

An Assembly Talk for Secondary Schools

For week beginning 18th June

Length: 3½ - 4 minutes

How many people spent some time in reflection this morning?

If I said I'm going to talk to you this morning about spending time in reflection, you may think it's a time for sleep and that I'll be talking about monks locked in a monastery somewhere or people sitting crossed legged, humming with their eyes shut.

My guess is that all of you spent some time in reflection this morning. In fact my guess is that some of you spent a lot of time in reflection this morning.

How many of you spent time looking in the mirror?

If we think about it some of us spend a significant part of our day in reflection, looking at ourselves in the mirror. We take time to make sure that we look OK, that our hair is just right, that we've got no spots and that we're looking our best. These times of reflection are intensely private moments. No one else knows the secrets of our hair or our skin, and we often don't want other people to know what we're really like, just in case they don't find us attractive or will make fun of us. That's why some of us spend so much time each day in private reflection, looking in the mirror to make sure we look right.

So how many of you spent time in reflection this morning?

Now not all of us spend time looking in the mirror but we spend time in reflection in other ways. Think about the footballer who misses a penalty kick, or the pop singer who misses a note, or the person who misses the bus, or anyone who misses an opportunity. Each of those people will spend time reflecting afterwards on what went wrong. How could I have improved my performance? What do I need to do differently next time?

This is part of what is called the action-reflection cycle that all of us participate in every day. We do something. We get a result or an experience, and we think about how we might get a better result or improve the experience next time.

You may not have had a chance to do this successfully on your way here this morning because you were too rushed. You had no time to think or take time to reflect on what you were doing, you just had to get on with it.

So all of us do spend time in reflection, and if we want to get on in life all of us need to take time out to reflect on our actions and experiences to make sure we get it right, improve and progress.

This Thursday, the 21st June, has been designated as a Day of Private Reflection by a group called Healing through Remembering. They are a group that recognises that we all need to take time to reflect, to take a close look at ourselves, and at our actions – to look into the

mirrors of our lives to ensure that we don't just get it right and improve life for ourselves, but also for other people.

This Thursday they are encouraging people to think about the conflict that took place in and about Northern Ireland, to think about all those who were killed and were injured, and to think about the attitudes we all have, and the responsibility we all have, to make sure that we live in a peaceful society where everyone is safe and treated fairly.

This is a process which starts with private reflection. This can and should be done every day. But this Thursday, 21st June, you may decide to make a special effort to spend some time in reflection. And when you're looking in the mirror, look yourself in the eyes and ask yourself what sort of person am I, and how can I improve life not only for myself but also for all members of society regardless of what gender they are, what religion they are, what they look like or where they live.

Spending time in reflection is good for all of us, not just to make sure our hair looks OK, but to ensure that we reflect on our attitude and actions, so that we don't just get caught up in our own selfishness or the rush of life, but that we get the best for ourselves and for other people too.

So don't forget – this Thursday, 21st June, a day of Private Reflection.

Note:

Posters and publicity resources from HTR could be used to accompany the assembly and provide visual aids. A couple of power point slides could be used to highlight the date and purpose of the Day of Private Reflection.