

# Introduction

In 2008 I had one of those 'aha' moments in teaching. Most teachers face the constant dilemma of listening to and 'sorting' through students who have had some sort of conflict during their lunchtime breaks. It was one such day that I looked to the heavens and cried in humorous exasperation, "I just want someone to tell me a good story ... does anybody have a good news story to tell?"

It was in that moment that I realised where my attention/energy was going. Kids love attention, either good or bad, so long as it is attention. I suddenly realised in that moment that I was focusing and modelling MY attention to areas of conflict and conflict resolution. One part of me argued that I, with good intentions, was listening to each side of the stories of conflict or complaint, and using various strategies to get students to resolve the 'problem', often by asking them, "What could you do differently next time?" But I realised that the root cause was that they/we/I were focusing on the problems and the negatives!!! Most of our attention went to the problem! Where attention goes, so does energy grow.

So we got together as a class and discussed what we wanted to see in the playground. The first things that most of the students started telling me were: no teasing, no bullying, no this, no that, etc. I was a little shocked as no-one was telling me what they DID want to see. We then listed what we wanted to see, say, hear, feel, and do. These included such things as kindness, helpfulness, friendliness, etc.

These observations, along with learning more about the mind and brain, as well as reflecting on my life and drawing from my teaching experience, were the motivation behind creating and sharing this book. ***A Wise Apple Tree Helps Me: Top Tips for Wise Kids*** is a rhyming book for kids of all ages.

This book contains research drawn from both modern and ancient wisdoms and psychology, presented in simple rhymes. While these truths are nothing new to most, my intention for every reader is to increase their awareness, and for them to remind themselves how to be their best selves and consciously learn to focus on what they want to be, do, and have.

It is so important to be the change we wish to see in the world and in the children we have in our care. The language and actions we model are so influential in setting up the foundations of our children's being. This is often so hard to do when our buttons are being pushed. The rhymes in ***A Wise Apple Tree Helps Me: Top Tips for Wise Kids*** are important reminders, not only for our children, but for us adults too.

This book also fits perfectly within the **Australian Curriculum** under the ‘**General Capabilities**’ banner relating to the ‘**The Personal and Social Capability Learning Continuum**’. This section organises itself into the four interrelated areas of **self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social management**. Each of these elements are themes throughout this book and can be embedded into daily conversations as an educator or parent.

***A Wise Apple Tree Helps Me: Top Tips for Wise Kids*** has been set out in chapters to read separately, or it can be read from the start to the finish. Enjoy reading this book with your children, discussing the many concepts it contains, and how these can be integrated into your life.

Both the stand alone children’s book and the accompanied ***Creative Colouring Journal*** complement each other. The accompanied ***Creative Colouring Journal*** allows for reflection and deeper integration into the brain of the many concepts within.

Space is included after each chapter, where readers can share their personal responses using their own wisdoms, insights, rhymes, or illustrations that have come from personal experience. This new awareness and these shifts in thinking can come about as results of possible discussions whilst reading the book with peers, family members, teachers, or therapists.

I thank the many people, including all the children I have ever taught and learnt from, to colleagues, family, and friends, and all who I have met on this amazing book/life journey. Our everyday thoughts, words, speech, responses, and actions have contributed in some way to what is present in this book today.

May you find peaceful, happy, loving thoughts, in creating the reality you wish to call the ‘present’, knowing that these thoughts and actions create a new page in the chapter of your life’s journey, right now, today!

**“If you focus on the bad,  
you’ll be mad or sad,  
so focus on what’s alright,  
and you’ll be a bright shining light.”**

Much Gratitude  
**Andrew Holt**

# Testimonials

*"It is a unique book that will be very helpful. It has very good meanings and will sell out!"*

*- Solomon McDonald, age eleven, Grade 5*

*"Andrew's commitment and dedication to taking his message beyond the classroom is commendable. What I love about this book and the message Andrew is sharing, is the simplicity of mindfulness. If we can teach our kids at an early age to embrace this way of thinking and being, the world will be a much better place. Read it to your kids, get them thinking differently, and be the change we need to see. It's been a delight to design and typeset this book Andrew, your illustrations are fabulous!"*

