
THE LITTLE BOOK OF INSPIRATIONAL TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Bringing NLP into the Classroom



David Hodgson Edited by Ian Gilbert



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Introduction

*The mediocre teacher tells.
The good teacher explains.
The superior teacher demonstrates.
The great teacher inspires.*

William Arthur Ward

I'm delighted that this book is being published as part of the *Independent Thinking Series* of Little Books. I used to think only Stephen Fry or the BBC could save Britain from itself. Now I think it's up to teachers and people such as myself who are doing our best to blaze a trail. Richard Bandler, co-founder of Neuro Linguistic Programming, has said, 'There is no such thing as learning disabilities, just teaching disabilities.' Before you throw down this book in disdain, with a Jeremy-Paxman-interviewing-a-politician look on your face, don't worry. This isn't about slating teachers. There's enough of that already. 'Respec' to da teachers' I say. I genuinely believe the only way we can change the world is by changing the way we teach children.

Independent Thinking Ltd is doing to the curriculum what Jamie Oliver did to turkey twizzlers. The challenge is to convince all of the brilliant teachers out there to believe in themselves as much as they believe in their students. I'm looking forward to the day teachers strike – not for extra pay but because they don't want to let the politicians mess up education anymore. Fire fighters did this a few years ago and received massive public support.

John Taylor Gatto, a teacher for over 30 years, writes eloquently about the need for a rethink on education in his book *Dumbing Us Down*. He describes the real curriculum obscured by the sound bites and pronouncements from politicians, business people and religious groups. It makes uncomfortable yet enlightening reading and I consider it a call to arms for teachers. It has inspired me to put together this collection of activities.



Did you see that programme about naturism?

A rather pleasant, plump, middle-aged woman, wearing only her handbag, was being interviewed by the pool. She remarked that most naturists were, physically, 'nothing much to look at.' The evidence – assorted middle-aged naked people milling around the pool or splashing in it – supported her observation. She went on to assert that younger people don't enjoy naturism when their bodies are at their best because their confidence is at its lowest. What would the world be like if it were the other way round? Listening to this woman, with rapt attention, I had two thoughts. First, isn't education about building and boosting young people's confidence so they can be and do their best? Second, can sitting naked on slatted plastic garden furniture really be comfortable?

The purpose of this book is to provide you with 62 activities designed to inspire people to be their best. So come with me. The activities are described succinctly on a series of playing cards and many require little or no preparation.

They adhere to the following Rules of Inspiration:

The Rules of Inspiration

They RING!

For an activity to work, it should be Relevant, Interesting, Naughty or a Giggle. If they are all four you're really chiming.

If you're not sure whether an activity is relevant, put yourself in the shoes of your audience and ask the 'WIIFM?' question, 'What's in it for me?' What do the students gain from listening and taking part? Are they clear about the gain?

You can judge whether it is interesting or not by measuring the response of the students. Do they sigh with boredom when you introduce the lesson, or sigh in disappointment when it ends?

6 of Diamonds: Group Challenge

This is an energiser activity similar to *Parachute Jump*.

Assess the group, or ask, to determine whether they wish to work co-operatively or competitively. Each team adds their scores together to see if they can beat the best-ever total (currently 75) or work in tables against each other. Generally, boys like to be competitive and girls co-operative. I don't mind as long as they play.

Other examples include giving different tables different objects and asking them to come up with as many uses as possible for the object. You can bring in things from home. If you're a Primary school teacher it seems to be a compulsion to collect items from your house and neighbourhood and take them to school. I wonder sometimes what it must be like living with a Primary teacher. Things must regularly go missing and end up in classrooms. Actually, it must be like living with me, as I take all sorts with me to my training sessions including rubber gloves, big knickers (see earlier), water pistols, umbrellas and Russian dolls.

I was stopped at Customs once when flying to a venue and had to open my case and talk a bemused security official through a bizarre collection of items. He seemed very interested and thankfully decided against any deeper probing than trying on one of the glove puppets I had with me. Though I'm told there are worse gloves a customs officer can put on ...



6

Group Challenge

Time: 10 mins



Activity: Each group is seated around a table and given three to five objects. They have to think of as many uses as possible for each object within a time limit, five minutes is good.

Learning Point: This activity encourages divergent thinking and creativity.

The purpose of these activities can also be to highlight that creativity is fun and we can all do it. Our brains work better when they're allowed to be creative and RING (are Relevant, Interesting, Naughty or a Giggle). We can believe in ourselves because we all have this amazing brain.

