

# IN THE QUIET SPACE: INNER QUIET AS A COMMUNITY RESOURCE

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*In this narrative, the authors examine the use of inner quiet and how it can serve various populations in the community as a coping resource in time of need. In a modern world that is confusing, insecure, noisy, and rapidly changing, the lack of inner anchors exposes populations in need to many pressures. They describe how the "In the Quiet Space" program has taught self-calming coping skills to a client with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; a holocaust survivor and bereaved mother; a foster mother; social workers; drama therapists and a child care leader. This is a program that is useful to both children and adults, and to clients of various social, ethnic and religious backgrounds. The testimonies of these clients suggest the need for more quiet spaces in the community. Note that pseudonyms are used to describe their clients' experiences in order to protect their privacy.*

*"Nor is it good to be without knowledge of the soul." (King Solomon, Proverbs)*

Commenting on the above proverb, Irving Bunim, in *Ethics from Sinai*, says:

*"Everyone should be aware of those conditions that enable the soul to expand and thrive. Silence is such a condition. When your body is quiescent, when your ears get a vacation and your eyes relax and your tongue lies still, then can your soul speak up. In the distracting din of ceaseless chatter, the 'thin silent voice' of Divinity is often drowned out" (Bunim 1964).*

This was written just under two thousand years ago, a good while before Facebook, Twitter, Internet, iPods, Kindle, telephone, television, fax, cars, Google, DVD, and the advertisement explosion. By the 1940s, Aldous Huxley had already named the twentieth century "the century of noise," and that was well before the telephone was commonplace. But he was referring to more than the level of physical or mental noise in a rapidly urbanized western world. He was intuitively telling us that we were entering a new stage of humanity in which the technologies of the media—then,

only film, radio, television, and newspapers—were devoted to a never-ending noise of desire.

It was Alvin Toffler (1971), who thirty years later, in his book *Future Shock*, opened our eyes to the consequences of living in what had become not just a very noisy world, but one that was accelerating at an unheard of speed in terms of technology, information, and change. We had lost and discarded many of those anchors—myths, religion, social solidarity, traditions and identities—that, in the past, had helped us cope with the vagaries of life. At the same time, the rate of change had disturbed our inner equilibrium by increasing the pace of life and complicating its structure by multiplying the number of roles we were required to fill and the number of choices we were required to make. In short, life had become far more complex. People needed to be far more adaptable and capable than ever before, and needed to search out new ways to anchor themselves.

A new program called In the Quiet Space (ITQS) is such an anchor for the modern world. ITQS is like a bricolage, a new creation that uses old materials in a different way. The two main elements of ITQS are a simple sensory room/corner and a conditioned self-calming technique. The experience in this kind

of quiet space, combined with the learning of the technique, provide a cognitive-behavioral coping skill for all kinds of populations in a variety of contexts.

All the components of the sensory environment, called the Quiet Space, are specifically designed to encourage an atmosphere of trust, calm, and quiet. The colors are soft and soothing; there is low, pleasant music; lights are soft, never harsh; there is a pleasant aroma in the room; and the furniture or floor cushions are soft and comfortable—it is as if each of the senses receives a gift that quickly reduces tension in body and mind.

Within this quiet and pleasant environment, we teach a technique of conditioned calming, which systematically associates a gentle cue with a positive physical and emotional state. The special cue or key words are three Hebrew words: Naim, Shaket, Ragua (in English: Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm). The cue words radiate tones that are phonetically pleasing and echo the essence of the words. The learning, too, is easy and pleasant, and when practiced daily for five minutes over a period of a month, the feeling of calm becomes conditioned. After this, when someone says the three words silently during a time of pressure, whenever and wherever they are, they automatically reconnect to the profound feeling of calm and quiet experienced in the Quiet Space. The result is an ability to think more clearly, and then cope with pressure from a place of higher functioning—no longer responding with old, ingrained patterns of past behavior, but with new, positive avenues of action.

My wife, Pamela, and I, with the help of several other professionals, all working in the north of Israel, developed the ITQS program over ten years ago.

### **How ITQS Began: Pamela's Story**

"It was on the path of learning new ways to help children with severe developmental problems that I was exposed to a special experience that offered me a new sense of profound calm for the first time in my life," says Pamela.

At the time, she was working as a drama therapist at the Child Development Center,

which was a department of the Seiff Hospital in Tsfat, a small city in the hills of the Galilee. The children who came to this Center were all suffering from developmental difficulties such as Cerebral Palsy, Autism, Attention Deficit Disorder, Down's Syndrome, and various behavioral and cognitive difficulties.