*- Jeanne Treloar, Sassy Branding*

*"I believe Andrew has successfully captured many of the everyday challenges in the life of a child. It is great to read a book that provides strategies to empower a child to think positively even when faced with challenging situations. The voice of Grandpa Joe as a mentor for Sam promotes respect for elders and emphasises the importance of family support. There is no greater gift we can bestow upon a child than a feeling of self-worth, and this book certainly assists in empowering children to trust their values and beliefs."*

*- Pam Erfurt, Principal, Moil Primary School, Moil, Northern Territory, Australia*

*"This book inspired me to make my own rhyme: 'If you focus on the good, then you will do what you should.'"*

*- Crystal Holmes, age twelve, Grade 6*

*"Andrew is a wealth of knowledge when it comes to educating and caring for our younger generation. He is able to teach a range of tools and techniques in order to empower kids, teenagers, and adults. With experience gained over many years of teaching and travelling around the world, he entertains and engages an audience through rhyme and storytelling. Andrew has the ability to impart important messages, while also sharing his sense of fun and adventure. This is an inspirational book that will assist many as they go through the ups and downs of life. Kids will be asking for more!"*

*- Brenda Carige B.Ed, Dip. T.*

*"Thank you for sharing your gorgeous book with my daughter and myself, we thoroughly enjoyed it. We really loved reading this together, my daughter loved the rhyming and I loved how each chapter discussed a different topic. It was like a key we could use to open a door of discussion on so many topics that perhaps aren't always talked about in daily life. Great format, loved the pictures, and it kept the attention of my nine-year-old."*

*- Samantha Allimant, mother of a nine-year-old*

*"This book has the best tips for kids than most other books have."*

*- Imogen Stride, age twelve, Grade 6*

*"Every time I read this book I feel overwhelmed with joy and gratitude, not only for the consciousness it embodies but for the fact that there are teachers out there who 'get it' and who are leading our children along with us on a more mindful, enlightened journey. One of the best children's books I have ever read. Well done Andrew."*

*- Sam Morley, mother of three.*

# Hey Wise Kids,

Are you ready to learn some wise tips that will help you shine brighter?

As you read, discuss, and reflect throughout this book, you will discover ways to train yourself for what you want to see, do, and be. After all, top athletes and actors get this training, so why not you?

Honestly, everyone (including adults) could do with remembering Grandpa Joe's tips. But when you practise them at your age it will give you a head-start to forming powerful life-long habits. (BEWARE: You may find it easier than your parents or teachers and lead the way for them!)

The tips in this book will work at their best if you decide that you will practise and have fun experimenting with them. They work in all areas of your life: school, family, hobbies, sport, dance, friendships ... EVERYWHERE!

These tips can help you become the master and leader in your own life by learning how to choose where to put your focus. You may like to lead the way in your family through different challenges, such as paying forward a kind act every day or making a collage/wall of pictures of your family's, friends', or class's strengths in action.

Wise Kids, I use to put my focus on poisoning my best self and say, 'I am hopeless and dumb at drawing. My drawings look stupid. I can't draw.' Then, because I could not afford an illustrator for this book, I had to retrain my thinking so I could do it myself. I began to tell myself, 'I can do this, and with practice, I'm getting better and better each day.' The illustrations in this book are my best efforts right now. I also discovered that I actually began to love drawing. They helped me focus and 'relax to achieve my max.' If I could do this at thirty-eight years old, then I'm sure you can do it too. My next challenge is to retrain my thinking and beliefs to learn a musical instrument.

Did you know, Wise Kids, that there is a part of the brain called the reticular activating system (RAS for short), which helps you see more of what you put your focus on? So where will your focus be today—this hour—this minute?

There are likely to be mistakes and some tough events along the way. Remember that you have the power to turn any moment into a wise moment with the thoughts, words, and actions you use; not only with yourself, but with others as well.

While you think and reflect on these rhymes and how they can help you, may you begin to create and design a space for your own wisdom to shine through. (Here is a space now!)

All the best Wise Kid, as you surf the waves of your life. Enjoy munching on a wise apple, using these tips to mindfully create your own moment-by-moment life journey.

