Children of the Earth
Pioneering Spiritual Activism

Nina Meyerhof
Diane de Terra
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_Pioneering Spiritual Activism_

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By Nina Meyerhof and Diane de Terra

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You are about to experience the guidance of Nina Meyerhof, an inspired and practical visionary. Her effective peace building and leadership development is known worldwide. She has guided countless emergent young leaders and her legacy lives on. Nina’s wisdom embraces cultural diversity. This extensive groundwork leads to evolved leadership. By integrating the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual parts of our human experiences we put in balance our own inner transformational work.

We can no longer preach peace without also being peaceful. Balancing the rational and the intuitive leads us to becoming effective and strategic. This inner and outer integration is a dynamic process. We never finish our learning because people and situations around the world always change.

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 a two-way process with people opening up to share their deep truth with the other.

Many of us are inspired to be a part of visionary peace work. During that process we need to learn how to prevent our own triggers and judgments from arising when in charged and conflicted situations. 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. It is for those committed to learning 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 with this classic handbook for emerging leaders of every kind.

James O’Dea

Author and Human Rights and Social Healing Peace Activist
Preface

The purpose of this book is to support the next generation and its role in integrating spirituality into individual lives around the globe. 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 seeking information for living a life filled with meaning and joy. Self-help books support people in their inner discovery of who they are and how to build better relationships. However, future generations, the inheritors of our actions, are rarely given the tools to prepare for this life journey. By helping young people now, rather than later, they don’t have to reconstruct the past. Imagine if you were told, “Be yourself. Be loyal to your inner voice.” Imagine if you were given tools to learn how to make and keep positive relationships with your fellow human beings. If that happened, we would all live in a more peaceful world.

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 it must have spirituality as its base. Spirituality is the uniting force. This awareness of how we are interconnected, needing to care for one another, holds us together as a species.

My devotion has always been to both spirituality and youth in recognition that this is the greatest form of peace building.

I thank my colleague and friend, Diane de Terra who pushed and cajoled me into writing this as a guide. She selflessly volunteered her personal time and stayed by my side to write, edit, suggest, and rewrite—page after page—while always reminding me how valuable this book is. Diane is an activist anthropologist, international development expert, linguist, and multicultural educator. She has devoted her life to the path set forth in this guide for peace activists.

My gratitude also extends to many other supportive people. Thank you, Harriett Nettles, who 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 my vision to paper. Thank you, Deborah Moldow, for the first editing. Thank you, Liza Ciano for accompanying us through the maze of revisions to the finish line. Finally, thanks to all the Children of the Earth (COE) young people of the next emerging generation. I treat them as wise ones who are growing into their own big shoes. Thank you, Oran Cohen, as youth visionary, for your important contribution, and all the rest of the youth who are and who were by my side as I became Mama Nina for them.

Children of the Earth has formed me as I formed this organization. I sincerely pray this handbook will serve others.
Acknowledgements

We are grateful for support from the Bay and Paul Foundation and PYAR Foundation.

Thank you to the youth: Oran, Karoline, Corina, Jimmy, Kelly, Ashfaque, Mark, Mridu, Sarah, Rosie, Lawrence, Collins, Colin, Yuka, Ping Ping, Augusto, Princess, Jacquie, Joshua, Chimay, Zeke, Sammy, Peter, Sushil, Sarah, Ruba, Annalise, and the many other young people who helped gather us together as family, loving me and allowing me to love them.

My love always,

[Signature]

Ilma Meyerhof, Ed. D.
My Story

My story is a story of caring for the world. For years I have worked with young people around the world. Through this work I developed an understanding about how each person has a unique personal gift to contribute to the tapestry of life. When this gift is tapped into, people no longer feel disconnected from life. Their surroundings become a backdrop to their lives. This allows them to find their authentic self. They develop a sense of freedom from feeling that they have a meaningful place in the world and this fosters greatness. When people develop a sense of their inner self, they tap into their own dream. When this happens they learn to live for higher values—ethics—and ethics serve a greater good.

For years I have gathered young people exploring 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, Heart’s Bend World Children’s Center, 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 camp as a parallel meeting to the World Summit for Children, which was held at the United Nations. Together they wrote “The Children’s Declaration of Peace” that was later presented to His Holiness the Dalai Lama as well as to the United Nations. At that meeting His Holiness said, “Children are the greatest untapped resource of the world. To reach real peace in the world, we will have to begin with the children.” This reaffirmed my belief in the power of youth to influence the future.

Children of the Earth (COE), is a non-profit organization established in 1990 to work with youth and children locally and globally. It has been recognized by the United Nations since 1992. Dedicated to the building of a better future, COE delivers programs that empower young people with leadership skills to advance peace in the world today and tomorrow. We promote international networks of cooperation, multicultural understanding, spiritual values, and ethical living skills. Through personal and social transformation, COE inspires and unites young people to create a peaceful and sustainable world.

