

“Gentle Teaching: A philosophy of life for a culture of peace” my chapter on this book and how GT has impacted my life for good!

Dr. Sylvia M. Fernandez-Colorado

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Dr. Sylvia M. Fernandez-Colorado was born and raised in Puerto Rico and is now a Master Mentor wishing to share with us everything she has learned about Gentle Teaching from Dr. John McGee...

Sylvia has one Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology and a second Ph.D. in Industrial Organizational Psychology; she has several certifications: Emotional Intelligence, Life and Career Coaching, and is now Master Mentor for Gentle Teaching able to share her passion for GT around the world as she's retired. She has also published four books two in Spanish and two in English that can be found on Amazon.

Her professional experience includes private practice, working in psychiatric hospitals, juvenile detention centers, at a university counseling center in the USA, offering trainings to personnel around Puerto Rico and nine years (and four positions) at the only Psychology Graduate School in Puerto Rico.

She was appointed by Judge Gustavo Gelpí as Dr. McGee's (Federal Monitor or Joint Compliance Coordinator to the Civil Case 99-1435 since 1999) assistant in October 2010. When Dr. McGee transitioned she was named JCC and quit after two years in the position.

In 2015 she moved to the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico where she remotely offered Life Coaching meetings to college students with a non-profit organization. Dr. Fernandez has also offered trainings and presentations, written articles and presented Gentle Teaching in professional Congresses in Israel, Puerto Rico and USA.

She has presented GT on local television, newspapers, magazines and radio programs as well as on the internet. Since 2017, her passion for learning about the world has taken her to over 10 countries where she has been spreading GT through her example, words and in her coaching meetings.

Since 2019 she has moved to San Juan, Puerto Rico and calls her meetings "Soul Alignment Meetings" because she relies more on her intuition and open heart than on any study, statistic or theory. These days she's eager and looking forward to spreading more Gentle Teaching as a Master Mentor having the time and freedom to travel and share the love GT has to offer all!

I want begin by thanking all the collaborators in this loving adventure.

- The idea for this book came about while talking to Mara Hawks in the summer of 2014 when Anthony McCrovitz very kindly invited me to learn from their techniques.
- Dr. McGee always loved telling stories to get his point across; he understood stories to be the best way to help others understand feelings, emotions and even ways of seeing life itself.

...through our stories

- It seemed to me like the perfect way to get others like you to get inspired about learning more of what the philosophy of Gentle Teaching is all about...through our stories.
- In 2011, I had started to videotape some of the new students and old colleagues of Dr. McGee while in Belgium and then in Denmark in 2012.

My You Tube Channel Upekkhapr Sylvia Fernandez

- I wanted and still want to make a small movie and Dr. McGee seemed very interested in the whole idea...of how we have benefited from GT in their lives as well as in their jobs.
- The focus was really on the person taking the trainings and not on the “client”.
- I began making small videos in 2012 that are on my You Tube Channel Upekkhapr Sylvia Fernandez.

Collaboration book adventure began!

- When I finally decided to start the collaboration book adventure I sent about 25 invitations to people I had met through Dr. McGee and the Gentle Teaching International community.
- It was my interest to get the book to the Stress and Anxiety Research Society Congress (STAR) where I'm the National Representative for Puerto Rico. The Congress was held in Tel Aviv, Israel in July 2015, but this wasn't possible.

More people wanted to join!

- I received e-mails of people who found out about it and wanted to participate, and I encouraged all of them to write their stories.
- Writing this book was a challenge that I devotedly took on because I felt the need to bring together a group of people that wanted to share their stories of love, understanding and community to the rest of the world just as I did...with the same intentions, motivation and inspiration and they all responded!

Several questions as a guide...

1. When did you first learn about GT
2. When did you First meet Dr, McGee and please share some memories about how you were inspired by him to live by GT on a personal level and at work
3. How would you define GT?
4. How has GT impacted in your personal Life?
5. How has GT impacted your perspective towards your Work?
6. When would you say you realized that GT changed your perspective on Life?

Our second book, Interested?

- *If anyone is interested in participating on a second book I will be editing about Gentle Teaching
- An idea for a movie please let me know by talking to me at the end of this presentation or writing me an email

upekkhapr@gmail.com

Yes, it was me!

- I had to move the deadline for the chapters on several occasions in order for everyone to be able to finish, but I was more than glad to! And guess who the last one to turn in the chapter? Yes, Me!
- I had to shift my energy to focus on the joy of having met him, learned from him and being able to meet this wonderful Gentle Teaching International community that was making this book possible with their life changing stories.

