

# Mentor's Energizer

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## A Foundation of Unity

**The promulgation of Universal Human Values** has the ultimate objective of the making a better world, beginning with individuals and families and extending to the community and the society. It's a grand and much needed aim founded on a deep love for humanity and the integration of all peoples into a "World as One Family". World peace may seem a far off goal, but unity in our families and communities can be envisioned, and as mentors, we are determined to lend our efforts to the progress and greatness of this purpose. "Compare the nations of the world to the members of a family. A family is a nation in miniature. Simply enlarge the circle of the household and you have the nation. Enlarge the circle of nations and you have all humanity. The conditions surrounding the family surround the nation. The happenings in the family are the happenings in the life of the nation. Would it add to the progress and advancement of a family if dissensions should arise among its members, fighting, pillaging each other, jealous and revengeful of injury, seeking selfish advantage? Nay, this would be the cause of the effacement of progress and advancement. So it is in the great family of nations, for nations are but an aggregate of families. Therefore as strife and dissension destroy a family and prevent its progress, so nations are destroyed and advancement hindered." Therefore students are being encouraged to actively investigate a way of life that leads to happiness, prosperity and unity. When they put their learning into practice, they're seeing immediate and positive changes in their homes and communities, and they begin to see themselves as change makers.

## Meet the Mentors

Meet Principal Mrs. Sunita R. Patil, KCE D.Ed College, Jalgaon



### 1) How has the experience of taking the training affected you?

This training was very exciting. I am a teacher-trainer. So during this training, I could use and experiment with many new techniques of teaching, which added to my skills as a teacher. Particularly, this training enriched my personality with the help of self-examination. I tried to overcome some of my drawbacks such as - 'Not being able to say no to anyone'. Due to this I ended up doing many things, unwillingly. But, now I can say no to people when I am not willing.

### 2) What are some of your positive experiences about being a mentor?

As a mentor I enjoyed every bit of the training period. I experienced my college days again, doing a lot of group activities, various role plays. It was a tough task to keep the students on right track while moderating the debates, discussions. One of the best experiences was the opening-up of the girl-students who initially were reluctant to join the training program but were teary eyed at the time of leaving the training centre having developed an emotional bond with the peers and the institution.

### 3) What kind of transformations have you seen in your students?

Most of our students were from rural areas out of which about 80% were girls. These girls never had any opportunities to think, to react, to express & to take decisions on their own. While going through all these modules, all my students transformed from an ugly caterpillar to a lovely butterfly, independent to think and act by themselves. The practical work helped them to think and to take right decisions. As a community service, they worked with the children in remand homes. This experience has inspired them to take a vow to do as much work as possible for these children, every year.

### 4) Do you have any advice for other mentors?

Mentors should try to put themselves in the shoes of the students to understand how they think, which will help mentors to understand their students better. Mentors should try to become friends with the students allowing them to approach the mentors freely, without any hesitation. This will create a mentor-student bond which will help the students to flourish in their social lives.

Leadership  
for  
Change

### A Certificate Course

This New Certificate Course has been launched on leadership for personal and community change.

On successful completion of the programme, participants will receive their certificates from Shivaji University, Kolhapur.

Mentorship Blog launched on  
[www.bahaiacademy.org](http://www.bahaiacademy.org)



The Bahá'í Academy wishes to thank our mentor of the month, Prin. Mrs. Sunita R. Patil, for sharing her insights.

Email your comments/pictures:  
[energizer@bahaiacademy.org](mailto:energizer@bahaiacademy.org)

## Asking Better Questions



Asking better questions is possible in positive atmospheres!



Encouragement is both an art and an instinct!

*Back issues of the Mentor Energizer are available on the Academy website. If you've missed an issue, please feel free to download it!*

Questions are the best way to learn. When we simply bestow knowledge on someone else, we don't give them the opportunity to learn through their own investigation. In language learning, the lowest, mechanical level allows us to hear, decode and accomplish grammatical tasks; the next level allows us to listen and understand, read comprehensively and internalize vocabulary. However, the highest level of learning encourages us to form opinions about what we hear or read and to express those opinions in either speech or writing. To form opinions, we have to think beyond what's given, to how we interpret and feel about a subject or event. One way to get 'beyond' is to ask better questions.

Questions can do many things for us. They can give us information, gather opinions, ask for advice and lead us in new and unexpected directions. Better questions are **open** and are asked with the intent to encourage students to think critically.

**Why?** "Why" questions ask for a purpose, reason or underlying belief.

Ex: Why is this important to you?

**What?** "What" questions ask for information and knowledge.

Ex: What do we know about this?

**How?** "How" questions ask for explanations.

Ex: How does this work?

**What if?** "What if" questions ask for imagination.

Ex: What if we looked at this in a different way?



**Closed questions provide 'yes'/'no' answers or information.**

Ex: What time is it? Are you going to the meeting on Friday? Do we have a plan of action?

**Open questions allow for a variety of expression.**

Ex: Could you describe your ideal learning situation? What should we discuss at the meeting on Friday? What if we tried a new plan?



### Is encouragement an instinct or an art?

Encouragement is a way of reassuring, reinforcing and inspiring others to achieve their goals. Some teachers do it instinctively with a friendly pat on the back or a kind word. Others create a plan for continually accompanying students in a wide variety of ways to help them become the best people they can be. Mahatma Gandhi said "Be the change you want to see in the world." As we increase our capacity to encourage others, not only will we feel encouraged, but they will model our methods as they accompany others on the path of service and growth.

**Be Aware; inquire:** We all want to help others, but a common complaint is "I didn't know he needed help." While talking with others, reading their papers, watching their interactions in class, etc., we have to tune in to needs that may arise very subtly. A student who routinely doesn't complete home activities may need some coaching and accompaniment. A student who doesn't speak up during presentations may need a confidence booster. A student with a grand plan may need reassurance rather than advice. Our awareness helps us decide what to do.

**Be Responsible; be trustworthy:** Our students trust us to be trustworthy. They believe that what we say is true, so if we tell them that they have a fabulous plan, but inside we know that there are some major flaws, it's our duty not to lead them astray. While we don't want to discourage creativity, we do want to encourage reflection in the form of evaluation of the resources, capabilities and enthusiasm of the participants involved. It's far better to have a plan that is possible than an idea, which ends before it begins.

**Be Respectful; listen:** Our students come from diverse backgrounds. We only catch glimpses of their perspectives as they share their thoughts in class and in their writing. We must realize that each person is doing his or her best to understand and inculcate universal human values into his or her life. From the outside, looking in, it's easy to see a solution for someone else, but we want to be careful not to give the answers. Sometimes the best encouragement is just to listen and acknowledge the problems a student has rather than trying to "fix it".

**Simple things to start the process; be an exemplar:** Acknowledge progress with a word, a gesture, a call or a note; use one student's idea to help another; suggest students help each other; rehearse difficult situations with students; go with them when they embark on a task; ask open-ended questions like those above; give opportunities for leadership: promote values, qualities and attitudes by your exemplar both in and out of the classroom.

Encouragement--instinct or art? It's a little of both. And, if you practice it, eventually it will become your instinctive.

Next month: What does it mean to have a moral purpose?