

Getting to Know Myself



Book 1

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Introduction to *Alive to the World*

Relationships and Health Education is, in a sense, nothing new. It has always been a task of primary schools to help socialise children and, alongside parents, to teach them how to look after themselves.

What is new is giving the subject a slot in the timetable for all pupils with an emphasis on family relationships. It takes sensitivity to teach this subject while also respecting the role of parents as the first educators of their children. However, it is important and it is something that our international *Alive to the World* programme has been doing for many years.

Alive to the World is based on years of research regarding the development of the child from of a variety of angles: psychology, anthropology, brain development, social science and the input of parents and teachers (see *Creation of the programme* below). The programme has matured over more than twenty years and this UK edition is adapted from a new French production.

Ethos of the programme

Alive to the World looks ahead to adulthood in order to teach children how to make the most of their lives in the present. It can be used in any school which gives priority to preparing children for the whole of their lives. It is not a religious programme, but schools of a religious character will find that it accords easily with the values they promote.

The programme begins by explaining in simple terms that human beings are made up of a unity of the spiritual, emotional and corporal levels and that our relationships with other people involve all of us, at each of these levels. Our spiritual nature, our intelligence and will, sets human beings apart from anything else in the natural world while giving us responsibilities for its care. Each man and woman is unique and irreplaceable and deserving of the utmost respect for who they are. Male and female share many of the same characteristics, but there are also important differences. Discovering the mysterious nature of these characteristics, and how

male and female complement each other, is part of the fun of growing up. It is also key to understanding our relationships with others.

The most profitable way to grow our capacity for friendship and family relationships is to enlarge our own characters, and it pays to begin early.

Children are more likely to try when they feel loved and wanted and when they know there is a purpose to their life. This emotional security is found first and foremost in the home, but it can be effectively reinforced at school. This is why Alive to the World begins in Book 1 by exploring children's self-identity: how each child is unique but also part of the class and of the school. Developing the ability to get on well with other people involves cultivating children's positive attitudes to life. Toddlers passing out of babyhood are naturally self-centred but, by the time that they reach school, infants want to be with other people and "join the group". Alive to the World takes advantage of this developmental moment to



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socialise children with the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” and, in reverse: “Don’t do to others what you would not wish done to you”.

This concept, first named in Book 2, runs through the whole series. Children are shown why it pays to be generous and self-controlled, willing to work hard and have fun, thoughtful of others and respectful. They are taught that work is a service to others and to know and thank those who care for them at school as well as at home. They are taught to be resilient, to be prepared to fail and try again, to say sorry, and to be glad when others do well. These qualities not only prepare children for the future; they also function in the present by improving children’s behaviour and the atmosphere in the classroom.

Dear Teachers,

It is with great satisfaction that we offer you this first book of the Alive to the World® series, which is based on research that reveals that healthy relationships education must start very early.

You are our favourite people, doing the world’s most important job: giving a start in social life to the future citizens of this country!

As you prepare to start teaching with Alive to the World, I would like to say just a few things. This programme has been prepared to help the girls and boys that will be using it to gradually and logically understand the world around them, their place within it and how best to deal with the myriad varied situations they will discover as they grow up.

The programme, although it deals with values, virtues and personal relationships, is not a religious programme. It is entirely based upon sound anthropology and the latest in brain science. For boys and girls to capture, and make their own, the concepts and skills of integrity and successful living, it is important to comply with the “windows of opportunity” which their natural development affords.

Just as languages are learnt with great ease at certain ages, and become nigh impossible later, so too the skills of life have ages when they are easy to learn if well taught.

And so the neural connections of veracity, orderliness, perseverance, responsibility and the other values all have their moment in the building of a strong and sound character.

We have prepared these Guides very carefully to make it as effortless as possible for you get the most out of the simple story in the Student Text. We have provided a variety of activities and discussion points we think will interest your classroom, or at least give you ideas, but of course they are only examples; your experience and knowledge of your pupils will decide how to use the book.

