

National Youth Conference – April 2009
Ceiling on Desires Pre-NYC Initiative: Energy-Wise Workshop
“Unplug and Plug In: Being Energy Stations for Sai”

Philosophy and Goals of this Workshop

“Every action has an equal and opposite reaction.” In Newtonian language, this 3rd law of motion describes the processes that physical forces undergo. But can this classical definition extend to the subtle forces of energy that interplay in the mind and heart? In other words, is the world but a mirror image of our own thoughts, intentions, feelings, and emotions? Does the “bottleneck of desires,” trapped at the crossroads of the mind, magnify its soul-strain out into the world of critical blame? How much of our attitude and vision is responsible for the present condition and future betterment of the world? Is world peace entirely dependent upon each one of us striving to end the discord within ourselves?

Swami says that “the whole world is reflection, reaction, and resound” and that “as is the feeling so is the experience, for everything is a reflection of the inner being.” Swami gives us reason to believe that we, as vessels of divine energy, can inspire purity and beauty in the world around us. If this is the case, then how can COD help us stay connected to this Divine positive “power source” without the deterrent of depletion? In this month’s Energy Workshop, we will discuss how to manage our inner energy levels and how we can reflect this energy into the world by channeling our divine qualities in ways that will positively impact society, the environment, and the world over. As Energy Stations, today’s youth have enormous power to invigorate the very core of Life and harmonize the forces of the universe. All it takes is connecting and charging to the right source: God.

Structure of the Workshop

Based on feedback received by the COD team, we have changed the structure of this month’s workshop. We begin by chanting Gayatri mantra to infuse the gathering with energy from the start, and close with Mindfulness and Meditation, so that we may internalize the lessons learned and energy gained through satsang before dispersing.

Also, this month’s workshop includes 3 smaller discussion sections, each about 20 – 30 minutes in length. Depending on your group’s interest and time, you can choose to do one, any two, or all three of the sections. We suggest that this decision be made ahead of time by the workshop facilitator or YA leaders.

- ☆ Section 1 is about our personal energy levels, identifying what depletes or replenishes our inner energy, and how the practice of COD can help us increase our own inner energy.
- ☆ Section 2 explores the idea that the external world is a mirror of our internal state, and considers two physical examples of that reflection.
- ☆ Section 3 looks at how we can serve as channels of divine Love by directing our purified energy outward to promote healing or transformation in the world.

Discussion:

Suggested time: 60 minutes

Begin the workshop by chanting Aum and Gayatri Mantra three times.

Check-in: Ask each YA to briefly answer this question:

What one desire have you committed to “ceiling” before the NYC, and how will that practice help you save energy?

Part 1: Inner Energy (*Using the selections below discuss the questions that follow.*)

Quote from Swami: *Love one another and help others to rise to the higher levels, simply by pouring out love. Love is infectious and the greatest healing energy. Let love flow so that it cleanses the world. Then man can live in peace, instead of the state of turmoil he has created through his past ways of life, with all those material interests and earthly ambitions.*

Excerpts from Sai Literature: *Taken from Phyllis Krystal’s “Ceiling on Desires” and “Study Groups and Individual Use of the COD Program”*

In contrast to the equal amount of time available to everyone, the amount of energy varies considerably from person to person. Baba cautions that whatever our energy level, we should make sure that we use it in productive pursuits and avoid wasting it unnecessarily. Only then will [we] be a fit instrument through which God can act.

We need to look at how we waste energy, often unconsciously, and wonder why we have little when we need it.

- Stress and tension use up more energy than is expended by participation in most physical activities, as they both block the natural energy flow.
- Idle talk uses up a great deal of energy as well as valuable time. [Baba] compared it to water being poured through a sieve, which disperses it in all directions instead of channeling it towards a specific purpose.
- Baba [said] that a bout of anger uses up more energy than would be contained in a three-month’s supply of food.

Of all the thieves of our precious energy, indulging in negative emotions is perhaps the worst offender. All of our negative emotions are directly tied to our desires. We express each of these emotions according to how we react either when we receive something we do not like... or when we do not receive something we desire. Consequently, we need to ... seek to discover which underlying desire is involved. In this way, we can begin a personal house-cleaning by removing the cause of the various negative emotions we have [and] are often unconscious.