One afternoon, Pamela and the other therapists and teachers at the Center attended a lecture sponsored by the Ministry of Education at a conference in Tel Aviv. The lecture was presented by Mimi Semuha, an experienced supervisor in the field of autism, who spoke about the use of relaxation techniques in her work with autistic children (Semuha, 1992). Mimi had learned a similar technique from her father, a psychiatrist, who had introduced her to the technique when Mimi was a child, to help her overcome her fear of dentists. The scientific basis of the technique was Pavlov's research on conditioning. Years later, when she was teaching in America, Mimi remembered how her father had helped her overcome her fears, and she decided to implement the technique with an especially difficult class of autistic children, whose tantrums were extremely hard to cope with. Her success encouraged her to continue using and developing the conditioned relaxation technique in Israel.

"Mimi had us lying on the floor, on mats, in a darkened space, with classical music playing in the background," Pamela said. "We were doing progressive relaxation exercises but with an addition: the repetition of the words, Relax, Quiet, Calm Down, and within five minutes, I experienced a great sense of calm. But not only did I feel it within myself, I felt it all around me. The whole group of women, who were behaving like a bunch of noisy school kids just moments earlier, had become calm and quiet."

Pamela immediately invited Mimi to the Child Development Center in Tsfat to help implement the conditioned calming technique with the children she was working with.

In time, Pamela adapted Mimi's technique of conditioned calming to her own uses in her work as a drama therapist at the Development Center, and then in much broader contexts. Pamela explains that the key anchor Hebrew

words that we came up with for the conditioning were Naim, Shaket, Ragua (Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm). The acronym for Naim, Sheket, Ragua—NSR—is pronounced Nesher. And Nesher in Hebrew means eagle, a fitting image, one that we have used ever since. An eagle hovers high above the ground waiting calmly before it acts down below. The eagle is referred to as the king of birds, reminding us that a successful king in human terms must first learn to have good control over himself so that he can function better as a ruler.

Pamela successfully implemented this technique using the Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm key words in four different kindergartens of Arabic and Hebrew speaking children. She recalls one of her earliest experiences:

*"I was working with a child, who had learned the Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm, technique. This child had many temper tantrums daily, especially when any type of transition or anything unusual was in the air. That day there was a birthday party in the kindergarten and I was sitting next to her in a circle waiting for the party to begin. Suddenly the kindergarten teacher put on some music and started the party. The child sitting next to me became very tense. I recognized the signs and I knew that she was about to start screaming, so I just touched her on the shoulder and whispered to her, 'Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm.' She made a big sigh, as if she had released all of her negative energy. Her tense shoulders and face changed from scream mode to listen mode. She looked around and saw that the music was only 'Happy Birthday to you.' She forgot all about being upset and began to enjoy the party."*

As it happened, someone had brought a video camera to the party and had taped the scene with Pamela and the little girl. This was

the first time we had been able to see the process at work from a distance.

According to Pamela:

*"The practice of Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm in the kindergarten had brought about a change in the whole atmosphere of the classroom. The practice involved dimming the lights; playing soft, pleasant music; and sitting on mats with the children, whom we cradled or stroked because of their developmental needs and young age. We found that, in most cases, touch helped to contain the children. At the beginning, we lay down, and then two-thirds of the way into the practice we started sitting in a circle on the floor, instead. This promoted eye contact and nurtured a feeling of care and intimacy."*

*"The staff loved this quiet, intimate practice time because it enabled a special relationship to develop with the children. But for them, too, it was something special to find a place of real quiet and calm in the middle of the day's pressures. We were very pleased to notice that this good atmosphere did not end with the experience itself. The readily observable benefits of the ITQS practice sessions were the ability of the children and staff to get more out of each following session: more listening, more concentration, more eye contact, and more calm. And the transition from one activity to another was made easier, too."*

The major benefits to the children showed themselves after approximately one month's daily practice, when the inner calm feeling experienced during practice sessions became conditioned. The staff then had a skill to use to calm the children individually or in a group, whenever needed. Some children were able to self-calm without the help of a staff member

and even began to help their classmates by suggesting, with a gentle touch or whisper, that they say the key words instead of crying.