My team and I wish you every success,

Christine de Marcellus Vollmer



Alive to the World course book

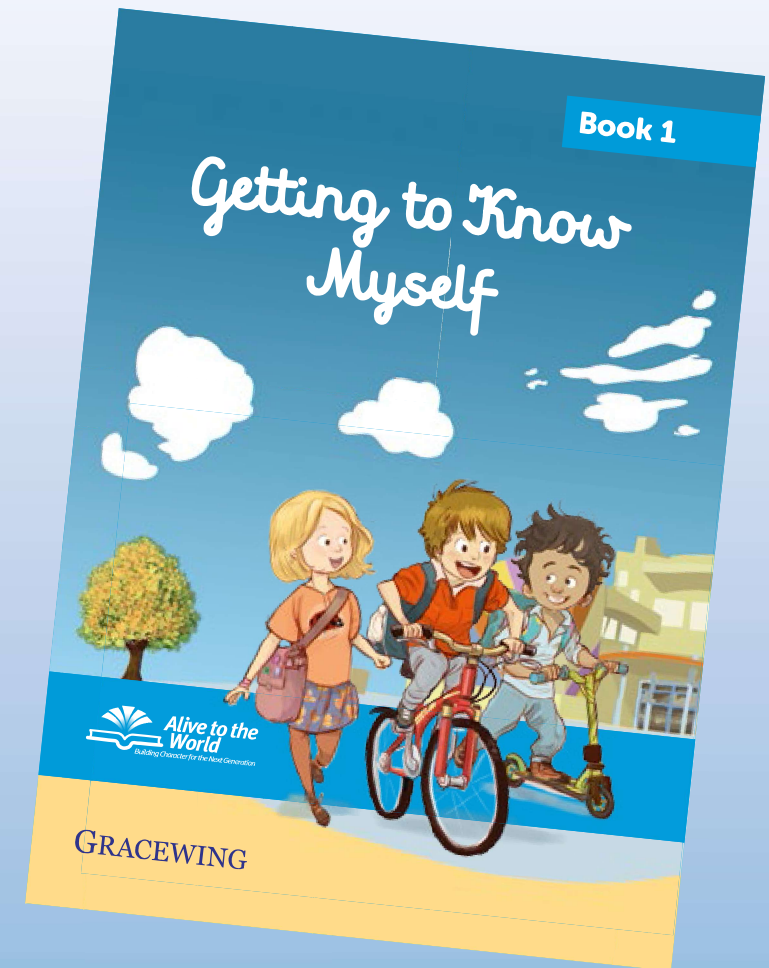
As Thomas Merton said, "You cannot teach another anything; you can only get him to discover it for himself." And so the key to teaching fruitful behaviour is to get the children to discover the value of it for themselves, which means first capturing their interest.

Alive to the World does this by using a fun and credible story. Charlie and Alice grow up alongside the pupils through each Course Book. (There is one Course Book for each year.) The two are cousins of the same age from close families. They and their school friends experience the typical adventures and emotions of a child growing up compressed into a story.

The story-telling technique has many advantages:

- The children associate easily with the characters in the books and are quickly engaged.
- The story presents concrete circumstances to think and talk about.
- This challenges children to assess how they would react.
- This extends their experience of life.
- It avoids anyone feeling personally judged.
- Concepts become memorable, aided by the Course Book pictures.

Through the story, Alive to the World addresses the characteristics that make for wholeness, happiness and success in adult life. These are then linked with children's growing abilities and perceptions of the world. This enthuses children with their own potential as they see for themselves why particular behaviours are fruitful and why others may have negative consequences and are to be avoided. They also recognise the dilemmas of life and the very real temptations to behave badly which we all face. There is much emphasis on saying sorry and trying again.