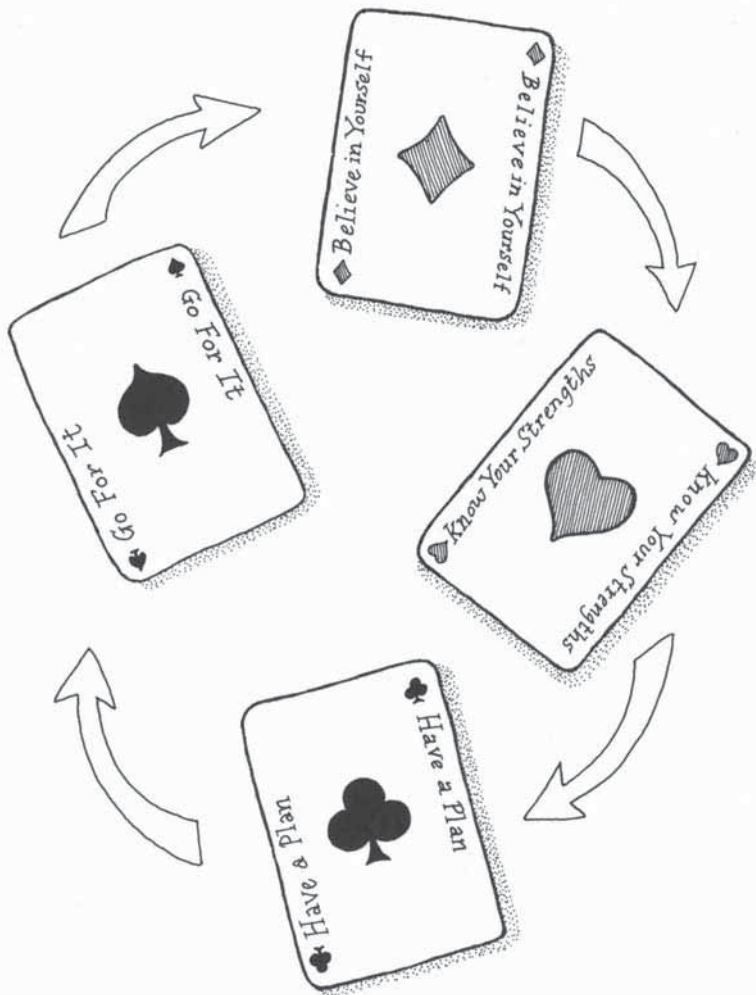
Preparation: You will need some objects.

Sometimes I just improvise with stuff in the room I'm in but if you add in some unusual items it enhances the activity. A rubber glove, fluffy toy, leaf, etc. results in more creativity and fun.



6





Know Your Strengths

*It's not about how clever you are;
It's about how you are clever.*

We can begin to know ourselves once we believe in ourselves.

The big challenge for educationalists, parents and society is to help people discover and feel good about what they can do without feeling bad about what they can't. Schools sift, sort, label and stream children like bananas being industrially sorted and graded. A-grade 'best' bananas wrapped one way, through to C-grade fruit packaged simply for everyday use. And in schools, too, many are D-graded. The answer is to believe we're all trying to be our best, unique individuals with something positive to offer the world. We can all leave the world a little better when we leave it than when we arrived.

We're up against 24-hour news and commercialism but surely it's worth the effort. The media tends to scour the world for the most horrible and graphic stories possible, intent on showing the worst humans can be, and do to each other and their environment. It is not balanced by the good stories, even though there are plenty of people doing amazing things to improve the world.

Commercialism deludes people into thinking happiness comes from the latest gadgets. One hundred years ago products were made to last for years. Now manufacturers have realised they can sell more if people update products more regularly. It's called 'planned obsolescence' and mobile phones in particular seem to be based on a six-week 'coolness' cycle before they should be discarded for the latest, better product. It's not what products do, it's what they say about us.

It seems madness to me and I have thought about leaving to join a hippy commune, somewhere my mobile phone and I are not



ridiculed for being 'so last month'. Alas, I've never looked good in oversized rainbow coloured knitwear so here I stay.

The activities in this section are designed to help individuals discover their natural strengths, positively. As my dad said: 'Remember, you're better than nobody else but nobody else is better than you'. He also told me 'red sky at night shepherds' delight, red sky in the morning sailors warning'. I've never been able to put this second one into practice, as my life/career choices thus far have excluded looking after sheep or sailing. If I'm ever asked to take a herd of sheep across the English Channel though I'll have my eyes glued to the sky. I hope I'm not colour blind.

The Multiple Intelligence theory by Howard Gardner (*Frames of Mind*) is also a powerful way to help people understand their strengths, and much of this section is based on activities which explore his theory. Multiple Intelligences are used in Card Activities *Ace to 9 of Hearts*. Here is a brief summary. Gardner first identified and introduced the idea of Multiple Intelligences around 25 years ago—a relief to all those with reservations about the limitations of IQ as a measure of intelligence and the disproportionate importance attached to maths and English in schools. They are often referred to as 'SMARTS' in education to simplify the terminology. I call them MINTs (Multiple INTelligences) just to be different. Giving someone the chance to be smart in eight broad ways instead of two has to be more positive and useful.

