The assembly

You will need:

Music: The suggested music for children to come in to and leave by is any piece composed by Beethoven. Point out to the children that Beethoven wrote wonderful music even when his deafness almost made him despair. He kept going because he believed in himself and because his friends helped him to keep his belief when times were very dark and bleak. (The Ode to Joy from the ninth symphony is a particularly powerful testimony to hope over adversity.)

Flipchart and pens

Sufficient copies of the story scripts for children with speaking parts

Pictures to support children’s understanding of the assembly story. You will find these on the CD-ROM that accompanies these materials. They can be copied onto acetates or used with a data projector.

Introduction

Note: For children in the Foundation Stage, it may be more appropriate to introduce the work on this theme in a class/group gathering.

You can either present this assembly as a story with just one child acting the part of Samindra, or you can involve several children in these speaking parts:

Samindra
Samindra’s mother

Note: Spoken words are printed in bold type in the story.

Tell children that this assembly is about ‘Going for goals’ – knowing what you want to achieve and setting out to achieve it. It can be hard work achieving your goal. You might get bored or scared, or you might feel like giving up because it seems too difficult. You might not be able to do it on your own and will need your friends to help you.

Ask children what they could say to encourage someone who was trying to achieve something that was very difficult for them. Accept all children’s ideas but write on the flipchart:

Keep going
You can do it

Outline

Tell children that the story they are going to hear is about a boy called Samindra who has something very difficult to achieve. Tell them that they will all have to help him by whispering the words on the flipchart over and over again when you point to them.

Ask the children to imagine that there is a huge mountain at the front of the hall or room where they are gathered. Use the first picture from the assembly resources (see the CD-ROM that accompanies these materials).
The story

A long, long time ago in a village at the bottom of a mountain, Samindra lived with his mother and baby sister. When Samindra was little, his father had been taken away to fight in someone else’s war across the mountains.

Samindra’s mother spoke of his father often. ‘He is the bravest, strongest and most hard-working man in the village,’ she said.

‘I’ll never be like my father,’ Samindra told himself. Samindra did not feel brave or strong, and he certainly did not work hard.

‘You’ll never be like your father,’ his mother said to him when he ran off and made mischief instead helping on the farm.

Samindra’s mother worked hard to feed the family. The family’s prize possession was an old tractor. It was always breaking down but she always got it going again. Without it they would have to leave the farm.

One day Samindra’s mother got on the tractor so she could start harvesting the corn. There was a terrible crunch. The tractor shuddered and Samindra’s mother was thrown from the seat and on to the hard earth. Her leg was twisted beneath her. Samindra could see she was in pain but still she got to her feet and looked at the tractor. ‘It’s no good. I can’t mend it. The tractor needs a new carburettor. I’ll have to go to the village over the mountain to buy a new one,’ she said.

She started to walk down the path but after two steps her leg gave way and she fell to the ground in tears. ‘It’s no good!’ she said. ‘I can’t get to the end of the path. I’ll never be able to go over the mountain. We’ll miss the harvest and the crops will be ruined.’

Samindra looked up at the mountain towering above him. His mouth was dry and his heart was pounding. His legs went suddenly weak and he felt as though he had a big hard knot inside him. ‘I will go,’ Samindra said. He knew he had to help. It was the family’s only chance. Without the new carburettor there would be no food for the winter and they would have to leave the farm or they would die.
The next day Samindra kissed his mother goodbye and set off. His mother waved and smiled weakly. Samindra’s legs still trembled and he felt a big, hard knot inside him. That day he walked and walked and walked, further than he had ever walked in his life. The land became steeper and the sun grew hotter. He stopped for a rest under the shade of a stunted tree and ate and drank a little. Then he looked up at the mountain above and saw there was still such a long way to go. He sighed and dropped his head in his hands. ‘I can’t go on,’ he said to himself, ‘I can’t do it. I just can’t do it.’