Anthropological approach

A quick glance through the Course Book reveals that the main characters, Charlie and Alice, both come from happy and united families. This has been done on purpose. The programme was first devised to help children from difficult backgrounds (see **Creation of the programme** below). Some of these have only seen what marriage is and what it feels like to have a father at home through the pages of Alive to the World.

Those children who arrive at school with poor social skills do not necessarily do so because of a broken home. Families come in many shapes and sizes and their happiness and social cohesion will vary with the personalities of their members and with their other close relationships.

However, it remains true that children from broken homes suffer more mental and other health problems than children from intact families⁴. It is particularly hard for boys to understand their future role as adult men when their fathers are not living at home. All children have a relationship with their own blood fathers to work on, of course, even if it is only in their imaginations.

The story approach of Alive to the World helps to align the deep yearning we all have for lasting and reliable love with a realistic idea of ourselves and of other people, of the ups and downs, tensions and joys which accompany our deepest relationships. Alive to the World teaches all children to appreciate other people and especially their family, whoever they may be. It encourages them to give of their best at home as well as at school.

Absence of a close physical relationship between mother and child can also be a cause of emotional insecurity. It is now known that the limbic system of the brain, which determines feelings, emotions, identity and self-control, develops under the "mutual gaze" of mother and child in the first months and years of life. When this is disturbed, children's emotional development is weakened. Wherever possible it is good to encourage parents to enjoy time and intimacy with their children, and to instil in pupils the importance of talking to their parents and siblings. The growing use of technology, even by pre-schoolers, is a worrying trend.

The importance of developing thinking skills

The Alive to the World method does more than stretch children's perceptions. It also develops their thinking skills:

- **Analytical**
The ability to dissect the whole into its parts and to classify them.
- **Logical reasoning**
The capacity to understand cause and effect, and the relationship between them.
- **Expression and communication**
Naming thoughts and emotions in itself develops understanding and encourages children to converse with each other on the deeper things of life. This helps their friendships and prepares them for fuller romantic relationships in the future.

⁴The Marriage Foundation reports that more than a third of children whose parents have split up suffer mental health problems, compared with only a fifth of those who are still together, and this can have a major impact on their life chances. Please see Marriage Foundation paper, '[Family Breakdown has a major influence on teen mental health](#)'. Ninety per cent of parents who stay together until their children reach 15 are married. Please see Marriage Foundation's page '[Top Ten Key Facts on Marriage](#)'. (Accessed 21 Nov 2019)



Unit 1: It's me!

The first step to gaining children's confidence is to make them feel secure and known to themselves. Teaching pupils to look at themselves with new eyes is also a quick way to capture their attention.

Chapter 1: I'm called Charlie

Who am I?

We are identified in the first instance by our names: first name and last name. Whatever those names may be, and in whatever circumstances children may have received them, it is important to their growing sense of identity that they should recognise and be comfortable with their names. It is the first step in answering the question: who am I?

Knowing that we belong is at the heart of developing self-esteem. Our sense of self is reinforced by understanding that our first name is given to us by our parents (and belongs to "me" as an individual) and our last or surname derives from who we are (and is shared by other family members, past and present). Surnames identify us with close family members, but

close family members will not necessarily have the same surname. A family grows from both the mother and the father and, if we were to keep all the names from which we derive, we would have a very long name indeed! The common convention in the UK is to keep the name from the father's family, but there are and always have been exceptions to this. There are now many children who have been given their mother's family name or have the two in conjunction.

There are two things to bear in mind:

- wherever it comes from, our name continues to tell us something about our family roots;
- we can be a close family member without sharing a name.

The issue of name touches upon deep sensitivities, as we know when it comes to nicknames. These latter can either be terms of affection or abuse. How we take them depends on what the name means and also on who gives it and with what intent.

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Chapter 2: The mirror game

What am I?

Understanding the body helps children to answer the question "What am I?" It helps them to form an idea of themselves. Guided to look at their own bodies, they grow in their appreciation of themselves. They see fresh aspects of their own (and their classmates') faces, such as freckles or moles. They also notice the specific colour of their skin, eyelashes and eyebrows as well as the lights in their eyes and hair.

