

Houston Feb 18<sup>th</sup> 19<sup>th</sup> 2017

# SSIO Regional Officers Training

Breakout Sessions



# TIPS FOR FACILITATORS



## WHAT ARE THE FACILITATOR'S BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES?

- Prepare in advance including review of overall objectives
- Plan the agenda
- State the objectives at the beginning of the discussion and review the agenda
- Identify a **Recorder** and a **Presenter**
- Establish expectations and ground rules (see examples below)
- Focus the discussion around the scenario and application of the Five Human Values
- Guide the group in presenting and sharing the information
- Provide closure and reiterate decisions and action items.



## FACILITATION TIPS

- **Staying on task and on time**
  - Remind the group of the "stay on task" ground rule and let them know you will redirect/interrupt, if needed
  - Directly refocus the group as needed
  - Close the discussion or set it aside in a "parking lot" for consideration later
  - Let the group decide
- **Dealing with challenging behavior**
  - Restate the group rules directly
  - Direct your questions to the individual for clarification
  - Seek help from the group
  - Address the issue offline
  - Refer to Human Values that need to be brought forth
- **Stimulate productive inquiry**
  - Use probing questions
  - Call on individuals in the group
  - Invite debate/discussion
  - Remind the group of the Values
- **Group Rules**
  - Everyone Participate/Contribute
  - Remain Open
  - Stay on Topic
  - Action Oriented
  - Respect the Person (let others finish their thoughts)

# GENERAL GUIDELINES



## APPROACH TO THE DISCUSSIONS

After reviewing the learning objective, the discussion should be comprised of two parts: Awareness (understanding) and integration (application). Since the training's emphasis is more on the process and the application, as a facilitator, let us briefly summarize the pertinent quotes which you all may have come across both in the recent study circles on the 8 discourses and/or earlier on.

We should dive deep into Swami's words and guidance both from a moral/ethical and also from a spiritual perspective. In the process, let's also focus on drawing out the pertinent virtues/qualities and human values. As the time in this session is short, let's focus on the quote with the application scenario in mind.

## FACILITATOR PRESENTATION (5-7 MINUTES)

After the breakout session, a summary of the discussion needs to be presented to the larger group

Include in Presenter's brief report:

- Briefly (1 minute) describe the Learning Objective, Context and Scenario
- What were challenges in the discussion?
- What was the impact of reflecting on Swami's quotes?
- What was the resolution?
- What would be some additional aids during an officers' discussion that would help arrive at the best decision while adhering to the teachings of Swami?
- The facilitator used Facilitation Tips. How were these tips useful in guiding the discussion?



# PRESIDENTS AND VICE PRESIDENTS

## SESSION ONE: UNITY

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

Members and Officers need to cultivate and work with unity

### QUOTES

*"Members of Sai Organizations should consider unity as their very life breath."* 20 November 1998, SSS 31:41 'Unity is our life breath' <http://www.sssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume31/sss31-41.pdf>

*"Have the feeling of oneness permeate every act of yours. Only those who do so have a place in this Organization; the rest can withdraw."* 1-6-1975, SSS 13:2, 'Not twice, but thrice!' <http://www.sssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume13/sss13-02.pdf>

*Members: "When once a person is selected in an atmosphere of peace and love, co-operation and tolerance should prevail and every one must follow his directions and respect his guidance. It is only then that the Divine Grace will be conferred on you."* 11-21-1970, SSS 10:33, 'Faults and failures' <http://www.sssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume10/sss10-33.pdf>

*"OBs (Office Bearers) in this Organization are leaders who bear the brunt themselves; guides who walk along a path they wish others to take. They shall not command or punish; they can only persuade or advice."* 11-22-1978, SSS 14:13, 'He too is He' <http://www.sssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume14/sss14-13.pdf>

### EXPLORATORY SCENARIO

Several members who are not officers subtly make decisions for the center, bypassing the officer involvement, or lead most of the bhajans, lead most of the study circles, and always get to play the instruments. This has caused confusion and frustration among other members. Since the center has operated that way for some time, most members assume that's the way the center is supposed to function. Recently, a few members have requested that the officers to intervene and to follow the center guidelines.

The officers have discussed the matter and it was decided that since the center was operating fairly smoothly, the approach should be handled discretely so as to not rock the boat. The center president has attempted to quietly and lovingly discuss the situation individually with the relevant members but without resolution. The situation is becoming more of a concern for some members and the officers. Although the officers have been attempting to avoid conflict or hurt feelings, the situation continues.

## VALUES

Non-Violence, Right-Action

## KEY QUESTIONS

- 1) What are healthier and unifying ways of addressing this situation?
- 2) How can we best carrying out our center duties and decisions using Swami's teachings and practicing the human values in our actions?
- 3) How could the officers have been proactive to prevent this scenario from occurring in the first place?

## DISCUSSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

## SESSION TWO: REGARDING MONEY

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Avoid collection of funds, Give minimum importance to money for Center and Regional work.

### QUOTES

*"I do not like the collection of funds. But since some expenses have to be incurred I allow it under very stringent conditions...Do not plan beyond your capacity and move about with lists from person to person to get funds. By this the Institution gets a bad name and you too will not be spared."*

*"Money is fundamentally rajoguna (quality of passion), fraught with danger and harm. Like the bees which collect and store honey for a future day, man too stores and collects money; but, alas, the bees are smoked out and the honey stolen. I do not agree with any of your ideas to collect and store money. I do not like you going about collecting funds, or raising donations. I assure you that funds will come, provided you sincerely pray for every worthy cause. Have faith, and watch the funds flow in."* Divine Discourse, Prasanthi Nilayam 21-11-1968

*"Members of the Sri Sathya Sai Organizations should do things on their own carrying out their responsibilities without depending on others. You may be very wealthy and have servants and assistants to help in a few tasks, but your own work you must do yourself. If you wish to be of service to society, serve yourself first. One who will not serve society has no right to belong to a Sri Sathya Sai organization." (SSE Teacher's Manual, p viii, from Swami's Ten Guiding Principles)*

### EXPLORATORY SCENARIO

Some officers want to raise a lot of money to do a great service, and others want to adhere to what Swami says about staying away from money, and to not do the service if you do not have the money.

