

A sense of being, the holistic way

Acquiring knowledge of the self is what holistic development expert Dina Lahlou believes is crucial for people to lead a happy and productive life, believing that in every one of us lies “a powerful and infinite potential for happiness and joy, with self-empowerment the key to self-transformation, leading to a positive existence”.

Dina has been teaching university and high school level students since 1996 and is currently living in Amman, Jordan, giving workshops on self-awareness, self-responsibility, self-empowerment, communication and diplomacy. In addition, she is developing a human values curriculum to teach and implement education for peace.

Conscious-based education is an approach that is said to awaken students’ total brain potential, so they are naturally focused and eager to learn. Its proponents – such as the Maharishi University of Management in Iowa, US – believe the expansion of creative intelligence saves children from making mistakes in life and sets them on the path of growing happiness and achievement.

“I believe in transformation learning, not information learning. My own education is ongoing, especially in the field of self-development, holistic healing, bio-energetics therapy and behavioural psychology,” says the Moroccan-born Dina, who recently held workshops in Bahrain. “Once you open the Pandora’s box of the self, which resides in the subconscious, you discover not only how you function but how everything functions around you. My mentor was Munira Nusseibeh, who passed on her profound holistic therapy knowledge over a span of four years, and changed my life and the lives of many others for the better.”

Holistic education seeks to develop growth in the intellectual, creative, spiritual, social, physical and emotional potentials of the learner. It aims to create an understanding of various contexts and perspectives that shape human experience and to promote critical thinking. To achieve this it emphasises interconnections, integration between theory and practice, and empowerment of the learner, and addresses different ways of knowing and discovering the world we live in.

Maximising one’s potential, Dina believes, is knowing where the links are, so things then end up falling into your lap and coming together. She

thoroughly enjoys teaching high school students, especially teenagers, at the Modern Montessori School in Amman, a Theory of Knowledge class for the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme.

“It is immensely gratifying to teach students about values and ethics, topics that are not abstract concepts. It is wonderful to see these kids

*“When faced
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tapping into their inherent knowledge – they are both my inspiration and teachers,” says Dina.

She asks: “Even though we go to school, university and have acquired all this great knowledge, why we are not creating a small, peaceful world? It’s obvious we are not tapping into all our intelligence. The intellect has one function and the emotional, spiritual and physical intelligences each have other functions. If we just use the intellect, we cannot become ‘done’. We have to use other ways of knowledge to become complete, and this idea, believe it or not, is a hit with the teenagers I teach, who believe this all makes perfect sense.”

“It is easy to say you are a peaceful person and that you respect other peoples’ differences when you don’t have to. The challenge is when you are tasked to become peaceful, calm, respectful and self-responsible. The majority of us are aware all of this is right, however, we can’t apply it to our lives,” she says.

Tired minds, Dina believes, is a widespread phenomenon in today’s world, which is why one’s thoughts have become scattered in this day and age and it is difficult to focus. “We are bombarded by too much on a daily basis, which is why many people are unable to deal with life. All it takes to survive and thrive is knowing the tricks,” says Dina, who thinks it is important for people to build their sense of self and be human beings in the full sense of the word.

Dina believes all spiritual teachings from the world’s greatest religions say the same thing, which is “start by knowing yourself if you want to know God”.

“Sages and wise people all have one thing in common: they went within themselves every day.

Dina believes people have a powerful and infinite potential for happiness and joy.

There is wisdom in this planet amidst all the turmoil out there and I believe that in every single ritual we do, there is a reason behind it. It’s not by accident Muslims, for example, pray five times a day, because we have the five elements of the cosmos,” says Dina.

More people are unhappy today than ever before, she says, because they feel confined, with panic attacks on the rise and people wasting time in order to avoid how to think.

“We never stay still, which is what we must do to absorb our thoughts. After all, awareness is observing how we think and becoming more exposed. We are enlightened every day and just don’t see it. Traditional therapy, which involves concentrating only on the mind, is limiting. Holistic therapy, on the other hand, addresses both the body and mind and can even eradicate phobias in people or panic attacks in one of two sessions,” she says.

A firm believer that the youth need a platform of belonging, Dina says they need to understand they are citizens of the world, “which will give them both a sense of regional and global belonging”.

Going on the basis that every human is fundamentally good, Dina believes people only lash out if they are hurt, in pain and feeling misunderstood. “We are not working as a whole, because we are not complete inside. We must embrace our differences, and learn from other cultures and not shun people whose ethnicity is not the same as ours. It irritates me when people say we must be ‘tolerant’ of others, because that word has a lot of arrogance attached to it and I prefer to use the word ‘accept’ in this case,” she says.

“We experience what we believe, not believe what we experience. Even scientists are aware a universal force is at play. Children are more aware than we are of their surroundings and can see things we can’t, which is why we must realise we have the power to pay attention to things we have manifested ourselves. It’s interesting to note that everything starts out as an impulse, just as our thoughts are impulses of intelligence that when mixed with a wave of probability, a small world is created. Nothing is impossible, and it has been proven that children understand this concept better than adults and are aware there are no limits to what we can do,” Dina says.

Since she realised “the infinite potential of life” Dina believes every day is an achievement. “Every day is great and things just happen because I have a dream, an intention, and I love life. Our weaknesses are our potential strength and are challenges we can learn from, which makes life more fun. My wish is to empower the new generation and then move on to the next challenge of humanity. Once they realise all the world has to offer and that they have to offer to the world, many problems will be solved,” she says.





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A divorced mother of ten-year-old Talal, whom she says adopted her after she married his father when he was five, Dina, says her son is her best friend and inspiration. "I trust his judgment on many things. He is wise beyond his years and both of us know how lucky we are to have found each other. It makes me happy to know that he is growing up to be a fine individual and meditates daily, which makes him more focused in school. I'm still good friends with my ex-husband, as we both accept each other's differences. Dina, is well-travelled, having already been to China and South America by the time she was 14, as her father fostered a deep love of adventure and discovery at an early age. She is

fluent in five languages as a result of her travels.

Dina's passions include EQ (emotional intelligence), spiritual, scientific, quantum physics and metaphysics knowledge, as well as yoga, scuba diving, skiing and, of course, travelling. "I try to be more flexible, which is why I channel feelings of humility in the morning, which always keeps me grounded for the rest of the day," she says.

Ever the optimist, Dina believes in miracles and hopes to continue doing what she loves best, spreading the word about everything from power to love and serenity to freedom ■■■