

# Placing a Ceiling on Our Desires

This is just a brief overview of some of the many aspects of the "Ceiling on Desires Program" which was created by [Sathya Sai Baba](#) as a means of introducing a moderate form of self-control over our various desires. This results in greater self-mastery and allows us to have more time and money for other beneficial things, including helping others. Amazingly enough, this also results in more self-confidence, inner peace, and inner satisfaction. And it doesn't mean that we're not to have fun in life! We have more fun than ever!

## But Why Rein In Our Desires?

Before we start, one of the first things we might want to do is ask ourselves: "What's the big deal about reining in our desires anyway? Don't we want to have fun? Do we want life to be some sort of ho-hum, boring existence, with all sorts of do's and don'ts, and burdensome restrictions, regulations and limits? I thought we're supposed to be "unlimited spiritual beings" who are born to "transcend" all limits?"

## An Interesting Insight

Well, one of the many reasons that we've embodied at the physical vibratory level is so that we can grow spiritually as we strengthen our "spiritual muscles" by doing the "difficult thing". It's like an athlete that wants to strengthen their physical muscles. They need to "workout" by pushing their physical muscles against some sort of resistance - lifting weights, pedalling a bike, rowing a boat, running, or whatever. They need to "push themselves", in order to make progress. Spiritually we need to do the same thing. In fact, one of the main reasons that we've embodied on a physical planet in physical bodies is to encounter something called the "Law of Resistance".

## What's the "Law of Resistance"?

It's simply that force that we encounter every moment of our lives that forces us to "make an effort" in order to get anywhere, or achieve anything worthwhile. In fact, it's that force that sometimes we would like to have a little less of. And yet, it is this same force that makes it possible for us to grow spiritually. When we're in some of the higher, non-physical spiritual realms, we do not necessarily encounter this force the same way we do down here. The lessons learned in those more ethereal realms are simply different ones. Perhaps we are learning divine creativity in creating deeply inspiring and uplifting music or art, or something else, and it seems absolutely effortless to do so. But down here, it's not that way. It's all about the "Law of Resistance" and making an effort. And the amazing thing is, that as we "make the effort" to break free of the kind of control various desires so often have over us, we actually grow in "soul strength"! In fact, that is one of the principle ways in which we grow spiritually!

## So how does "Setting a Ceiling on Our Desires" help?

It's real simple. "Desires" can sometimes distract us from our real purpose in life. They can "delay" us, if you will. They're not necessarily "bad" in and of themselves, but if we're not careful, we can become so caught up in them, that we forget why we're here, and thus we

waste another precious lifetime. And we may have to wait a long, long time until we get another one. In fact, that's one of the main reasons why Krishna, the Buddha, and Jesus came down here of their own free will to help us. They literally came to "save" us, from getting too bogged down in desires that distract us from our true purpose in life. That's one of the reasons why they always seem to be talking about not being so selfish and self-centered.

## **So How Do We Start?**

The way to start is by setting some gentle limits on some of our desires. Then, as we experience the joy and inner satisfaction as we become stronger in the Light and become more experienced spiritual aspirants, we gradually increase these limits. That way we can stay in our "comfort zone" and still make steady spiritual progress. Believe it or not, we actually become happier, the farther we progress!

## **Everyone is Different**

Before we go any further, it's helpful to note that since everyone is unique, and since we all come from different spiritual, cultural, family, personality, and educational backgrounds, what is going to "feel right" for one person, may not "feel right" for another person. So each person needs to identify their own challenges; set their own goals; and progress accordingly. It's also helpful to know that since each of us is unique, each of us will progress at different rates in different areas of behavior and desire. In fact, one person may progress very rapidly in one direction, and yet seem unaccountably slow in another area. While another person may be exactly the opposite and progress quickly in the area that the former person found difficult, but is slow in the area the other person found relatively easy. So we all need to give each other a break and avoid looking over our shoulders to see how everyone else is doing. It's really none of our business, and it's like comparing "apples and oranges" anyway, so it doesn't get us very far.

## **Okay, so where do we begin?**

Well, we begin wherever we're at! All we have to do is take a close look at how we're spending our spare time and consider what activities or desires it might be a good idea to curtail a little. Again, this will vary from person to person, and what one person is doing is never the business of another person. And of course, different people will naturally chose different starting levels for their "ceiling" for a particular desire, but we all have to start somewhere.

## **But we want to try to avoid the kinds of "cheating" illustrated by the following funny anecdote:**

"My therapist told me that the way to achieve true inner peace is to finish what I start.

So far today, I have finished two bags of chips and a chocolate cake!

I feel better already!"

