

Mentor's Energizer

April, 2016
Volume 4 Issue 1

Bahá'í Academy, Shivajinagar, Panchgani-412 805, Maharashtra
www.bahaiacademy.org energizer@bahaiacademy.org +912168240100

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Youth Can Move the World
- 2 Builders of Civilization
- 3 Creating a Thoughtful Classroom
- 4 What's Meditation Got to Do With It? (Part 1)
- 5 International Conference, June 11-12, Panchgani

Youth Can Move the World

Idealism, purity of heart, compassion—young people are known for these qualities. They haven't yet let the overwhelming noise and busyness of "modern" society sway them. We say that youth are the future, but often the future seems to be an ever-moving target that may never be reached unless we make concerted efforts toward inclusion. Young people are present all around us. They are a critical component to the progress of humankind and their voices need to be heard. As well, those in the middle age group and those who are older are valuable in the process of community building and social transformation. You are never too young to contribute and you are never too old to learn. The talents of all ages are important to the betterment of the community and the world. Though we all must contend with outside pressures to conform to the fast-paced, money-driven, media-hyped material world, we must also take time to think, to reflect, to listen to ourselves and others so that we can better understand ourselves and our unique capacities and roles in bringing about a culture based on universal human values. Undoubtedly, it is within the power of the youth to contribute significantly to shaping the societies of today. "Youth can move the world."

How can we enlist these qualities and aptitudes in ourselves and those we mentor? What is necessary to encourage ourselves and others along a path of selfless service? What moral, ethical and intellectual capacities can guide us as we move forward together? How can we collaborate in this process? These and other questions can, and should, be explored in our classrooms, in families, in neighborhoods and villages. They should also be explored in our own minds as we take time to think strategically about our own personal growth and the collaborative growth within our communities. We would love to hear from you, our precious mentors. What are your thoughts and insights on the above questions or what was the result of a classroom discussion on similar topics? The more we share, the more we grow.

Builders of Civilization: Youth and the Advancement of Humankind

It is often said that youth are the leaders of tomorrow, the future of humanity. This is clearly true, but young people are very much present in the neighborhoods and villages, work places and communities, of the world today. We form a sizable segment of many populations, and the way those of our generation understand ourselves, our inherent capacities, and our role in society has, in every land, significant social consequences.

The issue, then, is not the difference youth can make in the life of society. Young people are already impacting their communities every day, in countless ways and to widely varying ends. The issue, rather, is how the desire to contribute to constructive change and to offer meaningful service – both characteristic of our stage in life – can be strengthened, supported, and expanded.

At the international level, discourse on the role of youth often focuses on issues of voice and participation. Integrating young people into formal structures of power is of course advantageous for a variety of reasons. But simply feeding "young" voices into "old" systems, if unaccompanied by more substantive forms of participation runs the risk of degenerating into mere tokenism. Young people are needed as leaders and decision-makers not only in youth forums and special-purpose councils, but in those spaces where the course and direction of society as a whole are determined. This may well require the development of new systems of decision-making and collaboration – systems characterized by an unbiased search for truth, an attitude of cooperation and reciprocity, and an appreciation for the vital role every individual can play in the betterment of the whole.

But society is far more than a collection of impersonal laws, policies, programs, and organizations. It is equally shaped by norms, values, aspirations, and relationships. It is important, therefore, not to artificially limit young people's potential sphere of contribution. Youth might well contribute to social progress by participating in the structures of government or volunteering their time and capacities to development agencies or other civil society groups. But no individual is dependent on external organizations to better the condition of his or her community. None of us are reliant on the direction of others to begin working for the common good. None of us are incapable of making a difference in our own social spaces and circles.

In this light, the involvement of youth is not something to be sought for our sake alone, nor a tool designed to advance our needs as a specific population group. Rather, it is a component critical to the well-being of all of humankind, young and old alike. Youth must be involved in development efforts because the construction of a new and better society rests on our shoulders as much as on those of any others, and everyone is worse off when the contributions of any group or population are marginalized or disregarded. (Contribution of the BIC to the 2014 World Conference on Youth 2 May 2014 Colombo, Sri Lanka, <http://www.onecountry.org/sites/default/files/pdf/e232fnl.pdf>)



Students, Teachers and Visitors from ICT Elite University, Mumbai, at the Academy



B.Pharm Students of SMBT College during a Service Learning Activity in a nearby community

Back issues of the *Mentor's Energizer* is available on the Academy website.
www.bahaiacademy.org

Please send your thoughts and learning to energizer@bahaiacademy.org.

