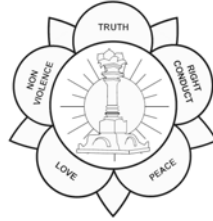


Om Sri Sai Ram



**Sai Spiritual Education
Group 4 – Ages 15-17
“Blossoming into Sai Youth”**

‘The age span 16 – 30 is crucial, for that is the period when life adds sweetness to itself, when talents, skills and attitudes are accumulated, sublimated and sanctified. If the tonic of unselfish service is administered to the mind during this period, life’s mission is fulfilled for the process of sublimation and sanctification will be hastened by this tonic’.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Introduction:

There is growing awareness around the world, that youth of the age group from 15 to 21 years, are becoming the most susceptible victims of societies and environments that are unable to stop the relentless forces of declining and negative human values.

Sai youth who are brought up to behave in a dutiful, disciplined manner, also crumble in the face of varied surmounting challenges faced by pressure at school, work and community.

In many Sai Centres around the world, the post Group III SSE students are becoming the so called ‘drop out’ generation. These youth find that they have outgrown the SSE Stage, yet they are too young to mix with the SAI Young Adult/Youth group.

It is important that these youthful teens should not be left to fend for themselves without any guidance during these transitional and turbulent years of their lives.

History:

May 1, 2009

- It was at the World Youth Conference held in Prasanthi in 1997 that the problems faced by teen youth were recognized. The solution was the introduction of special teen youth programs.
- In Nov 2000 at the World Conference, one of the resolutions of the youth, focused on ‘teen youth’ was read as follows:
‘To address the drop out rate of youth in the Sathya Sai Organization, particularly in their teens, after finishing SSE/Bal Vikas, a Teen Youth Program module be presented by the Sathya Sai Organisation in 2001’.
- To this end, the Youth Wing in Canada, developed a formalized ‘teen youth program’ at the national level in 2004 under the leadership of Dr Aroon Yusuf.
- At the Sri Sathya Sai World Education Conference held in July 2008, Swami approved ‘the expansion of SSE classes to accommodate the age group 15 -18 years consisting of teenagers who are too old for Group III SSE and too young for the Sai Youth group’.

We see an overlap between the WYC and WEC in the age groups. To accommodate this overlap, the Sri Sathya Sai Organization in Canada decided to include teens of ages 15-17 under SSE Group 4.

The Group IV student:

Let us look at the difference that exists between a regular SSE student and a Group IV student.

SSE Student	Group IV Student
1: Will listen to given instructions.	1: Questions and resists authority
2: Usually will conform, with rules or general custom.	2: Struggles to establish their independence and identity.
3: Less influenced by environment.	3: More easily influenced; concerned about acceptance and approval by peers, popularity and ability to attract the opposite sex;
4: Respect for parents and elders.	4: Tends to treat parents and elders as peers.
5: More relaxed school environment.	5: Heavy exam oriented pressure environment; more anxious about academic success
6: Less problematic.	6: More problematic; self conscious and easily embarrassed - emotional mostly developing boy/girl relationships/ Discovering their own sexuality.
7: Likes to do handicrafts, drawings.	7: Age of experimentation

	- Likes to do their own thing to please teacher and parents. -Less parent- oriented but more peer- oriented.
8: Satisfied with attention at home - TV, video, games and outings with parents.	8: Attracted by movies, discos, modern music and dance. Less inclined for parental outings: More for peer or boy/girl outings.

The Group IV program has to attempt to hold the hands of these young teens and walk them across the delicate bridge to young adulthood, so that they become the SAI force for tomorrow.



Traditional SSE module of teaching is ineffective to sustain the interest and enthusiasm of these young teens. Also it does not cater to their special needs and maturing minds. What they need is a highly dynamic program to sustain their attention and allow them to explore, understand and assess their role.

The Group IV Program:

These teens were previously included under the youth wing and some Centres had a teen youth program. Now the Education Wing is responsible for this group and as such it is required to define the objectives and goals for this group.

The teens of this age group would have gone through the SSE program of 9 years. So they already have the foundation laid in Educare, the basic tenet of the Sathya Sai Education. At this stage, in these three years, the focus would be to help them build upon the foundation, by using it in their daily life.

So the objective of the Group 4 program are:

1. To strengthen their understanding of and their loving relationship with Swami
2. To help them develop self-confidence and self-esteem
3. To instill awareness of gratitude towards their parents, society, nation, creation and the creator
4. To help them in nurturing respect and love for the different races, creeds and perspectives

5. To help them to acquire and utilize life skills at home, at school/University, at work and in the community.
6. To help them develop and improve upon their Leadership skills
7. To prepare them to the fullest extent to take up leadership roles within the Sai Organization.

More than anything the program will be fun filled and will give the joy of learning through practice

Methodology:

At the outset, in the beginning of the three year program, the Guru and the students will together set the goals for the program.

These three years will be a learning period for the students through interactive sessions, role plays, study circles, presentations, and helping in the various wings of the Sai Organization – especially with the Education and Seva Wings.

Activities to be planned:

All the activities will have the focus of Swami and His teachings

All the activities will be designed to provide a sense of “belonging” to the student.

Didactic lectures will be kept to the minimum.

The 5 teaching techniques could still be used but in a more subtle way.

Debates

Group discussions

Study circles

Guest speakers

Watching suitable videos followed by healthy discussion on the utilization of “Educare”

Field Trips

Boosting the talents like singing, song writing, instrument playing, dramatics etc.

Monthly journal discussing a question/difficulty/challenge the student had to face

Responsibility of organizing events in the Centres

Helping the Gurus in SSE Classes

Working with Youth on suitable projects

The Group IV Guru:

May 1, 2009

More than being an expert in Content and Teaching Methodology, the Group IV Guru must: have the three C's – consistency, commitment and care.

They should be able to

◆ Understand the terrain of these students and be prepared to walk with them while being dedicated to upholding the values all the time. For example, the Guru must be aware of what is accessible when the students go online, be open to listening to modern pop songs, be open to viewing latest movies so he/she will be better equipped to guide them through pitfalls of the environment they are in.

◆ Empathize with the students and be non-judgmental.

◆ Play the critical role of a friend, mentor, confidant and advisor.

◆ Motivate them to reach for the stars and dare to be divine **'to be flowers in Gods garden and stars in God's heaven'**.

The partnership between the Guru, parents and the children is much more important for this group. The program can be successful only when the Guru and the parents work hand in hand with Swami's guidance.

'Above all realize that children are precious treasures, yours is the greatest task of rearing them to become devoted servants of God and sincere seekers of the spiritual path'

Sri Satya Sai Baba