## **Okay, let's have an example:**

Let's say we have our heart set on doing some "fun thing" and spending our hard earned money and time to do it. And everything is going along splendidly, and there doesn't seem to be any "obstacles" getting in our way. But, let's say that as we're getting everything ready, we happen to run into someone who really, really needs our help. Maybe they've hurt themselves in some way; maybe they're lost; maybe they're lonely - whatever. Here's the rub. In order to help them, we need to take at least a little of our precious time in order to help them out. This of course puts us in the classic bind. Are we willing to sacrifice at least a little bit of our "fun", in order to help someone else in need? Usually the more we're willing to do this, the more we grow spiritually. This is not to say that we're not supposed to enjoy life! We are! But, we need to be balanced about it, and when it feels right in heart, help out our sisters and brothers of earth along the way!

## **Let's give a more concrete example.**

Let's say that on the weekends we like to go out with friends and share a meal together. Now, there's nothing wrong with having a nice meal, and it's a lot of fun to be eating with our friends. But, let's say, just once a month we do something a little less expensive, and use the money we saved, to instead help a homeless shelter, or contribute to a fund that helps children in Africa. This is especially inspiring, if we're in a position to see how we're really making a difference in their life. In fact, the feeling that we get from doing the selfless act of generosity, is often even better than eating the nice meal! And it's not like we can't still go out with our friends to a nice restaurant almost as often. It's just that we're occasionally substituting a new activity that gives us even more satisfaction, because we've just helped someone else out. It also feels good because we've just successfully made an effort to govern some of our "desires", and have thus strengthened our spiritual muscles of "self-control". It kind of makes us feel that life is worth living.

## **So what has just happened here?**

Well, we've just set a "ceiling" on one of our desires! Instead of eating out at a nice restaurant with our friends four times a month, we're "limiting it" to three times a month, and then doing something else on the fourth day that's just as fun, but at the same time, saving some of the money we would have spent on the meal to help someone less fortunate than ourselves!

## **Making Time to Help Others**

The previous "going out to dinner" example was about setting a "ceiling on our desires" that saved some money that we could use to help others. What would be a good example of setting aside some of our time to help others? Let's say that we play a musical instrument - perhaps the violin - and we know of a program that needs volunteers to help disadvantaged youngsters to learn to play musical instruments. In this case, instead of setting aside money, we set aside time. Let's say that instead of spending an extra four hours watching television or surfing on the internet each week, we spend those same four hours helping a youngster that ordinarily would never be able to afford violin lessons. We don't have to spend the whole day doing it. Just some prep time; travel time; and an hour or two with the youngster. And there's something special about seeing the progress someone makes when you're helping

them. And how does it make us feel about ourselves? Fantastic! And in a different way than anything else could! And who knows, we may even make a new friend in the process! So here again, we've set a "ceiling" on some desire, but this time it involved "time", and we used that extra time to help someone else out.

### **And this introduces an important principle:**

**Setting a Ceiling on Some of Our Desires is not about making our life less fun; it's about making our life more fun and satisfying while feeling more self-confident because we now have more self-control!**

### **Barking Up the Wrong Tree While Looking for Fun**

We all want to have fun. There's nothing wrong with that. But we sometimes are simply barking up the wrong tree, when we're looking for fun. And sometimes we get stuck in a rut and keep on barking, and barking, and barking up that wrong tree - and then wonder why we feel kind of empty inside and kind of sad. Well, how do we get out of the rut and find a more fruitful tree? One thing we can do is to simply look around and see where we can do some good! It may be a family member who needs loving care or emotional support. It may be a friend. Or it may even be a complete stranger. It doesn't really matter much who it is. But generally the more they really, really need our help, the better we feel when we're helping them out. And happiness is what it's all about!

### **And the sky's the limit on where, when, and how we can help out!**

We can volunteer to work with Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts; help with a youth group; help in a local homeless shelter or soup kitchen; help in some already established volunteer program; teach swimming lessons; help people that are physically or mentally challenged; volunteer at a Hospice center; play our guitar and sing in an "old folks home"; bring in your kind, gentle dog to an "old folks home" to let them pet him or her; or just see a need in our local community and start filling it. In fact, we can just spend more quality time with our family. Another invaluable thing that we can do without even leaving our homes is simply to sincerely pray for various good causes such as for: world peace; the victory of the Light over darkness on our planet; for divinely inspired leaders to be elected worldwide; for the protection and nurturing of the environment; to inspire scientists to come up with new, non-polluting energy sources; to inspire musicians, singers and artists to create soothing, uplifting, inspiring beautiful music and art that promotes kindness and compassion; to pray for the sick worldwide; etc. The nice thing about praying, is that we can do it even if we don't have the physical ability, finances, transportation or time to do any of the other kinds of "seva" (selfless service) for others. So we don't need to go all the way to some Third World country in order to help out - although that too might be a life changing experience that we would treasure the rest of our lives. Remember, the sky's the limit!

### **Summary**

So now we can discover a new kind of inner strength, peace, happiness, self-confidence and satisfaction that comes from gradually setting some gentle ceilings on our desires while little by little transforming our life into one of selfless service to humanity.

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