During this time, Pamela took a trip to England, where she made her first visit to a Snoezelen room, which is a multi-sensory environment, initially developed in the Netherlands in the mid 1970s. It was a purposely designed environment or room (mostly white), providing controlled multi-sensory stimulation for people with physical and/or mental disabilities. The purpose was to help connect patients to the world around them, through stimulation of their senses.

Inspired by the concept of the Snoezelen room, and especially influenced by the feeling of care and respect that the room offered, Pamela helped create a special sensory room in the Child Developmental Center in Tsfat. In time, she left behind the expensive equipment and whiteness of the Snoezelen environment and developed, instead, her own inexpensive and simple sensory environment, devoted less to arousing the senses and more to calming them.

Practicing drama therapy in this Quiet Space furthered a faster and deeper relationship with the children than she had ever experienced before, which enhanced the therapeutic work.

Pamela described her experience:

*"After the Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm technique was successfully implemented in a sensory environment within the framework of special education, we started to imagine the benefits that an approach based on ITQS could offer to mainstream education in kindergartens and schools.*

*"During those same years when we were implementing ITQS in special education, there was an effort within the Israeli education system as a whole to generate new ways of coping with the rise of behavior problems in schools, in particular violent behavior. So when we offered ITQS to a*

*mainstream school to help reduce the level of tension and pressure, it was gratefully welcomed. From then until now, ITQS has spread into various social, educational and therapeutic programs. But initially, we created the sensory rooms in the schools. For the children, this was like going into a magical wonderland, a dramatic change from the drab school environment.*

*"What we understand today is that the children who learned the self-calming technique in the special sensory room can still feel the magic in a less dramatic environment, such as their regular classrooms. The conditioning still works and they still feel something special when they come into any style of quiet room or space, for example, in the classroom where they work under the guidance of the class teacher, who uses a special training disc that we recorded for this purpose. The pupils practice the technique while sitting in their classroom chairs, with only a few sensory additions, such as music and soft light, for five minutes daily. Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm still has its calming effect just as it did in the special sensory room."*

The concept of a Sacred Space was the contribution of one of the original members of the ITQS team, the philosopher Dr. Mark Cohen. His suggestion of adding a spiritual element helped us appreciate the real potential of a Quiet Space in people's lives. Mark said the new environment should be created with love, care and respect for all. He believed that because the room has something special about it, and into which we also bring our energy, it is a place one enters with respect. So we taught this to the children, and we created rituals like taking off shoes before entering the room; entering the room individually or in twos; not talking at the beginning, but just sitting and

looking around quietly. And it is in those first seconds in the Quiet Space that participants begin to sense that they really are in a sacred space.

Even if ITQS is in the classroom, many of the rituals that promote respect and quiet and calm behavior still remain. One of the rituals we sometimes use at the end of sessions involves the use of a talking box, which is any small object that can be held and passed from one child to another, designating who has the right to speak. A talking box is a reminder to listen to the person who is holding the box without interrupting, to give each other physical and emotional space, and to give care and respect to each person in the room.

### Implementing ITQS in the Wider Community

After many years of working within health and educational institutions, we realized that inner quiet is not a luxury item, but a necessary resource for all. Why, we asked ourselves, should it not be made available to the wider community? What could we do that would provide an anchor for a scared three-year-old child in a kindergarten, a teenager failing in school because of Attention Deficit Disorder, a dysfunctional family with six young children, a group of burnt-out teachers, a pregnant woman about to give birth, a sick and elderly person before an operation, or a group of children in an afternoon care facility or on a hospital ward?

With these questions in mind, we established an ITQS Center in Tsfat, the town where we live, to promote inner quiet as a local and regional resource. And from the ITQS Center, the practice of the Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm self-calming technique in a special sensory room or corner has migrated into homes and other venues throughout our town and the surrounding areas.

Through the eyes of those who have put into practice the ITQS approach in their homes, places of work, institutions, and professional work, we shall examine some of the benefits and drawbacks of the approach in these contexts.

