a month. That way you can keep the enthusiasm high.”

George nodded.

“What do you think, Lisa?” Papa asked.

“Well said! It’s nice to relax and rest occasionally, you two!”

Mama smiled at both George and Katie. “But, I was thinking it would be nice to have a picnic on the beach the next time we do a clean-up.”

George gave her a wide grin, “Could we?”

A few days earlier, Katie had asked if Tom, Tanya and Tanya’s mother could come and help in the garden. The three of them came over after breakfast. They arrived a little shyly, quietly knocking on the front door and saying very little. Tom hung back, unlike his usual boisterous self. Katie noticed how pale their mother looked. But, she had a pretty smile and was soon digging with Papa and Katie, George, Tanya and Tom.

It was a beautiful morning outside. The sun was slanting down, creating pools of light on the greens, blues, yellows and pinks. The earth smelled good as they dug.

“I’ve been missing the earth,” Tanya’s mom said when she finally spoke. “We live in

a little apartment so it's really nice to be here and feel the soil. This looks really healthy

– and you have great worms.”

She had brought some seeds and small vegetable plants with her and soon they were all chatting and planting the seeds and plants in the fresh new rows of earth. Tanya's mom told them in which direction to make the rows so the plants would get maximum sun, and showed them how deep to plant the seeds and plants.

It took a long time to dig and make the rows, so Mama invited them for lunch. The little family of three looked happy as they left.

When they were leaving, Tanya hung back to whisper to Katie, “Thank you, thank you, thank you.”

Katie had told Mama and Papa what Tanya had told her about her mom.

“How sad,” Mama said. Papa had nodded.

“Why would she take drugs when she didn't like her husband taking drugs?” asked Katie.

“Well, it sounds like things were really rough,” said Mama. “Sometimes people take drugs because they have emotions they can't deal with, like hurt or fear. When so many bad things happen, life can feel overwhelming. I'm glad you welcomed them to come and help in the garden,” said Mama. “People need to have hope and something valuable to do.”

“Aristotle used to say that happiness is a result of virtue. Doing something good will help her be happy again,” said Papa.

Later in the weekend, Katie announced at dinner, “I've decided on my answer to Ms. Bennett's homework question about one thing we can do that will most benefit the planet.”

“What’s that?” asked Mama.

“Be a vegetarian that eats organic food,” said Katie.

“How would that help?” asked George looking puzzled.

“Well,” said Katie enthusiastically, “if everyone was a vegetarian then people wouldn’t fish and we wouldn’t be overfishing and killing millions of fish, and if we all ate organic food then we wouldn’t be poisoning the ocean and creating dead zones and the oceans would have healthy kelp forests and enough oxygen for a healthy ocean and enough fish again for the whales and the whales and dolphins wouldn’t be getting trapped in nets because no one would be using nets!”

“You’ve really been thinking about this,” said Papa, looking a little surprised.

“And,” said Katie with a big smile, “that’s not all. If everyone was a vegetarian, then we wouldn’t be deforesting the Amazon because of the production of cattle and the demand for meat and the output of greenhouse gasses would be less so the whole planet would be healthier.”

“Good reasoning,” said Mama.

“But you’re not really going to do it are you?” asked George.

“Do what?” asked Katie.

“Be a vegetarian.”

“Well,” said Katie, with a pause and a pleading look at her parents, “I was thinking that maybe I can’t be a vegetarian that eats *only* organic food, but I could be a vegetarian that eats as much organic food as we can get.” She took a deep breath as she looked at Mama and Papa. “I would really like to try it. Can I please? I really do think it would help our planet.”

Mama looked at Katie, and then at Papa. “Luke?”

Papa looked at Mama. “It’s okay with me. She has some great reasons. Is it okay with you?”

“Oh Katie,” Mama said with a tiny worried look. “You would have to promise me that you would eat healthy.”

“The World Health Organization says it’s the healthiest diet for human beings,” said Katie.

“If you eat healthy,” said Mama firmly. “Promise?”

“Yes.”

“Okay. Then it is okay with me,” Mama said.

Katie sprang up and gave Mama and then Papa a big hug.

“I am proud that you’ve really thought about it and want to help our planet,” said Mama.

“Is it okay if I’m a vegetarian with her for two months and see if it works for me?” Papa asked Mama with a quizzical look.

