

# JUST THIS DAY

## June Newsletter: *Silence in Schools*

### November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011



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Since 2007, people across the world have taken part in *Just this Day*, a day for people to come together in stillness, to go beyond any difference and to find that space which is without division.

## YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN IN

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### How does silence make a difference?

Making space for silence offers everybody, regardless of age or faith, a chance to become fully present. It recharges batteries, allows emotions to settle, and reminds us of who we really are.

Giving this ability to children helps them cope with the world they live in, to find a safe and settled space which doesn't change as they grow up. For some, this will simply be something that happens at school, for others it may develop into a life time practice. Recent research shows that stress, illness, pain, and old age are easier to cope with if the ability to be still has been established, it gives access to a place where we may encounter that which doesn't change.

**This year's Just this Day concentrates on ways of giving children** in schools a way to make space for silence. **If your school would like to join in**, please send a message via the [www.justthisday.org](http://www.justthisday.org) website. There are resources for schools on the website and a **step by step guide to making and walking a labyrinth** will be available shortly.

Read the article below about silence in schools from **Dr. Helen Lees**, Research Fellow of The Laboratory for Educational Theory, University of Stirling

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'The ability of a school to use and benefit from silence is strongly linked to the ethos of a school. Schools which listen to the voice of their students will probably be better able to use and benefit from silent practices. This because silence creates freedoms and an educational environment needs to be able to respect that. There is no educational reason why silent practices in some way should not be an integral part of a child's education. In fact, when we take various strands of research on school settings and put them together, along with emerging research on the benefits of silence in people's lives, what we see is that education without silence does not make much

sense.'

'In areas of better learning outcomes, better interpersonal relationships, better self-esteem and well-being measures, silence in a person's life and an individual's education is shown throughout the relevant research literature to be a benefit. Atmospheres without silence are not so lucky. They manifest various problems. Curiously, where silence operates it brings with it advantage. And, if this is a potential school improvement measure, well, it's free! Essentially it is something that we all have recourse to. Every human being, given the right encouragement and perhaps awareness for it, can make silence a useful and valuable part of their education.'

So why isn't silence operating as a 'school improvement measure' in all schools? Is it ignorance of its potential? Perhaps it is to do with the current structures that function in schools to order the school day... People sitting quietly and closing their eyes looks like a failure in a busy curriculum schedule, does it not? This is a wrong-headed attitude. It's a failure itself to be able to embrace other –possibly better- ways of doing things. Ways which might seem unusual at first but after a little understanding can come to be essential educational tools. I have no doubt that education needs silence. It can benefit children in important ways. They will receive a better all-round education if silence is a part of their experience in some form.'

**Dr. Helen Lees will be speaking as part of a discussion panel who will look at the subject of *Silence in Schools* at 11am on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011. The full programme for the day is:**

**8.00 am: Doors Open for Morning Prayer.**

**8.30 am: 10 minute public silence in Trafalgar Square.**

**9.30 am: Discantvs sings in the Church.**

**10.00 am: Half hour period of Silence for meditation and quiet.**

**11.00 am: Debate on Silence and Stillness in Schools:**

Led by **Claire Foster-Gilbert**, Just this Day has invited four women will speak on their experience of silence for children in schools. Their investigations and research make a powerful case for the introduction of silent practices into schools.

The speakers are **Helen Lees**, whose forthcoming book *Silence in Schools*, will be published early in 2012. **Laura Hyde**, headmistress of St James Senior Girls School where meditation and stillness are offered to all pupils. **Kim Nataraja**, practitioner and teacher of Christian meditation to children worldwide and **Shanida Nataraja**, neuroscientist and author of the Blissful Brain whose scientific research proves that meditation has a proven benefit. [www.blissfulbrain.com](http://www.blissfulbrain.com)

Each will speak from their own experience and research into children and young people's response to meditation and silent reflection and discuss its relevance to attention, achievement, well-being and happiness in relationships which influence behaviour in children and within a school community.

**6.30 pm: Doors open for a special concert, Music for Stillness.**

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## **CONCERT INFORMATION.**

### **MUSIC FOR STILLNESS**

**FEATURING MUSIC BY ARVO PÄRT  
AND DAVID STOLL**

**PERFORMED BY THE CERUTTI QUARTET, ST MARTIN IN THE  
FIELDS ACADEMY, DISCANTVS**

**TICKETS PRICED £20, £15, £10**

**TICKETS NOW AVAILABLE FROM THE ST MARTIN IN THE FIELDS  
[BOX OFFICE](#)**

**IN WHATEVER WAY YOU WISH TO TAKE PART IN JUST THIS DAY,  
PLEASE GET IN TOUCH THROUGH THE WEBSITE**

[www.justthisday.org](http://www.justthisday.org).