

Pioneering Spiritual Activism



REFLECT • CONNECT • ACT

Children of the Earth



May Peace Prevail On Earth

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My love always,
Nina

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Foreword

You are about to experience the guidance of an inspired and practical visionary. Nina Meyerhof is one of those people who does so much good – so much effective peace building and leadership development – that it is impossible to measure her impact. Her legacy is in her work and in the countless emerging young leaders she has guided.

What you will find in this handbook is distilled wisdom. It is full of ways to hone evolved leadership, which have been drawn from extensive on the ground work. You will find that great attention has been paid to embracing cultural differences and welcoming diversity.

Nina's approach to integrating all the levels of our being clearly comes through. The physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual are woven together with skillful practices and exercises. We can no longer preach peace without also being peace; we cannot transform others if we are not committed to doing our own inner transformation work. We are called to balance the rational and the intuitive. Integration of the kind repeatedly outlined in this handbook leads us to becoming effective and strategic idealists.

Balancing the inner and the outer is a dynamic process: we never complete our learning because people and situations around us are always changing. What is in store for you if you master the practices in this handbook is a life committed to deep listening and deep dialogue. Dialogue is not just helping others tell their story and speak their truth, it is about you opening up to share your own most essential truth and qualities of being.

While many of us are inspired to be a part of visionary peace work, the reality is that we all need to learn how to prevent our own triggers and judgments when we are in charged and conflicted situations. We need each other to be mirrors. We need to understand our own patterns of wounding and hurt. We need to tap into the power of release, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

This work is for the bold and courageous as well as for the insightful and compassionate, but most of all it is for those who are committed enough to gain the skills needed to guide our planet towards peace, healing, justice, and sustainability. I can think of no better way to start developing those skills than to with this classic handbook for emerging leaders of every kind.

James O'Dea

Author, Human Rights and Social Healing Peace Activist

Preface

The purpose of this book is to support our next generation's role of integrating spirituality in our lives. Increasingly, people are including spirituality as part of daily conversation. Books on the subject of spirituality and leadership are emerging in the fields of organizational development and business. Meetings held around the world are calling for inner reflection and are seeking information for living a life filled with more meaning and joy. Self-help books support people in their inner discovery of who they are and how to build better relationships. But, alas, the future generation, the inheritors of all our actions, is rarely given the tools to prepare for this life journey.

If only we could help these young people now rather than later. Imagine if you did not have to reconstruct your past and peel away your life experiences. Imagine if you had been told, "just be yourself" and be loyal to your inner voice. Imagine if you had been given the tools to learn how to make and keep positive relationships with your friends and fellow human beings. What a wonderful world we would live in!

This handbook is similar to a rite of passage into mature clarity. If there is to be a new leadership model for building a better global society then it must have spirituality as its base. Spirituality is the uniting force. It is the understanding that holds us together as a species, the awareness that we are interconnected and need to care for one another.

I want to give great thanks to my colleague, companion, and friend who pushed and cajoled me into writing this as a legacy to my devotion to spirituality and youth in recognition that this is the greatest form of peace building. She modeled this by selflessly volunteering her personal time and constantly staying by my side to write, edit, suggest, and rewrite page after page while always reminding me how valuable this book is. Diane de Terra has been my most loyal of people in finishing this work. An activist anthropologist, international development expert, linguist, multicultural educator, Diane has devoted her life to the path set forth in this guide for peace activists. Then I thank Margaret Stearns who has been the invisible artist, biologist, educator, gardener and deep thinker always right there to hold and create as I moved through this process. Thank you Harriett Nettles who has walked in my "kid caring" life for over 30 years and spent hours with me on the first edition. Luc Logan, thank you for taking on the daunting process of countless edits and hours spent putting vision to paper. Thank you, Deborah Moldow for the first editing. Finally, thanks to all the COE young people of the next emerging generation whom I have treated always as wise ones, growing into their big shoes. Thank you Oran Cohen as youth visionary, for your important contribution, and all the rest of the youth who were and are by my side as I became Mama Nina for them.

I sincerely pray this Handbook will serve others.

Children of the Earth has formed me as well as me forming her.

Welcome!

For many years I have worked with young people around the world. Through this experience, I have developed the understanding that each person has a unique personal gift to contribute to the tapestry of life. When this gift is discovered, the individual no longer feels alienated from or overly concerned about the social demands of the surrounding culture. One yearns to live as an authentic self. To be free to be that self and have a place in the world fosters greatness. I have found that those who have a sense of this inner self and discover their personal dream and vision most often choose to live according to higher values or universal ethics. They then serve the greater good.

Children of the Earth (COE) hosts youth international gatherings that foster spirituality and leadership. Spirituality is found in the inner self once the layers of differences are peeled away. The basic human character is left and, along with it, a sense of whom we are beyond body, mind, emotions, culture, race or religion. Leadership is defined as identifying the depth of our convictions and being willing to stand firmly for them. From this stance, we take actions to benefit all life.

My story is a story of caring for the world.

Dr. Nina Meyerhof, founder and director of Children of the Earth

For many years I have worked with young people around the world. Through this I have developed the understanding that each person has a unique personal gift to contribute to the tapestry of life. When this is tapped into, the individual no longer feels disconnected or overly concerned as to his or her relationship to the demands of the surroundings but rather to be the authentic self. To be free to be that self and have a place in the world fosters greatness. I have found that when a person has a sense of this inner self and taps into the personal dream then automatically he or she chooses to live for higher values called ethics. This then serves the greater good.

For years I have gathered young people together to explore who they are, what are their skills and interests and how they wish to contribute to life. From 1970 until 2000 I ran and operated a farm camp where children and youth lived as family working and playing together and learning democratic living skills.

In 1990, a group of young people met at the Heart's Bend World Children's Center as a parallel meeting to the World Summit for Children held at the United Nations. Together they wrote "The Children's Declaration of Peace" which was later presented to His Holiness The Dalai Lama as well as the United Nations. At that meeting, His Holiness stated, "children are the most untapped resource of the world." This reaffirmed my belief in the power of youth to influence the future and inspired years of my assembling youth gatherings around the world from establishing a US Youth AIDS project to be presented in Washington DC to helping to establish an African Children's Peace Center to helping host meetings in about 50 countries around the world....always focused on the caring of the individual and processes for growth and transformation.

At these international gatherings we spoke of spirituality and leadership. Spirituality is the inner self after the layers of differences are peeled away and only the basic human character exists with a sense of who one is beyond body, mind, emotions, culture, race or religion. Leadership is identifying the depth of one's convictions and being willing to stand firmly in this. From this we take actions for the greater good of all of life.

This handbook is the culmination of years of work and dedication but more than that it is a culmination of materials for others to use so indeed they may take this and go inside and then link up to others in a deeper sense of self and the unity of all of life.

One Earth...with all her children smiling!
One People... learning to learn, learning to love, learning
to live.

REFLECT ~ CONNECT ~ ACT

The Handbook

We offer this handbook as a resource for those of you who want to create a peaceful world through spiritual activism, activism that comes from the heart. While it is designed primarily for youth, ages 15-30, this handbook may also be used by teachers, facilitators, and initiators.

Our handbook introduces you to the ethics, principles, and values that are the essence of COE's spiritual activism. It proposes a model and techniques that have proven effective for youth to create positive change. COE's model, Reflect – Connect – Act, provides guidance and structure.

The methods and techniques proposed here constitute a learning process designed to consolidate your spiritual growth and societal actions. Two approaches, Connect: Conflict Transcendence and Act: Lateral Leadership, are Children of the Earth's contributions to your development and involvement with spiritual activism. This guide invites you to an 'inner revolution for social evolution'. It is a path for global citizens united in a movement for peace. You will also want to add your own voice and methods to make this your 'toolkit', your path.

We at Children of the Earth are here to guide anyone who wants to use this handbook. Our schedule is flexible to accommodate your needs: one, three, or five-day sessions or other designs of your choice. You can also practice on your own and contact us if you have any questions.

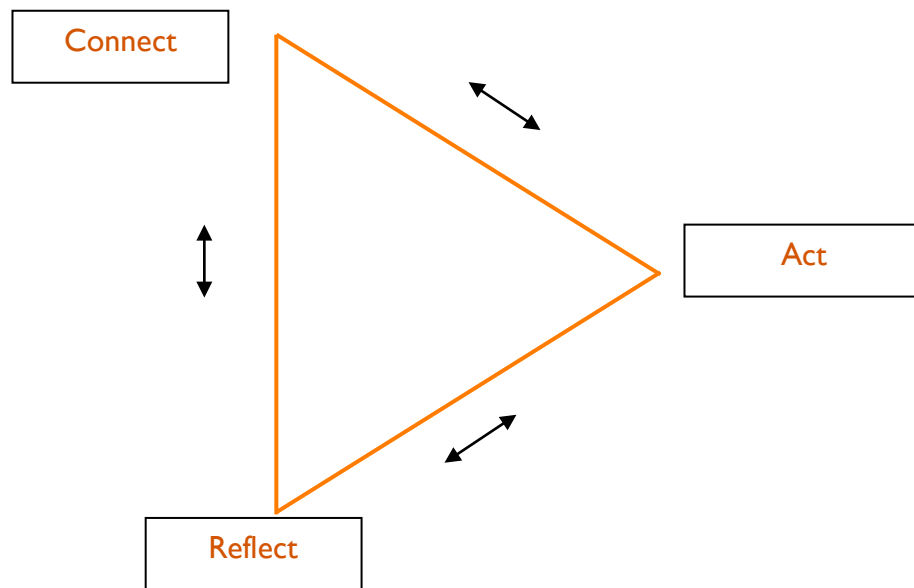
It is up to you!

The Spiritual Activist Model Proposed by Children of the Earth

Reflect is the journey that we take to awaken the inner self. The path may include meditation, contemplation, and/or prayer. As we become still, we hear the inner calling of our authentic self and experience personal purpose.

Connect bridges the perceived gap between self and others and leads to unity. Through deep compassion and listening, conflict transcendence and non-violent communication, we learn that it is possible to live in harmony, and thus we weave the interconnectedness of our family worldwide.

Action is taking the inspired will to serve others in the world through individual actions, local projects and global work. These acts are based on spiritual principles and ethics of Spiritual Activism.



This handbook, the culmination of years of work and dedication, was created for you to use and build on. These materials are for young people to use for personal and social transformation — the opportunity to go to their inner core and then to connect with others in a deep sense of self and to the unity of all of life. It is for anyone dreaming of becoming a spiritually inspired social activist.

Mission

Children of the Earth's mission is to inspire and unite young people, through personal and social transformation, to create a peaceful and sustainable world. Our belief is that one by one, this inspiration to explore the inner life, will lead to being socially responsible and united for peace building.



The Inner Revolution for Outer Evolution

Children of the Earth was established in 1990 to work with youth and children locally and globally. As an international tax exempt 501(c)3 corporation, we have been recognized by the United Nations since 1992. Dedicated to the building of a better future, we deliver programs that provide young people with the empowerment and leadership skills necessary to advance peace in the world today and in the future. We foster international networks of cooperation, multicultural understanding, spiritual values, and ethical living skills.

Children's Declaration of Peace, Newfane, Vermont 1990

In the name of love, unity, and harmony, we, the children of the world, declare that now is the time for peace. As creators of a better tomorrow, we envision social and environmental equilibrium, individual and international cooperation and the fulfillment of human potential as global goals.

To achieve equilibrium, education must be available to all. This education should not only include academic, but also personal, moral and spiritual development. With this education, we can increase our awareness of global problems and develop our ability to solve them.

The freedom accorded to all people through education shall be accompanied by the responsibility that will serve to bridge the gaps between economic, religious, material, political and cultural extremes.

As part of the earth's living system, our harmonious co-existence with nature is essential for the sustainability of humanity.

We pledge our support to the United Nations. However, we also stress the need for a more equitable distribution of power to all countries to encourage the evolution of peace. We desire self-determination for all people and hope that the emerging leaders guide rather than govern.

We, the children, as one of the world's greatest untapped resources, accept the responsibility to further the love, unity and harmony, which exist in peace.

In 1990, a group of young people met at the Heart's Bend World Children's Center in a parallel meeting to the World Summit for Children held at the United Nations. Together they wrote "The Children's Declaration of Peace", which was later presented to His Holiness The Dalai Lama as well as to UNICEF. At that meeting, His Holiness stated, "children are the most untapped resource of the world". This reaffirmed my belief in the power of youth to influence the future and inspire years of youth gatherings around the world that focus on processes for growth and transformation.



The Dalai Lama hands Nina the torch and thus his message continues around the world.

Introduction

Children of the Earth: The Essence

Pioneering Spiritual Activism

Spiritual Activism is a concept that originates from the understanding that youths' incredible energy can be guided into living a life based on the will to do good and positive social change. This begins by seeking inner peace and a connection to our consciousness. You can and you will activate your own calling for a life of meaning reflected in daily actions and service for the greater good.

"I believe spirituality is the key to harmony and oneness. It is a way to overcome our fears, doubts and limits. Spirituality to me, is reaching into one's divine self and realizing what life is all about. Like no clouds could ever harm or violate the sun, I believe that no experiences, thoughts or action could ever harm or violate the deep soul within. Therefore I feel it is our mission to reach out and awaken all the beautiful souls. And from there we can all start acting towards peace and oneness."



Yuka Saionji

Youth leader, Byakko and Goi Peace Foundation

Ethics, Principles, and Values

From years of asking young people to delve into their inner nature and to discover the voice within, we at Children of the Earth noted that there were many commonalities in terms of how to live and what is meaningful. We asked youth at different meetings to distill this into a Code of Ethics that would be relevant to them as well as a message to others. What emerged is a universal set of ethics to which all agreed. They were willing to live by this code and to continually assess their own behavior to see if it aligned with their code. They rely on their own self-assessment rather than someone else's judgment. When you live by this Code of Ethics – love, respect, honesty, truth, courage, humility, wisdom – you are a great human being and a great role model!

Code of Ethics: Actions Based on Selflessness and Love

LOVE - for the form, voice, thoughts and spirit of each person

RESPECT - for differences

HONESTY - of our feelings, thoughts and behaviors; to be transparent

TRUTH - in feelings and thoughts

COURAGE - to take a stand

HUMILITY - to reflect inner peace

WISDOM - to be a seeker

Questions for You, the Reader

Dear Reader,

We the youth and elders of Children of the Earth are asking you questions throughout this handbook to help you crystallize what you are learning and what your inner self tells you. The questions are not a test but steps along the way. The path is yours and we just offer you some soul-searching questions. The more time you take with these, the more you will gain. One way to start is by keeping a journal as a means of observing your growth.

