



# YOUTH PUBLIC MEETING REPORT



DECEMBER 8TH, 2018

RALEIGH - NC

# YOUTH PUBLIC MEETING

On December 8th, 2018, the Sathya Sai Center of Raleigh, NC, in partnership with Unity of the Triangle, hosted a public meeting for the young adults of the community. Previously, Sai Manickam, the local YA advisor, had spoken at Unity Church about the Universal teachings of Sathya Sai Baba. Impressed with his presentation, Reverend Neusom Holmes and Reverend Ana Quintana Bird recommended the workshop to youth members from their church. Flyers posted at the local colleges also helped to recruit other youth, including two college students from the local Muslim community.

The theme of the meeting was *“Discover your Potential, Empower Yourself!”* Dr. Joe Phaneuf, the National Young Adult Advisor, Sai Manickam, the Raleigh YA Advisor, and the local Raleigh Center YA team and adults worked together to make this program a success. Dr. Joe expertly led participants through the program with interactive workshops, thought-provoking group discussions, and engaging them musically.

There were four sessions which focused on human values such as love, kindness, compassion, and gratitude, and we discussed the benefits of living in the present, and connecting with our inner divinity to manifest our true potential.

The event was attended by 70 youth, ranging from high school students to working individuals who were all from various organizations and backgrounds such as the Raleigh Sai Center, Unity of the Triangle Church, Duke, UNC Chapel Hill, and many more. Everyone truly learned how to become beacons of positivity while also learning the importance of unity.



The Secret to Happiness workshop focused on the importance of living in the present moment. Without worrying about the future and fretting about the past, we can enjoy life with less stress. On that note, we practiced a few exercises and had a series of small group discussions. For one of the activities, the participants were instructed to close their eyes, focus on their breath and on each inhalation think “Present Moment” and on exhalation think “Wonderful Moment”. Some of the other exercises given were writing diary entries every morning on nine things one is thankful for, taking a stroll outside for fifteen minutes every day, and being thankful for all the blessing in one’s life, including the surroundings.

The other two workshops were: *Dare to be Divine by practicing Loving Communication*, and *Manifesting our Unlimited Potential by connecting to our Divine Source*.

To help us focus on Daring to be Divine in Communication the following quote helped guide our focus and practice of loving communication:

*“This is Advaita (Non-duality, it also means that we all have the same spark of Divinity at our very core, and that everyone’s true nature is Love) in practice. Treat all as divine sparks of divinity and yourself too as a spark of divinity. The difficulty is when the other person is behaving badly. At that time, you remain the person who is behaving in a nice manner and with Love.”*

Giving examples such as Mother Teresa, parents, and so on, we realized that seeing divinity allows an individual to do service to everyone, hence: “Love all Serve all” and “Help Ever Hurt Never” can be practiced daily in our communication. In connection with seeing divinity in all, an acronym was given to help us to pause and think before speaking.

- T- is it truthful?
- H- will it hurt anyone?
- I- will it improve silence?
- N- is it necessary?
- K- is it kind?



We also talked about the importance of the concept ‘First Understanding, Then Adjustment’ when communicating with others. We had a small group exercise where we practiced active listening to help us truly understand what another person is saying and what they are feeling. This methodology can also be used to help when we have different viewpoints and are trying to resolve conflicts.

### How to Check for Understanding and effectively discuss different viewpoints:

**Method One:** 5 steps when faced with a difficult communication challenge:

1. Listen carefully remembering we are speaking to another “spark of divinity”
2. Express empathy: “Seems like...” or “Sounds like...”
3. Summarize what the other person has said.
4. Validate what the other person has said, even if we don’t agree,
5. and then bridge to our own viewpoint.

For example, when discussing different viewpoints at an office meeting the conversation might go something like; “Based on what you said I can see why you think this is the best course of action, And (positive bridge, rather than a negative bridge such as “But”) I just want to share another approach that you might be interested in considering” and then share our viewpoint.



**Method Two:** When faced with a difficult communication challenge:

1. Remember who we are speaking to (*the Divinity within that person*) and ask God to help us speak with love to that person.