Mama just laughed as she looked at her husband. Then she looked at her son with a questioning look. “George?”

“Not me,” cringed George. “It wasn’t my homework!”

“Okay,” laughed Mama. “Two veggies and two non-veggies. But if you two don’t eat healthy, I’m changing my mind!”

Discuss

- What values did the people in the story show?
- Aristotle, a famous philosopher from the time of the ancient Greeks, said that happiness is a result of virtue. What does that mean?
- I want you all to remember a time when you were especially kind. How did you feel afterwards?
- If you had a little garden, what would you plant?

Activity

Eight to Twelve Activity: Work on the environmental project that the class has undertaken.

Thirteen to Fourteen Activity: Invite students to divide into three groups and study the following. Group One, the deforesting of the Amazon; Group Two, the impact of the production of cattle, chickens and other animals in response to the demand for meat and the relationship of this to the output of greenhouse gasses; and Group Three, the effect of greenhouse gases on the climate and global change. Allow each group to share their findings and understand the relationship of each to the information of the other two groups.

Close with the Sending Peace to the Earth Relaxation/Focusing exercise.

SIMPLICITY AND CARING FOR THE EARTH AND HER OCEANS LESSON 12 Reducing Our Carbon Footprint

Begin with a song with lyrics about nature.

Vocabulary word: Please share with students the meaning of carbon footprint. To reduce your carbon footprint means that you are reducing your negative effect on the Earth.

Your carbon footprint is the sum of all emissions of CO₂ (carbon dioxide), which were induced by your activities in a given time frame.

Usually a carbon footprint is calculated for the time period of a year.

(Source: <http://timeforchange.org/what-is-a-carbon-footprint-definition>)

Say, “To reduce your carbon footprint means that you are reducing your negative effect on the Earth.” Please read

Share a Story: Carbon Footprints

“It’s sort of like anything,” laughed Papa, “it’s easy *after* you figure it out!” It was early Monday morning and he and Katie and Mama were laughing as they ate breakfast and talked about what to pack for their Papa’s and Katie’s vegetarian lunch. They usually had fruit and oatmeal for breakfast, so breakfast was easy.

Katie and George went out after breakfast to water their organic vegetable garden before school.

“Look, these little plants over here must have grown a whole inch since Saturday!” said George. They were delighted with their garden.

But it was a bit of a rough day for Katie at school. She didn’t have the usual lunch at school because it had meat in it and a couple of kids gave her a hard time when she told them she was going vegetarian.

“Oh, leave her alone,” said Kinesha after one of the students said, “What are you going to eat when we have a barbeque, a carrot?”

“They act like there’s nothing to eat if you’re a vegetarian,” said Katie, swallowing a lump in her throat.

“Just stay in self-respect,” said Carol. “Some people get upset with others sometimes when someone does something they feel they should do but don’t have the strength to do.”

“It’s not like I’m saying I’m better than them,” said Katie forlornly. “I respect their choices. I don’t make fun of them.”

“And that’s one of the reasons you’re so wonderful, Katie,” said Carol. “You really do respect everyone.”

It was a relief to be in science class as all the students were part of the Green Values Club and supported whatever anyone was doing to help the environment, even Pam. When she heard from a friend that

Katie was going to be a vegetarian, she smiled at Katie and said, “You have more determination than I do. Good for you.”

Katie was surprised. “Thanks, Pam.”

Ms. Bennett taught a class on greenhouse gases and the effect on global change. She explained more about the gases released by using cars, planes and buses as well as the raising and slaughtering of pigs, cows, sheep, turkeys and chickens.

“I saw a commercial when I went to Denmark,” offered Megan. “It showed a man who was a vegetarian driving a large car and another man on a bicycle who was not a vegetarian and asked which one had a bigger carbon footprint. The surprise answer was the vegetarian driving the big car had less of a carbon footprint! I had no idea being vegetarian could help so much.”

Kinesha and Carol looked at Katie and smiled.

At the end of class they spent time talking about how to reduce their use of electricity and gas. There were the usual things like turning down the heat and wearing a sweater when it’s cool, turning up the thermostat and taking off the sweater when it’s hot, and bicycling and walking more when possible. Ms. Bennett also introduced them to alternative green technology.