### In a Children's Afternoon Day-Care Center

Naomi runs a Children's Afternoon Day-Care Center. She has fifteen needy children in her care, all from difficult socio-economic backgrounds:

*"I'm always very skeptical about new programs, but, anyway, for our first training session, as I walked into the room, which had been prepared in a very short time, I was immediately taken by the way it had been organized, by the fragrant smell in the air and by the relaxing music in the background. The atmosphere was very calming. I was pleasantly impressed by it all. The learning was then presented in the same vein of respect."*

*"I learned to prepare a Quiet Room in our Center, though I wasn't sure at all at the beginning how I would be able to get the children involved in it. The children are all from very difficult backgrounds. Not only that, I knew what sort of music they liked—loud and fast, not slow and calm. I knew they would like the Quiet Room because it was very attractive, but the whole quiet, calm atmosphere, that was something else. As soon as I put on the music, as anticipated, the comments started: 'What's this music? What are these words?'"*

*"We held the first meeting in the main area of our Center because that's what was suggested. I just put on the music in the background and we talked a bit. By the third meeting, the laughter had stopped, the children were already practicing Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm, and they were more attentive. By the fifth meeting, the children were also starting to use the talking box and opening up in the group in a way they had never done before. In the*

*past, personal issues would come up in one-on-one conversations with me. This whole process happened very quickly and easily.*

*"For example, in one activity, we had the music on in the background while the children chose a picture of nature that appealed to them. After that, we talked about the picture and practiced Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm. At the end, we did a round of sharing using the talking box. During the sharing, one eight year old girl started crying, telling how during the practice she had seen herself and her brother running very happily through a field of flowers with their father. This was a girl who was very upset that she had not seen her father for quite some time. Another boy chose a picture with icebergs. He saw himself on the icebergs; two angels accompanied him and then lifted him up above the iceberg. These are tough kids talking.*

*"When we started work in the Quiet Room you could see the children really felt they were entering some sort of very special space. We made sure the children took off their shoes and were given slippers. We gave the place a lot of importance, a place where we don't play around, we talk little and don't shout. Today the children are very protective of the room and don't allow any strangers in there.*

*"One of our children recently got in a fight in school, which was not very unusual, but what was unusual was the fact that he had not responded aggressively. He was called to the headmistress's office for a talk, and he told her what had happened. She told him that she greatly admired his ability to*

*restrain himself. 'How did you manage it?' she inquired. He explained that he had used Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm at the time of the quarrel and controlled himself, and added that if he hadn't done so he would have 'beaten the hell out of him.'*

*Today the children have more patience toward each other; when one speaks, the others are quiet; when one child has something to say, the others give him their respect. The group today is a lot more together; the kids share more openly with each other; overall I can see clearly a change in the way they react to each other and the staff. What made the difference was enabling the children to connect to their own place of inner quiet and truth. This led to a quieter community atmosphere. The level of sharing expressed a new-found belief and mutual respect in the group. Two of our children recently received a monthly award in the school for excellence. I cried when I heard about it.*

*"I myself have changed. I'm less anxious, calmer and more capable of controlling myself. The children, I think, feel it and are more open to me."*

#### **Coping with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

A couple had been referred by the Ministry of Defense to Pamela for drama therapy because they were having difficulty coping in the family with the husband, an ex-soldier, who was suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The need to cope 24 hours a day with the repercussions of PTSD meant living with intense non-stop pressure.

#### **Avi, the husband:**

*"Within a short space of time since I have been coming to the ITQS Center for drama therapy, a*

lot has changed in my life. I used to suffer greatly from anxiety, nerves, loss of control, explosions of anger, and a general lack of stability. Today I am a lot calmer without taking any medication. The words—Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm—resound in my head; no matter whatever is happening around me, I can use them. I avoid fractious situations and my relations with my wife and children have improved. When I arrived at the Center, I immediately felt comfortable. There was a calm, spiritual atmosphere there. I said to myself, 'this is a place I want to be; this place is good for me.'

"I listen to the training disc very often, especially in the car. Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm is in my subconscious; it's stuck there. Let me give you a few examples of how the technique works: I get less angry on the roads when I'm driving; the Sabbath is more like a real day of rest; it helps me calm down after getting angry or waking up.

"I feel today that my brain is like a computer. It knows how to navigate things so that there will be no complications on the way; it plans things so that life can flow; it's like a large control center. The background music on the disc communicates automatic calmness for me; it helps me to distance myself from my nerves, and from my disability.

"A few days ago I was in synagogue. Now, I really don't like it when people disturb me at the time of prayers. A teenager with a large hat stood next to me. He kept touching me as he swayed back and forth in prayer. It annoyed me considerably, so much so, that I was

just about to punch him and push him away from me, when all of a sudden, I just touched him on his hand. He then continued as before. I stopped again in the middle of the main prayer, and the feeling of Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm, came to me automatically, the sense of the quiet place and fragrant smell. My aggressive feelings completely disappeared, even though he kept on touching me.