When we remember the divinity in the other person and we ask God to speak thru us, we automatically will listen patiently and will speak with love, reverence, and respect. This will help us work through the most difficult of communication challenges.

The participants were given an opportunity to practice both methods after an initial listening exercise in which they learned how to be a good active listener without interrupting and immediately hijacking the conversation to our own agenda. The initial exercise had each person paired with another person, and the speaker discussed an emotionally charged situation in their life which was either positive or negative issue for 2 minutes. The other person was told to practice active listening which involves mostly listening without interrupting. Saying things like “Yes, tell me more”, “Oh that sounds difficult, or that sounds really nice” or you might ask for clarification, if something was said that you did not understand.

Next, the other person was given two minutes to practice some of the steps to understanding what the other person was saying and feeling by expressing empathy, summarizing what the other person said and validating their viewpoint. This exercise proved vital as it allowed everyone to practice listening and processing the information given by another person prior to voicing one’s own thoughts. Many found this activity helpful because it proved that it can sometimes be difficult to let the speaker tell their whole story without interruptions.

*We then ended this segment with two more pearls of loving communication*

1. *“Speak the truth in a pleasant way and avoid speaking an unpleasant truth when possible.”*

The importance being that hurtful words cannot be taken back and can result in a wounding the heart of another individual

2. One of the best ways to communicate and to spread our love and light to everyone we meet is to smile while we are speaking and even when we are not speaking.

To help us end this segment on a positive note and emphasize the importance of spreading our love and light to the world we sang “This little light of mine” together.

The final workshop was called Trusting our Heart and Our Inner Voice, and we began by a discussion of the book The Four Agreements, which discusses personal freedoms to live a satisfying and happy life.

1. **Be impeccable with your word** – Always follow thru and remember that whatever we say we are going to do we should do.
2. **Do not take things personally** – People may say negative things about us, we should reflect on them and if they point out faults we can change and improve ourselves, otherwise if accusations not true they should not bother us, they are just test from God which we have to pass thru.
3. **Do not make assumptions** – We cannot read other people’s minds and we should practice the steps noted in the communication section and make sure we understand what people want or need
4. **Be your best** – We should always do our best in each and every moment of our lives and give importance to doing in small things with proper attention and doing them well.

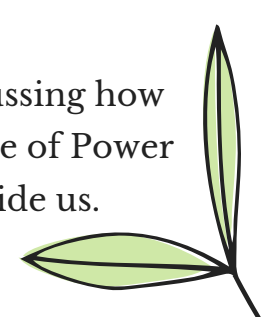
Dr. Joe showed us that these four agreements help us to recognize and manifest the truth that everything we see is the one divinity that exists in all of creation. This allows us to live in the present, and in turn live happily.

We finished this section by discussing how we can tap into the Divine Source of Power and Wisdom that we all have inside us.

When we are able to do this our conscience will always lead us to make good decisions in life, and when we follow our conscience we will have inner satisfaction and happiness and be successful in life.

**This meeting not only opened minds to concepts of spirituality but also united the melting pot!**

One uniting aspect of the meeting was the music. People often refer to music as the universal language and that saying was exemplified at the meeting. Music sessions with Dr. Joe sparked unity among everyone in the room. A Unity of Triangle pakhavaj player and a local Raleigh Sai Center tabla player held a percussion program together. This session revealed cooperation between people of two different cultures enjoying the same passion for music. Dr. Joe’s interactive activities served as a way to meet new people and it allowed attendees to become accustomed to finding commonalities between outwardly different people. There were lots of opportunities to connect throughout the entire workshop, even during lunch. Participants found lots of common ground in terms of shared values, morals, spiritual and even religious beliefs. A youth from the Muslim Student Association read a poem that was shared in Arabic. Even though many couldn’t understand it,





they could feel her passion through her voice. She also shared an English translation after reading her beautiful poem in Arabic. The interactive music performance, serving as the finale, provided a blend of various cultures including an opera singer to lift everyone to heaven with her angelic voice. The pieces from this musical presentation ranged from popular Disney songs, opera songs, Amazing Grace, Spanish Bhajans, and Christmas carols. By the end, everyone was either clapping, singing, or both!

**For audio recordings, please [click here](#)**





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