“Solar power is really advancing,” she said, “and becoming more affordable. Some schools are converting to solar power for their electricity, and some of the electricity-recharging stations for the electric-powered cars are being powered by solar power – so there are no emissions at all.”

The students had a great time researching the subject and were delighted to find a new technology that could convert disposable

plastic back into petroleum. “The challenge of course,” said Ms. Bennett, “is making that sort of thing widely available. It’ll be wonderful to see all the things that are invented in the next decade to help.”

One day they discussed reducing their consumption of “things” and the importance of considering what you are taking from the Earth when purchasing. “Not something most teenagers want to hear,” smiled Ms. Bennett.

The next couple of months were great. Tanya, Tom and their mother, Nancy, were coming over once a week to help with the vegetable garden. Their mother was looking less pale and much stronger. She was teaching Katie and George about composting. And they had beach and river clean-ups every month, with volleyball and swimming afterwards – and picnics every other time. George was so pleased. More kids and their families were getting involved and picking up trash whenever they saw it and the beaches and rivers were much cleaner.

“Class,” said Ms. Bennett one day, “three months ago I asked you to think about what one thing you could do that would have the most beneficial effect on the Earth and ocean – and what would happen if everyone on the planet did it? Your project will be due next week. On Wednesday, one-third of you will be able to present your proposal, with another one-third of you on Thursday and the last third on Friday. You can mind-map your ideas or present your ideas on poster board. Those of you who wish to give a PowerPoint presentation for your three to five-minute talk may do so, but you will also need to create a poster. The following week I will ask those with similar ideas to get together in groups and create songs, poems or skits/dramas. We

will end the semester with those. So, ladies and gentlemen, begin creating!”

Discuss

- How do you think Katie felt when someone made fun of her being a vegetarian?
- How do you feel when others make fun of you or a friend of yours?
- What anti-value are they using?
- What value could they use instead?
- Does anyone have any questions about the story?
- Have you thought about the homework that Ms. Bennett gave to Katie’s class? What is one thing you can do that will help our Earth and the ocean – and what would the effects be if everyone in the world did that? (Accept as many answers as they wish to give and list them on a piece of flipchart paper and save the list for the next Living Green Values lesson.)

Lesson Content

Please share the following as it explains more about what a carbon footprint means and what kinds of human activities cause the release of carbon dioxide – in addition to breathing! Please simplify the language for young students.

Source: <http://timeforchange.org/what-is-a-carbon-footprint-definition>

The total amount of greenhouse gases produced to directly and indirectly support human activities, usually expressed in equivalent tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂).

In other words: When you drive a car, the engine burns fuel which creates a certain amount of CO₂, depending on its fuel consumption and the driving distance. (CO₂ is the chemical symbol for carbon dioxide.) When you heat your house with oil, gas or coal, then you also generate CO₂. Even if you heat your house with electricity, the generation of the electrical power may also have emitted a certain amount of CO₂. When you buy food and goods, the production of the food and goods also emitted some quantities of CO₂.

Human-Related source of Carbon Dioxide

Source:

http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/co2_human.html

A variety of human activities lead to the emission and removal of carbon dioxide (CO₂):

- The largest source of CO₂ emissions globally is the [combustion of fossil fuels](#) such as coal, oil and gas in power plants, automobiles, industrial facilities and other sources.
- A number of specialized [industrial production processes and product uses](#) such as mineral production, metal production and the use of petroleum-based products can also lead to CO₂ emissions.
- [Carbon sequestration](#) is the process by which growing trees and plants absorb or remove CO₂ from the atmosphere and turn it into biomass (e.g., wood, leaves, etc.). Deforestation, conversely, can lead to significant levels of CO₂ emissions in some countries.

On the One World One Ocean website they suggested that people do four things to help the Earth and ocean.

- Use less electricity

- Use less gas
- Offset your carbon footprint
- Lower your food miles

Discuss

Say, “Please tell me what reducing your carbon footprint means.”
(Help them understand if they are still not clear about the concept.)

Ask:

- How can you use less electricity?
- What if the electricity is solar powered – would that be better for the planet than using electricity made from coal or oil? Why?
- How can we use less gasoline?
- Would walking and bicycling more help reduce your carbon footprint?
- What if you had a car powered by electricity? Why would that be better for the planet?
- What if the electricity in the car was recharged by a station that used solar power? Would that reduce the negative effect on the planet even more?