Then, the strangest thing happened; from somewhere he heard a faint voice, which seemed to be speaking to him over and over again saying (point to the words and all the children chant quietly): ‘Keep going, keep going, keep going…’

Samindra heard the voice but he did not know where it was coming from. Was it from outside him or inside? (point to the words): ‘Keep going, keep going, keep going…’

Somehow the voice gave him courage in his heart and strength in his legs. He remembered that more than anything in the world they needed the carburettor. ‘I will keep going,’ he said, and strode on up the mountain.

When it began to grow dark, Samindra knew that he would have to rest for the night. He didn’t like the dark, and there, on the mountain, the dark was darker than he had ever known it. He built a fire, but in spite of the bright flames, he began to shiver. He didn’t know if he was shivering because he was cold or because he was scared. All he knew was that he wanted to go home. He wanted to leave the horrible mountain and run back home.
and be safe and warm again. ‘I can’t go on,’ he said to himself, ‘I can’t do it. I just can’t do it.’

Then, from somewhere, he heard a faint voice, which seemed to be speaking to him over and over again saying (point to the words and all the children chant quietly): ‘You can do it, you can do it, you can do it … .’

Samindra heard the voice but he did not know where it was coming from. Was it from outside him or inside? (point to the words): ‘You can do it, you can do it, you can do it … .’

With the words in his ears, somehow Samindra felt less afraid. ‘I can do it,’ he murmured to himself as he fell fast asleep.

Samindra woke with the sun and was amazed to see that he was nearly at the top of the mountain. He struggled and climbed and climbed and struggled until at last he was standing on the very top. Below him, in the distance, he could just see the village he was heading to, but it was so very far away that his heart failed him. For a moment he forgot about his family and the tractor and everything. ‘It’s no good,’ he said, ‘I just can’t do it.’

Then he heard from somewhere a faint voice which seemed to be speaking to him over and over again saying (point to the words and all the children chant quietly): ‘You can do it, you can do it, you can do it … .’

Samindra heard the voice but he did not know where it was coming from. Was it from outside him or inside? (point to the words): ‘You can do it, you can do it, you can do it … .’

Samindra took a deep breath. ‘I can do it,’ he said out loud, ‘and I will!’ And he set off for the village below.

When, at last, Samindra reached the village on the other side of the mountain, he went to the shop and bought the part for the old tractor.

It was a long way back, just as long as the way there, but whenever he was tired or scared or fed up, Samindra said to himself ‘I will keep going, I can do it, I will do it.’

The nearer he got to his village and his home, the quicker he seemed to travel. When he was nearly there the villagers came out to greet him. He ran straight to his home to find his mother. ‘I climbed the mountain,’ cried Samindra, ‘I got the carburettor.’
His mother smiled at him. ‘I knew you would,’ she said ‘After all, Samindra, you are just like your father.’

You can now explore with the children their thoughts and feelings about the story by asking each age group one of the questions. Tell the children there are no right or wrong answers.

Foundation Stage: What do you think Samindra wanted most of all? How do you think you helped Samindra?

Years 1 and 2: Why do you think Samindra wanted to give up? What helped Samindra to get what he wanted?

Years 3 and 4: Do you think Samindra was brave? Why? Why not? What helped Samindra to keep going when he was tired or scared?

Years 5 and 6: Think of one thing that would have made Samindra’s task less difficult for him. What had happened to Samindra to make his mother say ‘You are just like your father’?

**Conclusion**

Ask the children to find a very still, quiet place inside themselves. Remind them that Samindra set out to achieve something very difficult all by himself. The children helped him to believe in himself and to believe that he could do it. Tell the children it is now their chance to think of something that they really want to do, or do better. Their goal could be, for instance, to be kinder to a friend, or to try harder at their writing. Sometimes they might feel as though there is a mountain in the way that they have to climb before they can achieve their goals. Ask them to think really hard about what they want and what they will need to do to get it. They may like to think about how their friends or teacher/practitioner can help them.