Tracy, Kiddi, and Cam

- Once you start learning more about GT you will definitely be mesmerized by it and feel the need to make any needed variation in your life to live by it in order to feel how close Tracy Mauk feels to all her family and clients and the indescribably feeling of peace and love anyone will feel around her and her family in the USA.
- Kiddi, or Kristinn Mar Torfason from Iceland, talks about how captivated he was with GT and how Dr. McGee's words marked his life and his work, as well as how his humbleness and will to help others was relentless.
- Cam Dore explains how he raised his daughters in Canada with GT in his heart and one of his daughter's lives by it now even noticing changes in how animals react towards her. Cam also gives you, the reader a taste of what GT is all about so that you can start enjoying and practicing how to live by it.

Gare, Pouwell, and Charles

- Garé Fabila Pescina invites us all to be more loving towards those in our families as she did in Mexico, so that we can expand from there to support world efforts to look after the rights of people with disabilities using the Gentle Teaching tools and Dr. McGee as an inspiration and an example to follow.
- Pouwell Van de Siepkamp's presentation of how GT changed his life in the Netherlands will also inspire you for he mentions how his spirituality and any spirituality path can be merged with GT to offer you a more peaceful and loving way of life!
- GT and Dr. John McGee impacted Charles Woodard so much that he was moved to do his doctoral dissertation in the USA on GT and has since lived by GT and promoted it in all his work with different groups of people, not only people with intellectual disabilities.

Cathy's and my story

- Cathy Evaristo spent many years of her life dedicated to helping children diagnosed with autism in England and she emphasizes in her chapter about how she has changed herself thanks to her being exposed to GT, something that she has adopted as a way of life!
- I've always seen Gentle Teaching as a philosophy of life, something to live by on a daily basis, and in my chapter, I hope to bring about how GT and Dr. McGee changed my life drastically forever, personally and professionally. I will always be grateful to him for all the lessons learned in life!
- ***Come share some of these lessons with me tomorrow at 11:00am Auditorium #4!***

Purpose of the book

- Having people from different parts of the world with many differences (age, gender, spiritual beliefs, culture, marital status etc) share their stories, clearly portrays just how GT can be of help to anyone and how we have all been positively influenced in meaningful ways.
- In a world where “outcomes” and “statistics” take precedence over how people feel and how safe they are in a loving environment, this book offers “evidence” that no number, no statistic and no outcome will ever represent how we as humans feel.
- For those of you looking for numbers I dare say that from reading these stories one could say that from 1 to 10 Dr. McGee and GT changed all of our lives with a 10!
- **AND NOW... ABOUT MY CHAPTER...**

CHAPTER 8

Trust your heart



To me... To me... To me...

- I would like to begin by saying that to me Gentle Teaching is a philosophy of life for a culture of peace!
- Gentle Teaching has definitely forever changed my life and Dr. John McGee was the person responsible for me learning, teaching and living by Gentle Teaching (GT).
- GT has helped me see and understand my needs as well as others' needs; it has adjusted my five senses so that I can feel instead of think so much... it gives me the opportunity to accept myself and others as perfect as we all are with our individualities and our varied ways of thinking and ways of expressing ourselves.
- GT has also helped me be less judgmental and more accepting because it has showed me the wonders unconditional love offers to all.

Emotions...

- We could benefit from being able to appreciate our emotions in a balanced way showing not only compassion, but kindness and consideration, love and sympathy, to ourselves so that more peace reigns in our lives.
- Instead of independence we should strive for interdependence which is what GT is all about, and for me, it is about being there for ourselves first and each other.

In general it seems to me this world could use more GT and less psychology, diagnosis and statistics!

- When you know yourself you are able to become the best listener in the world, and only then can someone say you give a feeling of confidence just with your eyes...then you know you are living GT and it's the best feeling in the world to feel connected to others in such a way.
- I studied psychology because I wanted to help people be happier, Clinical and Industrial Organizational Psychology and it helped some. On the other hand, with GT we are all helping people bring down the fences "of differences" so that we can all be closer and help each other, accept each other and live together in harmony. In general it seems to me this world could use more GT and less psychology, diagnosis and statistics!

Opening your heart...

- Trusting our heart allows us to be giving from our hearts and expecting nothing in return with unconditional love and it helps us bring down the volume of the thoughts to give space to our emotions and our intuition of humanity to guide us in getting closer to others.
- GT opened my heart to be able to love myself and others in a way I didn't even imagine could be possible...

Belgium 2011...

- Dr. McGee had invited me to several of his trainings around the world since I became his assistant in 2010, and when he mentioned giving a beginners training in Den Drites, Belgium I decided to go because he had mentioned independent living arrangements and I wanted something similar for Puerto Rico and I was eager to learn about it, but I must say he had also mentioned how beautiful Ghent was and I also wanted to come visit.