"Someone nearby who knew me, saw what had happened, and came over to me. He asked me how it happened that I didn't just give him a good flick. 'In the past,' he reminded me, 'you would have shouted at him and left angrily.' I just smiled at him; he knows I can't stand anybody touching me. 'I just controlled myself,' I told him, 'and coped calmly with the situation; I just didn't pay any attention to what was going on, and all this happened without me even having to say the words.'

"On another occasion, I was also surprised in the synagogue when somebody came up behind me and shouted in my ear. I went into shock and started punching him. People had to come and separate us. The culprit was someone with a mental problem who goes around making all sorts of noises. I went outside in order to get away from him. There, it was quiet, a little chilly and even a few drops of rain were falling. I did Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm, breathed in the clear air, and then realized what I had just done; I had just beaten someone up. I went over to him to apologize. He, in the meantime, had gone looking for me. When we met, I told him I was completely out of order and he gave me a hug. At the time of the shock, Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm couldn't have helped me, but

*afterwards it helped me to go and apologize."*

**Sarah, the wife:**

*"When I first entered the Quiet Space I immediately felt the atmosphere. It was a special feeling, like being in a spiritual place. It was there we first learned a tool to work with: Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm. There was a time when all the family heard it together. We created our own Quiet Space at home, with a nice fragrance, which helps a lot.*

*"Now when I am under pressure, my brain sends messages of calm to my body: remember the quiet and the smell. This creates for me an inner quiet atmosphere. Overall I feel less pain, strain, anxiety and anger. The talking we share in the Center also helps, meeting with someone from outside the family with whom we can share things. It's fun for us to do something together as a couple. Though you should know, it has all been a process of much work.*

*"I am learning to not get so angry, to relax more, and to let God in. The difference is now I have a way to do it, something very practical. Our oldest son (age 10), used to get annoyed that we were listening to the disc so often, so we decided to bring him with us for a session. Afterwards, we practiced at home and he joined in with us. Our three-year-old also listens to the disc; he asks to hear it. There were times when he would be crying so I would put on the disc and he would immediately calm down. It is obviously not just any piece of music. We need to get back to listening to it regularly again and creating the calm atmosphere; unfortunately things just get in the way at times. It's a shame we don't,*

*because solutions can come, where one is more creative. When I feel pressured all I have to do is say the words."*

**A Large Family  
Including Foster Children**

Integrating the Quiet Space into family life is a challenge, especially in a household where there are ten children. One example is Rachel and her family. She is the mother of ten children, one of whom was in a children's drama group in our ITQS Center. Three of her children are foster children, all with special needs; one of them is in drama therapy in the Center. Rachel herself learned the ITQS technique in a mother's training session:

*"I had some problems with my 10-year-old biological daughter who stopped going to school. She would have very bad moods and we couldn't do anything about it. She would suddenly start crying and nothing would stop her. She became so sensitive to the tinniest little thing, getting hurt by her brothers' and sisters' remarks. She is, however, a good learner; she behaves well usually and has friends.*

*"We tried all sorts of different ways to convince her to go back to school and nothing really worked. Then I went to the school counselor who told me about children's groups at the ITQS Center in which they learn the Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm technique. She seemed to think if my daughter would have more inner peace, she could get herself together. So that's what we did.*

*"I noticed that soon after she started going to the children's group, she started using Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm at home. Instead of crying right away and becoming hysterical for a few hours, without anyone being able to get her out of*



*the situation, she began to control her moods more. I could tell she was doing something she wasn't used to doing, like thinking about something before she got in a crisis. You could see her doing it. And if she forgot, I'd go over to her and remind her of it, whispering in her ear: Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm. You could just tell the immediate difference and that was only after she was in the group about four times and had also been practicing at home. It worked very quickly and had a very strong impact.*

*"When my daughter was in a bad mood, her screaming affected the whole atmosphere in the home. But now everybody is much happier again. At the beginning, the other children weren't sure about Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm. My older kids would say, 'that's a little weird, Mom, what are you doing?' But now they respect it, and some of them are even doing it, with the disc. The disc is definitely a big plus because the music is so relaxing.*

*"When my daughter says Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm she is reminding herself of the calmness she experienced in the quiet space, the place where she practices the technique. For me, it's easy to understand. When I was very young I used to go on holiday with my parents to a small town in France four times a year; each time for about six weeks. Whenever I say the name of the town, I remember the place and become completely relaxed; it doesn't matter what's going on. It's like word association. So I think even without using the technique, if somebody has a very good positive memory or experience in the past, then they can connect to it and use it.*