Center officers want to set up a 501(c) (3) charitable not-for-profit entity in the Sai Organization. They feel that this would enable them save money on taxes, get less expensive rates for venues to house gatherings, attract more people to functions/gatherings, and thus spread Swami's name by showing the public the selfless service the Sathya Sai International Organization is doing.

## VALUES

Discrimination, Integrity, Faith

## KEY QUESTIONS

- When there is a need for money for a project, what are the best ways to inform the devotees?
- Make a list of possible solutions, both negative and positive.
- How do we get money without asking?
- How does faith fit into this scenario?

## DISCUSSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

## SESSION THREE: CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Speak obligingly even if you cannot oblige.

### QUOTES

*"If you cannot oblige, you can at least speak obligingly. This means that you have to cleanse your speech of cynicism and sarcasm, and be sincere and sweet. You may differ from co-workers on methods and programs but this should not leave a scar on your heart or theirs." SSS14 p.14 1978*

### EXPLORATORY SCENARIO

As a regional officer, you have been tasked to lead the planning team for your upcoming annual retreat. The team comprises of officers and active members, adults and young adults. During one of your planning sessions, the topic came up concerning the number of devotional singing sessions, number of English, Spanish and Indian songs and music, and the standards required for lead singers. Historically, the retreat attendance is about 200 participants, primarily very long attending devotees. Over the past couple years increasing numbers of new comers/non-Indian guests have been attending. Many comments in the evaluation forms included unhappiness about songs in a language people did not understand and melodies that were difficult for non-Indians to appreciate. Some attendees suggested that 50% of all songs be in English. Some others asked for many songs in Spanish with a Latin beat. Some guests wanted familiar Christian gospel songs.

The planning team is in a dilemma. Many long time devotees want the retreat to remain the same since it reminds them of being at Prasanthi Nilayam where they would find comfort in the presence of Swami. Many were concerned that gospel songs or Spanish songs with a Latin beat would disrupt the peaceful and familiar atmosphere of the singing sessions.

There is an expectation that this year's retreat will bring many non-Indian newcomers as well as people who occasionally attend a center and who want to lead English and Spanish songs they learned in the churches they grew up in. In addition to the question of how to decide the percentage of Indian songs versus other songs, the question of how they could assure the quality of the singers if they were not regular members of centers came up.

One group is stressing the traditional approach of primarily Indian bhajans led by singers known to be excellent. Another group is keen on bringing new elements of songs, music, and local cultural programs, suggesting that the retreat should reflect the culture of the local community more.



## VALUES

Discrimination, Integrity, Faith

## KEY QUESTIONS

- 1) How can we generate consensus between those who want to retain the traditional kind of Retreat that brought peace and joy to devotees in the past and those who want to serve and be welcoming to newcomers?
- 2) How can we best serve new visitors to the centers – people who have no familiarity with Indian culture?
- 3) 3 How can we learn to communicate and discuss opinions that represent very different views of what is right, and arrive at decisions that do not cause serious hurt feelings?

## DISCUSSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

# SERVICE COORDINATORS



## SESSION ONE: MANAGEMENT OF SERVICE PROJECTS' PORTFOLIO

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Common Sense and Divine Sense

### QUOTES

*"Today people chant the divine name, not from source, but out of force. No benefit accrues from chanting the divine name unless it is done wholeheartedly. Chant His name wholeheartedly at least for half a minute, that is enough. One tea spoonful of cow's milk is better than barrels of donkey's milk. God is interested in Quality, not in Quantity."* (Divine Discourse - 4.3.2000)

*"Service projects must satisfy local needs, solve a local deficiency. Do not imitate. Be original."* (SSS X, 8, 44)

*"God will not ask when and where you did service; he will ask what your motives and intentions were. (SSS XI, 34, 195). The attitudes of mutual help and selfless service develop the "humanness" of man and help unfold the Divinity latent in him."* (SSS XI, 34, 192)

*Do not believe that you can by means of selfless service reform or reshape the world. You may or may not. That does not matter. The real value of seva, its most visible result, is that it reforms you, reshapes you. (SSS V, 66, 327)*

Swami tells us to engage in: *Direct service toward removal of physical distress, alleviation of mental agony, and fulfillment of spiritual yearning. (SSS VI, 7, 40)*

*Service is a lifetime program; it knows no rest or respite. This body has been given to you so that you may devote its strength and skills to the service of brother-man. Serve man until you see God in all men; then, what you do will be elevated to worship. (SSS 1975.01.06)*

*Try as far as possible within your means to satisfy the needs of the poor. (Sandeha Nivarini, VII)*

*Do not plan beyond your capacity and move about with lists from person to person to get funds. By this, the institution gets a bad name, and you too will not be spared. (April 21, 1967)*

*"Love, respect, tolerance, mutual, co-operation, forbearance – these must flow from the hearts of each to all."*

## EXPLORATORY SCENARIO

A medium-sized Sai Center has been extremely active in the community and to date still hosts several service projects throughout the week. Though some projects are small, many have been in operation for the last 20 years. Over the last year, this Center has experienced some active membership decline due to job-related relocations; the Center has also experienced some recent motivation issue by other members, all of which has put some strain on participation.

Very recently, a new service opportunity has come to the Center's attention. This project has the potential to help the condition of a significant number of underprivileged children and families, and bring a good name to the SSIO. The project is high-impact for the community and not many other organizations are able to take it up, but it will require a fair amount of attention, resources and volunteers.

A decision is needed within 30 days. In the meantime, these families continue to struggle daily.