I have spent years assembling youth gatherings around the world. Everything from establishing a US Youth AIDS project presented in Washington DC, to helping to establish an African Children’s Peace Center, to helping host meetings in some 50 countries around the world. I always focus on individual processes for growth and transformation in these international gatherings as we discuss spirituality and leadership. Spirituality is the inner self after layers of differences are peeled away leaving the basic human character. This process leaves people with a sense of who they are beyond body, mind, emotions, culture, race or religion. Leadership is identifying the depth of one’s convictions and being willing to stand there firmly. From this vantage point we then can take actions for the greater good of all of life.

Nina Meyerhof, Ed.D.,
Founder and Director, Children of the Earth
“Children are the greatest untapped resource of the world.”
– H. H. the Dalai Lama
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.
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 wisdom of the heart. While it is designed primarily for youth, ages 15-30; teachers, facilitators, and initiators may also use this handbook.

Two additional pieces complement the handbook: a training manual and a reflection journal. The training manual serves two purposes: to provide additional exercises for training youth; to offer training of trainer materials for both adults and youth. The reflection journal is for youth to record their spiritual activist journey.

Our handbook introduces you to the ethics, principles, and values that are the essence of Children of the Earth’s (COE) 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 spiritual growth and societal actions. Two approaches are COE’s contributions to supporting development and involvement with spiritual activism: Connect by Conflict Transcendence and Act by Lateral Leadership.

This guide invites you to an inner revolution for social evolution. It is a path for global citizens to unite in a movement for peace. Add your own voice and methods to make this handbook into your own personal toolkit.

Members of Children of the Earth are available to guide anyone who wants support in using this handbook. Our schedule is flexible to accommodate different needs. COE offers one, three, or five-day sessions, as well as custom-tailored programs to meet your specific needs. Additionally, you can practice on your own and all are welcome to contact us with any questions at www.coeworld.org, or nina@coeworld.org.
Children of the Earth’s Model for Spiritual Activism

ACT

CONNECT

REFLECT
The Spiritual Activist Model
proposed by Children of the Earth

**REFLECT** is the journey 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 gap between self and others, leading to unity. Through deep compassion and listening, conflict transcendence, and non-violent communication we learn that it is possible to live in harmony, weaving the interconnectedness of our family worldwide.

**ACT** 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 is the culmination of years of work and dedication and is for you to build on and use. These materials are written for young people to use for personal transformation. The book provides an invitation and an opportunity for readers to first learn to go to their authentic inner core and then to step forward and reach out to connect with others from this deepened sense of self and increased awareness of our unity with one another, and with all of life. This handbook is for anyone dreaming of becoming a spiritually inspired social activist.

One Earth… with all her children smiling.

One People… learning to learn, learning to love, learning to live.

**REFLECT — CONNECT — ACT**
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.

*Children of the Earth meeting in Switzerland*
“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

“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
Introduction

Pioneering Spiritual Activism

Spiritual Activism is a concept originating from the understanding that youths’ incredible energy can be guided into living a life based on the “will to 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.

Ethics, Principles, and Values

From years of experience asking young people to delve into their inner nature to discover the voice within, we at Children of the Earth, noticed there are 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. The youth are willing to live by this Code, continually assessing their own behavior to see if it aligns 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

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, naturally, the more you will gain. We are here to help but ultimately it is your journey. 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 own life?
2. Do you think any one of these ethics is more important than another?
3. If so, how would you rank order them?

Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles are standards by which you direct and assess your behaviors with no other person to evaluate or judge you. You may do this yourself by using each of these statements 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 them to reflect when you are dissatisfied with your actions to improve them. These principles foster an atmosphere of coherence and mutuality to build community where people within the community can feel valued and heard.

- 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 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 a 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.

### Changing Values:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Value</th>
<th>New Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>Non-attachment and Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
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<td>Separation</td>
<td>Wholeness</td>
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<td>Dualism</td>
<td>Unity</td>
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<td>Conflict</td>
<td>Peace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>Global Understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reason or Logic</td>
<td>Imagination and Intuition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Wisdom from Within</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domination</td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Multicultural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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 call this consciousness 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.

Today, 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 percent 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 right action and thought. Only when we concentrate on what makes us the same, instead of what makes us different, can we deal with the challenges ahead.

What is Spiritual Activism?

As you delve into your inner life becoming 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.

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 of 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 remembering 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 do our relationships with others. Harmonious relationships, through mutual understanding, kindness, and compassion do 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 right now and for future generations. This is Spiritual Activism.

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 when 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 you?
5. How do you define spiritual activism?

Children of the Earth harvesting rice in Thailand.
Spiritual Activism: A Movement for Change

Thank you for 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 want to shift this planet, we need to shift our inner warring nature as well as part of humanity. Our world mirrors our beliefs, attitudes, judgments, values, and perceptions.

There are many like you across the globe awakening to this call. They are 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 rewrite their social script.

For humanity to thrive during the transformation that awaits it, we have to realize our individual 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. The destiny of a thriving system is fueled by the mechanisms of collaboration, decentralization, and constant innervation.

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.

Be the Mapmakers of the future. Within your very being, you carry the pin-code for a changed humanity. You represent the new order of freedom emerging. This “movement” has no borders, no criteria, no categories, and no dogmas. All are called to join this growing force. You are being called to re-imagine the way you relate to yourself, to one another, to your world, and to the ways you engage. Your most valued tool is your heart and your ability to listen.