**Andrew Holt**

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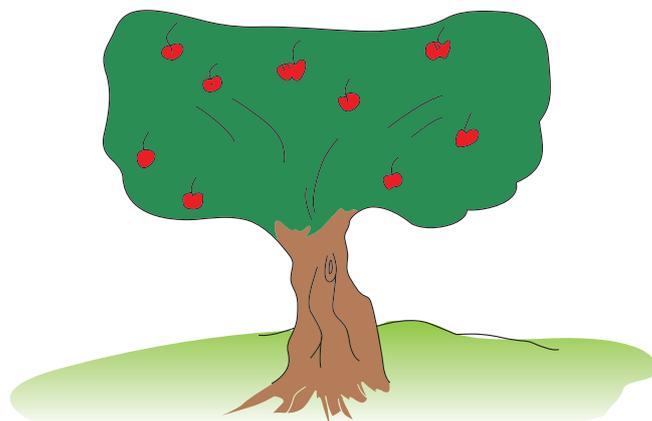
# Asking for Help

“Grandpa Joe, at school you see,  
there’s lots of people picking on me.  
I don’t know what to think, say, or do and  
I’ve had enough,  
I want to quit, it’s far too tough.”

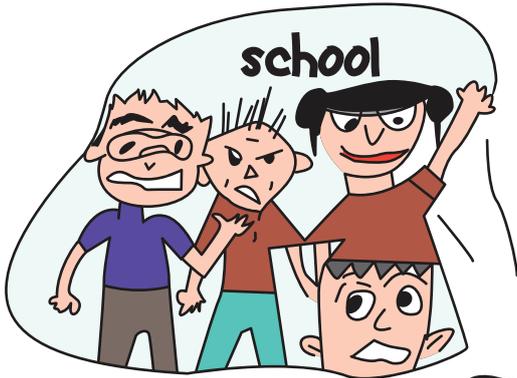
“Even at home I feel like I’m in a bubble,  
because I make mistakes and get into trouble.  
I don’t know what to think, say, or do,  
so I just go hide and sit on the loo!”

***Grandpa Joe then said ...***

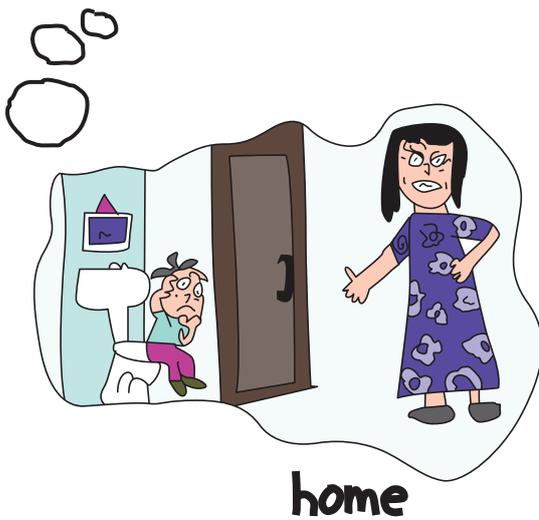
“Young Sam, there are some things I believe  
you should know,  
a few little tips that will help you grow,  
so be sure to listen, my dear grandson,  
as this can change your sadness to fun ...”