## VALUES

Right Action, Love, Common Sense, Faith, Sacrifice, Surrender, Dedication

## KEY QUESTIONS

- Shall we proceed with the new project?
- Who should decide and how? Should decisions be based on consensus, pragmatism or righteousness?
- How will we balance all the projects we currently have? Are adjustments needed?
- How will we secure/motivate the additional resources and volunteers needed?
- How will we ensure that quality of service and attention to detail are sustained in the long term?

## DISCUSSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

## SESSION TWO: COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Engaging in public outreach and collaborating with external organizations while maintaining SSIO's standards and guidelines

### QUOTES

*"When other Organizations require help, go and help them. This will make them realize the loving universal nature of your attitude."* 4-21-'67, SSS 7:18

*"It is best that Seva activities of our Organization are kept free from contact or involvement with other Seva Organizations in the country. For, other Organizations do not have the same strict rules and regulations regarding many matters. The environment which makes their service programs and the atmosphere created thereby may not be congenial to the Seva of this Organization."* Sanathana Sarathi Jan 1978

*"It is our duty to share the blessings of our inner freedom and joy with others around us in the society. This is the true brotherhood of man. Our Sai organization should keep this aim constantly before them."* Prema Dhaara, Part 2 p 122

*A person should strive to use every talent and skill they have, not only for their own benefit, but for the benefit of the whole world. Understand that society is the source of whatever pleasure one derives and whatever wealth one achieves in life. We owe everything to society and should be grateful to society for all that we receive from it. We have to repay this debt by helping at least as many people as we can (SSS 22:08)*

*Joy and Peace are not inherent in external objects; they are within yourself. Joy comes to you not through the shape of things but through the relationship established. Not just any child, but her own child, makes the mother happy; so it is with each person regarding all things. If one establishes that kinship, that Creator's love, with each and every thing in the universe, verily, what an overwhelming joy can be experienced. (SSE Teacher's Manual, p. 69)*

*If one object combines with another, or one individual gains association with another, love is the basis for the affinity. The entire world is filled with love. The world is love and love is the world. In every human being love is present as a radiance that shines in his or her feelings. Love is life, and life is love. Even as the power to burn is natural for fire and the power to cool is natural for water, love is a natural trait for man. Without it, he ceases to be human. (Prasanthi Nilayam, Nov. 24, 1972) (SSE Teacher's Manual, p. 70)*

*"The service activities we undertake are meant to experience unity in society."* (International Seva Conference, July 21, 2002)

*Fund collection is as much opposed to this movement as fire is to water. (SSS VIII, 6, 34) Money is fundamentally fraught with danger and harm. (SSS VI, 67, 325). It is the root cause of all misunderstandings and factions; keep it in the background and give it the least importance. (SSS VI, 67, 327).*

*"It is also laid down strictly that those in our Organization should not have any connection with other Organizations of Spiritual or Religious Character. Of course, so far as service is concerned, members should help and serve all without any distinction. Everyone in distress deserves help. But (SSS Vol VII)*

## EXPLORATORY SCENARIO

A Center decides to host a service project (such as a relief effort in a large city). In order to collaborate and establish a working network, the President and Service Coordinator reach out to local Government agencies and some NGO's. Some of these groups could be crucial in gaining access to the areas in need, resources and are a valuable relationship in the area. They also insist on accepting donations from their constituents, monetarily contributing to the cause and having their banner prominently displayed during the event. This cause is also one that the community cares about deeply and may have significant exposure in the public and/or media. Further, a couple of these government agencies have been strong supporters of the SSIO work in the past. Not allowing these groups participate might come across as harsh or self-righteous, could possibly damage a good relationship and will also leave a good-willing member of the community out of the opportunity to help.

## VALUES

Truth, Honesty, Right Action, Love, Joy, Unity, Gratitude

## KEY QUESTIONS

- Is there a conflict of interest at all?
- Should we partner with the other organizations? Why or why not?
- What should the role of the SSIO be in this partnership? How to establish it?
- What steps should the SSIO follow to adhere to its guidelines/principles?
- How do we ensure that unity, harmony and love prevail across the board?
- Is there a win-win solution?

## DISCUSSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

## SESSION THREE: SERVICE WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Compassion and service within the organization

### QUOTES

*"Practice the attitude of joy when others are joyful and of grief when others around you are grieved. Let your heart move in sympathy. Furthermore, the joy and grief have to be translated into service; they should not be mere emotions" .SSS 2:7, p. 39*

*"Out of all spiritual practices, service to mankind is the highest and noblest. You may be thinking that helping and serving others in times of their difficulty is service. It is not as simple as that. You should be constantly engaged in serving others. The human body consists of several limbs. All these limbs are meant to be engaged in services. Unfortunately, we have forgotten this basic fact. Every limb of the body must be engaged in service as worship. This is the only means by which human life can be redeemed. . . Service encompasses every possible help to the fellow human beings." SS Feb 2004 P. 43*

*"Members of Sathya Sai Organisations should consider UNITY as their very life breath. He who sees unity wins the grace of the One." (SSS, Volume 31, pg 415)*

*"Do not proclaim that you are a sect, distinct and separate from those who adore God in other Names and Forms. Thereby, you limit the very God whom you are extolling. Do not proclaim in your enthusiasm, "We want only Sai; we are not concerned with the rest." You must convince yourselves that all forms are Sai's, all names are Sai's. There is no "rest", for all are He." [17.5.1968]*

*"To understand God's nature, man has to develop universality of outlook and cultivate the all-embracing concept of expansive love." . [Summer Showers 1979, pg. 63]*

### EXPLORATORY SCENARIOS

- 1) A member has suffered a great loss and is in need of help.
- 2) A newcomer, who has heard of Sai Baba, arrives at the Center for the first time. He doesn't know anyone and is quietly waiting on a corner.

## VALUES

Love, Compassion, Right Action, Duty, Discrimination, Sacrifice

## KEY QUESTIONS

- 1) Loss Scenario:
  - a. Should devotees focus on service to fellow members in addition to outside service?
  - b. How should it be approached if help is asked? What about when help is NOT asked?
  - c. Would you involve others at the Center? If so, how would you go about it?
  - d. What kind of situation/needs would you consider worthy of addressing?
  - e. Could you tackle these in a more systematic way in the future?
  