People MINT

Able to understand other people; their moods, desires, motivations. Getting along well with other people.

Self MINT

An understanding of yourself, your feelings, strengths and weaknesses. Confident, able to control your own emotions and stick to goals and targets.

Word MINT

An interest in words, reading, writing, discussion, jokes based on word play, telling and listening to stories.

Number MINT

Ability in maths and other logical thinking. Work sums out in their head, may enjoy brainteasers and puzzles. Like to ask/wonder why things are as they are.



Music MINT

Ability to understand and create music. Musicians, composers and dancers show a heightened musical intelligence, have good sense of rhythm. Like to listen to music whilst doing other activities.

Picture MINT

Ability to 'think in pictures' to see the visual world accurately, and recreate (or alter) it in the mind or on paper. Spatial intelligence is highly developed in artists, architects, designers and sculptors. Good with maps, graphs and charts or design and fashion, combining colours and styles.

Body MINT

Ability to use your body in a skilled way, for self-expression or toward a goal. Sports men and women, dancers and actors display this intelligence. Good co-ordination, can mimic others.

Nature MINT

Ability to understand the world of plants, minerals and animals. An enjoyment of the outdoors, animals, environment, conservation.



I also find that the work Robert Dilts has accomplished on Logical Levels is a fantastic framework for helping people think through their strengths, and I've included some activities based on this work in this section. There is a full description in Part Two.

Further activities in which you can explore MINTs include the following:

Ask people to think of jobs based around their strongest MINT and collate results. Challenge the group, in their teams, to suggest an occupation for each of the following: the best-paid; the most exciting; the most useful to society. They should all come up with worthy answers because *all* MINTs are valuable to society.

Many people say they are good at two or three MINTs, not just one. This is great and you can give people the opportunity to explore their own profile of MINTs and what this means for their choices of course/career.

You may also consider an activity for each MINT to help people appreciate the diversity of intelligence. Each card, 2 to 9, covers a separate MINT. Together they could support a half-day session. I have put groups into teams and then taken them through a series of challenges, teams competing against each other, to show the range of MINTs and have found that different group members will shine at different tasks.



Ace of Spades: Go For It State

Think of and describe the moods you were in when you did your very best. Compare your feelings within your group. The best states are positive, go for it, in the zone, that sort of thing, regardless of whether it's for sporting or personal success.

We achieve our best when we're in positive states. We may not always get the result we want but we'll have done our best and we can do no more than that.

This activity underpins the theme of this book, namely inspiration. It follows the other suits.

Although you don't need props, I received interesting feedback from a careers adviser using this activity. She bought a number of gingerbread men and piping icing, so each mood could be represented on to a biscuit. A means of learning that also creates a tasty snack has to be a great idea.

A great example of people preferring to stick with what they know can be found in the list of items the British take on holiday with them when they travel abroad. This can be a good guessing game with a group. What do you think? What do you take abroad?

The top five in the survey I read were:

- Tea bags.
- Chocolate bars.
- Jars of Marmite.
- Packets of biscuits.
- Tins of beans.

A

Go For It State

Time: 5-10 mins



Activity: Ask students to compare how they feel when they're at their best and at their worst. Provide examples of sporting performance, interviews, exams, Christmas morning, birthdays etc.

Learning Point: We tend to perform well when in a positive state such as go for it or relaxed, and badly when we're nervous.

Preparation: None.



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THE LITTLE BOOK OF INSPIRATIONAL TEACHING ACTIVITIES

is a collection of NLP-based activities developed to use with students to spice up lessons, learning and life in general. Short, easy to follow and engaging, the activities are split into four sections corresponding to the suits of playing cards: Know Your Strengths; Believe in Yourself; Have a Plan; Go For It.

"I could fill a year's worth of training for teachers using these techniques alone and the best thing is they transcend all curriculum areas."

Yvonne Haymonds, Curriculum Co ordinator,
Connexions Hub Services in Tyne and Wear

"... an ideal guide for teachers who want to use NLP in the classroom but aren't sure how to start."

Kath Bennett, Assistant Headteacher, Sunnydale Community College

"The Little Book of Inspirational Teaching Activities succeeds in providing easy and effective activities that can be used in a variety of settings and with a wide range of young people."

David Hobbs, CEO of the Connexions services in Manchester,
Salford, Tameside and Rochdale

"This is a great way of making NLP techniques and solution-focused approaches accessible to practitioners/teachers and young people alike."

Michaela Gill, Senior Lecturer, Postgraduate Diploma in Careers Guidance,
Manchester Metropolitan University

David Hodgson, author of *The Buzz*, is a Master Practitioner and Trainer of NLP and works with young people and those who work with them on motivation, goal setting, life skills and employability.



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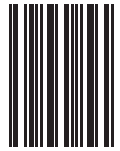
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