



# Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Issue 46

December 2010

Children



## What makes us happy?

## Advices and Queries 39

### Getting ready

This issue of Journeys is looking at Advices and Queries number 39. It is about happiness in our consumer society. These are tough issues to raise with children because, as adults, we have to be careful not to moralise and just create guilt. This advice fits very nicely with the Testimony to Simplicity. Testimonies being "a fundamental part of our faith and rooted in our worship", it is about being able to look at what is important in life - what are the simple things in life that we enjoy.

*How easy is it to see what we really do need and what we want?*

*Who puts pressures upon us to buy what we do not need?*

*How straightforward is it for us to say no and to be different?*

*How difficult is it for a child to opt out of following fashion and trends?*

*What does make us happy?*

*Should we expect to be happy or is it more realistic to be content or to just feel good enough?*

Hopefully this issue will help us explore with our children the ideas that they do not need to consume to be happy and that the world around them can offer great joy.

*"People are surrounded on all sides by the raging waters of modern living, a torrent so great that it seems they have to jump in and go with the flow" Brother Abbot*

*"Journeys in the Spirit"* offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children and young people.

This children's work edition comes out monthly. It offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with 5 –12 year olds in a Quaker setting.

It provides opportunities for exploring, creating and learning in an atmosphere of worship in partnership on our shared journey in the spirit.

### Gather

When you are gathered together in a circle ask the children to think about one or two of these questions; adjust how you say these according to age:

*What are things you enjoy, really like doing?*

*Can you remember the feelings you get when you do these things?*

*Where does that feeling go?*

*Does that memory come back sometimes?*

*Is there something you are hoping to do, that you or your family are planning and which is making you excited?*

*What makes you smile?*

*What's it like when someone smiles at you?*



### Underpinning references

**Twelve Quakers and Simplicity** - Quaker Quest - Quaker Bookshop

***Journeys in the Spirit*** children's edition Issue no. 4 on Simplicity online: [www.quaker.org.uk/journeys/archive-children](http://www.quaker.org.uk/journeys/archive-children)

**Quaker Faith and Practice: 20.27**

# Engage

This is about helping children to explicitly or subtly consider the meaning of Advice and Query number 39. It is about building discernment and reflection about everyday things.

Advice and Query 39: "Consider which of the ways to happiness offered by society are truly fulfilling and which are potentially corrupting and destructive. Be discriminating when choosing means of entertainment and information...."

Resources needed: Depending on the age of the children have a range of adverts from newspapers and magazines, pictures or, even better, actual examples of toys parents or grandparents played with.

## Some questions to help you to begin conversation and consideration in your group, however big or small:

*'What do you like to play with? What other things do you do for entertainment, play and fun?' 'What did your parents and grandparents play with as children? Do you know what other things they did for entertainment and fun? Did they have as many things as you?'* Ask parents in advance of the session about their toys.

Some other questions to help conversation include:

*'Are there some games which you do not like? How do you choose what games to play? Are there games you'd play with Quaker friends but not school friends?'*

## Activities:

### Adverts.

This can be done with most ages – it will just need simplification of language with younger children. Have some advertising pictures from a magazine or newspaper. You might need to say something like, *'These are adverts. What are adverts for?'* You might need to explain a little.

Ask the children about what the advertisers are trying to get us to do, you may like to say something like:

*Why do you think they have chosen this person or that animal?*

*Why do you think the picture was taken in that place?*

*Why do you think these colours are used?*

*Apart from the item shown what do you think the advertisers are trying to sell you or make you want? Do you think that they are selling a way to live?*

*Would this lifestyle make you happy?*

*Do you think that you can buy and sell happiness?*

### Logos.

A recent study has shown that children recognise most major brand logos. Do the children recognise this logo? You could put this out on the floor with lots of other brand names and just ask what children recognise. Reinforce the Quaker way – add in logos for other groups – Oxfam and C.N.D for example.



### Toys.

This can also be done with most ages. If you have pictures of the toys of parents and grandparents ask if anybody knows what they are called and what any differences might be between these and their toys. If you have been given or found actual or similar toys have a play time – then talk about what is different about them from their toys and what the children like or don't like.