1st International Conference on Universal Human Values

REGISTRATION HAS STARTED

The Conference is organized by the Bahá'í Academy in Association with the Department of Education of Shivaji University, Kolhapur and International Institute of Organizational Psychological Medicine (IIOOPM), Australia, at Panchgani, on 11-12 June 2016.

Registration has already begun. Limited number of participants and presenters can be accepted. Register TODAY!

For details: Visit www.bahaiacademy.org
Or

Contact the Conf. Coordinator
Dr. Mrs. Shashi Gaikwad at
02168-240100/ 240461; M: 97650 30970
email: conference2016@bahaiacademy.org

Creating a Thoughtful Classroom

In order to create a classroom where self-reflection and group-reflection are encouraged, consider the following tips for making time to think about strategy, the big picture or new ideas despite obstacles, endless to-do lists, sensory bombardment, etc.

Be proactive about distractions: Instead of being "on" all the time, waiting for the next ping on the mobile phone to signal a text or email, turn the phone off during scheduled times in the day and save responses for later. Likewise, schedule time for conversations instead of allowing each new distraction to take priority. Finally, schedule time to think. Research shows that people are more creative while alone and even more so if in silence and surrounded by beauty.

Think first: Make non-digital thinking time a requirement, not a luxury. When students first enter the classroom, require silence and quiet all distractions from the outside world including mobile phones and computers. Perhaps put a question on the board for contemplation and encourage 5-10 minutes of thinking/journaling.

Move around: Walking or running are great activities to encourage thinking. Movement of any kind, but particularly that which is slow and contemplative allows the body to use autopilot and the brain to focus. You could take walking breaks when it is time for students to think and plan an activity.

Plan breaks: Encourage students to say 'no' to fill every hour of their days with busyness. Instead, create a space and time each week to hit the reset button. Make it a mini-retreat where they read inspirational books in positive surroundings, eat healthy food, exercise, think, and plan and feel grateful.

What's Meditation Got To do with it? (Part 1)

"Today, the practice of meditation has become increasingly common among people from all walks of life," says Farnaz Masumian, author of [The Divine Art of Meditation](#). She goes on to say, "More of us are being introduced to the benefits of meditation, which has been cherished and practiced since ancient times. It is encouraged in high-level corporate sessions, during coffee breaks, before academic tests, and prior to athletic competition." Below are some excerpts from her book, which connects the benefits and practices of meditations in all belief systems.

Look inward: The Dalai Lama, during a speech at Harvard University, said the following on the significance of meditation: "In this century, human knowledge is extremely expanded and developed but this is mainly knowledge of the external world . . . we spend a large amount of the best human brain power looking outside—too much, and it seems we do not spend adequate effort to look within, to think inwardly. Perhaps now that the Western Sciences have reached down into the atom and out into the cosmos finally to realize the extreme vulnerability of life and its value, it is becoming credible, even obvious, that the Inner Science is of supreme importance. Certainly physics designed the bombs, biology, the germ warfare, chemistry, the nerve gas, and so on, but it will be the unhealthy emotions of individuals that will trigger these horrors. These emotions can only be controlled, reshaped and rechanneled by technologies developed from successful Inner Science. (Dalai Lama)

To build a life: What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow; our life is the creation of our mind. If a man speaks or acts with an impure mind, suffering follows him as the wheel of the cart follows the beast that draws the cart. (Dhammapada 1:1)

Conscious awareness: Masumian quotes Andrew Newberg and Mark Waldman who wrote [How God Changes the Brain](#). "Research suggests that meditation consistently takes the practitioner into deep states of consciousness. When compared to everyday awareness, the brain, during meditation, is operating in an unusual way. And, since the underlying mechanics of meditation are theologically neutral, it can be integrated with any religious doctrine or creed, or used in schools to improve social cooperation and cognitive performance."

And tapping into Universal Human Values: DovBer Pinson, the author of [Meditation and Judaism](#) states, "The prevailing objective of meditation is to have hegemony over one's thoughts. A person meditates to experience controlled thinking, which simply put, is to master one's thoughts and retain the ability to consciously decide what one will think about, and for how long that thought will be maintained."

And now, we are back to the beginning, to purify the heart, to still the mind, to prevail over distractions, to think with clarity and create with intuition in order to put our values into action. Thinking, reflecting, meditating—all are important to our progress and to the progress of humankind.

Thank you to Farnaz Masumian for her permission to share parts of her book, [The Divine Art of Meditation](#), George Ronald Publisher, Oxford, 2014

Next month: How do we incorporate meditation in our lives and our classrooms? (Part 2)