

Dear very practical Folk,

All my professional life I have championed the cause of teachers who want practical, down-to-earth, useable techniques that work with students. However when you, as a group, go for just such things, I react internally with a twinge of disappointment. It is a perverse reaction that I need to think about and deal with. My problem, not yours.

After all, I firmly believe that working with a certain set of techniques will open up new thinking almost automatically.

Your contribution, E, yesterday morning, felt very important to me..... this was when you explained how long it had taken you to try out what at first seemed crazy new exercises, how your teenage students initially reacted with titters of nervous laughter and how many of your colleagues dubbed you a looney. In fact I felt there were many fascinating things said by different people in the group yesterday morning. I guess we are getting to a level of trust where we can actually discuss openly stuff we maybe kept to ourselves last week.

Montse and I, in our lunch time session, came up with this very simple exercise:

### 3

Ask each student to write this number in the middle of page.

Each student then writes seven sentences about the number around the page, maybe in spokes out from the 3.

They discuss what they have written in groups 3-4.

Montse and I came up with very different ideas about 3.

A neat and simple exercise.

As you come to the end of this short letter, can I ask you to work with a partner and review the last six days by looking at all the uses of space and configurations we have made. If the students work in threes, with A standing on a table and B and C kneeling with their backs to him/her, this is a "configuration."

Put another way: please list all the geometric patterns we have used over the six days.

Then list all the spatial patterns you have used in your teaching which we have not used, eg two students sitting back to back, doing a telephone style exercise.

Yours warmly,

Mario.