Your gift is your uniqueness, your individuality—your personal genius. You can only change by acting with intelligence, discernment, passion, and reverence.

This is the path of the spiritual activist.

Hear the song in your heart, discover your genius, and bring it to the world with audacity, imagination, passion and grace. You will 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
Youth Leader, COE Board Member
Spiritual Activism Model

“Be the change you want to see.” –Mahatma Ghandi

“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

The process outlined in this handbook has been developed strategically in order to support and produce a transformative 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, and then wants to play the piano but needs lessons to nurture an emerging ability. You may be a pianist looking for your instrument to play and want your dreams to become your reality.

Self Esteem

As a young spiritual activist it is important 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 a desire to feel more valued and by comparing yourself to others. Such as saying, “I am ok.” Often this kind of self-esteem limits us as it teaches us to feel good when validated by others or when feeling better than someone else. It is a model based on feeling inadequate due to these external comparisons and drowning out the sound of your own inner voice.

Spiritual seeking frees you to feel whole and complete. It helps you find your own uniqueness. A sense of self emerges that knows what you want and need to live your life to its fullest. This spiritual inward seeking process fosters knowledge of your authentic self. Your personality and character become a treasure chest of traits and skills used for accomplishing tasks.

Our message is that the deeper you go, the more ethical and committed you are to your authentic voice. Fewer external demands drive you. This leads you to a more committed powerful leadership role for positive change.

Using the Children of the Earth Model

As a spiritual activist, there are three stages to address. The first is Reflect. This helps 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 become aware of your authentic self, and at the same time become more aware of others. These skills help you to be an effective communicator and listener. Further, you may then start to partner with others and wish to Act finding the inspiration and leadership to undertake projects and activities reflective of positive change.
Reflect–Connect–Act

I. REFLECT: 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?

II. CONNECT: Deep compassion for others

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 life?

III. ACT: Knowing what to do

The third step is based on awareness of a global community of young people who are 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 live as stewards of all of life. From this consciousness, new models of how to live in our world emerge ensuring a sustainable future for all of humanity.

Questions

1. What does it mean to live as a Spiritual Activist?
2. What actions can I take to promote conscious social change?
3. What skills and abilities do I need to make a positive difference in the lives of others?
REFLECT
“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

“The moral code of conduct and practice of meditation for mankind is the most effective short cut 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
Learning to Reflect

In this section you will begin the journey. You will walk with others who explore mediation, prayer, visualization, heart work, and other practices that will lead you to the self you seek. We include meditation, 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 hearing your inner voice. The minute we are born we begin to be 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 a blank slate that is formed 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 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. When you begin to hear this voice you will be clearer about what you can do in the world, who you are, what your personal values are and how to integrate all the pieces of your life into a meaningful whole.

“A natural altar can sanctify your processes.
Collect your stones and light a candle.” –Joaquin of Peru
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 thoughts to connect with the compassion of the heart and your inner wisdom. If you learn to practice—meditating daily and in a regular manner—your mind eventually becomes quieter and allows a deeper, clearer understanding of ourselves. Meditation offers the potential to know our inner self as well as to feel the interdependent connections of all life. In this state, we recognize that we are one human 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, and learn to engage and connect your heart to action that benefits others. There are many books and teachings on meditation. COE’s hope is that you will find an approach that resonates within. You may have a meditation practice already, or you may be exploring different practices—ultimately, the path is yours to find and choose. Our handbook provides a few examples of different meditations. All share the same purpose: revealing our true inner nature and awakening our heart’s wisdom.

In meditation there are many approaches as well as many religious understandings. In Tibetan “meditation” means “getting used to.” Getting used to what? Your true nature. How? You simply sit quietly and let all thoughts and concepts dissolve. It is like when the clouds dissipate or the mist evaporates revealing a shining sun and clear sky. When you allow your thoughts to dissolve in this way, you begin to experience your true nature. And at that moment when you know this feeling, this awareness makes you feel good and very glad to be alive. It is unlike any other feeling to know this real and genuine well of goodness in which you feel a deep peace, contentment, and confidence in yourself.

It is good to meditate when you feel inspired. Early mornings can bring that inspiration, as the mind’s best moments often are early in the day when the body and mind are rested. It is more appropriate to sit when you are inspired, for it is easier when you are in a better frame of mind and you will be more encouraged by the practice. In turn, your confidence in the practice grows, and later you will be able to practice even when you’re not feeling inspired at all. There is no need to meditate for a long time; just remain quiet and still until you are a little open and able to connect with your heart’s essence. That is the main point. Whatever you do, you are present. Right there. As in one famous Zen master’s saying, “When I eat, I eat; when I sleep, I sleep.” Whatever you do, be fully present in the act.
Even washing dishes can be very energizing, meditative, freeing, cleansing. You are more peaceful, so you are more “you.” In mindfulness meditation, you focus all of your attention on the here and now, releasing all extraneous thoughts. You strive to become aware of your thoughts and actions without blame or judgement.