Questions

1. Do you live by a particular Code of Ethics in your life?
2. Do you think any one of these ethics is more important than another?
3. If so, how would you rank them?

Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles are standards by which you direct and assess your behavior, with no other person to evaluate or judge you. You may do this by using each of these as a form of self-assessment. If you are having trouble reacting to a difficult situation, you can use these principles. You can also use these principles to reflect when you are dissatisfied with your actions and wish to improve them.

- Trust your intuition
- Demonstrate dignity and respect
- Communicate with honesty and clarity
- Assume the good intentions of others
- Support shared leadership
- Celebrate diversity
- Be inspired to take risks
- Allow decisions to emerge and embrace the process
- Understand the whole is greater than the parts
- Strive to support sustainability both personally and environmentally
- Honor agreements and take ownership for outcomes

Questions

Inner Dialogue or Journaling

1. Can you give examples of these principles in practice?
2. Do you see ways that you can implement them in your daily life?
3. Which principles do you see as most challenging?
4. Are there other principles you would add?
5. What is the difference between Guiding Principles and Code of Ethics?

Values for Becoming a Global Citizen

One of our goals is for you to experience yourself as a global citizen. You feel the connection with others in your local life, the national arena, and the world. You are uniting with the family of humankind and will live caring for one another.

As we begin the journey inwards, we also work outwards from the principles toward becoming a global citizen. It is the process of seeing the whole. You move from the principles to serving the collective good, from a world of competition to a world of mutual collaboration. When you choose to live in a different way, the shift from what exists to what is possible follows.

Values evolve from self-serving and individualistic to altruism and compassion, from a competitive society to one in which we collaborate and care for each other.

Changing Values

Competition

Materialism

Violence

Separation

Dualism

Conflict

Nationalism

Reason or Logic

Knowledge

Domination

Cultural



Collaboration

Non-attachment and Nature

Compassion

Wholeness

Unity

Peace

Global Understanding

Imagination and Intuition

Wisdom from Within

Empowerment

Multicultural



Questions

1. Can you think of examples of the shift from 'old' values to 'new' global values?
2. How would your life change if it were based on awareness of our unity and interdependence?

Spiritual Activism

Why Spirituality as a Focus?

There is a global consciousness arising in the hearts and minds of humanity. Some people call this the “spiritual revolution”; the evolution of humankind into full awareness. From this awareness, we finally learn that peace is possible for individuals and our world. In our unity we will be able to accept our diversity and finally find ways to live together here on Mother Earth. We are learning from science that we are interdependent and interconnected as one life.

Science and spirituality are coming to the same conclusion that all people are intrinsically similar. The human genome project has proven that we are genetically 99.9% alike, with only one tenth of one percent making us different. The realization that I am you and you are me, can only lead to the will to right action and thought. Only when we can focus on what makes us similar instead of different, can we deal with the challenges ahead.

What is Spiritual Activism?

As you learn to delve into your inner life and become a spiritual seeker, you begin to discover both eternal truths and personal truths. Through this uncharted seeking, you most often realize that one is bonded and connected with all life. This realization is clear in the history of the great sages who describe this inner state of being as a place of total peace; a ‘cloud of unknowing’ and a unified space of consciousness where everything is one.

There are many descriptions of this ‘unified space’ in the epic stories of explorations of metaphysical reflection. Such explorations lead to continued searching and to knowing that life is like a self-created dream walk, yet life is of utmost importance. How one lives, why one lives, and what one’s purpose is are integral to inner peacefulness and knowledge of self. To live a meaningful life, you make a conscious decision to be of service by manifesting peace and by linking to others who hold the same intention. Inner peace is for personal evolution. Inner peace is for world peace. Outer peace is achieved by serving others and all life.

One by one, each of you has the ability to become your “authentic self”. The voice of the authentic, or essential self, is your voice that remembers who you are no matter what the surroundings. It is the voice of remembering and feeling as if one conjures up that sense of original self prior to being influenced by one’s familiar surroundings.

This inner self wishes to live in right relationship by improving relationships with the outer self as well as those who are in one’s own community. There is an inner imperative or calling to learn to live in mutual harmony with oneself as well as others. As our inner and outer selves become more integrated and harmonious, so to do our relationships with others. Harmonious relationships through mutual understanding, kindness, and

compassion take time and effort for each of us to develop but are the way to a more equitable world.

Heeding the voice of your authentic self, leads to better relationships, be they family, local, national, or international. This makes the world a better place for now and for future generations. This is Spiritual Activism.

Through inner and outer transformation you become aware of your choices, specifically the choice to do good for one's fellow beings. This handbook is offered as a resource for people on a path to establish a peaceful world. This occurs by being spiritually united with others even if they live in a distant place.

Questions

1. What does it mean to live as a spiritual activist?
2. How do you hear your own inner voice and silence the outer voice?
3. How will you link with others to develop a movement of conscious change?
4. What is your inner voice or true essence telling is you?
5. How do you define spiritual activism?
6. What do you do as a spiritual activist?



Building a New Civilization
Japan Goi Peace

Spiritual Activism: A Movement for Change

Thank you for taking the plunge by daring to follow the call of your heart to the adventure of becoming a conscious leader within yourself, your surroundings, your community, and your world.

There is a movement afoot. More and more individuals understand that to fundamentally transform the culture of war, physical measures will never be enough. If we truly wish to shift this planet, we need to shift our inner warring nature on behalf and as part of humanity. Our world mirrors our beliefs, attitudes, judgments, values, and perceptions.

There are many like you across the globe awakening to their call. They're starting powerful initiatives, self-organizing, mobilizing, structuring, and acting from a center that is fueled and inspired by their spiritual truths. They know that by changing themselves, they can re-write their social script.

For humanity to thrive in the transformation that awaits it, we have to realize our personal truths about our nature on an individual, communal, and global level. We are being called to own up to the fact that humanity is an organism. We are being invited to learn to see our world as interconnected system rather than live under the illusion of separateness. And the destiny of a thriving system is fueled by the mechanisms of collaboration, decentralization, and constant inner-ation.

We are in critical times and the movement is at a critical stage. And you, dear beloved reader, are at a critical point. Your role is to listen to what emerges, see what is needed, and act as facilitators rather than dictators, as collaborators, and students of the future. Your part is learning to create conditions conducive to life! You are the mapmakers of the future. Within your very being, you carry the code for the change humanity is destined to undergo. You represent the new order of freedom that is emerging! This "movement" has no borders, no criteria, no categories, and no dogmas. So, all are called to join this growing force!

You, dear activist, are being called now to re-imagine the way you relate to yourself, to one another, to your world, and to the mechanisms by which you choose to engage. Your most valued tool is your heart and your ability to listen. Your gift is your uniqueness, your individuality, your personal genius. And you can only change things by acting with intelligence, discernment, passion, and reverence. This is the path of the spiritual activist.

Your mission, if you choose to accept it, friend, is to unearth the song that rumbles in your heart, to uncover and discover your genius, and to courageously bring it to the world with audacity, imagination, passion, and grace! Know that through doing this, you'll inspire others to do the same. That's how a movement is made. Its pulse is fueled by one crazy and inspired soul at a time. Thank goodness you exist! Enjoy the ride!

Oran Cohen
COE Youth Leader, Board Member

Spiritual Activism Model

“Be the change you want to see.”

Mahatma Gandhi

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead
Anthropologist

The process outlined in this handbook has been strategically developed to produce a transformative human experience. It will empower you to create a life of personal meaning as well as productivity for the greater good. This process can be compared to a youth hearing music inside his or her head, then wanting to play the piano but needing lessons to nurture an emerging ability. You may be a pianist looking for your instrument to play and wanting your dreams to become your reality.

Self Esteem

As a young spiritual activist you need to practice listening to your inner voice of creativity and intuition. This is how you reach your own true authentic self. Your external self is most often used as the basis for self-esteem assessment. This concept of self-esteem is based on wanting to feel more valued and comparing yourself to others. It is a manner to say, “I am ok”. Often this self-esteem limits us as it teaches us to feel good when one feels better than someone else. It is a model based on a sense of feelings of inadequacy from these external comparisons and negates the search for hearing your own inner voice. Spiritual seeking frees you to feel whole and complete. It helps you in finding your own uniqueness. A sense of self emerges that knows what you wish and how you wish to live life to its fullest. This spiritual inward seeking process fosters knowing the authentic self. The personality or your character becomes the toolbox of traits and skills used for accomplishing tasks. Together, the authentic self becomes the engine, the personality the car, and life the ride. Our message is the deeper you go, the more ethical and committed you are to your authentic voice. Fewer external demands drive you, all leading you to a more committed powerful leadership role for positive change.

Using our Children of the Earth Model

As a spiritual activist there are three stages to address. The first is Reflect, which is to help you find a means to access your inner self. It is a lifelong quest to know this self. This search then leads to a desire to Connect with others in a positive manner. You are becoming aware of who your authentic self is and at the same time sensing who others are with whom you are communicating. There are skills that will help you be an effective

communicator and listener. Then you may start to partner and wish to Act putting inspiration into projects, designing actions, and activities reflective of positive change.

Reflect

1st - The inner quest for the authentic self.

As you go more deeply into the self, you realize that you are not defined by your surroundings, parents, culture, or religion. Rather, inside you dwells a loving human being seeking full expression.

Questions

1. Who am I really as my authentic self?
2. What unique gifts do I bring to the world?
3. How can I manifest my inner dreams for the world?

Connect

2nd - Deep compassion for the other.

You become conscious of how you can best express yourself in the world for the highest good. Transforming conflict, using language that recognizes the other, appreciating without judging, all these can occur when you no longer judge yourself. You begin to act as part of a whole. A sense of unity occurs that can be called love or spirituality in action.

Questions

1. How do I find connectedness and build a purposeful unity?
2. How do I hear the inner heart of another person?
3. How do I handle conflict in my everyday life?

Action

3rd - Interconnectedness for global unity.

The third step is based on an awareness that a global community of young people is waiting to connect with you. Together you are the new leaders of this evolving consciousness for social change. You share a growing awareness of how to act as stewards of all of life. New models of how to live in our world emerge to ensure a sustainable future for all humanity.

Questions

1. What does it mean to live as a Spiritual Activist?
2. What actions can you take to promote conscious social change?

Chapter 1

Reflect



Learning to Learn

“The moral code of conduct and practice of meditation for mankind is the most effective shortcut by which we can restore the human mind to the inner source of happiness. In a nutshell, inner peace is the foundation of world peace that we have for so long overlooked. If only the people of the world could experience inner happiness and peace for themselves -- from the hearts and minds of each man to his fellows, peace could spread throughout the world – the true and lasting peace which we all await.”



Ping Ping Worakate
Young Peace Activist
Thailand

“Prayer is when one goes deep sea diving with the thoughts. Prayer is a heightened awareness that there is a greater force out there and that we are having a ‘conversation’ with that force or God or the Universe.”



Colin Lee
Spirit Youth Leader
Australia

Learning to Reflect

In this section you will begin the journey. You will walk with traditional and non-traditional seekers as you explore mediation, prayer, visualization, heart work, and other practices that will lead you to the self you seek. We include walking meditations, prayers, and guided visualizations so that you experience the power of inner reflection. Also included for you are techniques such as Ho'oponopono, HeartMath, free writing, and explorations in art.

The purpose of reflection is to go inside yourself and hear your inner voice. The minute we are born we are influenced by our surroundings, for example, our mother's touch and our father's voice. This starts our outer life's journey. Who are you? Are you not an empty slate that is formed only by these experiences? Why does one baby cry while another gurgles and smiles under the same circumstances? Is it because each child's inner nature perceives reality in a different way?

As you age, you are more and more impacted by your surroundings and expectations. You may sometimes forget your authentic self in your desire to adapt and to please others. You may have a yearning to know 'who am I' and 'why am I here', these are the questions of the inner self-asking to be remembered. This self wants expression. There are many processes that help you get in touch with the voice of your authentic self. Once you begin to hear this voice you will be clearer about what you can do in the world, who you are, what your personal value is and how to integrate all the pieces of your life into a meaningful whole.

Once seen as separate and contradictory, western science and spirituality are merging with exciting outcomes. Current findings in quantum physics reveal that a materialistic worldview only scratches the surface of reality.

Meditation

"Meditation is the way to bring us back to ourselves, where we can really experience and taste our full being, beyond all habitual patterns. In the stillness of meditation, we also glimpse and return to that deep inner nature that we have so long ago lost sight of amid the busyness and distraction of our minds."

Sogyal Rinpoche

Meditation is one way to quiet the mind — the wild monkey of thoughts that never stops. Meditation involves going beyond thought to connect with the compassion of the heart and to hear your inner wisdom.

If we learn to practice, meditate daily in a regular manner, then our minds will become still and lead us to a deeper understanding of who we are. Meditation offers the potential to know our inner self and to feel the interdependent connections of all life. In this state, we recognize that we are one family.

Children of the Earth considers meditation a way to access your authentic self. Learning to meditate is one of the greatest gifts that you can give yourself. Through meditation you can undertake the journey to discover and reflect on your true nature, thereby preparing yourself to connect from your heart to others; to engage in actions that benefit others.

There are many books and teachings on meditation. Our hope is that you will find an approach that resonates within you. You may already have a meditation practice or you may be exploring practices. The handbook provides a few examples of different meditations. All of them have the same purpose of revealing our inner nature and awakening our heart wisdom. There are many approaches as well as many religious understandings. Ultimately the path is yours to take.

In Tibetan "meditation" means "getting used to". Getting used to what? Your true nature. You quietly sit and let all thoughts and concepts dissolve. It is like when the clouds dissolve or the mist evaporates, to reveal the clear sky and the sun shining down. When everything dissolves like this, you begin to experience your true nature, to "live". Then you know it, and at that moment, you feel so good. It is unlike any other feeling of well being that you might have experienced. This is real and genuine goodness, in which you feel a deep sense of peace, contentment, and confidence in yourself.