You Tube – oldest videos at Upekkhapr Sylvia Fernandez Channel

- Dr. McGee explained to them how to really look at how we are all one and the same, focusing on the humanity of all instead of the differences, helping those in the training understand it's not about the other, it's about how we can improve, how we can adapt, how we can change to be able to offer community to anyone and everyone...
- After the three days ***I saw the participants at the talks become someone else, it was a wonderful experience to see and feel this change in all of them...*** they were more relaxed, seemed more caring, loving and even kinder, more at ease with themselves than a couple of days before when I first met them all.

Meeting Dr. John McGee

- Honorable Judge Gelpí had talked wonders of the man that was going to be my supervisor and how he lived for the people in this civil case, adults with intellectual disability. He mentioned how Dr. John J. McGee had developed Gentle Teaching and was known around the world for helping many understand how to get close to people with disability and help them get out of institutions and be integrated into society where everyone belongs.
- It was about two months into my new “job”, in November 2010 that I really started appreciating Gentle Teaching and Dr. McGee’s contribution to the world as he taught GT in many places around the world. Honorable Judge Gelpí had mentioned that Dr. McGee was “...protective of the people he serves... and he might not like you in the beginning, but give him time...”

As assistant I learned so much

- It was later clear to me how passionately responsible Dr. McGee felt about “his people in Puerto Rico”, people he had moved from institutions to the community creating a whole new life for them there as monitor with Mr. Richard Farano’s and the courts’ help.
- As Dr. McGee’s assistant I would do all kinds of different tasks, such as read and analyze Monthly Incident Reports, meet with parents of participants, visit private institutions and government homes where adults with intellectual disabilities were living, attend to monthly meetings with the JCC and develop instruments to measure compliance of Court Orders, offer trainings in group and individually about GT around the island.

Living by Gentle Teaching

- One “task” that I was learning how to do and live by was Gentle Teaching, although I couldn’t appreciate this until after almost two years later... Our “job” was to monitor compliance about court orders, but we were doing much more than that!

One of the lessons learned...

- We were helping people understand the basics of being a human being through GT when we did our visits.
- Dr. McGee would live by GT when he would treat everyone the same, those with disabilities and those in running the place, the caregivers, the parents, government people, etc.
- I then started seeing Gentle Teaching as a philosophy of life. I learned from Dr. McGee to live by it and use my example to show and teach others how great it felt to be close to others.

Be kind to all...patience

- One thing Dr. McGee was really good at that I couldn't find the strength to do, was to be kind to people that were not taking good care of people with disabilities from my government in Puerto Rico. He always told me "Sylvia, you have to be patient...they are doing the best they can...give them time..."

Memories of inspiration...

- *“It might have seemed to many that because of his “happy-go-lucky” attitude Dr. McGee didn’t have a care in the world, and it seemed to me that the contrary was true... he was concerned just about that...the Whole World!”
Sylvia M. Fernández-Colorado*

Dr. Mc Gee's "light"

- The need for his "light" I also saw in many others that follow Gentle Teaching when I went to my first Gentle Teaching Conference in the USA in 2011.
- It was evident that he was an inspiration to many people around the world for many years. Story after story in the Conference his name and how he helped all these people came up in their presentations and in conversations during the three-day Conference and after that.

GT has had a positive impact on my personal life forever!

- Gentle Teaching has allowed me to see myself in a more open and positive light! It has also given me the option to see my family and friends under a different scope, one with more kindness, extra love and compassion.
- It's as if now life takes care of me while I serve others as well as myself and the selfish part of me has shrunk until it has disappeared because I live in love and not fear when my needs are taken care of by the world.
- This allows me to see other's strengths, needs and situations.

I pay attention to my needs first

- It has allowed me to see beyond what people say or do to what they are feeling... their joy, their excitement, their love.
- This has allowed me to be able to get emotionally closer to people much faster because they feel safe with me, I do my best not to judge and always express my gratitude for them offering their heart to me when they speak of their lives because it's a gift to get to know people this close.
- Only then could I begin offering others some questions I've asked myself to give them the opportunity to move from where they are at to where they want to go. I've seen results and this gives me satisfaction and happiness to see others living the life they deserve and they create for themselves.

GT has allowed me to take unimaginable leaps of faith and guess what?

- I've always felt safe and surrounded by loving people. GT and Dr. McGee have showed me how to see beyond what people are saying to really see what they are all about.
- GT gave me the opportunity to feel for others so that I could be more empathetic and compassionate to myself and others, more understanding and accepting of myself and others and last but not least, less judgmental and more loving towards myself and others...
- In other words, I feel it has helped me become a better person in all respects for myself and for others!

