

## *A Peaceful Mind: Exercises and Questions*

### A. Reading and Discussion Questions

#### B. Moritz

1. Imagining you are Moritz
2. Moritz's Character Web

#### C. Travel Exercises

1. Sharing Experiences
2. Making Your Way to Your Train/Bus: Versions 1 and 2
3. Strange Place

#### D. Moritz's Patience Exercises

1. Waiting
2. Being with Moritz's Patience
3. Small Space
4. Patient Color

### **A. Reading and Discussion Questions**

1. At what points in his travels with Barry did Moritz have to wait? For how long? Name the places where they are delayed, and what kind of transportation they end up taking.
2. When did something unexpected happen to Barry and Moritz? How do Barry and Moritz react to what was unexpected?
3. When does Barry move fast in the story? When does he sit still? And what is Moritz doing at these times?
4. When does Barry reach down to pat Moritz with a reassuring hand? How does it help Moritz?
5. When does Moritz bark in the story?
6. When does Moritz prance in the story? What does prancing look like if you are a Bernese Mountain dog?
7. What does Moritz like about traveling?
8. What kinds of surprises happen when you travel? How do the people you are with react? How do you react? Is this reaction like or unlike how Barry and Moritz make their way?

### **B. Moritz (A basic imagination exercise to use throughout)**

#### **1. Imagine you are Moritz.**

- What is your fur like? What colors?
  - How big are you? (If you are 7 years old, it might take 3 of you to weigh as much Moritz). How big are you compared to a big suitcase?
  - How deep is your bark? When you do bark? When are you quiet?
  - What is your nose like? What can you smell?
  - How big are your paws? Put your hand on Moritz's paw print.
- Feel what it is like to walk on your four paws.
- How much room do you take up when you are in an aisle?

- What do you think of snow?
- What makes you wag your tail?
- When Barry tells you to wait, what do you do?
- When do you look to Barry for guidance?

## **2. Moritz's Character Web (qualities from *A Peaceful Mind*):**

Draw a box with Moritz's name in it. Have lines radiating out on different sides. Have children supply qualities of Moritz. Such as Moritz:

- knows how to ride on escalators
- likes to roll on his back down snowy slopes
- lies down in aisles on trains and buses
- waits for Barry to tell him when to leave a bus or train
- is good at waiting
- is brown and black and white
- likes treats
- does not move even when people step over him
- likes to meet new people and children
- can run very fast
- likes long cool drinks at a water fountain just right for his height

## **C. Travel Exercises**

### **1. Sharing Experiences**

Think of a time when you went to a new place. What kind of transportation did you use? What was it like to go there? Scary? Exciting? What was new to you? What did you know about already? What went according to plan? What did not?

### **2. Making Your Way to Your Train/Bus**

#### **Version One:**

Choose a scene based on one in the book. The numbers of people playing depend on the scenario you choose. Assign children to be: Moritz, Barry, and anyone else relevant such as: people in train station, people walking by, stepping into their seats, the bus driver, train conductor.

The child playing Barry --has two paper bags as suitcases, and a backpack. Improvise a leash that Barry holds as he walks with Moritz through a train station or other place.

Decide how much time Barry and Moritz have to reach the train. If they have to hurry, how do they do this? Go back to the details in the story.

Have children switch characters so they can feel like what it is like both to lead and have responsibility to be lead.

### **Version Two (Your Own Trip):**

Participants re-enact one of their own trips. Let people switch roles so they can imagine the different challenges of traveling together.

OR:

Let both parents and children think about a trip they are planning to take, and have them imagine what is needed. Who plans the trip, the packing, the food, the timing? Imagine the different roles people have in these activities. It can be as simple as getting to school in the morning, or going to a soccer practice. What makes things easier? What creates difficulties? Have people play and switch roles.

After staging both versions, have children talk about what they noticed: what was hard to do, what was easy? What depends on cooperation and trust? What kinds of reactions make things harder?

At the end, let people list what they appreciate about the preparation, the traveling, and getting there.

### **3. Strange Place**

Try this when you are walking through a crowd; or have arrived in a new place; or when you do not speak the language; or find yourself in unfamiliar surroundings. Pick out one or two people walking toward you, and think to yourself something like this: "That person has a mother/brother/sister/father just like me." "That person likes the warmth of the sun like I do; gets cold when the wind blows so hard." "He or she likes to hear laughter; likes music."

Imagine this person eating a favorite food. Imagine you eating your favorite food. You offer some to him or her, and he or she does the same to you. Each of you finds the food delicious.