It is good to meditate when you feel inspired. Early mornings can bring that inspiration, as the best moments of the mind are early in the day, when the mind is calmer and fresher (the time traditionally recommended is before dawn). It is more appropriate to sit when you are inspired, for not only is it easier as you are in a better frame of mind for meditation, but you will also be more encouraged by the very practice that you do. This in turn will bring more confidence in the practice, and later on you will be able to practice when you are not inspired. There is no need to meditate for a long time: just remain quietly until you are a little open and able to connect with your heart essence. That is the main point.

Whatever you do, you are present, right there. As in the famous Zen master's saying: "When I eat, I eat; when I sleep, I sleep". Whatever you do, you are fully present in the act. Even washing dishes, if it is done one-pointedly, can be very energizing, freeing, cleansing. You are more peaceful, so you are more you.

One of the fundamental points of the spiritual journey is to persevere along the path. Though one's meditation may be good one day and not so good the next, it is like changes in scenery. The daily practice enters into you and comes through to create internal changes.

You might even be able to laugh at difficulties a little, since there is more space between you and them, and you are freer of yourself. It is amazing but one can become more light hearted!

Exercise

Observing the Breath (1)

Each time you practice meditation attempt to make it fresh, as if it were happening for the very first time. Sit quietly, allow your body to be still, your speech silent, let your mind fall into ease, and allow thoughts to come and go, without focusing on them.

If you need something to do, then focus on your breathing. This is a very simple process. When you are breathing out, know that you are breathing out. When you breathe in, know that you are breathing in, just looking at the breath. Ignore the mind. This mindfulness processes your thoughts and emotions, and then, like an old skin being shed, helps peel away old habits and emotions.

Real relaxation comes when you relax from within, for then everything else will ease itself out quite naturally. To begin your practice, you center yourself. You need not focus on anything in particular to begin with. Just be spacious, and allow thoughts and emotions to settle without becoming attached to them or to the judgments they produce.

You may choose an object, like a flower, for example, to focus upon. Sometimes you are taught to visualize a light on your forehead, or in your heart. In the beginning it is best to simply be spacious, like the sky. Think of yourself as the sky, holding the whole universe.

Meditation is a tool to freedom.

Exercise

Observing the Breath (2)

Deep, rhythmic breathing is another way to begin getting in touch with our inner, peaceful self. Whenever you breathe in or hold your breath, you increase tension in your body. As you breathe out, your body automatically releases tensions and, in the pause before you inhale, relaxes naturally. Deep breathing takes concentration and practice to be effective. First find a quiet place, get comfortable and close your eyes. Now, pay attention to your breathing. Follow your breath as you breathe in... and as you breathe out... in through the nose and out through the mouth. Breathe in for a count of 4... Hold your breath for a count of 8... Exhale for a count of 12.

Questions

1. What did you experience while observing your breath?
2. Do you have other meditation practices that lead to inner peace?
3. How could regular meditation benefit you and those around you?

Walking Meditation

Mindfulness of breathing can be combined with mindfulness of walking. You walk slowly, in a relaxed way, keeping a light smile on your lips. When you practice this way, you feel deeply at ease, and your steps are those of the most secure person on Earth. All your sorrows and anxieties drop away, and peace and joy may fill your hearts. Anyone can do it. It takes only a little time, a little mindfulness, and the wish to be happy.

Here is one way that Thich Nhat Hanh suggests to practice walking meditation.

Exercise

Walking with Peace and Presence

Peace is something we can contemplate every day. Walking meditation is one of the ways to contemplate peace, and today you are going to walk, generating the energy of peace, solidity, and freedom.

When you breathe in, you make three steps. Bring your attention to the soles of your feet, and become aware of the contact between your foot and the ground. Bring your attention down from the level of the brain to the soles of your feet. Breathing in, you take three steps, and you may tell yourself with each step, "I have arrived. I have arrived. I have arrived." And breathing out, you take another three steps, always mindful of the contact between your feet and the ground, and say, "I'm home. I'm home. I'm home."

Every step brings us back to the present moment, so that we can touch the wonders of life that are available. Therefore, when I say, "I have arrived," I mean I have arrived in the here and the now -- the only place, the only time where and when life is available, and that is my true home. There is only one moment for us to live, and that is the present moment. We have an appointment with life, and that appointment takes place in the

present moment. If you miss the present moment, you miss your appointment with life, which is serious.

In daily life, one may have a tendency to think about the past, to get caught in the sorrow and regret concerning the past, and to get caught in the fear and uncertainty about the future, so your mind is not in the present moment. That is why it is very important to learn how to go back to the present moment in order to become fully alive, fully present. Walking meditation helps us do that easily. When you begin, take two or three steps and practice arriving. "I have arrived. I am home." It means, "I don't want to run anymore, because I know that conditions for my happiness are already here in the present moment."

Learning how to go home to the present moment is the basic practice of mindfulness. "I have arrived. I am home. In the here and in the now. I am free. In the ultimate I dwell."

Mindfulness of breathing can be combined with mindfulness of walking, and you will continue to get the nourishment and healing that is available in the here and the now. You can walk in such a way that every step can bring you stability, freedom, healing, and transformation. In order for each step to be solid, to be free, to be healing, to be nourishing, we need the energy of mindfulness and concentration. If you are truly established in the here and the now, you feel free, and you can get in touch with all the wonders of life that are available to you. Peace is the outcome of that practice. Walk in such a way that peace becomes a reality in every cell of your body, in every cell of your consciousness, because our consciousness is also made of cells. Mental formations, feelings, perception - they're all the cells of our consciousness.

There is no walk for peace; peace is the walk. By walking, we generate peace within our body, our consciousness. We embrace and heal the pain, the sorrow, the fear in us, and that is the ground for helping peace to be a reality in the world.

Questions

1. What did you experience while practicing walking meditation?
2. Did walking with peace and presence create inner peace?
3. What other words would you suggest as guides to walking meditation?

Mantra

The Hindu tradition, similar to many other traditions, often utilizes a mantra, or the repetition of sacred sounds to focus the attention and quiet the endless chatter of the ego mind. For example, by repeating “Om namah shivaya,” we sink deeper into the silent universe within.

A simple mantra “om” is considered one of the oldest vocal sounds in existence. Many speculate that it has been chanted for untold thousands of years. “Om” or “aum” is the purest name of god, the sound of the supreme consciousness – whether it be Atman, Krishna, Rah, Allah, or Jehovah.

COE Mantra

Be Peace. Live Peace. Create Peace.

Exercise

Repeat ‘om namah shivaya’, or the Children of the Earth mantra, 20 times with your eyes closed. Sink deeply into this mantra.

Questions

1. Are you able to feel the mantra reverberate within you?
2. Are you able to do this on a continuous basis? Could you do this 100 times?
3. What results do you perceive?
4. Do you have your own mantra?

Focusing of the Mind

Another type of meditation is mind focused on a seed thought. An example of this is taking a word or group of words and hearing where it leads you. This form of meditation uses words in order to direct you into a world of inspiration. This inspiration can lead you into who you are and what service to humanity you can provide.

Exercise

Take this seed thought and meditate, “I see the goal. I reach the goal. Then I see another goal.”

Alice Bailey

Questions

1. What does this mean to you?
2. Is it easier to use a thought to direct your self or to work with a blank mind?
3. Did this lead you to knowing what your purpose is?

Prayer

Prayer includes gratitude, devotion, and supplication: thanking, praising, and humbly asking. We ask and so we receive. The intention of what we want creates an aura of the potential to create that response, whether from God or angels or energetic intention.

Prayer is a tradition that is familiar to many, though it may take many different forms. Prayers can be readings from a sacred book, repetitive phrases or mantras said on beads, chants, hymns, and other spiritual worships.

Prayers can be shouted out in crowded places of worship or whispered in the quiet of our lonely hearts. Whatever the tradition, prayer offers a way to connect with the sacred and bring peace to our hearts. The most universal, spontaneous and natural forms of prayer are expressed in sound; from crying to laughing, from primal drumming to classical symphonies, from chant to rap, from “spirituals” to blues, folk, rock, jazz, or pop.

Prayers For Peace

Jewish Prayer for Peace

Come let us go up the mountain of
the Lord, that we may walk the
paths of the Most High.
And we shall beat our swords into
ploughshares,
and our spears into pruning hooks.
Nation shall not lift up sword against
nation-
neither shall they learn war any more.
And none shall be afraid, for the mouth
of the
Lord of Hosts has spoken.

Christian Prayer for Peace

Blessed are the PEACEMAKERS,
for they shall be known as
the Children of God.
But I say to you that hear,
love your enemies,
do good to those who hate you,
bless those who curse you,
pray for those who abuse you.
To those who strike you on the cheek,
offer the other also,
and from those who take away your
cloak,
do not withhold your coat as well.
Give to everyone who begs from you,
and of those who take away your goods,
do not ask them again.
And as you wish that others would do to
you,
so do to them.

Muslim Prayer for Peace

In the name of Allah,
the beneficent, the merciful.
Praise be to the Lord of the
Universe who has created us and
made us into tribes and nations,
That we may know each other, not that
we may despise each other.
If the enemy incline towards peace, do
thou also incline towards peace, and
trust God, for the Lord is the one that
heareth and knoweth all things.
And the servants of God,
Most Gracious are those who walk on
the Earth in humility, and when we
address them, we say "PEACE."

Hindu Prayer for Peace

Oh God, lead us from the
unreal to the Real.
Oh God, lead us from darkness to light.
Oh God, lead us from death to
immortality.
Shanti, Shanti, Shanti unto all.
Oh Lord God almighty, may there be
peace in
celestial regions.
May there be peace on earth.
May the waters be appeasing.
May herbs be wholesome, and may trees
and
plants bring peace to all. May all
beneficent
beings bring peace to us.
May thy Vedic Law propagate peace all
through the world.
May all things be a source of peace to
us.
And may thy peace itself, bestow peace
on all,
and may that peace come to me
also.

Buddhist Prayer for Peace

By the power and truth of this practice
May all sentient beings enjoy happiness,
and the causes of happiness,
Be free from suffering, and the causes of
suffering,
May they never be separated from the
great happiness devoid of suffering
And may they dwell in the great
equanimity that is free from attachment
and aversion.

Native American Prayer for Peace

O Great Spirit of our
Ancestors, I raise
my pipe to you.
To your messengers the four winds, and
to Mother Earth who provides
for your children.
Give us the wisdom to teach our children
to love, to respect, and to be kind to each
other so that they may grow
with peace in mind.
Let us learn to share all good things that
you provide for us on this Earth.

Shinto Prayer for Peace

Although the people living
across the ocean
surrounding us, I believe,
are all our brothers and sisters,
why are there constant troubles in
this world?
Why do winds and waves rise in the
ocean surrounding us?
I only earnestly wish that the wind will
soon puff away all the clouds which are
hanging over the tops of the mountains.

The Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your
peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is discord, union;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so
much seek
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to
eternal life.

Amen

Exercise

Practice Praying

Select a prayer, poem, song, sound, quote, or movement that inspires and leads you to feel closer to the infinite. It could be from your own religious heritage or another tradition. Repeat it each morning as you awaken and each night as you go to sleep.

Try writing your own prayers for inner peace and for outer peace.

Questions

1. What was the effect of your personal pursuit of your inner prayer?
2. What is the most satisfying, fulfilling form of prayer for you.
3. What do you have gratitude for?
4. What do you ask for? Is it more than for your own individual self?

Guided Visualization

Visualization, or guided imagery, is another way to listen to our inner voice. When used as a relaxation technique, it involves imagining a scene in which you feel at peace, free to let go of all tension and anxiety. Choose whatever setting is most calming to you, whether a tropical beach, a favorite childhood spot, or a quiet forest. You can do a visualization exercise on your own, with a facilitator's help, or with an audio recording. The aim is to develop a conscious dialogue with your inner world.

Exercise

Introduction to Visualizing

Close your eyes and let your worries drift away. Take three deep cleansing breaths, in through your nose and out through your mouth. Imagine you are in a very restful place, perhaps a special place from your childhood, or any place where you can relax and feel at ease (Pause). Picture it as vividly as you can. What do you see around you? (Pause) What do you hear? Are there perhaps insects or birds singing or any sounds at all? Are they near you or off in the distance? (Pause) Breathe deeply through your nose. What do you smell, perhaps flowers, the scent of pine trees, or food cooking in the distance? (Pause). Next to you is a picnic basket that you brought along with you. Open it and eat your favorite food first. How does it taste? Sweet, sour, refreshing? (Pause). Before you leave, lie down, relax, and be mindful of all that is around you. (Pause). As you sit up, you notice someone walking towards you. The person hands you an envelope. You open it and read the letter inside. How does the message make you feel? Now gently open your eyes. Take a deep breath. Then take a few minutes to sketch your relaxing spot and reflect on the message.

Questions

1. Did you receive a special message?
2. What did you see when you opened the envelope?
3. Was your calmness increased?

Exercise

The Treasure Chest

Lie down or sit up straight with your eyes open. Focus on an area in front of you. Take a deep breath and allow your body to relax and surrender its fears and anxieties. Take another deep breath and allow your eyelids to slowly drift closed. There is nothing but this moment. If thoughts happen to sneak in, welcome them as a projection on a screen. Give them no attention. Allow them to drift out the same way that they drifted in. Take a couple of slow deep breaths. When you breathe in, imagine that you are filling your toes with air. Then relax your calves, knees, thighs, pelvis, stomach, chest, shoulders, neck, chin, cheeks, eyeballs, and forehead. First, hold the air in, and then, as you exhale, imagine that all the air that is going through your body collects all the gunk, fears, anxieties, thoughts, and anything else that might constrict your body from breathing in the goodness of life.

Now, imagine you are in a very restful place in nature. Perhaps a special place from your childhood or maybe a place that exists only in your imagination that feels safe and nourishing to your soul.

And as you exhale, listen to the sounds of nature around you. What do you hear? Is it a warm or cold day? Is the wind strong or light on your skin? Allow yourself to feel as you surrender to the safety of this special place.

Now, as you walk around, you spot a place that is perfect for an afternoon nap or a quiet picnic. You lie down on the luscious green grass either with a blanket or any way that feels right. And as you lie on this restful spot, you start to feel nourished by the nature around you. You find a relaxed position lying down and you slowly fall asleep.