It is very important that children enjoy their bodies and accept the way they are, since this affects their self-esteem. The opinion they have of their bodies has a profound influence on their self-identity.

This touches on a fundamental aspect of the Alive to the World programme: that the human person is a unity of body ("the exterior") and spirit ("the interior"). Each child should be made aware of this unity and so be encouraged to look after their bodies.

Recognising their bodily make-up and accepting their physical characteristics helps them to be happy with themselves. Make sure to correct any negative ideas which may arise about their own or each other's appearance. Each child is beautiful in a distinct way.

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Chapter 3: A trip to the country

Unity of body and spirit.

Human beings are a unity of body and spirit. It is through the senses that both the intelligence and the will are kept in touch with the outside world. At birth, a baby already possesses all the parts of the body. However, in the first moments of life a child interacts with the things in its vicinity largely through the senses: eyes, ears, nose, tongue and touch. It is only as the baby grows that it learns how to control the other parts of the body (arms, hands, legs and feet) and so interact more fully with its surroundings.

By the start of school, the child already knows from experience what all the visible parts of the body do. Taking notice of each function brings home its importance and the need to take care of it.

Pointing out that we know about the things around us through our senses helps children to understand that learning begins with the senses. Quite how much we learn through seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching is brought home to them when they explore the functions of the various parts of the body. By becoming more aware of their bodily integrity the children will at the same time become more perceptive of the exterior world.

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Chapter 4: George breaks his leg

Our worth is not dependent upon our ability.


All of us have insecurities of one sort or another, and they are often focused on our weaknesses, whether these are perceived or real. One way to show children clearly that they are valuable regardless of their abilities is to focus on what happens when a person is evidently lacking a function (a sense or a limb). This lesson has the bonus of also encouraging children to be sensitive to those amongst them, or in the community, who may have special needs.

There are various types of special needs:

- passing ones that are visible (as in the story, where George uses crutches because of a broken leg);

- passing ones that are invisible (e.g. a bout of deafness);
- lasting ones that are visible (e.g. a child who lacks a limb because of a congenital condition);
- lasting ones that are invisible (e.g. allergic sensitivity).

A child with a special need in one area of life may be exceptionally talented in others. Pupils who are already used to having children with special needs amongst them will take easily to this lesson and you can expect lively class participation. Even where this is not the case, children may be able to draw on the experiences they have had in their families or among their neighbours.

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Chapter 5: Birthdays

Similar to others and also unique.

Human beings are both similar to and different from each other. They all belong to one and the same species, Homo sapiens, from which their equality of rights and dignity derive. The fact that every human being has a head, legs, arms, etc., helps children to understand this idea. They can also recognise that other people have a spiritual life just as they do: they think, love, laugh, cry, etc.



1

I'm called Charlie

Key Points

- Understanding how our names connect us with our family.
- Learning why we use first and second names.

Objectives

Knowing

To understand that we are identified by a first name chosen specially for us and by a surname which attaches us to a family.

Accepting

To appreciate our own family bonds and the family bonds of others.

Doing

To know and respect our names and those of others, including unusual names.

Lesson Notes

Before the age of four, children already know their own first names, but they may not take in that their first name has been specifically chosen for them by their parents. The names parents choose are usually taken from a selection used by others, more or less commonly.

Most names have a meaning, which children enjoy discovering. For instance, there are many girls' names associated with flowers (one child and her mother drew up a list of forty such names) and these in turn can derive from an ancient meaning.

Traditional British surnames (also called "second" and "last" names) likewise had an original meaning. Many are lost in time, but some are still easily detected.

Children whose origins are from another country may have names which sound strange to us but which are recognisable and have meaning in the land their family came from.

Experience shows that even after the age of seven children often fail to take in the difference between first and last names.

Asked their surnames, they commonly reply John Talbot, or Amy Smith. Try to insist so that they grasp the distinction.