# Who do I ask for help?



Hi Grandpa Joe



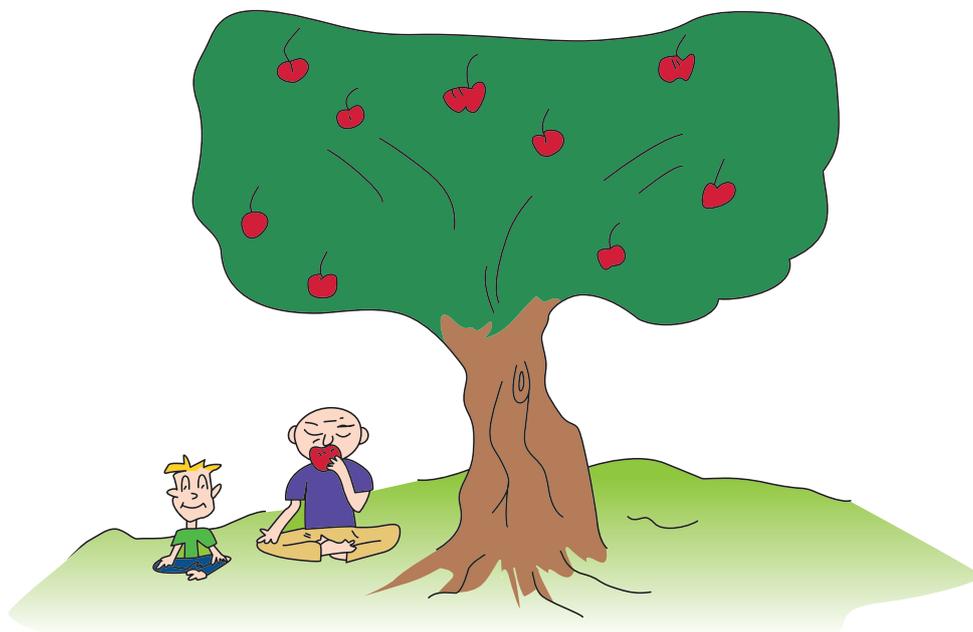
I have courage to ask for help.

# Train your Brain

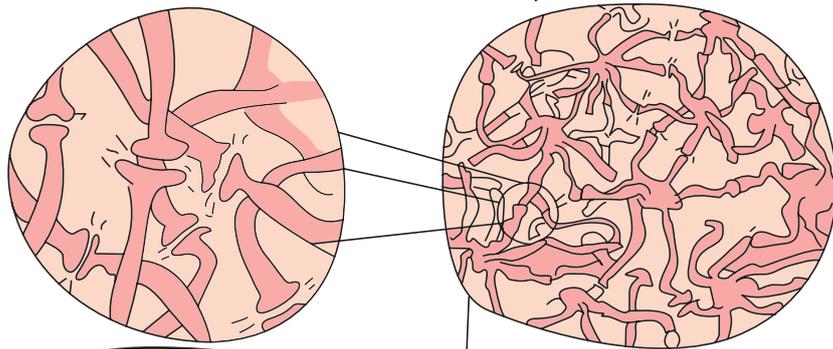
***“Let’s sit under this wise old apple tree,  
many stories it has witnessed under thee.  
So we can simply be still and discover the key,  
to grow happiness in you, and be free.”***

“It starts, young Sam, with the most important thing to train, it’s not eating, it’s not a sport, nor even flying to Spain That number one thing you need to train, is watching those thoughts and words that visit your brain.”

“For your thoughts are where it all begins, being aware of them helps your successful wins.”



# How will I train my brain?



Yes Sam, they're called neurons. Thoughts zip along here like speeding cars on a road.

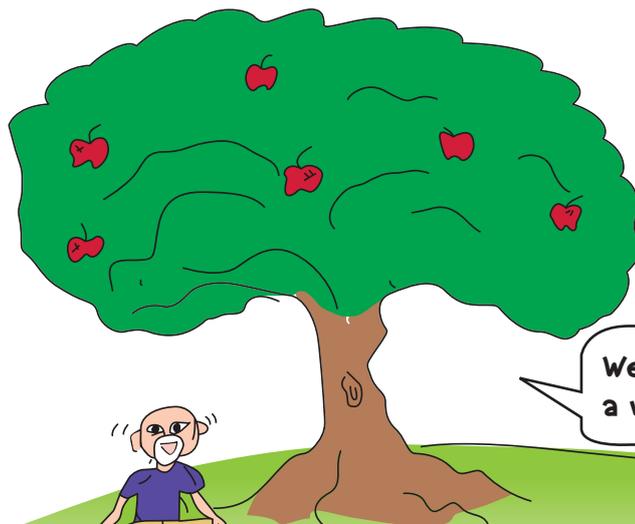
Wow! Look at the thought highway!

It looks like a computer circuit board.

Yes, it's the most amazing computer board you'll ever own.

I wonder how to program it and make it bug and virus free?

Hey, Grandpa Joe, those branches of this apple tree are similar to those neurons in my brain.



Well, Yes I see. What a wise kid you are.

I can see it's up to me to train my mind.