Day turns to night and you begin to dream. You allow yourself to dream of far away places and whispers of stories that sing to your heart. And in the dream you imagine that you slowly wake up and in the distance you see a figure approaching. You don't quite know yet who it is but just the feeling of it approaching warms your heart and tugs at your very soul. The figure comes close and you begin to see its shape, then its facial features. It smiles. And as it does, you find yourself smiling back. And you welcome it, inviting it to sit with you in this magical place.

Somehow, this being feels like home, feels like safety. It resonates with a feeling of something sacred. And then, you remember. You recall that this figure is an ancient guardian of an important treasure. A treasure that you gave to it to keep safe and out of harm's way. It laughs and feels joy as it realizes that you remember. You remember who it is and the function it has served. You both laugh as two friends sharing a secret without words.

As your eyes shine with this knowing, the figure reaches out to you and offers you a hand. And you know it is time. It is time to go and retrieve what has been waiting for you for a very long time. It is time to claim what is rightfully yours. Something that is older than time and more magical than words can describe.

You take the hand and are lead down a secret doorway that only you both know. Maybe it's a secret latch in the soil that opens to a staircase; maybe it's a tree with a secret tunnel. Whatever feels right for you.

You enter and the space looks dark but this new yet old friend urges you forward, holding your hand and guiding you deeper into this secret place. And you walk and climb and find yourself going deeper still. And just when you think that this tunnel goes on forever, you see a shimmer in the distance, in the darkness. The closer you walk, the brighter it gets and there, before you, is a closed treasure chest glowing in colors that you didn't even know existed.

You walk towards it. Every step seems to trigger your heart and bring memories, ideas and visions into your mind. The figure urges you to open the box. You reach over with both hands and open it. And then it dawns on you. This is the treasure chest of all your soul's gifts to the world. You look inside the chest. What do you see? Is it a symbol? A word? A gift? Allow yourself to take what feels right and leave what doesn't need to be taken. Breathe in what you need for the journey ahead.

Now you prepare to leave. You thank your companion and it thanks you back. You embrace each other and find your way alone back to your spot where you first lay down in your safe place. You smile and feel the fullness of your heart, the fullness of your experience.

“These are my gifts,” you tell yourself. These are the gifts of the Spiritual Activist. Open your eyes and wake up. Wake up to your gifts and to what you have become.

Take a deep breath and find yourself back in your body.

Questions

1. Find paper and colored pens and draw whatever comes to mind. Maybe it is images you remember from the treasure chest. Maybe it's an image or symbol of your experience. What is the meaning of what you draw?
2. Once you have finished this, write any insights you uncovered from your journey. What is of most importance from your treasure Chest that will help you in your journey?



“A natural altar can sanctify your processes. Collect your stones and light a candle.”

Joaquin of Peru

Models for Individual Reflection

Ho'oponopono, Heart Math, Free Writing, and Art Expression

Ho'oponopono

Self Examination for Cleaning Perceptions

Over the years, scholars and educators have examined many models of change and character building. When looking at the potential creative power of the inner self, Ho'oponopono offers a unique perspective. Based on an ancient Hawaiian healing tradition, Ho'oponopono was redeveloped as a model of self-cleaning by Dr. Ihaleaskala Hew Len. According to this practice, whatever we see in the outer world is a projection of what we hold inside, based on our many experiences. If we are able to 'clean' our perceptions inside, then the outside will alter itself. Keep on cleaning until the light shines through you. Ho'oponopono is composed of three elements: repentance, forgiveness, and transformation. It is based on the premise that what you see in another is also in you, so that all healing is self-healing. No one else has to do the process but you.

Exercise

Examining Your Self

Identify a situation that is presently giving you difficulty.

Example: A longstanding issue has existed between a sibling and yourself. Begin the healing process by going inside and feeling like you are cleaning out your misperceptions. Say, "I'm sorry " and "Please forgive me." You say this to acknowledge that something, without knowing what it is, has gotten into your body/mind system. You're not asking the divine to forgive you; you're asking yourself to forgive you. As you forgive yourself, your perception of your anger, the other's anger and the disagreement changes.

Next say, "Thank you" to yourself and then say, "I love you." When you say, "Thank you," you are expressing gratitude. You are showing your faith that the issue will be resolved for the highest good of all concerned. The "I love you" gets you unstuck and flowing again. It reconnects you to the clear light of who you are.

This helps you get to the "zero state," the state of pure love. Whether you call this divine or call it self, it is pure. You no longer see the other person as you saw her or him before. You are free inside of yourself to redefine the relationship. The other person experiences this and becomes free to be other than what she or he was. You may be inspired to take action or perhaps do nothing. If you aren't sure about it, use this same healing method on your confusion. When you are clear, you'll know what to do.

Questions

1. Was the problem you outlined at the beginning of this exercise similar to any other repeating problems in your past?
2. Did you gain any insights?
3. Can you think of other situations that might be addressed using Ho'oponopono?
4. How do you think this exercise could help you in school or work?

Resource: www.hooponoponohelp.com

Exercise

Extending Ho'oponopono to the One Life of Which We Are Part

Try the Ho'oponopono technique with an issue that is affecting the world. Here is an example offered by Masaru Emoto, the Japanese author of Messages from Water, in May of 2010, when there was a vast oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico:

"Now let's give energy of love and gratitude to the waters and all the living creatures in Gulf of Mexico by praying like this: 'To the water, whales, dolphins, pelicans, fish, shellfish, plankton, corals, algae and all creatures in our Gulf of Mexico, I apologize. Please forgive me. Thank you. I love you.'"

Questions

1. Can you think of other situations that might be addressed using Ho'oponopono?
2. How do you think this exercise could help you in your present work?

HeartMath

Heart Mind Unity

Even in our modern culture with its emphasis on thinking processes and the rational mind, the wisdom of the heart has always been acknowledged. As Saint-Exupéry's the Little Prince said, "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly. What is essential is invisible to the eye." What is new is that we can now study the heart's wisdom scientifically.

Researchers at the Institute of HeartMath have determined that the electrical power of the heart is 60 times greater than that of the brain. The heart's electromagnetic signal affects the brain, and one person's heart frequency can actually affect another person's brain activity. Have you ever walked into a room and felt positive or negative vibes? This could be why.

The heart's rate is a kind of intelligent language that affects every aspect of the body, including the brain. Negative emotions like fear, anger and frustration produce an incoherent rate. Positive emotions like love, acceptance and appreciation produce coherent patterns. The best coherency is when the mind and heart are aligned. Accordingly, the heart links to a higher vibration which could be called spirit and feelings of altruism, compassion and forgiveness grow.

The heart, in fact, has its own brain — some 40,000 neurons and support cells whose arrangement resembles the cortex. Studies have shown that putting on a big smile, even a fake one, shifts our being (through the heart) from anxiety or grief towards joy. Many cultures have focused on the human mind. There are now techniques to learn how to access our heart's intelligence.

The first step is to pay attention to our hearts, and the simplest way to do that is to sit still, feel the heartbeat, and then imagine breathing through the heart. Imagine (with your heart) someone or something that you love, and use your breath to "lock in" the good feeling that this someone or something brings you. Good things are happening in your body, and you're sending good vibes to others. With practice, we can spend more time in this healthy state, which is the state that wisdom traditions have long taught us. Now science is proving its effectiveness.

Exercise

Engaging the Heart in Self-Dialogue

Think of a time in your life when you felt very afraid and scared (This causes your heart rate to become erratic and often race).

Close your eyes. Go to your heart. This time feel love and appreciation for a happy time in your life (At this point the heartbeat may become more regular).

Ask your heart what it has to say about your fear. Ask your heart what does it say to the feeling of love. Listen to your heart.

Questions

1. Can you identify an experience that brings you a regular heartbeat?
2. Can you take a bad experience and turn it into a good result by working on your heartbeat?

Resource: www.heartmath.org

Free Writing or Stream of Consciousness Writing

Free Writing is a practice of continually keeping the writing hand in motion. One of its aims is to let the unconscious come to the conscious level without any interference of grammar, spelling, structure, or self-criticism. In this process you can learn more about what you are thinking and who you are.

Exercise

Reflect in Free Writing

Ask yourself what is your personal goal in life and then just write freely for 10 minutes. Never stop writing. Keep your hand moving and in contact with the paper. If you get stuck, just write 'I am stuck'. When you need to think, then write, "I don't know", but keep moving your pen. At the end read what you wrote.

Questions

1. How is free writing different from other writing you do?
2. What new ideas or feelings came up while writing?

Resource: www.awakeningmind.org

Art Expression

Many of you are artistic and come to know yourself through the arts. The arts can be an expression of your inner questioning and pursuit of a spiritual path. Art is expressed through music, movement, painting, and more.

As a creative process requiring self-examination, self-portraiture is another practice through which the spirituality of the authentic self can be cultivated.

Exercise

1. Make a self-portrait.
2. Choose your media.

Question

What did you learn about yourself?

Native American Traditions

Native Americans most often come to inner reflection through their relationship to nature. They know Mother Earth, Father Sky as alive. It is important to keep mind, body, and spirit healthy and balanced and to give gratitude for all living creatures.

Examples of these teachings are: talking circles, canoeing, meditating around the sacred fire, crafting medicine bags and dream catchers, simple ceremonies or ritualistic gestures, and sweat lodges.

The Medicine Wheel

What is it?

The Medicine Wheel is the core of all Native philosophy. From North to South America, the circle of life - with its four directions - helps understand the great cycle of life and death. The circle also includes the four main elements, four animal spirits and four medicine plants. Each direction is represented by a color. From one region to another, the symbolic colors, animals or plants may vary, but the main idea remains the same.

Why the word “Medicine”?

From the Native American point of view, the term “medicine” refers to all that helps us be fully alive on both physical and spiritual levels. The use of certain medicine plants can help maintain or re-establish the health of the body. However, they play a small role compared to the importance of knowing the different parts of the cycle of life and death. When you know that life is an eternal movement between letting go and new beginnings, our whole perspective can change. If you understand that respect and love for yourself comes first, then you can then fully respect and love Mother Earth and all her inhabitants.

Finally, when you learn to accept everything or everyone as it is; when you understand the medicine of forgiveness; when you are able to let go of all the mental thoughts that cut us off from our real inner being; then you can heal, become truly free and be at peace.

“Only when that sort of peace is achieved inside of us, can we hope for peace in the world.”

The Anishnabe Medicine Wheel



Global Ethics in All Religions



The Golden Rule shows us that all religions say treat the other as the self.

Our authentic self knows that it exists in connection to all that is, but, in fear, we may see ourselves as separate and vulnerable. Any time we do harm to those whom we falsely believe to be separate from us, we actually harm the intricate web of life in which we are embedded. This is known as the Law of Cause and Effect: for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Whether recognized by religion or science, the law still exists. Religious faiths offer this to guide each choice we make in how we behave towards others.

Chapter 2

Connect



Learning to Love

Connect bridges the perceived gap between self and others and leads to unity. Through deep compassion and listening, conflict transcendence, and non-violent communication we learn that it is possible to live in harmony, and thus we weave the interconnectedness of our family worldwide.

“Connect youth who live oceans apart by awakening by the realization that we are all related to one another and the Earth.”

Peter Lukwiya
Youth Leader, Uganda



“We must strengthen the dialogue between the generations, between today’s and tomorrow’s decision makers.”

Princess Ogechi Ukaga,
Youth Leader, Nigeria



Learning to Connect

This section suggests a range of communication skills that enable you to connect with others in empowering partnerships: Active Listening, Circle Groups, Compassionate Listening, Nonviolent Communication, Conflict Transcendence.

While practicing the connecting method of Circle Groups, each person has an equal voice, which helps to create unity within the group. Active listeners hear and communicate with an open heart, becoming compassionate listeners. One of the greatest challenges in connecting is the difficulty of communicating in a way that brings people together, even when they are in conflict. Nonviolent Communication is a tool that fosters this. Children of the Earth's Transcending Conflict model helps you go beyond conflict and understand as a spiritual activist that unity is your focus and the whole is greater than any of its parts.

Connection is how we relate to others. Once you have tapped into an inner sense of who you are, then you understand that others may follow a similar path. Who they are and what they reveal might seem different. When you are aware that not unlike you, others have a true essence that is masked by many layers of experience, views and tastes, likes and dislikes, then you can understand them better. The goal is to know, transcend the outer expression, and find the inner core of another as you found it in yourself through reflection. Then you recognize the universal human being and the oneness we all seek to feel safe and secure.

There are many personal and political problems in the world that may stem from how you relate to and perceive each other. You must learn how to transcend your differences and come to mutual caring and understanding. There are many techniques to connect with those who are less different or more different from you.

Children of the Earth considers 'transcendence' the process that best mitigates all differences, all negative thoughts, and all conflicts. By transcendence you view a problem from above and see the components of the differences. These differences are pieces of a puzzle. There is no right or wrong just pieces that fit together to create a whole. From this perspective you can manage to combine views, go beyond differences, seek answers and unite with others. Then the magnificent step of courage takes place when you are willing to release your view for the sake of this greater understanding.

Transforming conflict is first based on being aware of your language when you are speaking with others. How you express yourself reflects your regard for others. Our goal is compassionate resolution. Transforming conflict is based on learning to appreciate someone else without judging him or her. This can only occur when you no longer judge yourself. You begin to act as part of a whole, building oneness rather than asserting the separate ego. A sense of union occurs that can be called love or spirituality in action. Even when you realize that we are all interconnected, you still need to learn to create relationships with others that reflect your intention to build unity and harmony.

This section will introduce communication skills that enable you to connect in empowering partnerships. Learn to listen, learn to speak in harmlessness, learn to build relationships, and learn to transform and transcend all conflict!



Mayan Elder in Guatemala teaching as we listen.

Models for Connect

Active Listening

Think of a recent argument you were involved in. Perhaps you were listening to the person in front of you, but at the same time were thinking, “You’re wrong! It didn’t happen that way! Let me tell you how it happened!” Watch yourself the next time a friend comes to you with a problem. Watch how quickly you want to jump in, give advice, and tell your friend what to do.

When you are able to trust that someone is willing to listen patiently, you are able to trust more. This trust allows you to be more open to dealing with some of your own hurt, anger, or insecurities. This can often lead to new insights and gradual rebuilding for a new or different view on life.

Better yet, you can find the courage to view your life as a mirror. You begin to face the consequences of your own actions. You stop blaming others for your life’s hardships and begin to take responsibility for inner change. You start to pattern new ways of thinking that are positive. You may also release some of the many denials that make us right and the other person wrong. Right and wrong create all problems in the world.