Play the music. The children leave in silence keeping their goals in their heads until they get back to the classroom. There they can share or record them and talk about how they can help each other to achieve them. This will be the focus of the follow-up assembly at the end of the theme.
Follow-up assembly to be held at the end of the theme

Begin by reminding the children of the story of Samindra and the mountain, and how they helped Samindra to keep going and believe in himself.

Now children from each year group present some of the work they have done in class. The class teacher and children should together choose the work that the class will feed back, but here are some examples.

**Foundation Stage:** The teacher/practitioner (with help from the children) tells the whole school about the group goals that they set themselves (for example in the forest walk activity). They might project digital photographs to illustrate what the group wanted to do and what they achieved. They could talk about the difficulties that they had and say who or what helped them. Conclude by congratulating all the children on what they have achieved and summarise some of the things that helped them keep going.

**Years 1 and 2:** The children present their work from the *Ready to learn challenge*. They describe different ways of learning. Year 2 children talk about the things we can do to overcome frustration and help ourselves keep going when things are difficult. This could be presented as a drama.

**Years 3 and 4:** The children present several of the sets of sentences used in class to demonstrate where children are, and are not, taking responsibility for themselves. They read each of the sentences out loud and the children in the school vote on whether they think the sentence demonstrates that the child is taking responsibility. The teacher or children conclude by saying that no one can achieve their goals unless they take responsibility for their own actions.

**Years 5 and 6:** The feedback for years 5 and 6 reflects what the Foundation Stage children presented but at a much more complex level. Children talk about a skill that they or someone else has worked hard to acquire. They share with the whole school the process they went through. For example, was there a time when it seemed impossible? Did they ever feel like giving up? What helped, and what was unhelpful? What were the worst bits? Year 6 children can encourage the younger children to question them. Conclude by stressing the positive things that enable people to reach their goals.

End the assembly by asking everyone to think in silence about what they, or someone else, has achieved through the *Going for goals!* work. Encourage them to think positively about their own or others’ achievements and to feel proud of themselves or their friends. Ask the children to keep these positive thoughts in their heads as you play the music and they leave in silence.

**Variations on the assembly for subsequent years**

*Note:* The follow-up assembly remains the same each year.

The variations on the *Going for goals!* theme involve older children in planning and holding the assembly. Year 6 children, or a small group of them, will need to undertake some research prior to the assembly and will need time to plan properly. Planning and holding the assembly will present an excellent cross-curricular project, which could cover literacy (including speaking and listening), history, geography, citizenship, RE, art and design, and music.
Each year, the Year 6 assembly group choose someone to research who has overcome difficulties in order to achieve their goal(s). This could be someone in the local community or in the school, a child’s personal hero or someone from the list below. Children could use, as a starting point, the work covered in Years 3 and 4 (Yellow set) about people who achieved goals against significant odds.

Each year when the Year 6 children lead the assembly they should:

- outline briefly the story of Samindra and the mountain, pointing out that the mountain Samindra had to cross to get the carburettor for his family was a real one;
- point out that there are often mountains in the way of achieving goals – they are not usually real mountains, but they are things to be overcome such as tiredness, boredom or doubt;
- introduce the assembly by saying that it will be about someone who has achieved very important goal(s) in his or her life despite the enormous mountains he or she had to climb;
- present the story of the chosen person’s life in as visual a way as possible, for example through drama, pictures, hot-seating or rapping. It is for the children to decide.

**Suggestions for research**

People who have achieved their goals in the face of difficulties include:

- Sojourner Truth (slave and poet)
- Ludwig van Beethoven (composer)
- Rosa Parks (freedom fighter)
- Primo Levi (holocaust survivor and writer)
- Kelly Holmes (athlete)
- Sadako Sakasi (a Japanese girl who was a victim of Hiroshima)

Each assembly finishes with all the children being asked to think quiet thoughts about what they have learned through the assembly, about the goals they have recently set for themselves, and/or how they have helped other people to achieve their goals. The music plays and they leave in silence, taking their thoughts with them.