- 2) Newcomer Scenario:
  - a. What's the best way to serve the newcomer? List the 5 items they need the most.
  - b. Who else would you involve? Why and how?
  - c. What would be your best gauge as to whether you've served them adequately?

## DISCUSSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

# DEVOTIONAL COORDINATORS



## SESSION ONE: WELCOMING CENTERS

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

Welcoming new members to our centers appropriately

### QUOTES

*"Adore all religions; they are all pathways to the one God." 2<sup>nd</sup> of 10 Directives given to members and officers of the Sai Organization, SSS, Vol 18, Ch 23, Nov 21, 1985*

*"People labor under the impression that spirituality is ritualism. Spirituality on the other hand is the spirit of oneness. It is the spirit of oneness that constitutes the real spiritual endeavor, the right devotion and correct wisdom." Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1993, Pg 33*

*"Let the different faiths exist, let them flourish and let the glory of God be sung in all the languages and in a variety of tunes. That should be the ideal. Respect the differences between the faiths and recognize them as valid as long as they do not extinguish the flame of Unity." Divine Discourse, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1968*

### EXPLORATORY SCENARIO

Kara Freedman recently found a book on Sai Baba at the public library. She does some research online and finds the nearest Sai Center, and rides the bus route to her inner city center location.

She walks in. The center team is in the process of finishing up devotional singing practice and getting ready to start devotional singing in 10 minutes.

Kara looks around and notices Swami's altar and everyone sitting on the floor intently practicing. She is received with acknowledging warm smiles and directed to a chair. She finds her spot on the chair and continues to observe as coordinators correct nuances in Sanskrit bhajans. She finds himself drawn to the energy wanting to learn more. The session begins.

At the end of the session, Kara is given vibhuti along with everyone else. She looks around and quickly ascertains as to how to apply it, does so and walks out of the center. Someone approaches her, says "Sai Ram" with closed palms. They then proceed to talk to her about how Kara knows "Swami". Kara ascertains that it is Sai Baba that is being talked about and begins to explain her journey. She is cognizant of the large amounts of activities, busyness and conversations around her, keeps the conversation short, thanks the hosts and leaves.



Kara is drawn to the center, but finds herself thinking about whether she will return to this location on the bus ride home.

## VALUES

Respect, Friendliness, Tolerance, and Consideration

## KEY QUESTIONS

1. How do you think Kara felt on her first interaction with the Sai Center?
2. What can Center officers and other Center members do to make Kara feel more welcome?

## DISCUSSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

## SESSION TWO: DEVOTIONAL SINGING

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

Offering devotional singing to Swami and the Sai in all, by guiding devotional song leaders in a sweet and kind manner

### QUOTES

*"You should not expect people to follow whatever you sing. You should see that they can easily respond to your song. The names you chant should be short and sweet. If you use big words and complicated terms, the devotees will not be able to follow you... Therefore, in your bhajans use short names like Rama, Krishna, Allah, Yesu and so on. Then all would be able to follow you with ease. If you use high sounding words, few can follow you. Eschew any aversion to any faith or nation. Have no ill will towards any one. Do not cause hurt to anyone. Look upon all alike. This feeling of oneness should spread all over the world."* **Divine Discourse, April 11, 1997**

*"There is special merit in singing the Lord's name with due regard for melody and rhythm. The Lord is a lover of music. Moreover, when singing is done with fervour, it helps to drive out all bad thoughts from the mind. Melodious music can move the Lord and move all the participants. Melodious music will move the Lord Himself. Hence, when you take part in bhajans, sing with all your heart and soul. You must sing with such love for the Divine that you forget yourself. When you sing the praise of God with a pure heart, you will purify your environment, your country and the world."* **Divine Discourse, April 4, 1997**

*"Your speech should be good. Never utter harsh words. Speak softly and sweetly. That is why I tell you often, "You cannot always oblige, but you can always speak obligingly." Say what you have to say without harshness. Speak softly so that only the person for whom your words are intended may hear you."* **Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 32, Part 1, Chapter 13**

### EXPLORATORY SCENARIO

*A group of members are gathering around to practice devotional songs prior to a devotional center meeting. One member arrived at the beginning of the session and is waiting his turn to practice a song. The devotional coordinator has been selecting singers in the room and having them practice songs and thereby creating the song list. She almost has all the songs she needs to complete the session, when:*

**Sai Brother:** Sai Ram, Sai Ram! I have practiced a bhajan that I want to offer to Swami with all my love today.

**DC:** Sai Ram Brother! As you know we are down to about one song for today. I would love a short, simple song that is a nama sankeertana (a string of various names of gods) in order to keep the energy high during our session.

**Sai Brother:** I have practiced "Akhila Jagat key Data Sai" as Swami placed a strong feeling in me today, that he would be pleased by this song.

**DC:** Oh, that's quite a complicated song...

**Sai Brother:** Please, sister, let me practice, I'm sure Swami will be pleased. And I so wanted to please Him by offering it to Him in bhajans today.

**DC (Reluctantly):** Ok, let's practice. Do you know your key for the song?

**Sai Brother:** I'll start and then you can get the key

**DC (Reluctantly):** Sai Ram... the preferred mode of practice is to sing with a key. Let me give you a key in the middle of the male range and perhaps we can start there. Plays a key of 1 pancham

**Sai Brother:** "Akhila Jagat" starts off key

**DC:** Sai Ram, could you start here, please? "Akhila jagat" DC starts

**Sai Brother:** "Akhila" starts on key but veers off melody and beat

**DC:** Sai Ram, that line is sung this way. *She demonstrates singing the line the right way.* Please try again!

**Sai Brother:** "Akhila" starts off key and veers off beat a couple of times.

*Sai Brother checks in with "Is this correct" and the DC is nodding "No". It is clear that the Sai Brother is getting frustrated slowly with the multiple repetition and the situation.*

## VALUES

Right Action, Responsibility, Right Speech, and Cooperation

## KEY QUESTIONS

At this juncture, the Devotional Coordinator has the opportunity to course correct and offer guidance.

