

Social media and values

Topic 1: Ceiling on Desires and Social Media

(Note that this is also an out-of-class activity designed to encourage students to put the values into practice in their out-of-school lives.)

Sathya Sai Baba introduced the idea of Ceiling on Desires (CoD). Some information and quotations are below.

- Introduce students to the concept of CoD (see below).
- Introduce a challenge: Social Media CoD. This can be for 1-2 weeks or one month, depending on the level of the students' motivation at first.
- We are not asking them to give up use of social media completely, but rather to put a ceiling/a limit for the duration of the project. This limit can be agreed upon by the class.
- Make a pledge, as a class, to keep to the limit for the length of the project.
- Discuss as a class what they can do to spend the time they have saved from reducing the time spent on social media. It could be a community service project, doing something to help at home, learning a new hobby,
- Put a chart on the wall with students' names. Check with them each day; those who have managed to keep to their limit can be rewarded, eg with a star put beside their name.
- From time to time during the project, ask students to reflect on their experiences. How do they feel about restricting the social media? How do they feel about spending the time doing other things? Has this had any positive effects on anyone else, such as family members?
- Keep on discussing and encouraging the students to participate. Even if they seem reluctant, persevere.

Suggestion 2

Rather than just asking students to put a ceiling on the time they spend on social media, ask them to think about putting a ceiling on the ineffective time.

- Are you chatting effectively to your friends or just chatting indiscriminantly? What does it mean to you to chat effectively? What is indiscriminate chatting? (examples might include sending photos of everything you eat, reading everything that is posted by people you don't know even if it doesn't particularly interest you.... Ask the students to brainstorm about others.)
- As a class, decide some conditions to put onto your social media time to use it more effectively. For example, a condition might be that you will use your time to get to know your friends rather than indiscriminantly chatting. What do you want to find out about your friend? What questions can you use to find out?
- As part of the Ceiling on Desires project, practice (for a length of time decided by the class, eg 1 week, 2 weeks, 1 month) using the conditions agreed upon to use your time more effectively. Encourage students to report on their progress and to keep records (as above).

Ceiling on Desires: Some Introductory Information

Quotations by Sathya Sai Baba (from Krystal, 2009)

We constantly strive in various ways to elevate our status and condition. As we succeed in one effort we seek success in another, and so it goes on. But what is the hall-mark of a true human being? Human life is bound up with gains and losses, ups and downs. We have to face them. Incidentally, we have to suffer blows of one sort or another. The only true human beings are those who overcome these challenges with fortitude. What is the reason for vicissitudes in our lives? The cause is to be found in our desires. Doubtless, desires are inescapable. One person, for instance, seeks to achieve some ideals. Another may seek to do well in study and get a good job. Yet another may desire to get a good name and bring up a good family. There is nothing wrong in such desires. But what we are witnessing these days is the limitless growth of desires. As a consequence, we fall into bad ways. There should be limits to every desire. There should be a limit even to the pursuit of power and position. It has been well said, "There can be nothing great without restraints". Without restraints we are bound to go astray.

Do not waste precious time and life on impermanent pleasures. Have some control, a ceiling on your desires.

Today we appear to relish only pleasures derived from the senses. Every person is filled with various desires. As we grow we become headstrong. We fail to realize the true purpose of education. We develop ambitions to become great scholars, singers, actors or businesspeople. We are caught up in a bewildering maze of desires. As a result we become slaves to our impure desires and forget our true human worth. While birds and animals are content to live on what they can get, humans alone have insatiable desires and are filled with greed. There should be a limit to one's acquisitiveness and desires. It is not necessary to give up everything but excess of anything is harmful and should be avoided.

When children are born they are innocent of all desires. As they grow older, desires multiply. These desires have to be kept within limits. Life is a long journey and the less luggage you carry, the greater the comfort. Reducing desires is the true mark of civilization. Education should lead to restraint on desires.

People today embark on actions in the expectation of what they can get from society and not what they can offer it. This is not the right attitude. Each one should ask, "What is it that society can receive from me? What good can it get from me?" Actions should be undertaken with this high-minded attitude. Desire makes one incapable of having such a large-hearted view.

The desire for worldly objects can plunge one in endless misery. Desires are like a green pumpkin which will sink in water. A desireless person will be like a dried pumpkin which will float on water.

Other quotes

Desires are the cause of all Sorrow. (The Buddha)

There is enough in the world for everyone's needs, but not enough for every one's greed.
(Mahatma Gandhi)

Things for the teacher to say (several times a day to remind students constantly)

- Talk to the students about the quotations above and deliver their messages as often as you can.
- There is a shocking amount of waste and we must learn how to discipline ourselves to impose limits on waste, particularly in the areas of money, food, time and energy. (Krystal, 2009, p.1)
- The Ceiling on Desires Programme has been designed to help each individual, and therefore each family, to live a happier life. Instead of wasting life and its gifts on unhealthy pursuits, it will guide people to exercise care in the expenditure of money, and the use of time, energy and food. (Krystal, 2009, p.2)
- Sathya Sai Baba is asking each of us if any or all of these four areas are being wasted in nonessential or unhealthy ways, or if they are being used wisely for the benefit of each individual or family. In addition, are we allowing sufficient money, time, energy and food to be used in selfless service to help others in less fortunate circumstances? These are the questions each of us needs to ask, if we wish to call ourselves human beings. (Krystal, 2009, p.2)
- It is not sufficient to just assuage our consciences by giving money to charitable and humanitarian organizations, without undertaking the personal discipline of reducing waste in our lives. (Krystal, 2009, pp.2-3)
- **Money**, if used appropriately, can enhance our lives but it can be harmful if we are attached to it and believe money to be the source of our security and happiness (Krystal, 2009, p.5). If we become so attached to what money can buy that we equate our worth with how much money and material things we possess, we can develop the negative quality of **pride** (Krystal, 2009, p.5). If we have excessive desire for more than we need, we can develop **greed** (Krystal, 2009, p.6). **Jealousy** and **envy** can arise if somebody has something that we think we want (Krystal, 2009, p.6).
- **Food**: Even when there is an abundance of food available, people these days are suffering from malnutrition because they eat unsuitable food, junk food, etc. Another aspect of junk food is that it leaves those who eat it still hungry (Krystal, 2009, pp.13-14).