What is the place feel like now?

## **D. Moritz's Patience Exercises**

At the end of *A Peaceful Mind*, Barry and Moritz sit side by side on a bus, and Barry asks Moritz, "How did you learn to be so patient? Can you teach me?" Let's see if Moritz can teach all of us.

### **1. Waiting**

Imagine you are Moritz (as above in B), and in addition:

--When you are on the train or bus and are lying down in the aisle and people step over you, what do you do?

--When luggage is placed right near you, what do you do?

--When people are getting off the train, bus, gondola what do you feel? When Barry tells you to wait, what do you do?

--When a little girl is afraid of you on the gondola because you are so big, what do you do?

--In the gondola you are up in the air. It is swaying as it comes down the line. What do you do?

### **2. Being with Moritz's Patience**

1. Pick a time or place where it is hard to wait. Maybe you are in a line or it is not yet your turn. Maybe you are on a long car drive. Maybe you have to wait to talk to your mother or father while they are on the phone. Maybe... what else?

2. See this scene: where are you? What are you feeling? You can just close your eyes and notice how your body and breath seem to be, rather than saying anything out loud.

3. Imagine that Moritz is sitting next to you, in an aisle. Notice that he doesn't have much room at all, but he is very calm and gentle, relaxed but also alert. He sees you, wags his tail, but otherwise stays still. He is silently saying to you, "I will wait with you. Be like me." Here is how he is:

--His breath is calm. He can feel how cool his tummy is against the floor. he likes that. Can you feel your feet on the ground? How you are supported by the ground?

--Moritz likes being where he is right now. He fills that space. He knows he can't make things go faster. But what he can do is enjoy the cool on his belly, sniff the smells around him, enjoy each breath, hang out with Barry, enjoy meeting the new people around him.

Imagine that you put your hand on Moritz's big soft furry head. Or perhaps you put your arm over his back. Your hand feels good on his fur. He feels solid and warm. You and Moritz wait together. Through your contact with Moritz, patience comes to you. You feel more calm, more at peace, no matter how long it takes to....(fill in the blank).

### **3. Small Space**

You are in a small space. Perhaps you are in a small seat, or squeezed in-between bigger people. Or you are under a little table. You don't have much room for your feet or to stretch out.

Now imagine you are Moritz as in B above, a big dog in a small space with no room to turn around. How can you be there like that? Here are some ways to be in a small space. Experiment; do whatever imagination exercises let you become comfortable:

--You look at Barry. You trust him. He tells you that after a while, you will get off the train and have a long walk. You know this will happen. Barry puts his hand on his head to reassure you. You are content to wait.

--But right now you are in this space. What does it feel like? Well, there are people's hiking boots next to your nose. You spend time smelling their shoes, and you love learning about all the places they have been: the shoes tell you they were walking in the woods, that they have a cat, that they have a diesel fuel car. Your nose lets you travel far away.

--Remember when Moritz is out for his hike with Barry on the mountain? See this place --the air is clear and the snow sparkles. It is white, clean, inviting. What did Moritz do when he got there: remember how he bit the snow, dug holes in it, rolled on his back, and slid down the snow hill? All around him was lots of snow.

Close your eyes: imagine you are with Moritz in the snow. All around you is white, pure, fresh, clean air, spaciousness, lots of soft places to jump, dig, roll. You haven't really moved at all, but your imagination lets you be in this wonderful space. You can go there any time.

### **4. Patient Color**

One day --perhaps even today-- you seem to be having a hard time. People tell you to calm down but you don't feel calm. You just don't feel like it. Ok. So you don't. Right now though, you are looking through this book. Maybe you are even too upset to read it or have it read to you. But....as you flip the pages, you notice all the colors in the book. As the pages are turned, you see all that green on one page --wait, there is a green like grass, green of a playing field, a turquoise, an olive green. There are pages that are very purple, orange, red. What color do you like a lot? You can put your finger on that color. Touch that color. Let that color touch you, like you could breathe it in. As you look at the color, the color gently fills you with calm and patience. It is like you are painting yourself inside with the color of calm, life, space, happiness.

Whenever you start to feel upset again, go to that color. You can just remember it in your mind and know it is there, and let it spread calm and beauty inside and around you.

You can do this kind of exercise also with the blue of the sky. Or with a flower. Or something you think is beautiful.

Patient Color exercise adapted from Tarthang Tulku's *Hidden Mind of Freedom*.