One of the fundamental points of the spiritual journey is to persevere along the path. Although one’s meditation may be good one day and not so good the next, it is like changes in weather and scenery. The daily practice enters the soul of your being and that creates internal changes too. You might even be able to laugh at your difficulties a little more when there is quiet space between you and your problems. It is amazing, but through meditation one can become more lighthearted too.

**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 allowing thoughts to come and go, without focusing on them. If you need something to do, then be aware of 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. Be aware of your 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. Everything else will ease itself out quite naturally. To begin your practice, you center yourself, in touch with your “soft spot” and just remain there. You need not focus on anything in particular to begin with. Just be spacious, allowing thoughts and emotions to settle without becoming attached to them or to the judgments they produce.

**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 while 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. Anxieties and sorrows 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.

Exercise

Walking Meditation Green Planet

You can practice walking meditation by counting steps or by using words. If the rhythm of your breathing is three steps for each in-breath and out-breath, for example, as you walk you can silently say, “Lotus flower blooms. Lotus flower blooms.” Or for five-six steps, “Walking on the green planet. Walking on the green planet.” As you say the words see the flowers blooming and the green earth under your feet. Use your creativity and wisdom. Walking meditation is not hard labor; it is for your enjoyment.

When you begin to practice this you may feel somewhat unbalanced, but follow your breathing, become mindful of your steps and you will find your balance and ease. Visualize a tiger walking slowly and you will find your steps and movement become as natural and majestic as the tigers are. – Thich Nhat Hanh

Walking with Peace and Presence

Peace is something we can contemplate every day. Walking meditation is one of the ways, here and now, to contemplate and generate 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 from the top of your head and busy brain to the hardworking soles of your feet. Breathing in, take three steps and with each step tell yourself, “I have arrived. I have arrived. I have arrived.” Breathing out, take another three steps, ever 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 that I have arrived in the here and the now—the only place and time any of us have to live.

In daily life, it is easy to think about the past, to get caught up in past sorrows and regrets, fears and uncertainties about the future, and you are unaware of the present. We have an appointment with life, and that appointment is now; miss the present moment and you miss your appointment with life, which although common, is still a serious loss. That is why it is very important to practice going back to the present moment in order to become more fully aware and present. Walking meditation helps us do that more easily. Stating “I have arrived; I am home,” 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. When you are well grounded in the here and the now you are in touch with all the wonders of this earth and your life. Peace is the outcome of such practice. Walk in such a way that this peace becomes a reality in every cell of your body and consciousness, because our consciousness is also made of cells. Mental formations, feelings, perception—they are all cells of consciousness.

There is no walk for peace; peace is the walk. By walking, we generate peace within our body and our consciousness. We can embrace and heal the pain, the sorrows, and the fears that live within us; healing and making peace with ourselves is the groundwork for helping peace to become a reality in the world. —Thich Nhat Hanh

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 and 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 sound of all encompassing, universal consciousness.

Children Of The Earth Mantra


Exercise

Repeat ‘Om’ 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 the Mind

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

Exercise

Take this seed thought and try it in your meditation practice: “I see the goal. I reach the goal. Then I see another goal.” –Alice Bailey, Full Moon of Sagittarius

Questions

1. What does this mean to you?
2. Is it easier to use a thought to direct yourself 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, etc.

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 and pop.

Exercise

Praying

Select a prayer, poem, song, sound, quote, pose, or movement that inspires and leads you to feel a step 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 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?
Prayers for Peace

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.”

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.

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.

Christian Prayer for Peace

Muslim Prayer for Peace

Jewish Prayer for Peace

Shinto Prayer for Peace
Prayers for Peace

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
equanimitity 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.

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.

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
**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 any place where you can relax and feel at ease. Picture it as vividly as you can. What do you see around you? 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? Breathe deeply through your nose. What do you smell, perhaps flowers, the scent of pine trees, or food cooking in the distance?

Next to you is a picnic basket you brought along with you. Open it and eat your favorite food first. How does it taste? Sweet? Sour? Refreshing? Before you leave, lie down, relax, and be mindful of all that is around you. As you sit up, you notice someone walking towards you. They hand 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. 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 faraway places and whispers of stories that sing to your heart. 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 led down a secret doorway that only you both know. Maybe it is a secret latch in the soil that opens to a staircase; maybe 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 is 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?

Models for Individual Reflection

Ho’oponopono – HeartMath – Free Writing – 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 inner self-cleansing by Dr. Ihaleaskala Hew Len. According to this practice, based on our many experiences, whatever we see in the outer world is a projection of what we hold inside ourselves. 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 long-standing issue has existed between a sibling and yourself. Begin the healing process by going inside yourself and feeling like you are cleaning out your misperceptions. Say, “I’m sorry, 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 individual as you saw her or him before. You are free within yourself to redefine the relationship. The other individual also experiences this state becoming 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 Our Life

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?

Resource: www.hooponoponohelp.com
Heart Math

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 sixty 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. Although many cultures have focused on the human mind, some cultures and traditions have focused on ways to access the heart’s wisdom. Some practices and techniques are presented in the chapter titled Reflect.

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 are 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 also discovering 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 ten 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

Make a self-portrait.
Choose your medium: pencil, chalk, paint, and then draw a self-portrait.