1. How can the Devotional Coordinator gently correct this Sai Brother without hurting their feelings or offending them?
2. How can she work with the Sai Brother and others enthused in the organization to frame expectations around community singing offerings at the center?

#### DISCUSSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

## SESSION THREE: STUDY CIRCLE

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

Study Circle interactions that emphasize practicing Swami's teachings

### QUOTES

*"About the Study Circles, I am not for indiscriminate reading of books, however valuable they may be. Much reading confuses the mind; it fosters argumentation and intellectual pride; what I insist upon is putting the things read into practice – at least a thing or two. Moreover, you must always remember that the book is only a pointer, a guide, a sign post. Reading is not completion of the journey. It is only the first step. Read for the sake of practicing; not for reading's sake."* **2<sup>nd</sup> of 10 Directives given to members and officers of the Sai Organization, SSS, Vol 6, Pg 181**

*"It is the actual journey that will reveal the hardships, the delays, the landslips and the potholes, as well as the beauty of the scenery encountered and the magnificence of the final goal. No second hand account can equal the first experience."* **SSS, Vol 1, Ch 20**

*"Many of you have listened to countless discourses and have read a lot of books. But, what is the change in you? None at all. You have remained where you are. If we examine further, many seem to have gone back rather than going forward. Hence, devotees should strive to put into practice at least a fraction of what they have seen and heard....There are many here who know a great deal, but who practice very little of it. Of what use is all the reading of scriptures and epics? Very little of it is put into practice."*

**Sanathana Sarathi, Aug 1995, Pg 202**

### EXPLORATORY SCENARIO

A group of members are gathering for a study circle activity. The facilitator welcomes everybody and starts the activity. The topic for the day is "Ceiling on Desires – a comprehensive guide to realizing the Divine in and around us". A Swami quote is read:

*"What is the method of controlling the desires? You have to enquire into one thing carefully: Before I was born, where was this world? Every person who is born has to die. After one's death, where does the world exist? The world comes in between birth and death. Why should one aspire to have so many things in a world so transitory as that? The world is to be compared to a mirror. Your image is seen so long as you are before the mirror. You remove the mirror, your image and reflection will disappear. You should ponder about why waste such a precious life for transitory desires of the world". Divine Discourse 1987*

When the sharing portion begins, the facilitator immediately turns his attention to an “experienced devotee” who is asked to share. The “experienced devotee” launches into an exposition of the six bad qualities in man, of which desire is one, and how this affects karma and the cycle of life and birth etc., spending a good 10 minutes on the benefits and downfalls of each.

When finally, another devotee begins to share her understanding of Swami’s material, she starts getting one thought in - about how she’s trying to control her TV watching desires and her struggles therein - when the “experienced devotee”, interrupts her and corrects her understanding of the philosophical aspects of the “six passions of the mind”. She acknowledges him and tries to get another thought in and this interaction continues for a period of time.

At the back of her mind, she wonders about why the “experienced devotee” is talking about theory but not bringing up one of his known struggles around desires – that of eating sweets, despite his health conditions that suggests giving sweets up.

## VALUES

Right Action, Wisdom, Self-inquiry, Humility, and Responsibility

## KEY QUESTIONS

1. Why are study circles important? Why should this be an inclusive, facilitative, group activity?
2. How can we practice Swami’s teachings better and emphasize this/ share our stories to make Study Circles of higher quality?

## DISCUSSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

# SSE COORDINATORS



## SESSION ONE: PARENT FOCUS

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

In this scenario our learning objective is to develop empathy for teachers and parents trying to work together as well as ways to build parent commitment to the SSE program.

### QUOTES

*“While engaged as you are in karma, seva karma (service activity) as sadhana, you encounter many hurdles. But, that is the nature of the world in which you act. It is a world of dual characteristics---good and bad, joy and grief, progress and regress, light and shade. Do not pay heed to these; do what comes to you as a duty, as well as you can, with prayer to God. When you stick to the path of Truth and Righteousness, pain and poverty haunt you. But they are only clouds passing through the sky hiding for a little time the splendor of the sun.”* Sathya Sai Baba, Divine Discourse.1981, November 21, The fingers five

*“Establish unity among yourselves first; do not seek faults in others or excellences in your own selves. The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man---have full faith in this and fill every act of yours with that reverence and love.”* Sathya Sai Baba, Divine Discourse,1967 April 21.Sai Orgs Must Promote Faith in God

### EXPLORATORY SCENARIO

The SSE coordinator has been communicating with her center SSE parents by email and calling them to get a response from all of them. Yet she gets responses back from less than 50%. She is unhappy that despite all the efforts the parents are not participating. Some teachers feel that we need to engage the parents in more effective ways. Some think that our center is the only one where parents lack commitment.

### VALUES

- Commitment
- Follow-up
- Involvement/Engagement
- Sacrifice

## KEY QUESTIONS

1. What could be the real issues in this situation?
2. How did it come to such a situation?
3. Is it possible to get 100% parent involvement in SSE? What does it take?
4. Come up with a strategy for effective parent involvement.
5. How could the coordinator help proactively to prevent this scenario from occurring in the first place?

## DISCUSSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)



## SESSION ONE: ALTERNATIVE -- PARENT FOCUSED

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

In this scenario our learning objective is to develop empathy for teachers and parents trying to work together as well as ways to build parent commitment to the SSE program.