So a most important part of the Ceiling on Desires program must necessarily also examine such negative emotions as anger, envy and jealousy; greed, pride and vanity; fear, control, egoism, selfishness, and sloth, to name the most common ones exhibited by most people. When these no longer control our lives, their place will be filled by positive and beneficial attitudes and emotions, such as love, compassion, kindness, and generosity.

Example of Sai Teachings in Action: “As We Forgive”

Background: Rwanda today is heralded around the world as one of the most inspiring examples of spirituality, healing, and unity. However, in 1994, this small African nation endured an unthinkable tragedy. After centuries of peaceful co-existence, two ethnic groups rose up in a massive wave of violence that lasted 100 days. Around 1 million of the total Rwandan population of 7.6 million died at the hands of their once-friends and neighbors as the world watched in horror. During this time, roads, schools, homes, and hospitals were destroyed. Thousands fled to the once-pristine jungles for safety, causing massive deforestation and nearly driving the endangered Mountain Gorilla to extinction. Entire communities were shattered as Rwandans succumbed to an energy or spirit that “wasn’t human.”

The national response to this tragedy was one of forgiveness. Thousands of prisoners were released back into their communities, and encouraged to seek redemption by directly reconciling with survivors of the families they had hurt. Rwandans today live, work, and eat side by side with individuals who were responsible for the loss of their loved ones. Roads, hospitals, schools and communities have been rebuilt. The mountainside is green, and Gorillas are thriving again. If asked their ethnic group, most will reply only, “I am Rwandan.”

This short trailer touches on why forgiveness, and not retaliation, was the key to the survival of this nation, and why we all have so much to learn from their inspiring example. As you watch this clip, consider Swami's teachings on COD highlighted above, and how Rwanda teaches us a powerful lesson in preserving divine energy.

Right click and save the below file before you start the workshop.

<http://www.saiyusa.net/files/nyc2009/initiatives/COD/as-we-forgive.wmv>

Questions:

1. How does the quote from Swami speak to COD and energy, as highlighted by the other two pieces?
2. What is the Ceiling on Desires lesson that we can learn from the Rwandans? How did they avoid wasting energy in the aftermath of the genocide? What results, both spiritual and physical, did this have on the country? Why is this important and how can we apply this lesson in our own lives as Sai YAs?
3. Phyllis Krystal writes about the importance of recognizing and relinquishing negative emotions to maintain our energy levels. The Rwandan Bishop compares the effect of the same negative emotions on our bodies to that of corrosive acid in a metal container. What "acid" do you hold onto and how do you feel it affects your system? What tools are we given by Swami to purify ourselves internally? How can we tell if we are making progress?
4. Is forgiveness divine? Swami once told a devotee that the difference between men and women is that women forgive without forgetting, and men just forget. How can we practice forgiveness in a manner befitting our divine nature?

Part 2: Mirror Reflections (Using the selections below, discuss the questions that follow.)

Quote from Swami: *Once man purifies his heart, he will find purity everywhere. The world outside is just a reflection of your heart. If you fill your heart with love, you will experience love everywhere. If there is hatred in your heart, the same is reflected outside. Whatever you see, hear and experience outside is only the reflection, reaction and resound of your inner being. All the good and bad that you come across in the external world are just your own reflections. So do not point an accusing finger at others. The whole world depends on your own conduct. If you are good, so too will the world be. It is a mistake to think that there is evil all around you in the world. In fact, it is your own evil which is reflected outside. If your feelings are demonic, the world all around you will look demonic to you. If your feelings are divine, you will find divinity everywhere.* (Sanathana Sarathi, August 2002)

Excerpt from Sai Literature: *How the COD Programme can reduce Global Warming and Climate Change*, by Neil Bisarya, Sai YA, United Kingdom

We must understand what Global Warming is in the context of Swami's teachings. Global warming is a manifestation of our inner conflict and pain. On a physical level, the sun's heat is being trapped in the earth by our polluted atmosphere, leading to increasingly serious climatic consequences.

Swami said to a devotee that He has taken on the negativity of the world because it has reached breaking point. When the devotee asked what we can do to help, Swami replied that we must remove the negativity from within us.

If we pollute our body, heart and mind with impure thoughts, words and deeds we are actually manifesting this pollution in creation. As Swami says, creation is a reaction, reflection and resound of our own thoughts, feelings and actions. So our anger, jealousy, and greed manifests in creation as a polluted atmosphere and environment.