Offsetting your carbon footprint means doing something “green” to help the planet to negate the effect of the carbon dioxide emissions. So, planting trees would help if you drove a lot and used a lot of gas.

Ask:

- We can all plant trees, and that would “offset” your carbon footprint, but we need to work both ways, doing something beneficial for the Earth and reducing our

carbon footprint. So, how can you reduce your carbon footprint?

- How can you lower your food miles? What do you think that means? (Buy locally-grown food.)
- What else do you think you can do?
- Do you think we can do anything differently in this class that would help?

Activity

Ask the students to draw a large footprint on a piece of paper. Inside the footprint they are to write all the things that contribute to their carbon footprint. Ask them what things they think they can do to reduce their carbon footprint. For example, they can walk or bicycle more or not buy so many material things. They can repair or recycle their toys and other material things. They can also reduce their footprint by planting a tree or ____? Ask them to make another picture with another footprint that is smaller, writing all the things they can do to make that happen.

Close with the Sending Peace to the Earth Relaxation/Focusing exercise.

SIMPLICITY AND CARING FOR THE EARTH AND HER OCEANS LESSON 13 What's one thing I can do to help the Earth?

Begin with a song with lyrics about nature.

Please read Chapter Nine of the *Green Values Club* below.

Share a Story: Living Green Values

You could feel the excitement of the students in science class on Wednesday. Ms. Bennett had posted a sign-up sheet for the presentations on Monday. Some of the kids wanted to be first and some wanted to be last, so those spots were taken first. Empty spaces were awaiting their posters on the wall.

“I just want to get it over with,” Carol had muttered.

Todd had already signed up for the first spot. He gave a very good presentation on the beneficial effects of solar and wind power on the climate. He thought switching from carbon-based energy production to renewable sources would stop the rising temperature of the planet and consequent slow melting of the ice caps and rising sea levels. He showed the system changes it would make, including cleaner air, the savings of not moving entire island-based communities, and the many health benefits, such as less children being affected by lead poisoning near freeways. He ended to applause from the class – and gave his classmates a smile of relief. “Glad it’s over!” he said.

Carol was second. She was also a little nervous. “I will start with a song,” she said to everyone’s surprise. Her clear voice was pretty as she sang . . . and comical as she slowed down dramatically on the last line of each stanza.

Be friends with each other,
Be respectful and kind,
To children and adults and all of humankind,
Don’t forgot the animals on the earth and in the sea,
Be friends to them all, like you are to me.
Friends ... pick up ... their ... trash

Don't pollute the water,
Don't waste things please,
Don't poison the ground,
the water, sky or trees.
Pick ... up ... your trash!

If we can do this,
Imagine what will occur,
Kelp forests will blossom,
And land mines disappear!
Pick ... up ... your trash!

Humans are smart,
But learn to be kind,
Then we'll all live safely,
And have a wonderful time.
Pick ... up ... your trash!

Everyone laughed and sang the last line with her. Picking up trash was the center circle of Carol's mind map poster. She had cleverly defined trash as anything that was harmful to humans or animals, so land mines were included. Each branch radiating from the middle was filled with factual details showing the many effects of picking up trash. Under clearing land mines was the increase in agricultural land and food production, reduced deaths and amputees, lower medical costs, greater well-being of families and increased production for society.

Each and every presentation was filled with good reasoning and enthusiasm. Some students were more nervous than others, but their work and determination showed through. Some were creative, some funny and some artistic. A lot of good ideas came out.

Katie was a little nervous about presenting her mind map. She'd worked hard on the facts and had taken pictures of the organic garden. She had many branches coming from the center circle that noted the benefits, included a reduction in greenhouse gasses, pollution of rivers and dead zones in the ocean, and an increase in the nutritional value of food and healthy kelp forests. Katie gave the class a big smile when the clapping finished.

The presentations continued Thursday and Friday. The last name on the sign-up list was Tanya's. Tanya came up slowly to the front of the class with a big roll of paper. It was much bigger than the other posters that had been presented.

Tanya stood up and smiled at everyone. Katie noticed that Tanya was less pale and looked more confident than she'd ever seen her look before. "Would someone please help me by holding this?" she asked.

Todd and Pam were there before Katie was halfway out of her seat. When the very large poster was unrolled all the students gasped and Ms. Bennett started to laugh.