### QUOTES

*"Each member and office-bearer must take an oath, from the very depths of the heart, before engaging themselves in the activities. "Swaami, Save me from any act of commission of omission which will affect adversely the three qualifications You have laid down. Bless me with the skill, intelligence and enthusiasm necessary for the task I am dedicating myself to carry out for my own uplift. Guide me along the correct path; shower on me Your Grace so that I may earn a fair name in this attempt; guard me from temptation and wrong steps." When you rise from bed at dawn, pray thus."* Sathya Sai baba , Divine Discourse.1967, April 21.Sai Orgs Must Promote Faith in God

*"Do not seek to exercise authority over others; seek rather to discover chances to be useful to them. When one neglects his duties, the positions of authority start causing headaches. Be a servant; a servant of God-then, all strength and joy will be added unto you. Try to be a master; then, you will arouse envy, hatred, anger and greed in everyone around you. Feel that you are an instrument in His Hand; let Him shape you and use you as He knows best."* Sathya Sai Baba, Divine Discourse.1968 November 21.The heart of the organization

### EXPLORATORY SCENARIO

A center president who is very devoted to Swami and SSE wants to involve parents in the SSE program in the beginning of the year with a detailed parent orientation meeting.

He arranged for his fellow officers, service and study circle and fellow teachers to talk about service opportunity & topics that they will discuss this year in class for all groups. The meeting was mandatory and any parent who couldn't attend one of the sessions could not register their child for the program. The meeting lasted for 4 hours. If people left after 2 hours they were considered absent. Many parents complained to the center education coordinator that this was not acceptable, as 4 hours of orientation and the level of strictness was becoming unmanageable, though they want their child to be in the SSE program. The center coordinator wanted to know what other centers were doing and she consulted with the regional coordinator and regional coordinator shared the knowledge that it was usually 1.5 hours - 2 hours.

## VALUES

- Commitment
- Follow-up
- Involvement/Engagement
- Sacrifice

## KEY QUESTIONS

- 1) What should the regional coordinator and the center coordinator do in this situation?
- 2) What is the fundamental issue here? Are there any of the six vices that come into play? If so with whom?
- 3) How can they address this issue lovingly?

## DISCUSSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

## SESSION TWO: TEACHER FOCUSED

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

Learn how to assess and focus on the quality vs quantity. Effectively communicate the complexities of a decision related to SSE teachers with those who may not have full understanding but are in a position of authority.

### QUOTES

*"God will not ask you when and where did you do service? He will ask, "With what motive did you do it? What was the intention that prompted you?" You may weigh the seva and boast of its quantity. But, God seeks quality, the quality of the heart, the purity of the mind, the holiness of the motive." --Lessons on Seva Sadhana, Seva Dal Conference, 19-11-1981*

*"Devotion has to be guided and controlled by discipline and duty. What exactly is duty in this context? By duty I do not mean the items of work entrusted to you by your superiors or society. Duty means the responsibility you have not to hinder or harm anyone by your movements, speech, behavior, or activities. When one walks on the street waving one's stick, one has to be conscious of the man coming from behind; if you have the freedom to wave, he too, has the same freedom, and both should behave as if they have a duty towards each other. The units of this organization, too, have to respect other units, and help them in doing their duty." --Why Organize; Hyderabad, 29-3-1976.*

### EXPLORATORY SCENARIO

An SSE center has a long standing program which is run by experienced teachers who have a long standing reputation. They have not only established their credibility in teaching but also have built long standing relationships with the families and students. Several of the teachers are second generation immigrants who have experienced the local culture and societal challenges and hence are better able to relate to the needs of the students many of whom are also second or third generation immigrant families. Their enrollment is significant enough that the team of teachers have to be highly committed and work harmoniously. This teaching team has built up a close knit process of recommending new teachers based on quality and offer local training and mentorship (co-teaching) experience to teachers.

Newer teachers who are getting trained feel that they are not given an opportunity to teach and there is a close group mentality which makes it difficult to replace any existing teacher with anyone else.

Over time the center president also has been of the same impression although he may not have all the details. He has recently decided to require the SSE teacher pool should be changed and new teachers should take on the mantel of responsibility. He has asked the teaching team itself to work out how to get this done. In the past the teachers have held their ground to maintain quality not quantity as emphasized by Swami.

While the newer teachers are trained, there is a concern that all may not yet have been mentored into a tradition of diligent and regular reading of Sai literature. This is a best practice considered to be essential to becoming an effective and insightful teacher, to foster an ability to develop lesson plans that are both engaging and inspiring.

#### VALUES

- Quality
- Experience
- Communication
- Dedication
- Connecting with students
- Renewal
- Inspiration

#### KEY QUESTIONS

1. What could be the real issues be in this situation?
2. How did it come to such a situation?
3. Is it possible to ensure quality and quantity in the teacher pool? What does it take?
4. Come up with a strategy for what the center president can do?
5. How could the teachers help proactively to prevent this scenario from occurring again in the future?

#### DISCUSSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

## SESSION THREE: COORDINATOR FOCUSED

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

In this scenario our objective is to learn how to empower center coordinators to step up to their role and be responsible and committed.

### QUOTES

*"Choose men and women who have unshaken faith in this present Avatar, with this Name and this Form. Offices should not be regarded as positions of authority or as 'prizes' for devotion. They should be accepted with humility and exercised with love."*

*"When you perform your duties, you will be acquiring the title to your rights. Every man should discharge his duties. Performance of duty is your yoga. It is your enjoyment. It is your sacrifice. Discharge of duty is the basis for everything." SS December, 1993, P 313*

### EXPLORATORY SCENARIO

The center SSE coordinator is not interested in teaching SSE classes and isn't engaged with the teachers in planning the calendar or classes. The coordinator is not motivated or responsible to coordinate teachers meetings or other SSE activities in the center. In addition, hasn't attended any coordinator meetings at the regional level. The teachers take the lead to schedule parents meetings, plan the lessons and service activities as a team without any involvement from the coordinator.

Center officers have supported the SSE coordinator's selection but none are able to communicate the concerns.

Teachers have expressed the concern of their coordinators lack of motivation and interest in engaging in SSE activities with the regional coordinator. The regional coordinator has had a couple of informal conversations with the center coordinator and conveyed the requirements of the role including commitment to be more engaged with SSE teachers and activities in the center. The regional coordinator followed up with the teachers after the conversations with the center coordinator, and the concern remains. There has been no improvement in the situation.