Question
1. What did you learn about yourself?
2. What medium did you prefer for self-expression?
Native American Traditions

Every native nation has its own set of beliefs and traditions, but generally holds a common understanding that the universe is alive and that life was given by the Creator. Mother Earth is a living and sentient being, and humans are her children and caretakers. The state of Mother Earth is a direct reflection of the state of humanity. All living beings, from the plants to humans and the four directions, were given duties to sustain life on earth, for which we must give thanks. The highest form of human spiritual expression is gratitude for life, celebrating life and living in balance with nature. Human kind is also responsible for the social and spiritual well being of one another, as one human family.

The Practice of “A Good Mind”: A Haudenosaunee Lifeway

A Good Mind is exercised by intentionally cultivating positive thoughts such as compassion for others and ourselves, helping others, caring for the earth, and giving thanks to all life. Redirecting negative thoughts to kind and constructive ones directs behavior and shows where healing may need to take place. Actions naturally follow thinking patterns and through the use of a Good Mind, we shape our life and the world in a loving, peaceful way.

Native traditions include ceremonies that give thanks to the natural world and acknowledge the cycles of life – from babies bringing forth the breath of life from the universe, to the nurturing children’s gifts within to create meaningful life on earth, giving an elevated status to elders in society, and returning back to the spiritual world. Critical to human life is ensuring our actions bestow a healthy planet for the next seven generations.

–Michelle Schenandoah
Oneida Nation, COE Director

“When the adults don’t know what to do, they look to the children for answers.”

–Richard Shako:wi Chrisjohn, Wolf Clan Chief, Oneida Nation

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. Every religious faith offers a Golden Rule to guide each choice we make in how we behave toward others.
THE GOLDEN RULE

BAHA’I FAITH
Lay not on any soul a load that you would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for anyone the same things you would not desire for yourself.
Baha’u’llah, Gleanings

HINDUISM
This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you.
Mahabharata 5:1307

BUDDHISM
Treat not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.
Udana-Vyga 5:16

CONFUCIANISM
One word which sums up the basis of all good conduct...
Loving kindness.
Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself.
Confucius, Analects 15:23

ISLAM
Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself.
The Prophet Muhammad, Sahih

TATWISM
Regard your neighbour’s gain as your own gain, and your neighbour’s loss as your own loss.
Li Shang Yin Ying Pien, 21-216

JUDAISM
What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour.
This is the whole Torah; all the rest is commentary.
Hillel, Talmud, Shabbat 31a

Sikhism
I am a stranger to no one; and no one is a stranger to me. Indeed, I am a friend to all.
Guru Gobind Singh, pg. 1299

JAINISM
One should treat all creatures in the world as one would like to be treated.
Mahavira, Anekantavada

CHRISTIANITY
In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.
Jesus, Matthew 7:12

ZORASTRIANISM
Do not do unto others whatever is injurious to yourself.
Shayast-e-Nabuyat 55:29

UNITARIANISM
We affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.
Unitarian principle

NATIVE SPIRITUALITY
We are as much alive as we keep the earth alive.
Chief Ike George
“Connect youth who live oceans apart by awakening 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, and Conflict Transcendence. While practicing the connecting method of Circle Groups, each individual 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 connection. Children of the Earth’s Conflict Transcendence 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 another. 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 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, going beyond differences, seeking answers and uniting 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.

Models for Connection

Active Listening

Think of a recent argument you were involved in. Perhaps you were listening to the individual facing you, but at the same time maybe you 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 or 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. Imagine being able to reconstruct yourself to accept others and appreciate yourself.
**Exercise**

Pair up with another individual. 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 listening 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**

A circle symbolizes unity, wholeness, and oneness in all 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 connection and authenticity in our lives. The circle calls, inviting us to slow down, to communicate with ourselves, and with one another, connecting with the natural wisdom in 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 everyone in the circle sees 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 some indigenous traditions, circles (sometimes called councils) were used as a form of governance, conflict resolution and problem solving. A talking stick was used by some Native American cultures to encourage listening in a deeper way than in ordinary conversations. Only the person holding the talking stick could 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
- 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 make sure 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:** Create the center of the circle with an object, drawing, or focus point.

**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 the guidelines asking the group 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.”

**Facilitate:** Give everyone a chance to be heard. Honor everyone’s contribution. Offer your opinions as little as possible, rather, synthesize 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 an individual 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 for 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. This empowers, unifies, and sustains the whole.

Exercise

Working with a Focus Question

Every session starts with a focus question such as “How do you deal with bullies?” or “If, and when, is it ok to reveal your friend’s deep, dark secret?” Make sure it is not too broad.

Writing—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 in the group. Ask each person 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 expands on the initial response and is asked to add any thoughts about the first answers.