The poster was gorgeous. The circle in the middle was a picture of the Earth from space and there was a green circle around that with white letters. There were an amazing number of branches and sub-branches on the mind map and each and every inch of the poster was covered with fine writing and hand-drawn pictures. Around the picture of the Earth the words written were, *Living Green Values, Respect and Care for Earth, and its Humans and Animals.*

Everyone started clapping. They clapped so long Katie could see Tanya's eyes swimming in happy tears.

"I thought that if we really respected the Earth and all humans and animals we would do all the things we've been talking about," said Tanya. "So, I just wrote them down."

The next week was fun. Ms. Bennett had them get together in small groups to create skits/dramas on the environment and songs and poems. Pam asked if they could do a show for the other students at their school and at the primary school. Pam sure was smiling a lot more now. "Hmm," thought Katie, "I think she has more hope."

Ms. Bennett accepted Papa's offer to take the whole class out on his work boat for a picnic on the little island near the place where Papa had found the whale. George and his friends, Mama, and Tanya's mom, were coming too.

"But," said Katie to the class with a somewhat worried look, "everything's going to be organic and vegetarian. Is that okay?"

Shouts of "Yes!", "Hooray!" and "Let's hear it for veggie burgers!" filled the air.

Discuss

- In addition to learning about the environment, what else do you think Katie's class learned?
- What do you think helped Tanya and her mother?
- What are other values besides respect and care that you think benefit the Earth?

Bring out the list that the students created during the last lesson to Ms. Bennett's homework question.

Ask:

- Is there anything else that you would like to add to this list?
- Is there anything that you would like to take away?

Activity

Help them in forming groups to mind map their ideas, showing how that one thing, if everyone did it, would affect many other things in the world.

If there is time, allow each group to share their results, they may need more time to make their mind map complete. Older groups may wish to research some of the results so they can do a thorough job

Close with the relaxation/focusing exercise, Sending Peace to the Earth.

SIMPLICITY AND CARING FOR THE EARTH AND HER OCEANS LESSON 14 Advertisements Try to Get You to Believe . . .

Begin with a song.

Share the following concept with students: Appreciating the beauty of nature and the earth sometimes allows us to appreciate the natural beauty of the self more. The more we appreciate natural beauty, the less we are fooled into thinking we have to own certain things or look a certain way to feel good about ourselves or be accepted by others.

In order to sell things, businesses hire advertising firms to create impressive advertisements so people buy their products. Often they

imply that you will be more attractive if you use their product or feel better about yourself if you own what they are selling.

These advertisements can fool people into thinking they need these things to be okay and for other people to consider them okay. When people hear many messages like this, they often forget about the importance of inner beauty. These messages do not encourage people to respect the earth or the inner self. The self knows there is natural beauty inside. When we have that awareness in our own mind, we can be content about our own value, enjoy others for who they are, and give happiness. Simplicity is being natural. Simplicity is beautiful.

Activity

Ask:

- What ads are aimed at young people your age?

List the ads they mention on the board. Take one ad at a time and ask them to discuss them. You may wish to ask the questions below about several different ads.

- What message is this ad giving?
- Tell us about specific advertisements. What is their message? What is the implication or the hidden message?
- What do they want you to do? Why?
- Is their message beneficial for you?
- Is their message beneficial for our planet? Why or why not?

➤ Then make another list, and ask them to create thoughts they think are closer to nature and natural beauty. Take another example and repeat. Keep a list of their examples.

Reflection Point for Ages 12 to 14: Discuss the following point.

◆ Simplicity asks whether we are being induced to purchase unnecessary products. Psychological enticements create artificial needs. Desires stimulated by wanting unnecessary things result in value clashes complicated by greed, fear, peer pressure, and a false sense of identity. Once fulfillment of basic necessities allows for a comfortable lifestyles, extremes and excesses invite overindulgence and waste.

Homework for all ages: For one week, ask everyone to experiment with simplicity by wearing simple clothes to school or when out with friends. Say you would like them to remember to keep in mind the following simplicity points: *Simplicity is being natural. Simplicity is beautiful.*

End the lesson, by playing a simple game or cultural activity that does not require purchasing anything. This could be a circle game with physical movement and song, a native cultural dance or song, a camp game or line dancing with a chant. Enjoy simplicity!

