

## **LET'S CELEBRATE...TESTING!**

16 months after my opening, I hit the lowest point of my life. I remember it well! It was late Tuesday afternoon and I was driving home from school where I had experienced one of the worst teaching days of my life. I had had, sometimes, two H.M. Inspectors following me round for most of the day, watching me teach and asking me questions about it - sometimes at the same time. And worse still, only two weeks previously my wife and two young children had moved out and I was devastated. It felt like my insides were lacerated. And now I, alone of all the staff, had been given such a grilling that day that I could only assume it was because they saw me as a weak link in the school. It felt awful- so bad that, as I drove away at the end of the day, I thought that everything – my whole life –was falling apart. I had just lost my family and now I had failed big time in my career. Alone in the car, it all overwhelmed me.

What could I do? I did not feel I could cope. I remember thinking: “this is a breakdown; I need help. Who or what can help me now?” There seemed only one alternative: not to go to my deserted home but to head off to my folks and stay with them for the immediate future. I felt there was only my parents left. But, unfortunately, they lived so far away that meant opting out of everything. I could not see what else to do... my insides were in a chaos of awfulness. A few moments later I realised this was my latihan night. Perhaps I should delay things until after that? I half-heartedly thought: maybe I could do some testing about it all... But these were luke-warm thoughts: I did not really expect much help there. Surely that was too much to ask? It was just all too bad. But I wondered...Then I saw a T-junction coming up. Turn left and I went to my folks; right and it was latihan and testing. Feeling panicky, I honestly did not know what to do: I would not make a decision until I got to the junction itself. Rarely does one's life turn on a single moment like this! Moments later I found myself on the familiar road to my home. So it was to be latihan and testing.

What a surprise it turned out to be. Testing immediately and powerfully turned both my perspective and feelings completely round. I realised I had got it completely wrong. The Inspectors were not as “unfriendly” towards me as I had

believed. In fact, I felt they wanted me to succeed. They were more on my side than I could have believed. And, more specifically, they had *not* singled me out for the reasons I thought. After the testing, I still found this difficult to believe but, by the end of the Inspection, it became clear that the Inspector's policy at this time was to focus mainly on one member of staff for each day of the week- I just happened to be the first! Testing proved absolutely right. As the testing continued my feelings became more and more positive and confident. Amazingly, unbelievably, I came away from the testing session feeling like superman and even excited about the next day when I had the extra, and daunting, challenge of leading the school assembly. It was my turn to stand in front of the whole school community with the intimidating added presence of a team of dark-suited Inspectors with notebooks and pens, criticising all I was saying and doing! Instead of feeling inwardly dark and defeated I went into the school the next day with my feelings utterly and completely transformed by my previous night's testing. After the assembly, when the hall had almost completely cleared, the Lead Inspector came up to me, with a smile on his face, and said: "I can't wait until to-morrow." I looked quizzically at him. "Yes," he said "These assemblies get better every day!" I felt wonderful.

The school came out with "a glowing report" from this inspection. I survived totally because of testing. Without it I know that my extremely negative feelings would have led me into "breakdown" and goodness knows where my life would have taken me then. As it was I came to be more successful in my career than I ever expected to be and found a way to provide a home for my children and myself when this looked nothing short of impossible (In fact, I had been told by a colleague, who also worked for the Citizen's Advice Bureau, that the best I could hope for was a bedsit in the nearest town some 30 miles away. As it was, I ended up in a 3-bedroom house in the same village as my children so they could visit me as often as they liked and also stay overnight with me for half the week! But that is another testing story... ) Without testing I simply cannot see how any of this could have happened (and this is a view also shared by people who knew me at that time).

Testing has been an immensely valuable help in my life on many other occasions, too. Through it I have found my way through some seemingly impossible

situations, understood people better and nearly always had my perspective immeasurably broadened. I know I have a lot to be extremely grateful for!

Yet I do not test that often. Usually I test out of desperation when I simply cannot see any possibility of a way through as in the instances above. Or there may be times when I see all sorts of possibilities but really want to do the best thing for everyone concerned. Sometimes I really want to do the “right thing” but simply cannot be sure what that is. In my religious moments I express that as wanting to do, not just what I want, but rather “God’s Will” and then I feel ready to accept whatever comes (whether I “like” it or not)

I am prepared to test anything believing testing to always be a bit of an experiment i.e it might work or it might not. (That is not in my hands). I seem to be one of the few people who actually likes the word “testing.” To me it conjures up the image of someone trying to get a microphone ready for a speaker or entertainer, for example, and there is that preliminary experimenting with the device in order to get it just right with the words “Testing! Testing! Testing!” being repeated until the sound is completely right! This often seems to describe the process of our testing, also, as more and more complexity is revealed as the testing gets underway! I am often amazed at the complexities that the simplest of “tests” can throw up.

Van Hien says in “What Is Subud?” that Bapak “freely encourages us to test and to practise testing” (p163) Varindra Vittachi records Bapak saying that “Without the experience of testing, it is not possible to gain faith in our inner development” (p.123 “A Reporter’s Assignment In Subud”) Varindra also points out that Bapak “agreed” that “none of us can test correctly”(p125) but that should not stop us doing it! Perhaps, though, it should give us some humility about our testing. I believe, too, that none of our more usual faculties, particularly our critical faculties, should ever be completely abandoned either, particularly with regard to our outer lives. Again, as van Hien says: “In fulfilling our worldly obligations, common sense and knowledge, coupled, I would suggest, with a sense of humour, are what we need most of the time.”

There is a great deal of modern, scientific research which I think is helpful here and for anyone interested I would suggest David Myers book: “Intuition (defined as “ our capacity for direct knowledge, for immediate insight without observation

or reason”): Its Powers and Perils” The point is repeatedly made that this way of knowledge can be incredibly accurate and helpful in just about all walks of life ( from clinical diagnosis to gambling to sport to investments etc.) but it can also sometimes “err disastrously”

Is this not a good reason to be humble?

I think most of us realise the need for checks and controls on the testing we do – some of us may have learnt this the hard way! It is a huge challenge for us to be empty of ourselves, our wishes etc in order for us to receive in a sufficiently untainted way. Modern knowledge has shown, all too clearly, the powerful influence of unconscious and preconscious motivation and the reality of non-verbal suggestion (as well as verbal!) from the presence of other people and when we stand as a group to test all these factors *may* come into play. Nonetheless, my experience of testing leads me to totally endorse what van Hien said all those years ago:

“Like everything else in Subud, testing is above all an experience-a very special experience of receiving. It lies at the heart of Subud and therefore of our daily lives. It is a great blessing which most of us accept with *an increasing sense of wonder, reverence and awe.*” ( “What Is Subud” p.168)