*"My daughter sometimes asks me to do it with her. Usually we go up to my bedroom, which is the quietest place. We lie down on the bed, put the disc on, turn on a light that provides a pleasant atmosphere, and enjoy a nice fragrant smell. I have noticed another change in my daughter. She has asked for more privacy in her room. She requested we put a little curtain by her upper bunk bed. It was her way of saying she wants to be more by herself, which I took very positively, because it showed me she was looking for some inner peace, some way to find herself. So we made her a private space and it helped. I know now that what was bothering her and making her so frustrated was the fact that there are so many people in the house; she was saying, 'I need my own space.'*

*"When I saw it was working, I thought about trying it out with others. The little one, who is three years old, had learned Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm in the nursery at the Child Development Center. Even though he can't sit still for very long, he can still remember the words. For example, if he doesn't want to go to bed, as soon as I mention it to him, something happens and he calms. I have another 10-year-old boy with us in foster care, who comes from a very difficult background. I also sent him to a children's group, but he needs a lot of individual therapy, in addition to learning to calm himself."*

These case histories attest to the difference between children and adults. Children are usually more flexible and receiving. Older people come into any situation with their minds closed, while children's minds are open from the beginning. That's why

positive memories are so important. However, as the next case history illustrates, not everyone is fortunate enough to be sustained by good memories.

### **Loss and Trauma in Old Age**

Ruth, 85 years old, is a Holocaust survivor and bereaved mother; her son was killed in the Yom Kippur War. She has been in therapy for four years:

*"I never knew anything about calming techniques. After all that I have been through in my past, as a young woman, I see that physical suffering is something I can bear, but emotional matters are still always very difficult for me. I learned Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm, during drama therapy sessions some years ago to help me cope with my bereavement and daily living difficulties, and it is a great boon for me. Even so, I often forget that I have something that can help me to cope better. When I remember, I say the words immediately to calm myself. At other times, I listen to the disc, which works on the soul of a person, and that is just what I need. I need to feel inner calm. Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm is my medicine. It has helped me a lot, thank God, so I don't have to take any tranquilizers.*

*"Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm, helps me to calm down. For example, I used it a few days ago at the wedding of my grandson. Another time I used it was when I went to have two cataract operations on my eyes. I almost couldn't see beforehand, but they succeeded so well now I can see; the doctors said to me they had never seen anybody so calm before an operation. I always use the technique before medical checkups; it helps me prepare mentally for things.*

*"For me, there are all sorts of situations where pressure comes up, and then I put the disc on or say the words that help me to cope. The word most fitting is strength; it strengthens me emotionally. I also have problems that are connected to my age, for which there is no medical solution. I don't want to take pills because they are poison. Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm, is something neutral that goes to the soul. What I have been through, I cannot forget. My son was killed in the Yom Kippur War; I often see him and talk to him, and then it helps me to cope when I say the words.*

*"I was a good pupil. I learned Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm, quickly and easily. Someone who is really in need learns a lot quicker. My daughter knows that I do it, my grandchildren don't. I don't want them to think that I am a weak person. Sometimes my daughter reminds me to use Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm, especially when I am visiting her and her husband."*

### **Attention Deficit Disorder**

Rebecca is a drama therapist of nearly 20 years' experience, who today works in various educational settings:

*"I studied Reiki over 15 years ago, and have always been interested in meditation and other ways of calming. It really is part of my nature. So when, many years ago, I experienced the self-calming technique taught by Pamela in our creative arts therapy supervision group, I naturally took an interest.*

*"However, it is only a year ago, since I acquired the training disc, that I started practicing and using Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm, in an*

*orderly fashion. It joined the other disc I keep by my bedside, a guided-imagination disc. I always fall asleep with one of them. They are a special part of my every-day life.*

*"Since I have had the disc, I have found it very helpful in my work with school children. I could teach the technique myself in the drama therapy session but I prefer to put on the disc rather than say the words because it allows me to be fully available for what is going on with the child. There have been very few children who didn't want to hear the disc. Some like it a lot; in particular I can think of one very special case, a 10-year-old boy who liked the disc so much that he wanted to teach it to the whole school! He spoke about it to his teacher and to all his class. His teacher came to me asking, 'What is this Pleasant, Peaceful, Calm, that he taught me? He's taught all the class.*

