
Seven Angel Breaths: A Re-Centering Imagination

~ Nancy Blanning

A recent conversation among early childhood teachers turned to self-care. One teacher was brave and honest enough to say that she is simply worn out with responding to the daily dysregulation and challenges our children carry with them into the classroom. She loves her work, loves being with the children, but feels drained and unable to replenish. Many other teachers describe the same distress. We know that the children absorb and imitate the inner state and mood of the teacher. How can we adults find re-centering, regulating moments when it is not possible to retreat to compose ourselves?

The idea of Seven Angel Breaths arose out of thoughts shared by Dr. Helmut von Kügelgen, Waldorf class teacher in Germany for thirty years and then a deep friend of Waldorf early childhood education in his years of retirement. He spoke about the power of working in rhythm and with the archetypal number seven.

“In working with the spiritual world, it is important to work in a rhythm, and particularly the rhythms of seven are of great help. One can work with the rhythm of seven days or seven years or even seven minutes. . . In rhythms of seven a new strength appears.

“When we work with these rhythms of seven, the angels take notice of us. If, for example, we have a sudden impulse to act, we can take time and wait seven minutes before acting. We may then feel that seven minutes is a very long time indeed. But in this quiet pause something happens. Waiting these seven minutes gives the angels a chance to notice us, to let something ‘fall into’ us. In this way we make time for the angels to enter our lives, and they wait for us to do this. It is not that magnificent revelations from the

angels appear to us in this time, but that the angels see us. They can only perceive us when we are prepared for this to happen and give it time.” (Dr. Helmut von Kügelgen, “Working with the Angels, the Archangels, and the Archai,” from *Working with the Angels: The Young Child and the Spiritual World*, WECAN, 2004)

For ourselves as teachers, parents, and other adult care-providers, seven minutes can be impractical if something urgent arises that requires prompt attention. So the idea came for taking seven slow, deliberate breaths before responding to the situation before us. Following is a verse to accompany these seven angel breaths. Each breath (except for the seventh) is accompanied by a word or phrase of two syllables. Breathe in on the first syllable, exhale on the second. The final word of the verse will have its own natural in- and out-breath and take this breath especially slowly, even lingeringly. ♦

An – gel,
Guard – ing,
Guide my
Think – ing,
Feel – ing,
Will – ing,
Heart