Imagine being able to reconstruct yourself to accept others and appreciate yourself.

Exercise

Find another person to pair up with. Pick a question, ‘is it ever right to take the life of another person?’ or ‘should you always tell the truth?’ Discuss this in depth. Listen to opposing views.

Questions

1. Did your view alter as you listened to the other person?
2. What was different about the other person’s position?
3. Did you view the answers to your topic differently?

Circle Groups

Each Person Has a Say

The circle symbolizes unity, wholeness, and oneness in some cultures and since the time of our earliest ancestors has been used to bring people together to celebrate, to communicate, and to solve conflicts. Today in our hurried world of responsibilities, commitments, and deadlines, many of us yearn for a sense of connectivity and authenticity in our lives. The circle calls, inviting us to slow down, to communicate with ourselves and with one another, and to connect with the natural wisdom of our communities. When we gather in circle, we are all equals — there is no one authority to tell us how it should be. The circle encourages connectedness because we are able to see each person's face as he or she is speaking. Circle processes encourage us to speak deeply and honestly about what is important, to listen with full presence even when we disagree with others, to respect all voices, and to seek collaborative solutions to our problems that are inclusive of the needs of all present. In indigenous traditions, circles (sometimes called council) were used as a form of governance, conflict resolution, and problem solving. A talking stick was used by Native American cultures to encourage listening in a deeper way than in ordinary conversations. Only the person holding the talking stick may speak, preventing the tendency to interrupt.

The guidelines of dialogue process are simple:

Open-Mindedness * Acceptance * Curiosity * Discovery * Sincerity * Brevity

- Use “I” statements. Speak your truth.
- Be brief.
- Be respectful and appreciate others.

You may be surprised to hear others say just what you are thinking! As the Circle Keeper or facilitator, you have the responsibility to be sure that the group agrees to the guidelines and that they are followed.

“To lead people, walk beside them... As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. The next best, the people honor and praise. The next, the people fear; and the next, the people hate... When the best leader's work is done the people will say, ‘We did it ourselves!’”

Lao-Tzu

Exercise

Leading a Circle Group

The Circle Keeper is responsible for the circle.

Center - Place something beautiful in the center of the circle.

Intentions - Listen from the heart, speak from the heart, speak spontaneously, and speak truthfully.

Opening - Open the circle with a few words of welcome. You may light a candle or ask for a volunteer to do so. You may offer a poem or a bit of inspirational writing for the circle to respond to, or set a theme for the meeting.

Beginning - “We’re now in council where we’re going to really listen to each other.”

Explain guidelines and ask for agreement.

Talking Stick - Provide an object to serve this function. Explain that only the person holding it may speak. They also have the option of “passing,” as the talking stick travels around the circle.

Focus - Explain the purpose of the meeting. An example would be to say, “The focus for our circle is to share what brought us here and our hopes and vision for the group.”

Facilitation - Give everyone a chance to be heard. Honor everyone’s contribution. Offer your opinions as little as possible, rather synthesizing what others have said.

Closing - Have some ritual or statement to acknowledge when the group is finished.

Questions

1. What does it mean to be the change you wish to see in the world?
2. What is a spiritual action?
3. How do you want the world to be ten years from now?

Compassionate Listening

Cultivating compassion is learning to listen with one’s heart in order to experience the feelings of the other person. A person who takes this on as a personal practice increases the ability to suspend judgment and to “walk in the other person’s shoes.” This fosters the ideal of being harmless, not threatening to anyone, thus allowing people to be themselves and share from their hearts. It is also important to express gratitude whenever possible and to practice forgiveness. In a group setting, compassionate listening begins the possibility of communing together at a deeper level, finding understanding and trust that not only empowers but unifies and sustains the whole.

Exercise

Working with a Focus Question

Every session starts with a focus question (‘how do you deal with bullies?’ or ‘if and when can you reveal your friend’s deep, dark secret?’). Make sure it is not too broad. Write this question in large print at the top of a page or white board. Give an index card or small piece of paper to each person and ask them to write all the responses to the focus question they can think of in three or four minutes.

Rewarding (the “whip-around” phase) - Go around the group at least three times or until all answers have been shared.

Expanding - Each person in turn expands on their initial response. They are asked to add any thought they might have about their first answers.

Summarizing (stacking) - What are some of the issues talked about more than once? You may want to organize into smaller groups, then ask the participants to try to put the data into categories.

Questions

1. How does one determine what focus question should be in a group?
2. What do you want to accomplish in the group meeting as a result of this process?
3. How did compassionate listening impact your understanding?

Resource: www.compassionatelistening.org

“Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.”
His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Nonviolent Communication with Listening Skills

One of the greatest challenges to peace building is the difficulty of communicating in a way that brings people together, even when they are in conflict. Nonviolent Communication (NVC), developed over the last 20 years by Marshall Rosenberg and his trainees, strengthens our ability to respond compassionately to others and to ourselves. Through its emphasis on deep listening, to ourselves as well as others, NVC fosters respect, empathy, and a mutual desire to give from the heart. These skills emphasize personal responsibility for our actions and the choices we make when we respond to others. NVC guides us to reframe how we express ourselves by focusing on observations (free of evaluations), feelings (straight from the heart), needs, and requests (expressed clearly in positive action language). The process of NVC encourages us to focus on what we are observing, why we are each feeling as we do, what our underlying needs are, and what each of us would like to have happen.

By observing ourselves, we learn to hear our own deeper needs and those of others, and to identify and clearly articulate what we want in a given moment. When we focus on clarifying what is being observed, felt and needed, rather than on judging, we discover the depth of our own compassion.

When we are angry or upset, we often blame others for our problems. It is important to take responsibility for our feelings and to acknowledge that all we can ever know is our own perception and realize that the other person’s perception will be different. When we avoid blaming others and accusing them, we are far more likely to transform the conflict and allow for different points of view.

Example

It is 6 PM and I need to eat dinner because I really am hungry and I know you are not happy about this but if you are willing to find this acceptable we can have dessert later.

You take responsibility for getting your own needs met, and you let the others take responsibility for theirs. Use Active Listening, which is listening with the heart, to help diffuse any possible hostility.

Exercise

Practice Active Listening and Non-Violent Communication.

Find a partner. One person will speak about a personal problem for ten minutes while the other person listens. Listen in total silence or with questioning comments that reflect the meaning back to the person speaking. Use “I” statements. Use the steps outlined below. Switch roles and debrief.

- First always agree to work the problem out!
 - Next use “I” statements to give your perception of a situation.
 - Always say “I need ” rather than “You are....” or “You make me....”
1. State the observations that are leading you to feel the need to say something. These are observable facts and provide a common ground for communication. State the feeling that the observation is triggering in you. You may also estimate what the other person is feeling, and ask as part of your framing of their need.
 2. State the need that is the cause of that feeling. What do you need here?” you can clarify if there really is a conflict at all. Or, guess the need that caused the feeling in the other person, and ask. When our needs are met, we have happy, positive feelings; when they are not met, we have negative feelings.
 3. Make a concrete request for action to meet the need just identified.
 4. Ask clearly and specifically for what you want right now, rather than hinting or stating only what you don't want. Reframe the concern so it is more acceptable.

Questions

1. You may ask: How did that make you feel? I can see you are upset.
2. Tell me more about what happened. What would you like to see in the future?
3. How did it feel to be listened to?
4. Was there anything the listener said that made you feel understood?
5. Were you able to ask for what you need without blaming someone else for what was not right?

Communicating to Transcend A Children of the Earth Model

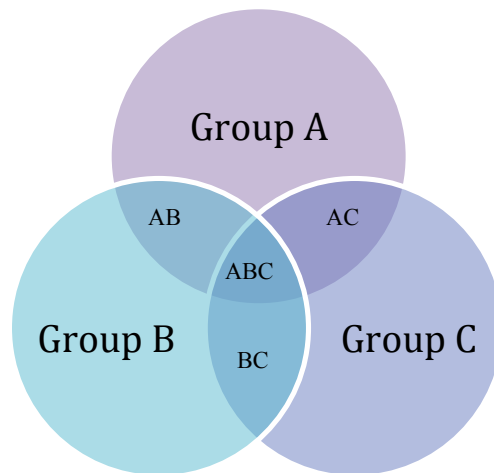
“There is no human being who does not experience conflict. The difference lies in the way each of us addresses conflict when it arises. Conflict is an opportunity to come to a new understanding. At its core we can understand conflict as a contradiction of perceptions, values, feelings, principles, interests or positions.”

Corina Simon
Youth Peace Activist

Conflict Transcendence

The approach developed by Children of the Earth goes beyond conflict. While differences are acknowledged, it is understood that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. When this unity exists, a sense of integration prevails over a sense of conflict to such an extent that all parties wish for the same outcome.

Conflict Transcendence goes beyond conflict resolution and conflict transformation; rising above the situation and looking down into the totality of all that is.



Transcendence Diagram

The diagram shows each group with their respective ‘solutions’. In the exercise below, each group has their ideal outcome, which can be shared with one another (AB, AC, BC), but by using the Transcendence method, one can find a common solution that benefits the whole (ABC).

Conflict Resolution is achieved by resolving conflict through active listening and non-violent communication, which leads to compromise. You and others want to resolve the issue and foster a better relationship.

Conflict Transformation is achieved by using your skills to transform the conflict into a learning experience. Focus is placed on the outcome and even more on resolving the

underlying issues so a win-win solution emerges.

When you experience conflict you may dive into it from your view of what is right and what is wrong. But when you can rise above the conflict and view it from above, you see all its pieces. Einstein believed that the only resolution to a problem is to go above it, that no problem can be solved at the level it was created. As spiritual seekers and spiritual activists, our goal is to unify. To unify the pieces it is more than to understand, compromise, or tolerate; rather to unify all pieces from inherent oneness.

When you know who you are with others then when a conflict arises you realize that it is your own problem as well as that of others. The only solution lies in realizing that all contradictions are interrelated. The sun, moon, rain, clouds, and snow are all aspects of weather.

As we begin to transcend, then the need for an answer that fortifies a position dissolves. The issue begins to look like a pattern showing that we are universal human beings with cultures, religions and ideas. As this universal human we can see from above that the problem is just an expression of our differences and within that is the essence of what is the same. Thus formulating a means to an answer acknowledges that we hold this sameness in our hearts, so that the external differences become mere minor concerns. We transcend the 'I' and become a 'we,' and thus all parties are responsible for the solution.

"I am who I am because you are who you are."

Ubuntu

Exercise:

Form a small group. You are a small group of youth coming together because you want to make a difference in the world. This meeting is sponsored by a local Service Award Community grant and is described as an invitation to develop a youth to youth project to further sustainability. \$2000 will be rewarded to a deserving project.

Some of you are attending to fulfill a school credit requirement. Others really want to be involved in starting a local service project while still others are already involved in a project and wish to receive the \$2000 award.

Step 1

Form a circle for group inner reflection—see meditation section. Set an intention by asking "Why are you here today?" "What project would you like to commit to?" Breathe and sit in silence and reflect and meditate.

Step2

Popcorn style...meaning whoever feels it is their turn to speak, speaks into the circle. No commenting on what the other person said. It is time to just say what comes to mind. List this all on the board or large paper.

Step 3

Look at the list and arrange items according to ideas or categories so there is a flow of items grouped together. For instance, one of you has been working on environmental

projects and thinks the city needs to have trees planted along the streets. Another person recognizes hard economic times and wants to help the community by starting a food bank. A third person is involved in a project helping orphans in Rwanda and thinks that since this project is already fully functioning it should be supported.

Step 4

Using the Transcendence Model, ask each person to pretend to be in an airplane flying over a large mountain. The closer you get the more you see the towns, rivers, and people. The higher you go, the farther out that you are, you see the whole half of the world. Draw a picture of all the suggestions as if it were a mind-map of the world?

Start drawing lines connecting these suggestions, weaving a story of how they are interrelated. Look at this and one person at a time tell what overarching theme seems to be expressed in the drawing. See if a title or a collective project could be identified. If the projects cannot all be woven together, is there one that fits the overarching theme best?

Step 5

Once the theme has been identified start the process again. Using the agreed upon theme, each person integrates his or her ideas into this. The project might take on a totally new face yet becomes reflective of the whole group. Thus the whole is greater than its parts. The pieces of the sustainability puzzle are school credit, trees for streets, food bank, and Rwanda orphans. How do they fit together?

For example, were maple trees and fruit trees planted, fruit and maple syrup could either be donated to the food bank or sold to help Rwanda orphans start gardens and plant fruit trees. What a great way to earn school credit. Please release all preconceived ideas of needing to be right or have a singular view. Be prepared to coalesce and see what emerges for the group. It is so satisfying to know you are part of a group with good intentions to make a difference together.

Step 6

The next question is how to allocate and advocate for the money? If the project represents the group then the money is budgeted according to the needs of the project and not given to one individual's project in which others are not involved.

Step 7

Always end with an affirming group closing, like a positive cheer, a moment of gratitude, a group hug, etc.

Questions

1. How did it feel to transcend your personal agenda?
2. How would you define transcendence for others to understand?
3. Could you use this process for other times you have differences with others?
4. Could you learn to step back and see the larger picture on a daily basis? If so, what would this do for you in your relationships with others?

Learn to See the Whole: A Story An Elephant and a Blind Man



Once upon a time, there lived six blind men in a village. One day the villagers told them, "Hey, there is an elephant in the village today." They had no idea what an elephant was. They decided, "Even though we would not be able to see it, let us go and feel it anyway." All of them went where the elephant was. Every one of them touched the elephant.

"Hey, the elephant is a pillar," said the first man, who touched his leg.

"Oh no! It is like a rope," said the second man, who touched the tail.

"Oh no! It is like a thick branch of a tree," said the third man, who touched the trunk of the elephant. "It is like a big hand fan," said the fourth man, who touched the ear of the elephant.

"It is like a huge wall," said the fifth man, who touched the belly of the elephant.

"It is like a solid pipe," said the sixth man, who touched the tusk of the elephant.

They began to argue about the elephant and every one of them insisted that he was right. It looked like they were getting agitated. A wise man was passing by and he saw this. He stopped and asked them, "What is the matter?" They said, "We cannot agree to what the elephant is like." Each one of them told what he thought the elephant was like. The wise man calmly explained to them, "All of you are right. The reason each one of you is telling it differently is because each one of you touched a different part of the elephant. So, actually the elephant has all those features you described."