## VALUES

- Responsibility
- Accountability
- Leadership
- Initiative/Involvement

## KEY QUESTIONS

1. How can the center president address this issue lovingly keeping aside the personal relationships?
2. Can the teachers influence the coordinator?
3. Should the regional coordinator interfere and have an open conversation with the coordinator?
4. What is the root cause of this behavior? Who should have an open and honest conversation with the center coordinator?
5. Will a training of the officers help?

## DISCUSSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

# YOUNG ADULT COORDINATORS



## SESSION ONE: COMMUNICATION

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

Appropriate communication with Regional team/Center

### QUOTES

*“Devotion has to be guided and controlled by discipline and duty. What exactly is duty in this context? By duty I do not mean the Items of work entrusted to you by your superiors or society. Duty means the responsibility you have not to hinder or harm anyone by your movements, speech, behavior, or activities. When one walks on the street waving one's stick, one must be conscious of the man coming from behind; if you have the freedom to wave, he, too, has the same freedom, and both should behave as if they have a duty towards each other. The units of this Organization, too, have to respect other units, and help them in doing their duty. Rules are necessary until the members realize the spiritual Unity of all.” SSS 13, chapter 20. March 29, 1976*

*Always respect another's opinion and another's point of view. Do not start a quarrel at the slightest difference of opinion. He may be right and you may be wrong. Ponder over his argument; he might have had the advantage of knowing more about the subject or you may be prejudiced either for or against; or he may not know as much as you. All differences of opinion are not due to personal hatred, remember. SSS 1.24: 25-Nov-1959*

*I advise through another slogan also: "Even if you cannot oblige, you can at least speak obligingly." This means that you have to cleanse your speech of cynicism and satire and be ever sincere and sweet. You may differ from co-workers on methods and programs, but this should not leave a scar on your heart. Office-bearers in this Organization are leaders who bear the brunt themselves, guides who walk along the path they wish others to take. They shall not command or punish, they can only persuade and advise. [SSS 14.13: 22-Nov-1978]*

*Do not have any one in, who would much rather be outside the group of Sai Bhakthas, either on account of his habits or indifference towards religious matters, especially towards the directions given by Me. For, my honor is your honor, your honor is My honor. This is not your Unit, your Organization; it is Mine. In My institution, minds must mutually harmonize. The hearts of all have to be ploughed by discipline, and sowed with the seeds of Love, so that they grow into the Trees of Dedication, and yield the Fruits of Jnana. Office-bearers and Members of Sathya Sai Institutions must have Sahana (tolerance of opinions different from one's own), Sathya (Truth), Dhaya (Compassion) and Prema (Love towards all). SSS 9, chapter 33, November 22, 1969*

## EXPLORATORY SCENARIOS

1. You are halfway through your 4-year regional YA officer term. The regional selection calendar means that a new President, Vice-President, Service Coordinator, Education Coordinator and Devotional Coordinator have just been selected for your region. Your new Regional President has commented that they would like to be more hands on in the running of and decisions made in the Regional YA Program. Additionally, one of the current Regional YA Advisors has commented that they do not feel welcomed to attend some of the YA meetings. The first regional officer call for the entire team of 9 regional officers is scheduled for tomorrow, and you have requested to add an agenda item of "define responsibilities and forms/level of communication within: a) The Regional YA Team b) Between the Regional YA Team and entire Regional Officer team". What are the points you will discuss/make/cover, and what do you think good resolutions and/or takeaways should be?

2. Congratulations! You have just been selected and have started your new term as Regional YA Rep! Your Co-Rep has already been serving for 2 years and are thus part way through their term. They have recently reached some major life milestones and in the short time since you have come on board you have noticed that they are not very responsive when you reach out to them to organize upcoming events or make decisions – you have even tried multiple channels of communication such as Phone, Email, Text, WhatsApp, Hangouts, Facebook and even Snapchat but they don't respond most times and haven't provided any reasons for their lack of communication. You're starting to feel stressed now. What are good expectations regarding communication, responsiveness, dividing of duties and providing coverage/support between Regional YA Reps? And how will you approach this situation?

## VALUES

Love, Right Action, Duty, Kindness

## KEY QUESTIONS

1) Is the Regional President responsible for running the Regional YA program, or is the Regional YA Team running the YA program?

2) What are good practices in regards to the YA's participating in center and regional events and also communicating with the Regional team, particularly the Regional President

3) Should YA Advisors be welcome and encouraged to attend YA meetings, programs, service projects and other events? What should advisors do when they are not invited or told they are not needed at YA meetings and events?

4) What would good communication look like between Regional Reps and Advisors and also between the Regional YA team and the Center YA programs around the Region.



5) What should be done when things are not going well regarding communication between members of the YA Regional team and how to make course corrections and try and get things back on track?

#### DISCUSSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

## SESSION TWO: SWAMI'S EXPECTATION AND ROLE OF YOUNG ADULTS IN THE ORGANIZATION

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

Understanding the purpose of YA program

### QUOTES

*"It is the privilege and duty of the young men and women to promote the welfare, progress and peace of the world. Transform all your actions into sacred duties. Experience the love of the Divine. That is the meaning of Swami's declaration: "My life is my message." Adhere to the ideals set before you by Swami." SSS 30, Chapter 14. July 16, 1997*

*"Remember that you are the future torchbearers of Sri Sathya Sai Organizations. The elders of the organization today may be aged and have their own constraints. Youth have to take the initiative to lead the organization from the front. Each state organization should have its own youth leader to take up major responsibilities. Ensure that you keep yourself distant from politics. Work for the welfare and progress of society. That is the greatest sadhana." SSS 32, Chapter 14, 21 November 1999*

