

Communication and Conflict Resolution Ideas

Best practices conversations within the Babaji community are supported by the Jai Ho Administrative Group. This Jai Ho web will serve as a library of what is created / found helpful. Ashrams, Centers, Projects and individuals are invited into the conversation and encouraged to offer suggestions.

Basic Communication Strategies:

E-mail: Face to face conversation is a blessing to all. Email is ideal for scheduling meetings and setting agendas but not very useful for resolving conflict or airing feelings.

Caring: Healthy, caring communication can occur in the spirit of Namaste (the light in me greets the light in you; God's essence lives in each of us). The goal is to let the spirit of Babaji promote a spirit of engaging a positive future.

Practices: The Best Practices conversations assume continued alignment with foundational practices instituted by Babaji:

- doing japa (Om Namaha Shiviya);
- performing work as karma yoga (dedicating / surrendering all to God);
- singing Aarti;
- doing Havan;
- celebrating Hindu holy days (Navaratri , Guru Purnima and others);
- pilgrimages.

Policies: Residential Centers and Ashrams work best when residents and visitors practice a daily checking-in / truth telling / “affirmation/love feast” where every individual can be heard and deeply celebrated. All practices are “best” when discussed, experimented with and refined locally. While effectiveness, service and joy are valued over uniformity and control, Ashrams, Centers and Projects area all urged to develop and written “best practices” for :

1. Individual spiritual practice
2. Leadership development: (including strategies developed for “next generation “ individuals)
3. Communication and Conflict Resolution.
4. Local Service Projects.
5. Financial budgeting and development.
6. Maintenance and operations manuals
7. Succession Plans.

Meeting Strategies:

If a meeting is set to resolve conflict, first establish a format for the session: clear timing (beginning and end); designate a time keeper to alert people as allotted time is running; agree to: non-violent communications guidelines (see below); confidentiality of what's shared so people are more likely to feel safer and so less conflictual); If the conflicting factions can work out a structure/format together at the beginning there is already a cooperative spirit to ease tension.

Helpful Conversation Guidelines:

1. 1. Going round the group – each person says one or two words only to describe how they are feeling emotionally at that moment. e.g. I feel worried – I feel anxious here - I feel angry – I feel it's pointless. Just feelings, not thoughts. One or two words each, going round the group.
1. 2. Then each person says one sentence as to what they would like to see happen AT BEST. A few appreciative words if they can.
1. 3. Then going round the group take turns Speaking & Listen to the other person(s). When speaking avoid blaming or shaming others. When listening, do not respond or interrupt while the other is talking. (If you have to say something, write it down on a piece of paper to say later when it is your turn to speak).
1. 4. Repeat what the other person is saying ("What I hear you saying is....") & ask if you are correct before assuming you understand.
1. 5. Avoid accusations, blame or shaming. ("You said....." "You are.....!" "You did.....")
1. 6. Use "I" statements. ("I feel...think...believe. My perception is . . .")
1. 7. Focus on Interests ("This is what will fulfill my / our needs") rather than Positions ("This is what I must have to win").
1. 8. Focus on the Future rather than the past.
1. 9. Build in a 'rain check' – i.e. if things get heated, try to take an in-breath and go round the group once more: each person says one or two words only to describe how they are feeling emotionally at that moment. Just feelings/emotions, not thoughts. One or two words each, going round the group.
1. 10. Focus on Problems & Behavior ("When you do this....." or, "I have a problem when you...." Or "I have a problem with") rather than personalities ("You are a").
1. 11. Break the problem into smaller parts, tackling the easiest one first.
1. 12. Look for trade-offs. ("if you organized that..... I will raise funds to help it happen").
1. 13. Change places in the room. Instead of eyeballing someone across the room try sitting alongside them rather than opposite them. (*Israeli and Palestinian negotiating teams, when sitting opposite each other round a large boardroom table, would sometimes have one member of each team sitting on the opposite side – this magically defused some of the energy of opposition in the room*).
1. 14. Be Creative, Flexible and BREATHE . Practice forgiveness of yourself and others.

Additional ideas for Conflict Resolution:

Try to self-reflect by asking yourself the questions:

1. 1. Can I be bold and be self-effacing ?
1. 2. What I have done that might have contributed to the current conflict
2. 3. What I can do to change things.....
3. 4. What is conflicted within me ? e.g. I want to have more space and time to just BE...but I should work, earn money, do karma yoga. Awareness of our inner conflicts can magically bring change outside in an outer conflict.

Try to be aware of the here and now and how others might be feeling.

Simple Communication to clear the air and get positive going (it can be quite a humorous experience):

Sit opposite the other person and say to them:

“These are the 5 things I most find troubling in relating with you...”

The other simply says “Thank you” - they cannot reply.

Then say, “These are the 5 things I most like/love about you.”

The other can only say “Thank you”.

Then the two swop round and repeat the exercise the other way round.

A Rainmaker Story

There was once a village in drought for years. The families were in conflict due to hunger and the village began to fall into decay. As a last resort they raised the last money to send for the Rainmaker magician to come from far away over the mountains. The villagers fought among themselves as to who should host the Rainmaker. On the day he was expected an old shuffling tramp arrived and to the villagers surprise he announced that he was the Rainmaker. He smelt the air in the village and turned his nose up ! “In the furthest away field that belongs to the village build me a small hut by nightfall and then leave me alone, go back to your village”. This was done and when it was built the villagers all went home because they were scared of the magician. But one man hid behind a rock and saw the Rainmaker go into the hut. In the middle of the night rains fell from the heavens on the fields and village. The man saw the Rainmaker close the door of the hut and walk swiftly away in the direction from which he had come. Driven by curiosity the man ran after the Rainmaker and asked him how he had done it ? The Rainmaker replied “Well it was strange, before I begin my ritual I always centre myself in the Tao, and this night as soon as I centered myself the rains began to fall !”