"Oh!" everyone said. There was no more fighting. They felt happy that they were all right.

Chapter 3

Act



Learning to Live

Action is taking the inspired will to serve others in the world through individual actions, local projects and global work. Children of the Earth's principals and ethics inspire spiritual activism.

"Service is more about knowing how to give than just to give."

Jimmy Lama
Youth Leader, Nepal



"Take action, start doing something, make the change and serve this world."

Christian Marx and Mark Conrad
Youth Leaders, Philippines

"There is no greater peace than knowing that we are on the higher path of evolution and that we are fulfilling our mission upon the Earth by helping and caring for others; by being vessels of compassion wherever we go."

Karoline Buys
Youth Coordinator, Colombia



Learning to Act

Spiritual Action is based on the notion that every action you take impacts the world and reverberates in ripples. It is up to you as an individual to be mindful. Using Children of the Earth's Guiding Principles, you can evaluate your own behavior; using the Children of the Earth's Code of Ethics, you exemplify ethical living and inspired action.

This inspiration needs to be expressed as action that serves the community. This is altruism. You may want to form a group around a particular concern that would lead to positive change for your personal, social and political lives.

This section will help you organize a group and teach you how to be a leader in the newest sense of the word. You become a facilitator, bringing others into an empowered state so you can all work collaboratively. You will learn about new means of governance so everyone has a voice. You will learn how to work in groups, develop an agenda, launch a project, and assess needs and results.

Enjoy the journey and understand change happens moment to moment. Act and be the change you want to see in the world!!

Lateral Leadership

A Children of the Earth Model

Lateral Leadership

You are a leader if you follow your inner wisdom. You will be seen as someone who knows what you want and how to walk in life. It is up to you to go inward and hear that authentic voice and then follow your higher consciousness. Your behavior becomes the yardstick of how you measure your own life. As we said, “It is up to you!”

There is a global community of young people who await connection with you. All are the leaders of this evolving consciousness for social change. They share a growing awareness of how to live as stewards of all of life. From this new consciousness, there will be new models of how to live in our world and more importantly, how to secure our harmonious balanced future.

For His Holiness Shri Shri Shri Saidas Baba of India these are qualities of a true leader:

L - Love
E - Energy
A - Acceptability
D - Discipline
E - Egolessness
R – Respect

Second International Youth Leadership Conference, Apeadu Peace Center, Ghana.

Who is a leader?
You are a leader!



Apeadu Meeting in Ghana

Leaders have an inner sense of direction and take responsibility for making a difference. A leader is an idea and is willing to act on it. Look at your heroes, look at the civil rights movement, look at the women's movement, and now look at the youth movement that is coming alive. All these leaders are pioneers for change.

Leading takes conviction. Leading takes believing in one's self. Leading takes work, and is worthy if done from an inner drive for a better world. Leading is serving a cause that is bigger than yourself and is your life's purpose.

Who is a spiritually inspired leader and activist?
--

Each person is entitled to be a leader. As a leader, you access your inner wisdom and know what your calling is and follow it. A spiritually inspired leader reflects deeply. You have a sense of what your purpose is, as well as the need to manifest it. You follow your conscience and do not succumb to the pressures of society or personal emotional needs.



Jimmy Lama with his community elders discussing building new schools.

Lateral Leadership: Introduction

Lateral Leadership, a Children of the Earth's model, hears each person's authentic voice and integrates it into Act: project planning, decision making, governance. When you hear and follow your inner wisdom, when you hear and respect others' inner wisdom, then you are a leader.

The Leader as a Group Member

One person totally in charge with others doing what is dictated is not most effective for spiritual activism. Everyone matters. Everyone must have a voice in decision-making or in information gathering or in expressing feelings. We know the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Group work, if done well, can bring about more results and greater possibilities than any one person could. This is not easy. Everyone must be present in their minds and hearts and be committed. The road to success is the road travelled together in a trusting manner for the greater good.

Guiding Practices for Lateral Leadership

You can express your leadership by forming a group. You can bring alive your principles, practices and vision for action in this group with a shared intention. It may be a club at school, a youth group within your religious community, or a chapter or affiliate of an existing organization dedicated to service.

One powerful way to structure your group is around Reflect, Connect, and Act.

Reflect, the individual journey that we take to awaken our gifts, can also support the foundation of your group. You can begin your meetings with a time of silent reflection or soft music to encourage everyone to come into a unified field of intention. A member of the group may volunteer to lead a spiritual opening, or you may want to take turns. You may also want to observe a few minutes of silent meditation before discussing issues of particular importance.

Connect, which bridges gaps to build unity, is essential to group coherence. Practice active and compassionate listening and nonviolent communication in icebreakers, learning about one another's faiths and religious traditions, or paired sharing so people feel connected. Sometimes, a retreat or a day of fun serves as a healthy break from the routine of meetings, increasing the group's feeling of friendship and common purpose.

Act is how your group takes your joy from reflecting and connecting into the world. Simple and achievable projects that are based on the principles of spirituality can make a real impact on the world. This is not ordinary action, but Spiritual Activism.

At the end of this section, you will find some guidelines and tools for spiritual activists that may be useful when developing projects. Please adapt them to your situation.

Planning a Program Using Lateral Leadership

If you wish to convene others, as a leader you must know your vision and goals. You must be clear about the direction you wish to take and not let the group wander in circles of decisions and discussions. On the other hand, you must be open to change directions,



to input that may alter the outcome or require program modification. To do this, you must feel grounded in your vision. How can you do this?

Usually you start with a core group and benefit from a variety of ideas. You are all the holders of energy. It is not what you say that sets the tone, but rather your ability to vision and experience the totality. Each of you sits and observes, while guiding the discussion toward the goals of the program. You are like painters, or weavers, working with you to create a harmonious tapestry.

Keep in mind that it is never about a particular person speaking, but rather about what is to emerge for the whole. You can see yourself as an antenna sending and receiving messages all the time. The intention will be set energetically and

you will see the group coalesce into its full potential.

To facilitate means that you lead by hearing others. Leading laterally means informing the group of the program and setting the structure. You inspire and motivate and invite others to speak, keeping on topic and targeting the goal. At the beginning and end of each session, you review what is to occur and what has occurred and how this will lead to the next session.

This is important: you are youth in charge. Adults often want to help by sharing their knowledge and wisdom, often setting a tone of being the known experts. This is your meeting. Each adult, even if invited to be a workshop leader, is a guest. They can sit in circle with you, hold energy for the group, offer their skills, or interject their thoughts as a participant who may be an expert in the field. Their presence can be very important, as they bring credibility to your work. But do not allow them to direct the process. Please be aware that well-meaning adults who want to share may take away from the discovery of new models that could emerge from the evolving consciousness of youth. Each generation to come has more available consciousness. Adults are the gatekeepers from the old, asking youth no longer to imitate what has come before but rather to encourage the new.

After each session or workshop, the core group meets to review where you are, whether you are aligned with the goals you set, how the sessions are going, whether the work is gender and ethnic balanced, whether there are individuals who might be too overpowering and if there are any cultural issues. Then you can revamp the schedule and next activities and plan accordingly. It is never about personalities, but rather about a

smooth, harmonious and effective process. Meet regularly with your planning team. It is best to start this planning meeting with a short prayer or meditation to bring the small group into harmony as one voice and not many voices with strong opinions. Remember that the goal is to get clear and go on to the next session.

Always be prepared so that you are not stressed as you share responsibilities instead of delegating them. This is your group's collective work and each of you knows the others' strengths and roles. Groups often experience certain phases as they grow. They begin in the joy and peace of creativity, but after a while they may move into some altercation and friction.

Finally the group finds its stability and harmony. This is known as “forming, storming and norming.” Never fear, but simply walk with the changes. Keep your eyes on the outcome and see the group as a whole, as an organism finding its direction. Keep good notes. You can take turns, asking for a reporter in each group. Exchange times for leadership so it is not about who is leading but rather what is getting done. Enjoy and spread joy; others will feel this. In the end the change we want to see is the love we feel for each other.

You will be amazed by how much you have accomplished. At the conclusion of your project, make sure you have a written report or post your achievement on a website.

Decision Making in Lateral Leadership

Lateral Leadership allows all to be heard and make decisions efficiently. While consensus builds on everyone's input it can be slow to reach agreement and decisions. Democratic decision-making is by majority, so there are winners and losers. A model that is useful within lateral governance is “acceptance”, which is a means to consent to a decision suggested by one member of the group that does not require full agreement. The person making the suggestion asks each person in the circle if he or she is able to accept the suggestion. This makes for quick rounds of voting to achieve group acceptance. If a member of the group truly does not find the suggested decision acceptable, then he or she can object and give reason for the objection, then propose an amendment or begin some further discussion. This is an efficient manner in which to run a meeting and have the group work cohesively as a unit, without waiting for consensus or having democracy rule.

Exercise

Steps for Lateral Leadership

1. Create a vision statement and set some goals for the work ahead of you.
2. Form a small planning committee and combine vision and goals with yours.
3. Invite others to a gathering with defined Vision Statement.
4. Place the initiators of this program throughout and seated in a circle.
5. Allow each person to take a turn to speak and make no decisions.
6. Listen as if walking in each other's shoes. Use time for Reflect, Connect and Act.
7. Decisions are collective agreements.
8. Meet with planning group during program breaks to revise path towards goals.
Any participant may join the planning group meetings.
9. Create and chart actions within the group as results of this meeting.
10. Plan next steps.



With the understanding that each member of the group is entitled to be a leader, these are the questions for reflection and self-examination that enhance connection and spiritual activism.

Questions

Self-Examination for Leadership

Ask yourself and others:

Do I experience joy in my work?

When do I feel most happy at work?

How often?

How does it relate to the challenges and effort I put in?

How can I increase my sense of joy?

Do others benefit as a result of my work?

What are the direct benefits?

What are the indirect benefits?

How can I increase the benefits to others?

What do I learn at work?

In what practical ways is my work a learning experience?

In what personal ways am I learning?

In what spiritual ways am I learning?

How can I increase my learning at work?

How do I help others learn at work? In what practical ways do I help others learn?

In what personal ways do I help others learn?

In what spiritual ways do I help others learn?

How can I help others learn more?

How is my work benefiting generations to come?

In what ways is my work supporting the needs of the young people today? How does my work contribute to the development of future generations?

How can I strengthen this contribution?

How is my work evolving?

How am I helping my work to evolve and improve?

Isira

Spiritual Teacher, Australia

Models for Group Action

World Café

A Process That Creates Conversation

A Café conversation is a creative process for leading collaborative dialogue, sharing knowledge and creating possibilities for action. It is based on seven design principles:

1. Set the context
2. Create a hospitable space
3. Explore the questions that matter
4. Encourage everyone's contribution
5. Cross-pollinate and connect diverse perspectives
6. Listen together for patterns, insights, and deeper questions
7. Harvest and share collective discoveries

You begin your World Café by setting up the room with enough tables to accommodate your participants splitting into groups of six or eight. Have a question ready. Gather small groups at tables with the question you prepared, and make sure everyone understands the instructions. Ask each table to choose a “table host,” who will stay at the original table when everyone else moves on. Ring a bell to begin the conversations.

After a short time (perhaps ten minutes) for introductions and discussion of the question, ring the bell again to indicate that it is time to switch to a new table. Each time people switch, the “table host” gets new participants and shares the essence of that table's conversation thus far. The newcomers relate any threads that they are carrying from previous discussions and the conversation continues, deepening at each round. This enables everyone to know what each table group has said to that point. After three or more rounds, the whole group gathers to share and explore emerging themes, insights and discoveries, which are captured on flipcharts or other means for making the collective intelligence of the whole group visible to all. The meeting may end there, or further rounds of conversational exploration and inquiry may begin, with additional questions formed from the results.

Doodles, mind maps, scribbles are highly encouraged. This practice actually is proven to stimulate the creativity side of the brain and to support learning and interaction.

Exercise

Choose a question and convene a World Café.

Question

How can we establish a spiritual youth platform that links young people?

Open Space

Group Mapping of Interests

Open Space is a way to facilitate inspired meetings or events to create extraordinary outcomes. Over the last 20 years, it has proven to be a powerful self organizing process that can get people and organizations going, getting more done than top down, and hierarchical processes.

To begin the process, the facilitator explains the theme and focus of group work together, such as creating a club, planning a gathering or a service project, holding interfaith dialogue, etc., and invites participants to think of specific topics about which they want to hold discussions.

The facilitator then invites participants with a discussion topic to come to the center of the circle to announce what they would like to discuss and work on that is related to the theme. They may choose whatever they want to talk about — whatever has heart and meaning for them — around which they are willing to convene a 60-minute discussion group. Those who want to create sessions come to the center, write down the topic that inspires them, announce it to the group and post it on the wall. After all topics have been posted, the facilitator announces the locations for the various groups and the space is opened.

Participants gather into groups and begin to talk, trade ideas and learn from one another. The focus is always on individual responsibility and personal action. For instance, if the topic is creating a group for spiritual activism, the focus is not just on rules, but on what we can do as individuals and what actions we want to accomplish.

Each group should choose someone to be the note takers and someone to be the reporter. Then they may move on to their next group, and their next group, and so on— to whatever topic inspires them.

At the end of the Open Space, participants come back to the group to share what emerged in the small groups.

The Basics

- Whoever comes is the right person. You don't need every person in the group. And if you're the only one who comes, you might actually have some rich, focused quiet time for thinking and writing on that issue.
- Whatever happens is the only thing that could happen, so let go of your expectations and work with whatever unfolds.
- Whenever it starts is the right time: creativity doesn't happen on a schedule.
- Whenever it's over, it's over. If you find a solution in twenty minutes, move on to the next group. If it takes two hours, keep the conversation rolling.
- Be prepared to be surprised. Don't carry your own agenda too tightly and by doing so miss some amazing thing that could come out of additional creative minds working on the same issue.

There is only one rule, called “The Law of Two Feet”: if you are not learning or contributing in a session, you are required to get up and leave to join another session where you feel you'll be more useful and inspired.

Exercise

Experiment with open space by referring to the group mapping of interests above and see what happens.

Questions

1. What is youth spirituality?
2. How does one bring out spirituality at youth meetings?
3. What are ways to get more youth involved in action for a better world?