*"I find many young people here. I am glad that the Seva Samithi (service society) has given them this valuable experience. There are men volunteers and lady volunteers' so I must tell you another point on which I am very particular. You must consider others as your own brothers or sisters. I dislike flippant prattle, casual conversation and even face to face grouping of men and women, at all times, and more specially during spiritual gatherings or occasions. You must be models of straight and courteous behavior. You must be good and appear good to everyone. External beauty and charm are flimsy, they are ephemeral. Real beauty consists in virtue, self-control and selflessness. Sundaram (beauty) arises from Shivam (goodness) and Shivam from Sathyam (Truth). Be guided by this rule." [SSS Vol.07 Ch.14]*

### EXPLORATORY SCENARIOS

- 1) You have been asked to help with some concerns that some of the devotees have expressed about some things that they have noticed at regional YA meetings and other YA programs (such as YA service projects). Some devotees have raised that there is what they believe is too much male / female interaction during the breaks at YA events, and you have also been approached with some comments that there may be too many social activities with the YA's at your center and region (examples given are that many YA's meet for dinner, going on hikes, or going to the movies). These devotees are concerned that the YA program at some

centers and the region have developed into something that involves meetings of more of a social nature and less of ones that have a spiritual foundation. This small group of young adults and adults have also commented that many of the gents and some of the ladies do not seem to dress the way that they feel should be appropriate for center meetings and YA programs (examples given are that some YAs wear torn jeans or other attire that is not appropriate for Sai YA's at official events, and most of the YA men do not come to the center dressed in whites, like other devotees at the center have been). How will you proceed to evaluate and act/respond?

- 2) Regional Center Officer Selections were completed several months ago. Your Regional President and a few Center Presidents have noticed that some Regional events (service projects, programs, etc) and Center events (service projects, programs, etc) been impacted since some YA events (service projects, programs, etc) happen at the same time as some Center and Regional events. They are curious why the YA's need to have separate events when there is plenty to do already. Looking into it, you find that at present many of the YA's in the region, especially the Regional YA officers and Center YA reps are serving at many Center service projects and Regional service projects, but other YA's are serving mostly at YA led service projects and not helping at center or Regional service projects. Center presidents have also pointed out that not all YA's in the region are regularly attending any Sai Center meetings and said that according to the guidelines the YA's are supposed to attend their local Sai Center. How would you discuss these topics and work thru these challenges with your Regional President and the other Center Presidents? And how would you discuss these points with YA Center reps and with the YA's in general?

## VALUES

Right Action, Responsibility, Duty

## KEY QUESTIONS

- 1) What is Swami's expectation of male female interaction at center events or other YA activities in USA?
- 2) What exactly is the dress code for men and women at the center and also for Sai events in USA?
- 3) Why have the Young Adults been given the opportunity to have separate meetings, programs and service projects, and what is the best way that they can do this and at the same time not be viewed as a parallel organization or viewed as not being part of the regular SSIO?

4) What is the best way for Regional and Center YA reps and advisors to handle situation where the Regional President or other regional or Center officers bring up the fact that they have noticed that many or most YA's are not attending their Sai Center or Regional events?

5) How should YA events be scheduled in terms of the broader Center and/or Regional calendar? What should be the scheduling priorities?

6) How can you encourage YA participation in both YA and broader Center and/or Regional events without it being perceived as pushy or demanding by the YAs?

#### DISCUSSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

## SESSION THREE: MOTIVATION AND DELEGATION

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

Developing Young Adult Leaders

### QUOTES

*"Do not waver, hesitate or doubt your destiny. Yearn to realize your Reality; that yearning itself will endow you with steady endeavor and the Grace of God which will remove all obstacles. Be an example to others. Do not scatter advice, without the authority born of practical experience. Do not search for the faults of others; seek your own. Love, co-operate, help, serve. That is your prime duty, as leaders of the Sathya Sai Units in your villages."* SSS 9, chapter 35. November 22, 1969

*Swami Kaarunyaanandha declared yesterday that he believed for a long time that those who lived in previous Ages were far more fortunate than those of this Age, since they could secure the darshan (direct sight) of the Incarnation of the Lord. But he said, it has now become clear to him that there is no generation more fortunate than his; that declaration is true. It is thrice true. For during no previous Age did man have this unique chance. No organization of this nature was established, no Conference of this character was held in the Presence and no opportunity was given then to derive Ananda through such close association, through conversation and singing together. Undoubtedly, you are all singularly fortunate.*

*Therefore, do not let the opportunity slip through your hands. Hold fast to it and make the best of it. With steady faith and enthusiastic devotional activity, tread the path indicated and reach the Goal of Realizing the Reality. I bless you that you may attain the Bliss of that Realization.* SSS 10, chapter 35. November 22, 1970

*"Tell me your company, and I'll tell you what you are."*

*"Only Youth can transform Youth"* In a Divine Discourse from 1985, Swami stresses on the importance of the role of youth in Grama Seva: *"Youth alone can transform youth. The youth of the villages will be inspired when they find you, graduate and post-graduate students, in Khaki work clothes, evincing practical interest in the cleanliness of the environs, the health of the villagers and in fulfilling their needs."*

### EXPLORATORY SCENARIO

1) As a regional YA rep, you have scheduled a regional YA meeting on a Saturday afternoon. A couple of days before the meeting, a family/school/work commitment arises and it's not something you can cancel. What can/do you do? You're feeling overwhelmed with rep duties

and are considering delegating more and sharing responsibilities with other young adults in your region. What are good ways to delegate? Please share examples.

2) The YA group you lead is well established with key individuals that you can count on to lead various offerings. However, some of the new YAs would also like to participate but feel left out. How will you balance program quality and at the same time involve everyone (new and experienced)?

## VALUES

Love, Sincerity

## KEY QUESTIONS

1) How does everyone benefit from delegating and sharing responsibilities? Please share experiences and examples?

2) How does one balance Sai activity duties with duties at work, family, and school?

3) What are ways that older more experienced YA's can mentor those who are younger or have less experience?

## DISCUSSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