When we remember God and put His teachings into practise, the environment automatically gets purified. God is not any particular form; God is manifest as the creation all around us. We need to act with the understanding that the man in front of us is God; the tree in front of us is God as are the river and the birds. Most important of all is the need to love ourselves - our real Self, which is our GodSelf. When we love and recognise the God that we are, then we are able to love and respect the same God in each other.

Sai youth themselves can apply the Ceiling on Desires programme in their own lives to bring about two aims:

- (i) A reduction in their own toxic thoughts and feelings which leads to a purer heart within which God can reside. This will lead to an increase in positive loving energy which will transform them and the environment around them.

(ii) Using the savings made from not wasting time, money, energy and food in monetary terms to help support local service projects.

Ultimately, human values will manifest in Sai Youth doing the Ceiling on Desires programme, and in the community being served. With human values, innate Divinity manifests; with that purification, the atmosphere and environment become purified too. If this programme is coordinated on an international level by the youth with the setting of specific goals, then the Earth itself can be transformed.

Example of Sai Teachings in Action: Mirror Neurons

Do you ever wonder why you get so worked up while watching sports? Why you cry at the cheesy endings of movies? Why you wince in pain when someone else gets hurt? A recently discovered system in the brain suggests that we have “Mirror Neurons,” which respond to the emotions and actions of other people as if they were our own. As you watch, consider this research in light of Swami’s words on reflection, reaction, resound.

Right click and save the below file before you start the workshop.

<http://www.saiyusa.net/files/nyc2009/initiatives/COD/neurons.wmv>

Questions:

1. What does it mean to you when Swami says that the world outside is a reflection of our heart? Is He speaking to a matter of perspective, or can we really change the external world by purifying ourselves? Do we have to be completely pure beings inside before we can extend our hands in service to others and expect to see any results?
2. What is the connection between the current state of the environment and our desires? How does this manifest on a physical level? On a spiritual level? What are practical ways that we can use COD to benefit the earth?
3. When we are confronted by an angry person, do our Mirror Neurons automatically always trigger the same angry reply in us? Does COD offer a way to override this system to produce an objective response, rather than an instinctual reaction? Can you share a time when you personally experienced either of these processes? What did you learn?
4. What do you think of the ideas proposed by our Sai Brother in the UK and the scientists at PBS? Do their theories give evidence that we are truly interconnected beings? How does this expand your understanding of Swami’s teachings and message?

Part 3: Channeling our Divine Energy Outward (*Using the selections below, answer the questions that follow*)

Quote from Swami: as told by Sharon Sandweiss in *Mother Sathya Sai*, May 2008

Q: “Can we do more, Baba?”

A: *Yes, I will give you the power, the strength, and the blessings.*

Q: “There is suffering and disharmony in the world, Baba.”

A: *The world is good, but the man of mind is corrupt and polluted.*

Q: “Will you save the world, Baba?”

A: *Half seva, half save.*

When we rally the forces of love and compassion, He provides, as He promised, the power, the strength, and the blessings. When we protect Mother Earth and take care of one another, He takes care of us. When we open our heart to others, He lets us merge into His heart. He allows us to become His messengers on earth. His love saves.

Example of Sai Teachings in Action: The Square Root of One Percent

Is meditation about inner transformation or outer transformation? This short video highlights a study on the effects of meditation. A group of researchers found that the rate of violent crime in Washington DC was reduced by 25% after 4000 people gathered to meditate. The researcher’s theory is that it takes $\sqrt{1\%}$ of a place’s population to create transformation through the right intention, channeling positive inner energy outward. As you watch this video, consider how Sai Youth can work together to channel Swami’s love for social transformation.

Right click and save the below file before you start the workshop.

http://www.saiyusa.net/files/nyc2009/initiatives/COD/The_Square_Root_of_One_Percent.mp4

Excerpt from Sai Literature:

You, especially the youth, are messengers of Sai Love. A messenger needs to deliver something. To do so, we have to receive something first. We have to ask Baba to give us His Love. That is the only power in the entire world that can change this very negative energy that we see around us into a more positive one where people can be happy.

When my husband and I were hijacked, Baba helped me. I could love the hijackers by being willing to breathe in His Love and send His Love to them. That was the biggest thing that I could possibly have done to help the situation. He acknowledged this later by saying that it was because the plane was filled with His Love that everyone in the plane was saved. But we need to be able to first receive something before we can give it to others.

