

# Conference Materials

## Junior Youth

*These materials were created to fit the 12-14 year old age group. It should be modified to fit different realities. It is hoped that this can assist with connecting the themes of the materials and the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program.*

### Introduction

- Name
- Ages
- Favorite form of art

*It may be helpful for facilitators to make note of names, ages and favorite form of art to assist with the formation of Junior Youth Groups post-conference.*

### Bahá'u'lláh's Vision for Humanity

- The purpose of humanity/creation (i.e., true religion)

Bahá'u'lláh states that “the purpose for which mortal men have, from utter nothingness, stepped into the realm of being, is that they may work for the betterment of the world and live together in concord and harmony.” He has revealed teachings that make this possible.<sup>1</sup>

**“...let your heart burn with loving kindness for all who may cross your path”**  
-‘Abdu'l-Bahá

Building a society that consciously pursues this collective purpose is the work of not only this generation, but of many generations to come, and Bahá'u'lláh's followers welcome all who labor alongside them in this undertaking.<sup>2</sup>

- Raising vibrant communities that are contributing to spiritual and material progress

It means learning how to raise up vibrant, outward-looking communities; it means those communities learning how to bring about spiritual and material progress; it means learning how to contribute to the discourses that influence the direction of that progress.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Universal House of Justice, from a message dated 30 December 2021 to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

*Discussion Questions*

- What are the different ways your community is working for the betterment of the world?
- What are the positive qualities of your community?
- What hopes do you have for your community?
- In what ways are you and your peers supported?
- How do you support others (family, school, activities, etc.)?
- Why is it important to encourage young people to think about their contribution to their community?

*Facilitators are encouraged to utilize these questions as ways to initiate conversation and add additional questions that relate closer to the reality of the junior youth. To engage the junior youth further it would be helpful to have large sticky paper to take group notes on.*

**Activity**

- Mural
  - Prep: Large poster paper or paper roll, markers, paint, pencils, crayons and ruler.
  - Creating one large mural that shares the characteristics of a vibrant community. Junior Youth should be encouraged to think about their own areas or a vibrant community that they resonate with. Afterwards, the whole group takes turns to share what they did and why.
- Combating forces - This activity can be done together or in smaller groups
  - Prep: If the wall of the room is not available for things to be taped onto it- a large poster board will do. Write out 20-40 attributes, characteristics or capacities and their definition on index cards. Pieces of paper- ideally 3-5 per person. Pens or pencils.
  - Ask each junior youth to write down on each piece of paper 3-5 obstacles or needs of their community. Afterwards, collect all papers, mix it up and pass it back out. Index cards should be either taped to the wall or board. Each group or individual will read through the obstacle(s) and identify an index card that they think would assist in combating that force. The pieces of paper can be taped onto the index cards.
    - For example:
      - Index card: Kindness
      - Obstacle: School Bullying
- Music
  - Create a song based on the quotation above

## Building vibrant communities

Watch <https://youtu.be/ZCHrqwoXhSE> - Frontiers of Learning (Canada)

- The characteristics of a vibrant community

...Bahá'ís are engaged in cities and villages across the globe in establishing a pattern of life in which increasing numbers, irrespective of background, are invited to take part... This pattern of community life is giving rise to vibrant and purposeful new communities wherein relationships are founded on the oneness of mankind, universal participation, justice, and freedom from prejudice. All are welcome.<sup>4</sup>

### Discussion Questions

- What are different ways to welcome people when they are being left out?
- How do you encourage others to participate in building a more vibrant community?
- What effects does it have on a community when everyone is welcomed to contribute?

*Read lesson VIII from Walking The Straight Path and answer questions as a group*

Memorize

**“Shut your eyes to estrangement, then fix your gaze upon unity” - Bahá'u'lláh**

### Activity

- Music
  - Create a song based on the quotation above
- Yurt Circle
  - Choose a clear and open space for this activity, as participants are likely to fall forward and backwards. Participants should stand in a circle facing inward and holding hands. Then step backwards until everyone is stretched out but still able to have a firm grip on the two people whose hands they are holding. Everyone needs to keep their feet planted and lean back as far as they can. They must use the group to maintain their balance. Once they have done this, number off the groups into 1s and 2s, alternating around the circle. Then, have the 1s lean in and the 2s lean out at the same time. Each person should be able to lean in or out while be held up by their neighbors

*It may be helpful for facilitators to reflect with the junior youth about the effects of someone letting go, being pushed out or excluded*

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<sup>4</sup> From a letter dated 27 December 2017 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer

## Educational endeavours and the training institute

- The centrality of education

The importance of education to a Bahá'í conception of spiritual and social transformation can hardly be overestimated. “Consider”, Bahá'u'lláh states, “the revelation of the light of the Name of God, the Educator.”<sup>5</sup>

**Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom.**<sup>6</sup>

### Discussion Questions

- How does society view your generation?
- What would communities look like if they “Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value”?

### Activity

- Rich in gems
  - Prep: canvas or poster, markers, paint, and pencil
  - Each participant will receive a canvas or poster and will trace their hand (right or left). Each person will then pass their hand to the next person and that receiver will write a quality/attribute/capacity that they recognize within the person of whom the hand belongs to. This should keep going until the hand is fully covered.
- Human knot
  - Everyone stands in a circle and reaches out to shake hands with other participants, with each hand connecting to a different person, creating a “human knot.” Then the participants attempt to unthread their bodies without letting go of each other’s hands.
- Music
  - Create a song based on the quotation above

*It may be helpful for facilitators to think about the previous themes and what has already been shared from the junior youth. This may be an opportunity to introduce the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program to the group and share the potential for them to start their own junior youth group with their peers.*

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<sup>5</sup> The Universal House of Justice, from a message dated 30 December 2021 to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors

<sup>6</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 162

### The Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program

- For young people between 12-14
- Program helps junior youth form a strong moral identity and empowers them to contribute to the well-being of their communities and the world at large.
- Develop spiritual perception, power of expression, navigate choices through moral reasoning and strengthen their capacity to serve their community
- The groups are facilitated by “animators”. They serve as a guiding friend and wise advisor
- The animator and participants learn from each other in a participatory mode of learning. Groups of participants engage in activities such as discussion, drama, artistic expression, cooperative games, study of literature, storytelling and acts of community service.

### Potential short videos to watch

- <https://youtu.be/UIkD2hwALj8> - Teen helps younger youth to love service
- <https://youtu.be/ZW8y5jKK5dE>- Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program
- <https://youtu.be/IrfGBM0kGfc> - What is the Junior Youth Program?
- <https://youtu.be/SOmbS0S7bpU>- Calling all youth