

Socrates

There once was an eager student who wanted to gain wisdom and insight. He went to the wisest of the town, Socrates, to seek his counsel. Socrates was an old soul and had great knowledge of many things. The boy asked the town sage how he too could acquire such mastery. Being a man of few words, Socrates chose not to speak, but to illustrate.

He took the child to the beach and, with all of his clothes still on, walked straight out into the water. He loved to do curious things like that, especially when he was trying to prove a point. The pupil gingerly followed his instruction and walked into the sea, joining Socrates where the water was just below their chins. Without saying a word, Socrates reached out and put his hands on the boy's shoulders. Looking deep into his student's eyes, Socrates pushed the student's head under the water with all his might.

A struggle ensued, and just before a life was taken away, Socrates released his captive. The boy raced to the surface and, gasping for air and choking from the salt water, looked around for Socrates in order to seek his retaliation on the sage. To the student's bewilderment, the old man was already patiently waiting on the beach. When the student arrived on the sand, he angrily shouted, "Why did you try to kill me?" The wise man calmly retorted with a question of his own: "Boy, when you were underneath the water, not sure if you would live to see another day, what did you want more than anything in the world?"

The student took a few moments to reflect, then went with his intuition. Softly he said, "I wanted to breathe." Socrates, now illuminated by his own huge smile, looked at the boy comfortingly and said, "Ah! When you want wisdom and insight as badly as you wanted to breathe, it is then you shall have it."