Appreciative Inquiry

Building the Platform for the Convening Group

What are you really about, what does the group want and who does what?

Appreciative Inquiry is a powerful tool that is used in organizational development worldwide, using system wide dialogue through a process of appreciative interviews. Using the 4 D's — discovery, dream, design and destiny — AI recognizes the best in people and asks the whole group to come together and share their strengths and resources.

From A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry by David L. Cooperrider and Diana Whitney.

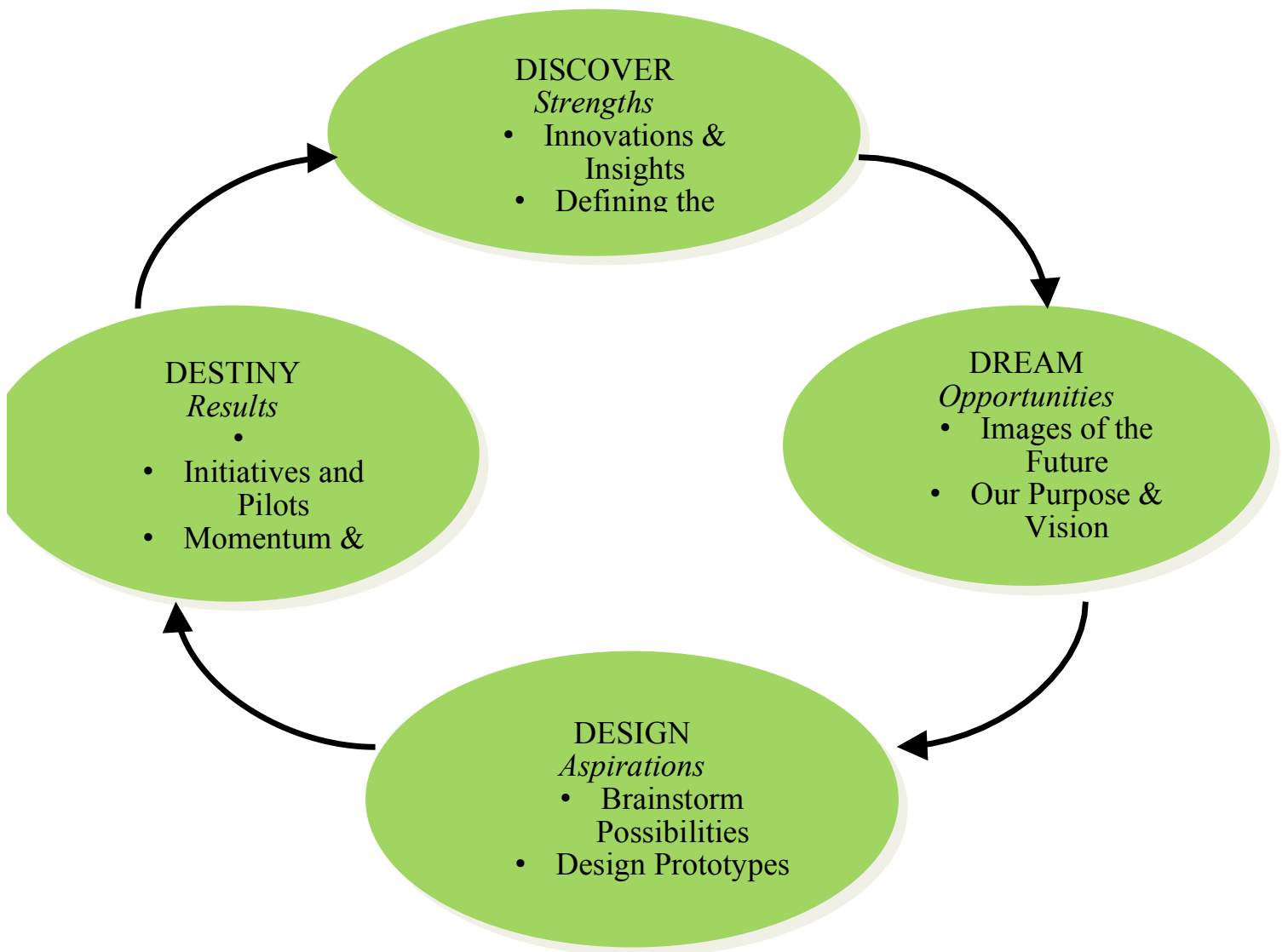
***Ap-pre'ci-ate**, v., 1. valuing; the act of recognizing the best in people or the world around us; affirming past and present strengths, successes, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems 2. to increase in value, e.g. the economy has appreciated in value. Synonyms: VALUING, PRIZING, ESTEEMING, and HONORING.*

***In-quire'** (kwir), v., 1. the act of exploration and discovery. 2. To ask questions; to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities. Synonyms: DISCOVERY, SEARCH, and SYSTEMATIC EXPLORATION, STUDY.*

Features of Appreciative Inquiry

- **Positive Thinking:** Rather than beginning with a deficits-based analysis that focuses on problems and the past, we begin with an awareness of the group's strengths and the future the members envision together.
- **Systems Thinking:** Systems thinking requires more diversity and less hierarchy than is usual in a working meeting, and a chance for each person and stakeholder to be heard and to learn other ways of looking at the task at hand.
- **Action Oriented:** Because the whole system is involved, it is easier to make more rapid decisions, and to make commitments to action in an open way that everyone can support.
- **Dialogue and Inquiry,** not problem-solving, are the bases for communication. The intention is to collaborate and take responsibility for our perceptions and actions, avoiding the pitfall of blaming.
- **Finding Common Ground,** rather than conflict management, is the frame of reference. We honor differences and then discover areas for action where there is strong common ground.

Here is an example of the 4 D's at a meeting using Appreciative Inquiry to establish a National Peace Academy:



If planning to establish a National Peace Academy that develops the full spectrum of the peace builder individually and professionally while embodying and reflecting the processes and principles of peace.

A meeting based on Appreciative Inquiry often begins by asking people to pair up with a partner whom they do not know well. In a given time frame (perhaps twenty minutes each), each one interviews the other. Then the pair returns to their table and each introduces the other to the group from what they learned in the Appreciative Interview.

An Appreciative Interview may also be held on a topic, such as personal experience with the issue of the larger group discussion. The results of the interview are reported back to the table, always by the listening partner. Someone is appointed to give a summary of what the table group discovered to the group at large.

Meetings convened in this manner often uncover a rich layer of relationship and experience that produces highly creative group thinking and cohesion.

Exercise

Have the forming leaders of the group explain why they created the meeting. Let them share the focus of their intentions and dreams for the future. Then ask the group for discussion of these concepts, starting with paired sharing. After this, see what topics emerge for breakout groups to form according to interests.

Questions

1. Since this group comes together and is planning for the future, then what is it that it wants to actually do and how do people actively commit to the roles needed to make it possible?
2. What is the title of this work?
3. Who does what?
4. What is the vision and the mission?

Sociocracy

A Governance Model for Group Decisions.

As spiritual activists you are aware of both the inner and outer world. You realize the inter-connectedness between things. You feel that everything is connected to everything else and you understand how one person can impact the whole.

The idea behind sociocracy is that each individual within a system holds a different and precious viewing point of the whole. If there were a way to harness this value and the different perspectives, organize them into a conscious and collective decision, all the parts impact the whole and the whole would benefit. The whole would become more of itself and would use the feedback to evolve and grow.

Sociocracy offers project organization and a model for leadership. It is an efficient process while honoring everyone's spiritual path.

Process for Group Decision Making

When someone makes a proposal, everyone has a chance to ask questions to be sure they understand it. The meeting facilitator then asks each person, in turn, for his or her quick reactions to the proposal. These reactions give the person who made the proposal a chance to adjust or amend particular points that may not be clear. The facilitator then goes around the circle asking each person in turn if they have a paramount objection to the proposal. The facilitator is asking for consent to accept it as it is.

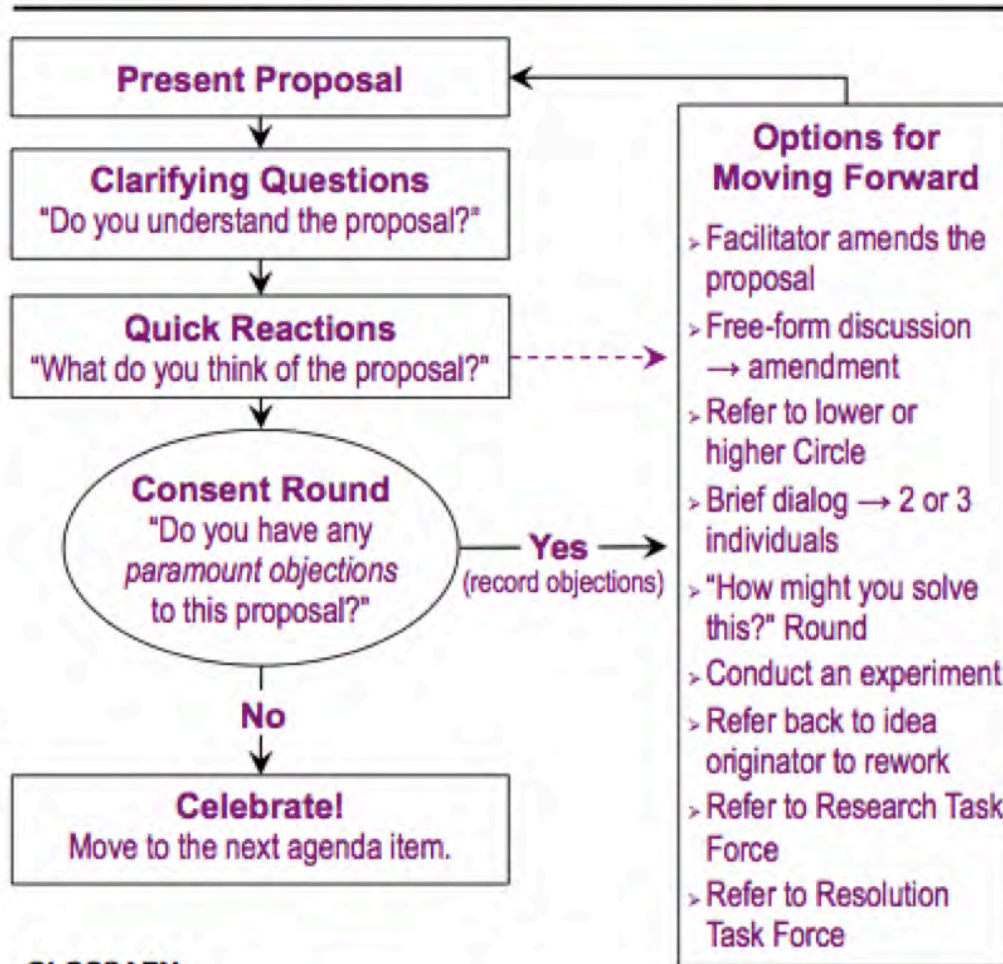
Welcome any paramount objections. A paramount objection means someone feels that the core objectives of their role cannot be achieved if the decision or action takes place. This is your best insurance that you will make a complete and wise decision about how to get your project done.

As long as the circle stays focused on getting its project done, the paramount objection will not be a block, but rather a starting point for creatively thinking, for figuring out, "Well then, how can we get the project done?" If there is a paramount objection, the facilitator leads the circle in a creative process to resolve the objection.

If no one has an objection, then the facilitator announces that the decision is made.

Dynamic Governance Summary

CONSENT DECISION MAKING



GLOSSARY

- Round(s)* — every participant gives input in turn, with no group dialogue.
Tuners — individuals appointed to make information more manageable by organizing it, without additions or modifications in meaning.

There are four main principles in sociocracy:

- **Decision-making by Consent:** Each person has a voice that cannot be ignored and is valued for its uniqueness and perspective within the decision-making process.
- **Election of Individuals to Fulfill Roles:** Elections are carried out by every member of the group. This allows clarity and the managing of expectations and the ability to delegate effectively.
- **Circles and Circle Processes:** In a circle, all sides are equal. This is a metaphor and, by and large, a systemic model of operation. In Sociocracy circles are the means of organizing and guiding the process.
- **Double Linking:** This is what connects the seemingly unconnected parts of a system. Double linking between circles ensures effective information flow both up and down as well as across the organization and that every voice is heard and accounted for.

Exercise

Elect a facilitator using sociocracy as the process:

1. Discuss the job to be performed, the length of time the person will do the job, and any special qualifications.
2. Each person writes privately on a slip of paper: his or her name, the word "nominates" and then the name of the person he or she wants to nominate. If you want to nominate yourself, that is fine. Each person hands the slip of paper to the facilitator.
3. The facilitator looks at each slip of paper and asks the person for his or her reasons. For example, "Susan, you nominated George. Would you please tell us your reasons for doing so?"
4. After all slips of paper have been read and explained, the facilitator goes around to each person and asks if, based on the reasons given for each nomination, whether "you want to change your nomination?" Often, people will change their nomination because of the arguments other people offered.
5. After each person has had a chance to change his or her nomination, the facilitator carefully weighs all of the reasoning and decides whom to propose. "I am going to propose that we elect Mary because of reasons x, y, and z." The facilitator asks each person in turn whether he or she has a paramount objection to Mary, asking Mary herself last.
6. If there is no paramount objection, the facilitator announces the decision and the circle celebrates. If there is an objection, the facilitator leads the process of resolving that objection, then announces the decision — again a cause to celebrate. In making a consent decision, the process of the facilitator going to each person in turn is called "a round." Rounds are important because they guarantee that each person's voice is heard — quiet people, loud people, shy people, not so smart people, very smart people — everyone. Asking for paramount objections rather than a majority vote means that the majority will not silence and ignore the minority. It guarantees that everyone's voice and each person's spirit is heard and joins in the decision.

Questions

1. Does the group feel that this is an effective means of making decisions?
2. Can each person have a say and feel heard while a group decision is made?
3. Does the decision making process go around efficiently and effectively within a short amount of time?



Implementing Spiritual Activism

“Masters of all the religious traditions on earth now understand that spiritual training is *essential* not solely for monks and nuns but for all people, whatever their faith or way of life. The nature of spiritual development is intensely practical, active, and effective. The danger we are all in together makes it essential now that we no longer think of spiritual development as a luxury but as a necessity for survival.”