Follow-up Activity: At the end of the week, ask for their feelings and reactions about the homework. Ask them to write a short essay on their experience.

SIMPLICITY AND CARING
FOR THE EARTH LESSON AND HER OCEANS 15
Freedom from Desires

Begin with a song.

Ask students how they are feeling about their experiment of wearing simple clothes.

Activity

List the Reflection Points below on the board. Ask the students to form small groups and discuss the points.

The following points were offered by students at West Kidlington School:

- ◆ Simplicity is freedom from material desires and emotional desires – permission to simply “be.”
- ◆ Simplicity avoids waste, teaches economy, avoids value clashes complicated by greed, fear, peer pressure, and a false sense of identity.
- ◆ From simplicity grows generosity and sharing.
- ◆ Simplicity is putting others first with kindness, openness, pure intentions – without expectations and conditions.

Include the following Reflection Point in your discussion:

- ◆ Simplicity is giving patience, friendship, and encouragement.

Ask them to make up a slogan on simplicity that they would like to communicate to others. Allow them different options to decorate it.

Close with a creative visualization or a relaxation/focusing exercise.

SIMPLICITY AND CARING
FOR THE EARTH AND HER OCEANS LESSON 16
Enjoying Simple Things

Begin with a song.

Discuss/Share

Say, “Think for a moment of a time when you enjoyed something that you could not buy in a shop.”

Ask:

- What are the simple things you enjoy?
- How often have you said you were bored?
- Was it you that were bored or the things around you that were boring?
- How did our grandparents entertain themselves before TV?

Activities

Sentence Completion: Verbally or in written form, as you think most beneficial for your particular group, ask them to complete the following sentences.

I find life too complicated when . . .

I can calm myself down by . . .

Small group sharing: Form groups of four to five to discuss a simple pleasure you both enjoy, and what you think about in quiet moments. Report to the class. – *Contributed by Linda Heppenstall*

Dance: Put on some music and ask the students to dance simplicity.

Close with a relaxation/focusing exercise.

**SIMPLICITY AND CARING
FOR THE EARTH AND HER OCEANS LESSON 17**

A Play

Begin with a song.

Activity

Write a class play about rediscovering the simple things in life/nature. Perhaps perform it for an assembly.

– Contributed by Linda Heppenstall

SIMPLICITY LESSON 17

The Precious Present

Begin with a song.

A story that ties in well with the theme of simplicity is “The Precious Present” by Spencer Johnson. It is a simple story about someone who knows when we stay in the present moment, we are free to enjoy it and be nourished by it. We are free from guilt from the past and worry for the future.

The story relates well to the following Simplicity Reflection Points:

- ◆ Simplicity is staying in the present and not making things complicated.
- ◆ Simplicity is enjoying a plain mind and intellect.

Activity

After the students read it, ask them to write about what they learned and to draw a picture about their story (for younger students) or create a poem. For students ages eight to ten, attach the stories to the pictures and form a big book of lessons learned.

Close with the Drop of Water Creative Visualization.

SIMPLICITY LESSON 17

Simplicity Challenge – Declutter

Natasha Panzer, an 8th grade teacher at Mizzentop School, likes to offer the following Simplicity Challenge to her students.

She shares: “During this month, your simplicity challenge is to declutter your bedroom and your work space in your home. There is no specific time frame for this assignment. You will need to pick a time that works for you. Clutter is one of the biggest causes of stress in our lives. When we clutter our lives physically and mentally, it drains our energy. When we de-clutter our homes, we create more space for peaceful living.”

Discuss with the students the above idea and the Reflection Points:

- ◆ My mind settles more quickly and I feel clearer when my living space is not cluttered.
- ◆ I do not need so many things in my life to live richly.

She gives students the following information in written form:

Your goal is to only have objects out in your bedroom and your work space that are useful and/or bring you joy. Try to minimize the decorative items for the sake of this challenge and see how having only a few of your most prized possessions out changes the way your living space feels. After you de-clutter, try to keep your bedroom and your work space uncluttered for as long as possible. Happy de-cluttering! P.S. Playing your favorite music while you de-clutter will help the process along.