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

Questions

1. How do you determine what the 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 twenty 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. Another individual’s perception will be different than ours. When we avoid blaming others and accusing them, we are far more likely to transform the conflict allowing for different points of view. For example: “It is 6 p.m. and I need to eat dinner now because I really am hungry. I know you are not happy about eating this early, but if you are willing to agree we can both eat now and we can have dessert later.” In this example conversation, you have taken responsibility for meeting your own needs and have respected the need for others to do the same. Active Listening, which is listening with an open heart, is a healthy communication method that can be used 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 the steps outlined below. Switch roles and debrief.
**Guidelines**

- Always agree to work the problem out.
- Use “I” statements to give your perception of the situation.
- Always say: “I need” rather than “You” as in “You are…” or “You make me…”
- State the observations that are leading you to feel the need to say something. These are observable facts providing 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.
- Make a concrete request for action to meet the need just identified.
- 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. How did this conversation make you feel?
2. Were you able to state clearly what happened and 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?
Conflict Transcendence

“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

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.

Transcendence Diagram

The diagram shows each group with its respective “solutions.” In the exercise below, each group has its ideal outcome, which can be shared with one another (AB, AC, BC). By using the Transcendence method, they can find a common solution that benefits the whole (ABC).
Conflict Transcendence creates a new reality by rising above the fragments of conflict to witness them as parts of the whole. This global perspective inspires you to seek solutions that serve the greater good.

Conflict Transformation changes the conflict into a learning experience. It is a process that transforms relationships, perceptions, and interests by improving interpersonal and communication skills to get to the root of conflict.

Conflict Resolution leads to mutually satisfying agreements or win-win outcomes for all by dialogue, negotiation, and problem solving.

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. Albert Einstein said, “No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.” As spiritual seekers and spiritual activists, our goal is to unify. To unify the pieces is more than to understand, compromise, or tolerate, rather, it is to unify all pieces into inherent oneness.

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

As you are learning to transcend, the need for an answer to fortify a position dissolves. The issue becomes a pattern revealing we are universal human beings with cultures, religions and ideas. From this “universally human” perspective you can see more clearly that the problem is just an expression of our different vantage points and that the essence of what is within us is the same. Formulating a means to an answer acknowledges the sameness held in our hearts and the external differences diminish and become mere minor concerns. Transcending the “I” and becoming a “we” thus makes all parties 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. Sit in silence, reflect, and meditate.

**Step 2:** 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 you have written down arranging 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 individual in the group 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, the more you see the whole world. Draw a picture of all the suggestions as if it were a mindmap of the world. Start drawing lines connecting these suggestions, weaving a story of how they are interrelated. Everyone should look at this mindmap 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 can be identified. If the projects cannot all be woven together, is there one fitting 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 theme. The project might take on a new face, yet become 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 Rwandan 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 orphans in Rwanda 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.

**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

The Story of an Elephant and the 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 passed by and he saw them. He stopped and asked: “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 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 arguing. They felt happy that they each of them were right. Together that had seen the WHOLE elephant.
ACT
“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  
Youth Leader, Philippines
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. By following Children of the Earth’s Guiding Principles, you can evaluate your own behavior. Living the Children of the Earth’s 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 individual, 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 assess needs, launch a project, and achieve 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

Children of the Earth Model

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 to hear that authentic voice and follow your higher consciousness. Your behavior becomes the yardstick of how you measure your own life.

The choice 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.

The qualities of a true Leader, according to His Holiness Shri Shri Shri Saidas Baba of India:

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!

Leaders have an inner sense of direction and take responsibility for making a difference. A leader has 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.

_Each individual is entitled to be a leader_. As a leader, you access your inner wisdom and know what your calling is and follow it. You hear and respect others’ inner wisdom.

Who is a spiritually inspired leader?

A spiritually inspired leader has done a great deal of inner reflection and has a deep sense of what his or her purpose is, as well as the need to manifest this in the world. Rather than a mindless response, the leader follows his or her conscience and does not succumb to the pressures of society or personal emotional needs. This is aligning with your destiny.
The Leader as a Group Member

One person completely in charge of what others are doing is not the most effective model for spiritual activism. Preferable is a lateral leader – a member of the group, a partner, who knows that everyone matters and everyone is a leader. He/she collaborates, inspires, and empowers to create a team. All members have a voice in decision-making and in expressing views and feelings. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Group work, if done well, brings about more positive results and possibilities than any one person could do. All members are present and committed in mind and heart. The road to success is the road travelled together in a trusting manner for greater good.

Guiding Practices for Lateral Leadership

You may express lateral leadership by forming a group. While you contribute your own ideas, approaches, and vision, you also encourage others to express their thoughts and concepts as well. One powerful way to structure your group is to use COE’s program approach of Reflect, Connect, and Act.

REFLECT The individual journey that you take to awaken your 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 Bridge gaps to build unity, which is essential to group coherence. Practice active and compassionate listening and nonviolent communication in icebreaking exercises to learn about one another’s experiences, creativity, and talents. The goal is for people to feel connected. Sometimes a retreat or a day of fun serves as a healthy break from the routine of meetings and increases the group’s feeling of friendship and common purpose.

ACT The group takes the results of reflecting and connecting out 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

When you bring a group together, be prepared to share your vision and goals. You listen when others share their ideas and together you look for new approaches and solutions to the issues. You must be open to changing direction and 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? You may start with a small core group to benefit from a variety of ideas. It is not just what you say that sets the tone, but it’s also your ability to envision and experience the group as a whole that makes a difference. Each member observes and guides the discussion toward defining the group’s purpose and goals. You are like weavers creating a harmonious tapestry.
Remember that it is never about one particular person speaking, but is about what emerges from the group as a whole. Imagine yourself as an antenna sending and receiving messages. The intention is set energetically and allows the group to coalesce and realize its full potential.

