



Denise Flora and Valentina Dolara

16 Guidelines for Happy Families

By Alison Murdoch

In July 2008, forty-one people from more than a dozen countries came together for the first Essential Education Summer Training. The five days of meditation, presentations, workshops, eating and conversation took place in the beautiful and welcoming surroundings of Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, Italy. The participants included teachers, parents and therapists who shared their enthusiasm for taking Essential Education to a wider audience.

The Summer Training focused on how to use the 16 Guidelines for a Happy Life with children and families. It was led by Valentina Dolara (Italy), who presented the four wisdom themes that underpin the Guidelines, and facilitated a range of experiential exercises designed to deepen each person's capacity to manifest these qualities in daily life. Valentina's sessions were complemented by a unique series of workshops from Denise Flora and her son Caeman (USA), the creators of a new Essential Education resource for children called Ready Set Happy.

Other sessions featured:

- Compassionate parenting (Rasmus Hougaard, Denmark)
- Inspiring stories and role models (Mikkel Kristiansen, Denmark)
- The evolution of Essential Education (Alison Murdoch, UK)
- Universal Education Italia (Patrizia Gavoni and others, Italy)
- Tara Redwood School and the Seven Steps, USA (Mikkel Kristiansen, former volunteer)
- Asociación Educación Universal, España (Mariana Orozco and others, Spain)
- An evening of Sufi music from Egyptian musician Ahmad Elsayy
- A beach party

From Valentina:

"My goal was that this course would be a small but genuine step in the journey to *become* kind and wise individuals. I wanted it to be joyful and profound, as our teachers are able to be; I aimed to satisfy our intellectual minds, and I hoped it would offer emotional insights.

"I could not have hoped to receive more valuable gifts from all the special people who participated in the course: their experience, motivation, skills and potential have been a

tremendous source of inspiration and delight. I feel deeply grateful for the precious seeds of service in friendship we've been able to plant, exploring and growing together in these days. Our warm-heartedness and intelligence are the most we can offer to bring about more peace and justice in the world."

From Denise:

"We designed Ready Set Happy as an on-screen book for use with seven- to eleven-year-olds. Some parents and teachers will use it in this way, but people also came up with so many new ideas for presenting and extending the existing 150 activities to new audiences back home. There was interest in adaptations for teens, younger children, and even expectant mothers, and also in sharing activities, lesson plans and related resources as an on-line support community. The comments that touched me most were: '*This book is a resource I have dreamed of all my life;*' '*I came with questions about raising my children and left with a basketful of answers;*' and '*You have opened my eyes. There is a lesson in everything.*'"

The Foundation for Developing Compassion and Wisdom, which organised the course, would like to thank Valentina and Denise, and all the volunteers who made the course possible: Francesca White (course administrator) and an outstanding and extremely hard-working group of translators: Davide Cova, Patrizia Gavoni, Zandra Mantilla and Mariana Orozco. Thank you also to all the staff at the Istituto, and to Joyce Petschek, for their warm hospitality.

Ready Set Happy is available as a download on www.essential-education.org, along with sample material on the 16 Guidelines, and the 16 Guidelines Study Program. Printed versions of all these resources will be available from 2009. Translations are underway into a range of languages including Danish, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Mongolian and Spanish. ❁

Essential Education was previously known as Universal Education and was the vision of Lama Yeshe, the founder of the FPMT. For more information, or to join the mailing list and get up-to-date information about 16 Guidelines resources and events, please visit www.essential-education.org.

If you are interested in hosting a 16 Guidelines training, or offering financial or volunteer support, please write to 16guidelines@essential-education.org.