It is important that children are at ease with both their names.

Consequently:

- If a child has an unlikely first or last name, don't pick it out. Names can make children feel uncomfortably self-conscious, on this and other grounds too.
- If pupils laugh at a name, point out that first names are specially chosen for us by our parents (they liked them, their meaning or associations); and that last names have been in the family for generations, making a link with grandparents and great-grandparents and beyond.

Origins of names

In the UK, there has been a long-standing custom of calling children after figures in the Bible or from among the saints. Children now come from many different cultures and you can encourage them to find out the meanings of their names and why their parents chose them.

Traditional British surnames (also called "second" and "last" names) likewise had an original meaning. Many are lost in time, but some are still easily detected.

Typically, British surnames came from relationships (e.g. Williams and Williamson: "son of William", Jones and Johnson: "son of John", McGregor: "son of Gregory", Campbell: from the Campbell clan); a trade (Smith, Baker, Miller), or a place name (Westbury, Newton, Thornycroft, Greenfield).

Sensitivities in teaching this topic

It is important to take trouble to pronounce children's names correctly. Children may want to be known by a nickname or an abbreviation. Equally, they may not.

Surnames can be a delicate issue, for instance where the father has disappeared, or where the mother takes the name of a new partner. Siblings from the same

family (some of whom may be at the school) can have different surnames. It is not the name but the family relationships which are at issue. Helping children to take pride in their name before they are aware of the sensitivities can help them to become more resilient.

Lesson plan

Charlie and Alice course book:
Chapter 1, "I'm called Charlie" (pp. 4-5).

- Start at the beginning, showing the children the cover of the book.
- Explain the characters, pp. 2-3.
- Turn to Chapter 1, "I am called Charlie", pp. 4-5. Get the children to look at and comment on the pictures.
- Read the story.
- Get the children to retell the story.

Materials

- Full length photographs of the pupils [Lesson notes]
- A5 sized red and white card [1]
- Camera/phone [1]
- IWB pictures [Reflection]
- Large piece of paper [Reflection]

Activities

1.



Invite the children to find their names on the interactive whiteboard (IWB). They will probably be used to finding their first names. See how quickly they can also find their last names, and the two names combined.

2.



When do you use a first name? (to call them, to speak of them,)

3.



Go round the class learning names in rhyme (spoken or sung). Some ideas can be found at:

Preschoollearning.com

DreamEnglish.com

[What's your name? song: 1.55 min](#)

4. **Peter calls Paul game.**



Each child stands in a hoop which represents his or her house. One child calls out the name of another and the two run and swap places. If a child cannot name another child, he/she stays put. The child who has just been called takes the next turn.



5. Pigeons are white



The children make a circle and sing:

"The pigeons are white

They are green and grey

Turn round, [Julie]!"

Each child named turns round. The game finishes when all the children have been named.

6. The ball game



Ask the children to sit in a big circle.

Take a big ball and ask the children to

roll it to each other saying: "I'm sending the ball to [name]"; this pupil sends it on using the same phrase. Make sure that everybody is included.

7. A portrait



Again with the children in a circle, the teacher begins: "I'm thinking of a girl.

She has brown eyes, a pigtail with a red ribbon, and she has taken her jumper off. I am thinking of". The child who gets the answer asks the next question.

Reflection

Ask the children if they are always called by their first names, or if they have nick names, too. Who uses them, and why? Draw from them that there are some people we habitually call by another name (Mum, Dad, Grandma etc.) Why do we do this?

When do we call people by their surnames? What is the difference between using surnames and "Sir" or "Miss" for teachers?

Go through the teachers and other members of staff making sure that the children know their names.

Family links

Get the children to ask their parents to write down their own surnames, those of their grandparents and other close family members (including siblings). Ask them to make a simple map of their intimate family members, telling the children that they can include (or leave out) anybody they wish. First and last names should both be included. Pets are not valid!