Lessons learned...

- After visiting people with disabilities I discovered the power of words and my tone of voice, even for those who didn't understand my language...amazing.
- I learned how compliments and praise have so much more power and “magic” than loud words or humiliations, even for those with “intellectual disabilities”.
- I've come to understand even better how sarcasm, irony and double sense messages erode the deepest part of relationships.

I write my own story!

- I now feel more aware of how I am responsible for my own story, my own growth and found ways to be more forgiving and less strict with myself and others.
- Once I realized I was the “author” of my own story and all the “light” I can achieve for me and for others just by loving the life I live.
- I decided to be creative and start developing a “masterpiece” of a life and look where it has brought me, in front of all of you, How Amazing Is That!

Feel the “emotional talk”

- GT has offered me the opportunity to be closer to my feelings in a “safe” and balanced way in order to be able to feel them and talk about them to myself and others so that my message gets through in an effective manner and felt understood.
- After GT I can talk to just about anybody about many subjects on a personal level because I feel their “emotional talk” and not only hear their “intellectual talk”.
- This in turn makes them feel that I understand and accept them and so the relationships develop so much easier... and flows with open hearts and hands, loving eyes, and accepting gestures and comforting words!

- In a nutshell, my experience meeting and working as Dr. John J. McGee assistant for two years was an extraordinary one and I will always be thankful to him because of everything I learned about life and myself!
- How to communicate without words is something I attribute to have learned from him and a gift that helps me get closer to people, I feel safer around people and people say they feel they can trust me... it's as if Gentle Teaching makes your humanity shine as a beam of light out to others.
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OUR NEW BOOK on Gentle Teaching

- It has been through these experiences that I have come to believe that the world needs more experiential writing than scientific or statistical proof that Gentle Teaching and Dr. McGee make a difference in people's lives... the world needs ***“Loving life: Our stories of growth in inspired, intentional love and community with Gentle Teaching!”*** 2020

GT and work...

- If I may say so...I don't see work as work anymore! Since learning GT and spending 4 years of my life visiting participants with intellectual and developmental disabilities I see myself as a loving instrument of GT. Gentle Teaching impacted my perspective towards work from all aspects.
- As assistant to Dr. McGee for two years it allowed me to see all the love in people with intellectual and developmental disabilities like never before. This population is so genuine and so caring towards others and nature that it's delightfully inspiring to learn from them.
- It also allowed me to see through social masks that other people wear in their daily lives helping me to be more compassionate and loving towards myself and them too.

Some of the readings about how Gentle Teaching has been developing throughout the years:

- 1. *A Community-Based System for the Mentally Retarded: The ENCOR Experience.*** by [Kevin Casey](#), [John J. McGee](#), [Jack A. Stark](#), [Frank J. Menolascino](#), [Michael Albert](#) (Foreword by). Published April 1st 1985 by University of Nebraska Press ISBN 080324147X (ISBN13: 9780803241473)
- 2. *Gentle Teaching: A Nonaversive Approach for Helping Persons with Mental Retardation.*** by [John J. Mcgee](#), [Frank J. Menolascino](#), [Daniel C. Dobbs](#), [Paul E. Menousek](#). Published January 1st 1987 by Human Sciences Press. ISBN 0898853575 (ISBN13: 9780898853575)
- 3. *Gentle Teaching Workbook. Japan Society for Gentle Teaching.*** By John J. McGee. Published 1995 in Osaka, Japan
- 4. *International Handbook of Community Services for the Mentally Retarded*** by [Jack A. Stark](#) (Editor), [John J. McGee](#) (Editor), [Frank J. Menolascino](#) (Editor). Published November 1st 2013 by Routledge (first published January 1st 2013). ISBN 1306046793 (ISBN13: 9781306046794)

Some of the readings about how Gentle Teaching has been developing throughout the years:

- **5. *Beyond Gentle Teaching: A Nonaversive Approach to Helping Those in Need.*** by [John J. McGee](#), [Frank J. Menolascino](#) Published April 24th 2013 by Springer.
ISBN 1475794142 (ISBN13: 9781475794144)
- **6. *Gentle Teaching: A philosophy of life for a culture of peace.*** (2015). Sylvia M Fernandez Colorado Editor.
Available www.planforamiracle.com and www.amazon.com

*** *Mending Broken Hearts: Companionship and Community. A handbook for those who care for and about others.*** (19..) Can be downloaded for free in the Web site of Gentle Teaching International (www.gentleteaching.com).

Thank you again!

- Thanks for sharing this time with me and sharing your ideas and love here in this presentation.
- Remember to write to me or talk at some point with me about your interest to participate in a book or movie about Gentle Teaching!

upekkhapr@gmail.com