As a spiritual activist who reflects and connects, whose activism comes from the heart, here are a few tools and guidelines that may be useful as you take action in the world to create positive change. Remember that compassion is the high standard, the watch word is "do no harm", and the universal golden rule your guide. These suggestions for developing a "spiritual activists toolkit" aim to consolidate your spiritual growth and societal actions. Working with others or on your own, these approaches may enhance your service. You will also want to add your own methods and practices to make this your "toolkit"

Needs Assessment

This is a systematic process for determining and addressing needs, or "gaps" between current conditions and desired conditions or "wants".

A needs assessment is an important part of the planning process, often used for improvement in individuals, education/training, organizations, or communities. It can be an effective tool to clarify problems and identify appropriate interventions or solutions. By clearly identifying the problem finite resources can be directed towards developing and implementing a feasible and applicable solution. Gathering appropriate and sufficient data informs the process of developing a solution that will address the group's needs and wants.

One example of needs assessment is SWOT analysis. SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The basic process involves gathering information about your group or a group that you want to work with.

SWOT Analysis

1. Generate a list of the group's or organization's strengths and weaknesses, and the external environment's opportunities and threats, based on the understanding of successes and failures. Allow for some discussion of each, without dwelling on any.
2. Brainstorm ideas for maximizing strengths and minimizing weaknesses while taking advantage of the environment's opportunities and neutralizing its threats.

Strengths What do you do well? What unique resources can you draw on? What do others see as your strengths?	Weaknesses What could you improve? Where do you have fewer resources than others? What are others likely to see as weaknesses?
Opportunities What opportunities are open to you? What trends could you take advantage of? How can you turn your strengths into opportunities?	Threats What threats could harm you? What is your competition doing? What threats do your weaknesses expose you to?

Resource: <http://www.mindtools.com>

SWOT Analysis

Discovering New Opportunities

SWOT Analysis is a useful technique for understanding your Strengths and Weaknesses, and for identifying both the Opportunities open to you and the threats you face.

Used in a personal and group context, it helps you develop in a way that takes best advantage of your talents, abilities and opportunities.

Tip: Strengths and weaknesses are often internal to your organization, while opportunities and threats generally relate to external factors. For this reason the SWOT Analysis is sometimes called Internal-External Analysis and the SWOT Matrix is sometimes called an IE Matrix.

Strengths

- What advantages does your group have?
- What do you do better than anyone else?
- What resources can you draw upon that others can't?
- What do you see as your strengths?

Consider your strengths from both an internal perspective, and from the point of view of outsiders.

Weaknesses

- What could you improve?
- What should you avoid?
- What are people likely to see as weaknesses?

Again, consider this from an internal and external basis: Do other people seem to perceive weaknesses that you don't see? Are your competitors doing any better than you?

It's best to be realistic now, and face any unpleasant truths as soon as possible.

Opportunities

- What good opportunities can you spot?

Tip: A useful approach when looking at opportunities is to look at your strengths and ask yourself whether these open up any opportunities. Alternatively, look at your weaknesses and ask yourself whether you could open up opportunities by eliminating them.

Challenges

- What obstacles do you face?

Resource: <http://www.mindtools.com>

You and Your Team: Knowing How You Act

Exercises for Assessment and Action

Four different ways of handling each situation are described below. Select the way of handling each situation which you prefer and assign the number “4” to that choice. Select your next preferred choice and assign a “3” to it. Assign a “2” to the next preferred choice and then a “1” for the least preferred choice. Assign your numerical choices directly on a scoring sheet for all group members.

Exercise

This exercise is designed to help you assess your preferred style, as well as other team members’ style of handling situations that you are likely to face.

Assign a 4, 3, 2, or a 1 in the order of your personal preference for handling each situation described.

Situation 1

You are beginning the second year of your two-year teaching contract. You have been able to introduce some innovative methods, and students and fellow faculty have responded well and begun to adapt them. Some students in particular have “blossomed” under your direction. What are your priorities for the next eight months?

Choices for Situation 1

- A. Focus on blossoming students and bring more into the fold.
- B. Organize special teacher-training seminars to broaden and deepen innovations in curriculum and teacher practices.
- C. Seek opportunities to co-teach with counterparts to solidify innovations already adapted.
- D. Begin planned withdrawal to lessen dependency on you for sustaining innovations adapted.

Situation 2

You have been working as an athletic coach in the community and, under your direction, the community has produced outstanding teams. It is a matter of considerable pride to community leaders, and they have asked you to continue to win. You have noticed little parental involvement, however, and in order to win you have focused attention on a small number of talented youth. How will you change the situation?

Choices for Situation 2

- A. Try to maintain your winning teams, while organizing new teams with more focus on parental involvement among new team members.
- B. Call a meeting of existing and new parents and make a condition of your continued coaching, greater parental involvement all around.
- C. Seek parental assistance in coaching, organize new teams, and focus your time on training new coaches.
- D. Spread your “winners” among newly organized teams, minimize importance of “winning” and concentrate on parental involvement to identify new needs.

Situation 3

Your colleague is becoming increasingly dominating during project committee meetings. As his/her confidence and skill have grown, you have gladly given more responsibility to your colleague. But it seems to you that other committee members are becoming more withdrawn from the project. You want to build a strong project team, rather than just one strong colleague. What should you do?

Choices for Situation 3

- A. Raise the issue directly with the colleague and offer to lead the next committee meeting to demonstrate participative leadership skills.
- B. Provide help in planning the next meeting and make some specific suggestions to the colleague about how to modify leadership behavior.
- C. Watch for opportunities to provide feedback, ask the colleague questions about how she/he thinks meetings are going, and reinforce participative behavior.
- D. Leave the situation alone and count on the committee to call the colleague on dominating behavior, then reinforce and offer to help.

Situation 4

You have just been assigned to a project that is a mess. Your colleague appears to have opened a small shop for a second income and is not showing up for project work. Community leaders are unhappy because the project was begun with a lot of enthusiasm. They have asked you to take over and straighten it out. How will you proceed?

Choices for Situation 4

- A. Take over and straighten out the project first, then deal with the colleague problem later.
- B. Confront the colleague with his/her behavior and provide ongoing consultation until both problems are more manageable.
- C. Present colleague with pressing project problems and ask him/her to suggest solutions and plans to implement solutions.
- D. Call meeting with leaders and colleague and facilitate a problem-solving session as first step toward project reorganization.

Questions

1. How has this exercise contributed to your understanding of how you ACT?
2. How has exercise contributed to your understanding of your team?

Force Field Analysis

While there are many methods to rank needs, it is important to develop criteria for ranking priorities. Feasibility is often used as criteria resources. Force field analysis is one method for determining needs feasibility. For example, feasibility is defined as degree of time or funds. The illustration below displays a model force field analysis.

1. Review the list of needs developed through a SWOT analysis or other procedure.
2. Develop criteria for rating the feasibility of meetings these needs.
3. Identify positive and negative forces inside the group or organization and outside it.
4. Determine the feasibility of meeting each need.
5. Review the needs.

Exercise

Reflect – Connect – Act: SWOT and Force Field Analysis

You are committed to working in a small village in a rural area. The village has a number of neighboring villages within an hour or two walking distance. You have visited the village several times in the past four months and have seen projects (e.g., education, health extension, food production, etc.) in other villages. You think you have been well received by the village and have established good relations with village leaders. In fact, your reputation is that you are an “outsider who can get things done.” You are asked to come and meet with the village elders who want your assistance. You meet with the elders, and after appropriate ceremonies they begin to tell you of their problems and needs. In the course of this visit and several subsequent visits you find out the following:

- The village is very poor.
- People survive from making charcoal and selling it for income.
- Subsistence gardening supplements the food supply.
- There are about 500 people in the village.
- There are health problems caused by poor nutrition, lack of clean water for drinking and hygiene.
- There is enough land to grow more food and even produce commercial crops but water would need to be developed from wells or brought in by canal and pumping from a river 10 kilometers away.
- Many people have transistor radios.
- The community says they want to build a school so that the ministry of education will give them a teacher.
- The community has no history of working together on a project before.
- The young people are leaving the village and going to the cities. Few come back, some send a little money to help their families.
- Chickens in the village are rather expensive, and tough unless cooked a long time.
- About 50 percent of the village is fifteen years or below in age.
- There are a few animals, goats, pigs, and chickens, that forage for food. They are used occasionally for food.
- There are no roads going to the village, which can be used by vehicles. Mules are used to carry goods in and out, or people carry goods on their heads.
- You have met enough people in the village to know who the leaders are and you know about twenty or so of the children.

The elders have requested your assistance. They wish to have greater opportunity for income producing activities in the village. More specifically, they have heard that there is a simple process for developing charcoal faster and more cheaply than they are able to. They ask if you will teach them the process even though it may have a negative impact on health. What other ways can you be useful in producing some income for the village.

What's the problem? What strategies could be used to solve it?

Questions

1. How did the Reflect – Connect – Act process influence your approach?
2. What did you do to Reflect?
3. What did you do to Connect?
4. How did SWOT and Force Field Analysis contribute to ACT?

Resource: <http://www.mindtools.com>



Conclusion

It's Up to You!

We welcome you to Children of the Earth. You can join us in many ways!

A COE spiritual activist may be an Ambassador, serving as an individual; a Hub Leader, leading groups to explore spirituality; a Chapter Leader, forming groups committed to spiritual social action; an inspired member of a Hub or Chapter.

COE Ambassadors are youths who feel aligned with COE's Mission and who are inspired to express their spiritual awareness by taking action to create a more peaceful world. An Ambassador learns from the collective spiritual wisdom of others and of local traditions. It's up to you to seek connection with youth and elders to increase their awareness, their own spirituality, and help to raise global consciousness.

COE Chapter Leaders are youths who have created projects around the world. They work with COE through their own programs and organizations to help children and youth develop their spirituality. Chapter Leaders are taking responsibility within their communities by sharing and caring for others.

COE Hub leaders form groups of young people to reflect on spirituality. At a COE Hub you explore, reflect, and connect.

We have a bi-monthly newsletter, chapter starter kits, hub kits, ambassador registration forms, PowerPoint's, and CDs. We are on Facebook and Twitter. Link with us and join the movement. Use these Pray it Forward cards and share them with your friends.



Most important is that you consider yourself a spiritual activist and start to take responsibility for your own inner revolution for social evolution.

On our website, www.coeworld.org, you can learn what other youth are doing.





Inspired Spiritual Activist Sammy Jacobs Abbey of Ghana helps support these children to go to school.

C.O.E. Spiritual Activists

What they are doing

On our website you can see what some of the youth are doing. Mark and Chris in the Philippines are creating envelopes of school supplies for local children while another Mark in Toronto is taking a group to Nepal to work with Jimmy on rebuilding classrooms in a rural village. Peter has started a project for women in Uganda to learn beekeeping so they can support themselves and their children. Ashfaq in Pakistan promotes literacy, helps rural communities establish schools, and assists families suffering from the floods. The youth in Switzerland are giving Free Hugs and holding meetings. Youth to Youth, Children for Children, all caring for each other as Spiritual Activists!

It's up to you!

Our dream is to see you participate. This means linking and networking and building. The dream is in your hands.

Please share your abilities and step into the world of Spiritual Activism.

Nina Meyerhof, President
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Pledge for a Culture of Peace

We invite you to join other peace-builders around the world who have signed the UNESCO Manifesto for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence, initiated by a group of Nobel Laureates. This is a very real way to build the recognition that we are all part of a growing body of individuals heading for the “tipping point” that will shift the tide of civilization. Keeping a copy of the pledge on your desk or wall can serve as a reminder of the global community we are seeking to establish.

Because the year 2000 must be a new beginning, an opportunity to transform - all together - the culture of war and violence into a culture of peace and non-violence.

Because this transformation demands the participation of each and every one of us, and must offer young people and future generations the values that can inspire them to shape a world based on justice, solidarity, liberty, dignity, harmony and prosperity for all.

Because the culture of peace can underpin sustainable development, environmental protection and the well-being of each person.

Because I am aware of my share of responsibility for the future of humanity, in particular to the children of today and tomorrow,

I pledge in my daily life, in my family, my work, my community, my country and my region, to:

Respect All Life

Respect the life and dignity of each human being without discrimination or prejudice;

Reject Violence

Practice active non-violence rejecting violence in all its forms: physical, sexual, psychological, economical and social, in particular towards the most deprived and vulnerable such as children and adolescents;

Share with Others

Share my time and material resources in a spirit of generosity to put an end to exclusion, injustice and political and economic oppression;

Listen to Understand

Defend freedom of expression and cultural diversity, giving preference always to dialogue and listening without engaging in fanaticism, defamation and the rejection of others;

Preserve the Planet

Promote consumer behavior that is responsible and development practices that respect all forms of life and preserve the balance of nature on the planet;

Rediscover Solidarity

Contribute to the development of my community, with the full participation of women and respect for democratic principles, in order to create together new forms of solidarity.

Signature: _____

Children of the Earth honors the decade of building a Culture Of Peace. The decade did not bring PEACE but it is our hope that we continue to work towards this. It is up to you to do so. So imagine you are a leading peace-maker, building peace for our world! As you hold peace in your mind, peace radiates out into the world furthering its potential. Peace in your heart, peace in your mind, peace in your actions all create peace.

Additional information can be found on the UNESCO website at www3.unesco.org/manifesto2000.

To Hopi, children are the natural healers of the manifest and un-manifest world. From the beginning, we have called upon them, day-to-day, to restore and sustain the harmony and balance upon which the Hopi and the world depend.

They bring fresh attachment to life and the future, hope to what is ever-coming to be. Peace among peoples and cultures, health and purity in nature, love and hope within our homes all depend upon this hopeful healing nature of children. It is in learning through them that we come again to restore our true selves and to create the daily balance by which we and all life are sustained.

When discord and hatred, disrespect and abuse rule the home for a time, it is to the children that the parents turn. Their voice is a healing. Through them, mother and father learn to speak to one another again. Respect is recovered; proper behavior renewed; family, the balm of days, is restored; and Hopi life is preserved.

It is time once again that we turn to the children and seek from those who are innocent and have the power to heal all waters and for all of life which it sustains -- or not. As the life-quality of water is threatened by human and industrial waste, by irresponsible behaviors and disrespect -- as sickened water weakens all of life - it is the prayers of children that must bring hope-filled healing to the spirit and substance of water, to water-the-source-of-all-life."

The Hopi Elders