You lead by listening to and hearing others. You inspire, motivate, and invite others to speak while staying on topic and targeting the goal. At the beginning and end of each session, you review what has occurred and how this will lead into 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. Adults, even if invited to be workshop leaders, are guests. They can sit in the 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; however, do not allow them to direct the process. Please be aware that well-meaning adults wanting to share may take away from the discovery of new models that could emerge from the evolving consciousness of youth. Each new generation has more available consciousness. In COE’s model, adults (gatekeepers of the old), request that youth no longer imitate what has come before but embrace the new.

After each session or workshop, the core group meets to review how the sessions are going, if the work is gender and ethnically balanced, whether there are any cultural issues or overpowering individuals. Then you revamp the schedule and plan accordingly. It is never about personalities, but rather about a smooth, harmonious, and effective process. Meeting regularly with your planning team fosters coherence. It is best to start this meeting with a short prayer for meditation to bring the small group into harmony as one voice and not many voices with strong opinions. Remember that the goal is to find clarity and to move on to the next session.

Always be prepared so that you are not stressed when you share responsibilities instead of delegating them. This is your group’s collective work and each of you knows the strengths and roles of the others. 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.

The goal is for the group to find its stability and harmony. This process is referred to as “forming, storming, and norming.” Never fear, but simply walk with and through the changes. Keep your eyes on the outcome seeing the group as a whole, an organism finding its direction. Keep good notes. You can take turns, asking for a reporter in each group. Exchange roles as leaders so that it does not become about who is leading but rather what work is accomplished. Enjoy and be positive because when you are, others will feel this energy and are likely to respond in kind. 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 accomplish as a group. At the conclusion of your project, make sure that 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 a slow way 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, he or she can object and give the reason(s) for the objection and 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 of all individuals in total agreement nor having win-lose democracy rule. Consent is not full agreement with the request but means not objecting. Thus consenting to the group, allows one to move forward with a decision. The group comes to an action.

Exercise

Steps for Lateral Leadership

Step 1. Create a vision statement and set goals for the work ahead of you.
Step 2. Form a small planning committee and integrate their vision and goals with yours.
Step 3. Invite others to a gathering with a defined vision statement.
Step 4. Place the initiators of this program throughout the circle and not at the head of a table.
Step 5. Listen as if walking in each other’s shoes. Use time for Reflect, Connect, and Act.
Step 7. Make decisions by collective agreements.
Step 8. Meet with planning group during program breaks to revise the path toward goals, and invite all participants to join the planning group meetings.
Step 9. Chart actions and decisions with the group as the results of this meeting.
Step 10. Meet with small committee plus new members to plan next steps.
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 to contribute.
5. Cross-pollinate and connect diverse perspectives.
7. Harvest and share collective discoveries.

Here is how to set up and begin your World Café:

- Set up the room with enough tables to accommodate participants splitting into groups of six or eight.
- Have a question ready.
- Gather small groups at tables with the question you prepared.
- 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 sharing what has been discussed so far.
- Newcomers relate information from any 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 assembles to share exploring emerging themes, insights and discoveries.
- Write these themes on flipcharts to make the collective intelligence of the whole group visible.

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 creative side of the brain that supports learning and interaction.
**Exercise**

Choose a question and convene a World Café.

**Question**

1. 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 creating extraordinary outcomes. Over the last twenty years, it has proven to be a powerful self-organizing process that accomplishes more than a top-down, hierarchical process.

To begin the process the facilitator has participants form a circle, explains the theme, and focus of this group work. You may be creating a club, planning a gathering or a service project, holding interfaith dialogue, etc.

The facilitator invites participants to think of specific topics they want to discuss. The facilitator then invites participants with a discussion topic to come to the center of the circle to say what they want to discuss that is related to the theme. They may choose whatever has meaning for them – something that they want to discuss within the group. Participants wanting to create smaller sessions come to the center, write down the topic that inspires them, announce it to the group and post it on the flipboard or on a sheet of paper on a wall. When 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 a group, and as individuals within that group and what actions we want to accomplish. Each group chooses someone to be the note taker and someone to be the reporter. They can move on to join another small group and then another if they so choose. 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 to the Open Space discussion is the right person to be there. If you are the only person who arrives, you may have some rich, focused quiet time for thinking and writing on that issue.
- Whatever happens is the only thing that could happen. Let go of your expectations.
- Whenever it starts is the right time: creativity doesn’t happen on a schedule.
- When it is 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. Your own agenda may be enhanced by something arising from other creative minds.
- The Law of Two Feet: If you are not learning or contributing in a session, you are required to leave joining another session where you will be 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 (AI) is a powerful tool 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.

**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:

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 one interviews the other. Then the pair returns to their table and each introduces the other to the group based on 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 listening partner reports the results of the interview back to the others. 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. What does your group want 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.
There are four main principles in sociocracy:

1. **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.

2. **Election of Individuals to Fulfill Roles**: Elections are carried out by every member of the group.