*"He is a boy with ADD who really needed help and was able to ask for it. We heard the disc together and he immediately asked to hear it again. He felt the benefit of the technique. He told the teacher it helped him to concentrate, so much so, that he asked her to practice it with him in the class and if she couldn't, at least to let him do it by himself. She agreed to this and now it gives him the time he needs to self-calm when he becomes overly agitated, pressured, and frustrated because of his learning difficulties. He cannot keep up with everybody, and he gets very frustrated. He was desperately in need of something immediate to help him calm. He's a child who really knows how to make use of what has been given to him.*

*"I really don't know how to explain the change. It's very interesting. It's not that all his problems have been solved. But it is something he has internalized; it has become part of his life and has helped him learn to calm himself when in need. I have never had a child who wanted to teach others what he has learned.*

The three words are special. They are also symbolic of the eagle, and that is something I speak about with the children. The three words take us up high to where the eagle hovers, a place of vision, a place above the problem where we can contemplate before making a decision. There's something very spiritual in this imagery, evoking a feeling, a place, a voice. It raises the spirit; it's as if you have taken a pill that has a calming effect on you, changing your mood. When I listen to the disc before I go to sleep, it helps me to go above those daily things that are disturbing me. For me it's not a technique but a way of life.

*"But not every child reacts in such a calm way. I had a very introverted 13-year-old girl in my drama therapy session. One day I suggested to her that we listen to the music on the training disc; she agreed. But on hearing the music, she started crying, saying that the music made her think of her father and brother who had recently left the country. She didn't want to hear the disc again after that. While listening to the disc can clearly have a calming effect on a person, at the same time, the music can also touch a person in a very intimate and inner place, which potentially can be threatening or overwhelming for some. But we were able to do some work on this issue, which she had never brought up before. So the ITQS music actually helped her progress in a totally unexpected way."*

## Adapting to a New and Different Culture

Moving from a traditional African way of life to a modern western (albeit Middle Eastern) capitalist way of life can also be very threatening and overwhelming.

Shoshana, born in Ethiopia, immigrated to Israel with her family. She is a social worker who works in an absorption center for new immigrants from Ethiopia who have arrived in Israel during the last year.

*"What attracted me to the ITQS program from the beginning was the sense of calm, peace and quiet that it provides. During the daily pressures of work and home, the continual running throughout the day, there is a special time when you can sit by yourself, and go inside quietly. It is for me an opportunity to reconnect to myself again.*

*"The Quiet Room we set up in the absorption center adds something special to the atmosphere here; it gives a feeling of purity, something clean and aesthetic. I work in the room with children. I would like to use the room even more, but because of our full and pressured routine, it's difficult for me to find the time.*

I remember when the children from a drama therapy group entered the room for the first time; they opened their eyes and said 'wow.' They enjoyed being in the room; the physical appearance of the room had a very positive effect on them.

Some of the parents checked out the room. Most of them said it seemed something very special, though there are a few who were a bit wary. Overall there has been very positive feedback; the room has for them a very special presence. All the time children ask to be able to go inside; it's a lot easier for them to connect to their feelings and express their needs in the room.

*"For myself, I use the technique mostly in the car. It calms me. Even if I don't say the words, the music is very special. It touches my innermost feelings. The peace and calmness make their way inside, without me really knowing how, and touch me in a very deep inner place.*

*"I like using the room more with the women; they are honest and work very hard. They don't have much opportunity to rest, taking the children back and forth from kindergarten, and taking care of the home. They don't have the time to sit quietly by themselves. My feeling is that women connect more to themselves in the room than the men do. Women are more willing to try out new things.*

*"Ethiopian people are calm and peaceful by nature. People tell the time from looking at the sky, not from looking at a watch. Here in Israel, it's completely different; here you have to be on time, and to run and run, not knowing exactly where you are running to. In Ethiopia, there was a calm and peaceful life, which makes it very difficult for new immigrants to integrate into modern western life. The parents cannot educate the children as they did in Ethiopia. If the father in Ethiopia said to the child be quiet, he was quiet. Today the children do what they want to do. The children are now exposed to another culture very different from that of their parents. Here, you have to be on time, to succeed, to bring a wage; there you worked in your fields. In the summer you worked, in the winter you rested. There was a lot of time for rest. There was a connection to the fields, nature. Here? There is no place or time for people to relate to their longing for their past life in Ethiopia. We could*

*use the quiet room for people to tell their stories."*

### **MicroCalming: Peter's Story**

After the ITQS Center had long been established, a word suddenly came to me when I was thirty-thousand feet above the Earth, high on the wings of a Boeing jet, and gazing at life down below. The perspective was something like an eagle's: The word was MicroCalming.