## References

"Genuine happiness consists in those spiritual qualities of love, compassion, patience, tolerance and forgiveness and so on. For it is these which provide both for our happiness and others' happiness."  
–The Dalai Lama

"Only when the last tree has died and the last river been poisoned and the last fish been caught will we realise we cannot eat money." - Cree Indian Proverb

"Be content with what you have, rejoice in the way things are. When you realize there is nothing lacking, the whole world belongs to you" - Lao Tzu

## References & other resources

“Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed.” - Mohandas K. Gandhi, quoted in E.F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful*

Frugality is one of the most beautiful and joyful words in the English language, and yet one that we are culturally cut off from understanding and enjoying. The consumption society has made us feel that happiness lies in having things, and has failed to teach us the happiness of not having things. - **Elise Boulding- American Quaker and peace activist**

*Additional resources 46.A and 46.B listed in the text are available at:*

[www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children](http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children)

## Respond

You will need paper for posters and pens, paints and brushes to write and colour with. If you can, have books or pictures of posters spread out – ask people in Meeting if they have any to share.

**What would your Quaker poster be?** After looking at the Quaker posters on *Additional Resources 46.A*, see sidebar for details, or at full size ones that Meeting might have bought talk about what everybody would put on their poster. Begin to make the posters and ask everybody to bring in a photo of themselves next time to put on it. Here for two examples:

I like football,  
eating cakes and I  
am a Quaker.

I like riding a bike,  
dancing, eating  
ice cream and I am  
a Quaker

**Advertising** is about selling things to people that they did not know they wanted. Write up a big list of the ideas below – ask children which one they would like to do or if anyone can think of any other simple ideas that they would like to advertise – things that people might not know they need but which could be good for them? It could be a joint poster or an individual one. Some ideas for posters:

- Having a special day when no money is used
- Helping
- Having times of quiet and stillness
- Being a Quaker
- Living with what you have
- Praying

Younger children might like to draw their favourite place or object and then share this with the others.



A picture of a Quaker Meeting – if it was an advert what would it be selling? Can you see the wood outside the door? Is there a breeze coming in? Use this as a discussion focus with children.

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**Entertainment:** Make up a game which is simple and fun that you could share with others or make list of favourite games that people can play together and arrange a play time for several Meetings or just yours to share. Perhaps you could act out an advertisement from the list from above to try and persuade people they would enjoy a silent meeting?

**Additional activity online:** Living a quiet life – the daily lives of monks and nuns - See *Additional Resources 46.B* for additional ideas, links and resources. See the sidebar on this page.

## Reflect

Gather the children together to enable them to close their meeting for worship.

This might be a good time for them to look at what they have discovered for themselves, the favorite things that they have shared.

Remind them of the A&Q 39 in language that they will understand or may be one of the children would like to read it out.

Finish with a time of quiet and stillness.

Can you enjoy simple and beautiful things instead of things that cost lots of money?

## Review

Reviewing can happen at the time or later, and may be particularly helpful where a series of activities is planned around the same themes. Some helpful questions to talk about with co-volunteers or another member of Meeting include:

- What went well?
- What was not so good?
- Is there anything that could have been done better?
- What sort of comments did the children make?
- How well do you think children were able to think about or reflect on Advice and Query 39?
- What did you learn?
- Did you have fun?

**This issue was written by Adrienne Jeorrett and edited by Chris Nickolay and Howard Nurden. Chris Nickolay wrote the Topical activity.**

The next children's issue of *Journeys in the Spirit* is **Issue 47** and is about Advices and Queries 23, 24 & 25 (*diversity, family and marriage*) and is available on January 5th 2011; **Issue 48** is about Advices and Queries 41 & 42 (*sustainability and our responsibility for the Earth*) and is available on February 1<sup>st</sup> 2011; **Issue 49** is about Advices and Queries 30 (*helping with thinking about death and dying*) and is available on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2011.

## Materials available online are:

*Current issue additional Resources Sheets 46.A and B*

An easy to use plan for a Children's Meeting

Links to other resources and information

A simple plan for an all age Meeting for Worship

A topical activity – this time about making cardboard candle gifts

Also a 'How to use *Journeys in the Spirit*' guide; a link to special issues; an archive of previous issues; a discussion forum and a link to the *Journeys in the Spirit* Youth edition.

**All these are available at:**

[www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren](http://www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren)

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