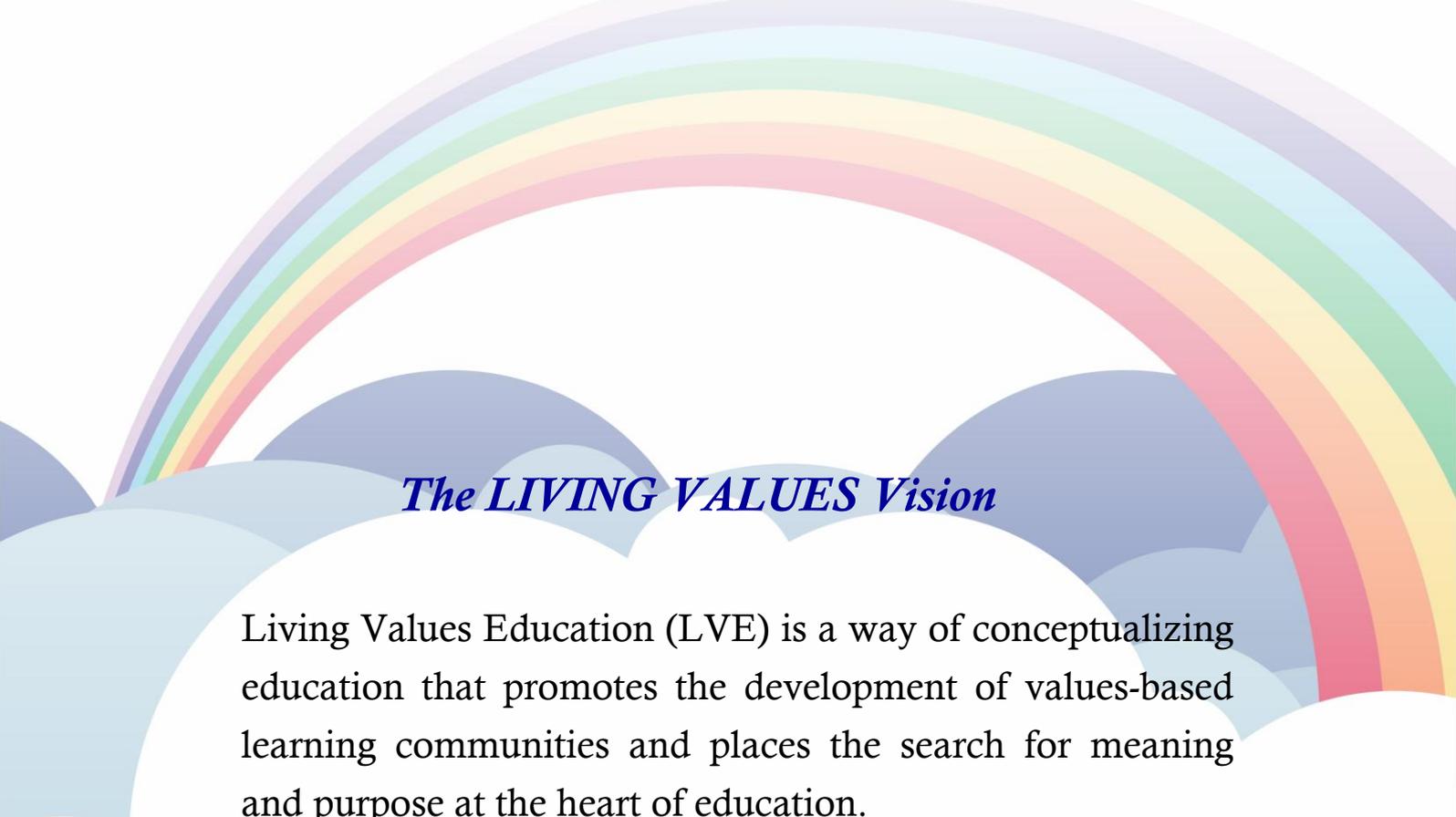
After you go through this process, please answer the following questions and return to me.

1. What possessions did you choose to leave out in plain view?

2. Did you find belongings to donate?

3. Was the process of de-cluttering difficult, liberating, fun, or torturous? Explain how you felt during the process and how you feel now that your space is uncluttered.

Thank you for participating in these exercises, if you have others that you have found effective, we would like to hear from for possible inclusion - resources@livingvalues.net



*The **LIVING VALUES** Vision*

Living Values Education (LVE) is a way of conceptualizing education that promotes the development of values-based learning communities and places the search for meaning and purpose at the heart of education.

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