I had been inspired by the work of Professor Mohamed Yunus and the Grameen Bank he had helped to establish in Bangladesh. The goal of the bank was to help the poorest of the poor, through microlending: small, interest-free loans that people were given to use as they saw fit to further their own welfare. Microlending was something small that had the potential for achieving something big in the lives of people.

I saw the parallel to In the Quiet Space, which offers something small—MicroCalming—that has the large potential to provide many people with access to inner quiet, to mobilize personal resources, and strengthen coping skills. These skills are necessary to living effectively, as the modern world accelerates rapidly toward the future. As Alvin Toffler (1971) suggested in his book, *Future Shock*, successful living may depend solely on an ability to adapt to a rapidly changing, volatile and complex world, crowded with stimuli, demands and choices.

As Rinpoche (1992), the Buddhist master said, it had to be something simple, but profound, that could be integrated by all into their lives. What could be simpler than inner quiet, yet what could be more profound?

### **Conclusion**

What could be more needed than internal calm in the vibrant, dynamic, multi-cultural Israeli society of tension, noise, stimuli, rapid change, long-term effects of security concerns, terror, and war? Our understanding grew that a new environment was called for in order for inner quiet to take root in the kindergarten, school, hospital, place of work, day-care center, home, and community. "In

the Quiet Space" became this new, special sensory environment.

After over ten years of implementation, on the well-trodden path of trial and error, we can view the ground down below from a place of experience. While we are very satisfied to note the successes that this program has achieved and the service it has provided, there have also been some challenges.

Place is critical to the implementation of ITQS, but in many homes this can be difficult. Many homes have no spare rooms and no spare space at all, so creating even a "corner" as a quiet environment is problematic because of the noise level in the environment. In work places, finding a suitable, available room is often hard, sometimes impossible. We help with the setting up of portable, mini ITQS environments—on a small table in the center of a room, for instance. But beyond the actual physical space, more challenging is developing awareness that ITQS is not just another room; it is a special space, a sacred space that must be protected as such.

For example, a room set up in a children's hospital ward was not protected as a special, sacred place, and it soon became, also, a doctors' room of rest. It was often left untidy and unaired and it soon lost its unique quality. If there is no staff member designated to look after and preserve the specialness of the space, then it loses its *raison d'être*.

Working with staff in educational, health or welfare agencies is often problematic. Within today's economic climate, funds are limited, affecting the time that can be devoted to staff training. Finding enough time to help staff members understand the meaning of sacred space is a serious challenge when for so many people, such a thing is no longer part of the vocabulary. However, we have been heartened to see that many people today are so aware of the need for respite and peace in a non-stop, fragmented world, that they are prepared to try out something new.

The key to the future of ITQS lies with people who are most in need, who will be changed and affected by their initial experience of profound quiet, care and respect. For many, this will be an entirely new experience. And with ITQS, the experience is the essence.

Even though we often try to describe it in words, to truly understand what it is, how it works, its ease and simplicity, it must be experienced.

**According to Rinpoche (1992):**

*"...human beings have come to a critical place in their evolution and this age of extreme confusion demands a teaching of comparably extreme power and clarity. I have also found that modern people want a path shorn of dogma, fundamentalism, exclusivity, complex metaphysics, and culturally exotic paraphernalia, a path at once simple and profound, a path that does not need to be practiced in ashrams or monasteries but one that can be integrated with ordinary life and practiced anywhere."*

The effect of any practice must be profound in order that people will have the motivation to continue that practice. How often have we heard from teachers how difficult it is to control a class, how they are pressured to achieve results, how they really need help? And yet, when offered a practice that requires only five minutes a day in the classroom, the staff reply, "We all want to practice but I'm too busy and pressured....I know it will help the children be calm and cope better, but there was no time this week." Even in families, creating a sacred space and time comes up against the non-stop dynamic flow and demands of modern life.

We hope that in the near future (there is already interest in the idea) there will be the first Community Quiet Space Center in Israel for all those in need of reaching inner quiet. The goal is to reach the general population, most of whom live their lives surrounded by inner and outer noise of one form or another, who don't have the means or the knowledge to reach their inner place and use it.

Small, profound experiences, no less than peak ones, can break through the inner and outer layers that prevent us from touching that simple but profound place. MicroCalming

enables us at any time or place to regain control of our lives and discover or rediscover that each of us has untold inner resources.

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