From Phyllis Krystal's speech at World Youth Conference, Parthi 2007.

Questions:

1. What is the role of Sai Youth as messengers of Sai Love? What does this mean to you? How have you put this into practice, and what have you learned? Can our spiritual path of self-transformation yield social-transformation?
2. What are some different ways that we can be channels of Swami's Love? (i.e. meditation, gayatri, service, etc.)
3. What are some ways that Sai YAs can channel Swami's Love together? What steps would we have to take in order to become "energy stations" for Swami, to help spread His Divine energy, love, and message to the USA? What activities deplete our energies, which we should reduce? What practices help replenish our Divine energy?
4. Next month, we will have the Akhanda Gayatri. Can we use this as an opportunity to direct the power of the mantra toward a particular cause? What should this cause be? Can we gauge if there is any effect?

Group Action Plans: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

As a group, please select or create one activity to undertake together this month, in order to explore more fully the resource of energy and how to stay connected to our inner source of Divine energy.

Akhanda Gayatri: Participate in the ongoing chanting of this powerful mantra, channeling your energy toward a specific cause for social or personal transformation.

Bite Back the Backbiting: Stop gossiping and idle chatter. Direct the energy you save toward YA group activities.

Seva the Earth: Nature is a beautiful physical expression of Divine energy. Do a group service project that gets you outdoors or working to protect nature. Plant trees, clean up trails, or work with animals in need of care. As a follow-up, commit to making 3 small changes in your daily life to protect the earth on an ongoing basis.

Public Displays of Peace: As a group, meditate in a public place and watch what happens to the energy of those around you. Check out the Public Meditation Project to see how it has worked for others.

Un-plug and Plug in: Remove one energy-draining habit, practice, or gadget from your life. Replace it by plugging into an energy-boosting activity, sadhana, or time in nature.

Energy experiments: Make minor changes in your life and track how your energy is affected. For example:

- Listen to calming music when you wake up or on your morning commute;
- Study or work in a natural setting instead of a man-made/artificial environment;
- Eat only fresh or healthy food for one day;
- Smile more, especially at strangers or people you struggle with.

Growing Good Energy: Grow a houseplant or a garden by intentionally sending good thoughts, saying good words, chanting Gayatri mantra, or playing spiritual music to it. Bonus: grow another one without any added “inputs” and see how the two compare. For more on the science that inspires this, visit www.hado.net.

Meditation and Mindfulness: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

Conduct the Mindfulness activity and/or close the workshop with the guided Heart Meditation at www.saiyausa.net

Give each participant a pen and paper, and allow them to spread out and be seated comfortably before beginning the guided activity below in silence.

Facilitator: To start with, imagine yourself as a vessel of divine energy. On your paper, draw this vessel, or cup. Imagine that the vessel is filled with water, which symbolizes the divine energy within you. Mark the water level within your cup. In this cup, you begin to notice holes that allow the water to leak and pour out. Think of the habits, activities, or attachments that you have which allow you to deplete your divine inner energy. Draw and label the holes with the traits that cause them. What are the ways that we can patch the holes to repair ourselves? What positive values, disciplines and traits can help us retain or replenish our divine energy? For each hole, label the patches that can help save energy.

When you're finished, imagine yourself as this vessel of divine energy. Close your eyes and begin to allow your mind to settle on your breath (1-2 mins pause). Slowly lengthen the counts of your breath until they are slow and measured. Notice how your body feels and the energy flowing through you. As you inhale, fill each breath with love and compassion; while exhaling, breathe out negative thoughts, desires, and vices. Imagine that each breath replenishes your store of internal energy. This energy that you feel is the same energy that connects you to all beings and to all of creation. Expand yourself by breathing in the divine energy to sustain the world and breathing out its negative energy. (PAUSE for a few minutes)

Consider these words from Swami as you breathe. *“Tune in to the omnipresent God and become a channel for the flow of His love to all around you. But first, let the love flow throughout your whole being. Feel it, experience it, absorb it, enjoy it, that feeling of being immersed in a pool of divine love and energy, so powerful that all worries and materialist thoughts are dissipated by the sheer power of that love.”* (PAUSE)

Take your time. Observe the energy flowing within you and all around you. When you are ready, you can slowly open your eyes. Thank you all for participating in today's workshop. Please disperse quietly to preserve your energy within.