3. **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.

4. **Double Linking**: This connects what seems like unconnected parts of a system. Double linking between circles ensures effective information flows both up and down as well as across the organization, and that every voice is heard and accounted for. This allows clarity, managing of expectations, and the ability to delegate effectively.

**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, 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?

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**Dynamic Governance Summary**

**CONSENT DECISION MAKING**

1. **Present Proposal**
2. **Clarifying Questions**
   - “Do you understand the proposal?”
3. **Quick Reactions**
   - “What do you think of the proposal?”
4. **Consent Round**
   - “Do you have any paramount objections to this proposal?”
   - Yes: record objections
   - No: Celebrate! Move to the next agenda item.

**Options for Moving Forward**
- Facilitator amends the proposal
- Free-form discussion → amendment
- Refer to lower or higher Circle
- Brief dialog → 2 or 3 individuals
- “How might you solve this?” Round
- Conduct an experiment
- Refer back to idea originator to rework
- Refer to Research Task Force
- Refer to Resolution Task Force

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**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.
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.”

– His Holiness The Dalai Lama

As a spiritual activist who reflects and connects, whose activism comes from the mind and 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 watchword 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 and 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 toward 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

- Generate a list of the group’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.
- Brainstorm ideas for maximizing strengths and minimizing weaknesses while taking advantage of the environment’s opportunities and neutralizing its threats.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you do well?</td>
<td>What could you improve?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What unique resources can you draw on?</td>
<td>Where do you have fewer resources than others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do others see as your strengths?</td>
<td>What are others likely to see as weaknesses?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What opportunities are open to you?</td>
<td>What threats could harm you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What trends could you take advantage of?</td>
<td>What is your competition doing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can you turn your strengths into opportunities?</td>
<td>What threats do your weaknesses expose you to?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 cannot?
- 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?

Consider your weaknesses 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 are? 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 or transforming them.

**Challenges**
- What obstacles do you face?

*Resource: http://mindtools.com*

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**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 criterion for ranking 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.

![Force Field Analysis Diagram](image)

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

Teamwork

Know How You and Your Team Act

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.

Situation 1
You are beginning the second year of your two-year teaching contract. You have been able to introduce some innovative methods. Students and fellow faculty have responded well and begun to adapt these methods. Some students in particular have “blossomed” under your direction. What are your priorities for the next eight months?

Choices
1. Focus on blossoming students and bring more into the fold.
2. Organize special teacher-training seminars to broaden and deepen innovations in curriculum and teacher practices.
3. Seek opportunities to co-teach with counterparts to solidify innovations already adapted.
4. 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. However, you have noticed little parental involvement and in order to win you have focused attention on a small number of talented youth. How will you change the situation?

Choices
1. Try to maintain your winning teams, while organizing new teams with more focus on parental involvement among new team members.
2. Call a meeting of existing and new parents and make a condition of your continued coaching, greater parental involvement all around.
3. Seek parental assistance in coaching, organize new teams, and focus your time on training new coaches.
4. 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**
1. Raise the issue directly with the colleague and offer to lead the next committee meeting to demonstrate participative leadership skills.
2. Provide help in planning the next meeting and suggest how to modify leadership behavior.
3. Watch for opportunities to provide feedback, ask the colleague questions about how she/he thinks meetings are going, and reinforce participative behavior.
4. 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**
1. Take over and straighten out the project first, then deal with the colleague problem later.
2. Confront the colleague with his/her behavior and provide ongoing consultation until both problems are more manageable.
3. Present colleague with pressing project problems and ask him/her to suggest solutions and plans to implement solutions.
4. 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?

**Putting It All Together: Reflect–Connect–Act**
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 discover 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 drawn 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 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.

**Exercise**

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 are the problems? What strategies could be used to solve them?

**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. What did you do to ACT?

*Resource: http://mindtools.com*
Inspired spiritual activist Sammy Jacobs Abbey of Ghana helps to support children going to school.

Father Terry leads support groups with us in the Philippines.
We welcome you to Children of the Earth. You may 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 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, PowerPoints, and CDs. We are on Facebook and Twitter. Link with us and join the movement.

Most important is that you consider yourself a spiritual activist and start to take responsibility for your own inner revolution for social evolution. www.coeworld.org
It’s up to you!

Youth to youth, children for children, Spiritual Activists caring for each other—one and all! 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 Children of the Earth*
+802-862-1936
Email: nina@coeworld.org
Skype: nina_meyerhof
UNESCO Manifest for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence

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, 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 behaviour 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: ........................................................................................................................................

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

Hopi Message

“To Hopi, children are the natural healers of the manifest and unmanifest 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, Oraibi, Arizona, Hopi Nation
Use these Pray It Forward cards and share them with your friends.

A Wave of Change is Sweeping the Globe. It is Inner Revolution for Social Evolution.
Meditate, Pray, Connect Daily with Your Heart.
Awaken Humanity, Heal Our World,
Cultivate Peace and Harmony.

Pray It Forward ➤➤➤➤➤➤➤➤➤➤➤➤➤
Pass this card on. Make copies and pass them around.
Join the Movement
www.coeworld.org