

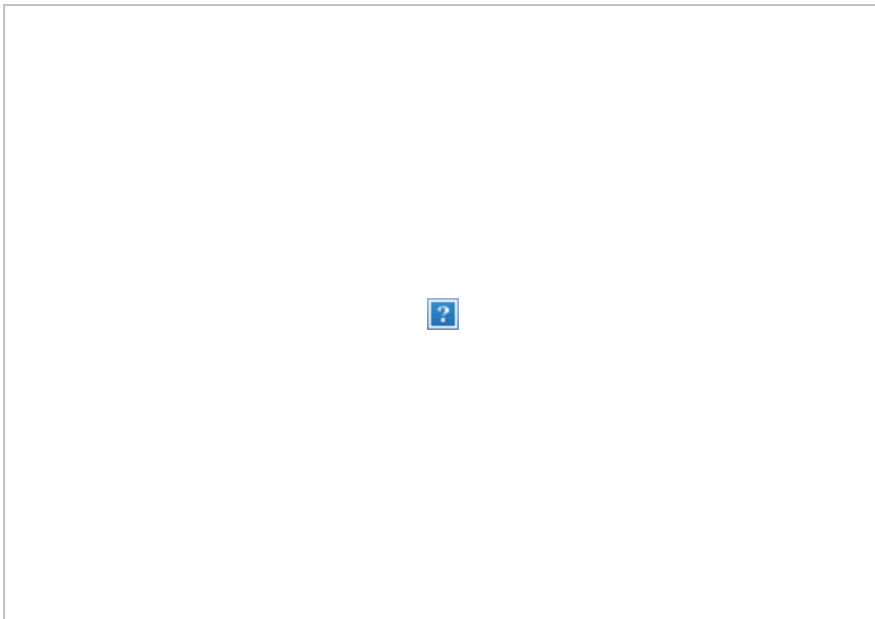
YOUTH SPACE

YOUTH SPACE you want it you got it! YOUTH SPACE is here, a dedicated space in the Journal for youth ...

Introducing ... space in the Journal solely for YOUTH! A regular way of communicating ideas and successes to each other, sharing stories and deepening in the Faith in a way that is relevant to you. Alright, so here's the space, now we need to fill it. There's a lot going on out there, so please, let the rest of us hear about it! Send EVERYTHING, send serious things and funny things, send photos and poems, send stories and your valuable knowledge. Pick up a pen and start writing, then when you look back in 20 years' time you can tell your children how much better it was in your day!

TRACES - Scotland's dance group leave a trace

In July, the Scotland-based diversity dance group TRACES was re-formed. It included members from France, Austria, USA and Scotland. After one week of training in South West Scotland, twelve youth and one hardworking co-ordinator (Vahid Mehrabi) set off on a three-week tour of Scotland. Their first stop was Dundee, where they met and had a photocall with the Provost (mayor), and gave several performances and workshops. They then moved on to Skye for three days of workshops followed by four days in Edinburgh for workshops and performances in a socially deprived area of the city. Community and youth workers in this housing estate were particularly impressed by the maturity of our Bahá'í youth. TRACES then went to the Isle of Mull for the final week. Helped by many sunny days and the beautiful scenery of Tobermory, the group gave street and public performances attended by locals and many tourists.



TRACES diversity dance group on tour around Scotland

Youth Can Move the World

Participants tell us what they got up to

For the fifth year a group of Bahá'í youth, aged between 12 and 23, have converged at Biblins campsite in the Forest of Dean, for the August Bank Holiday weekend. However, this year we have moved up in the world,

abandoning the traditional tents and moving indoors, much to the delight of the catering staff.

The talks and workshops have been based around the idea of crossing bridges (mentioned in the Ridván message) with the importance of the arts highlighted through sessions on music, art, drama and creative writing. We have endured many tiring but delightful hours of jam-packed fun activities, including kayaking, rock climbing, walking and scrambling over (and falling off) an inflatable monster at Lydney swimming pool. As well as our own version of "It's a Knockout" in which teams of youth fulfil various games in an aim to collect the most points (and in many cases, get the most wet).

Time has also been given for the youth to discuss the things that they find most relevant to themselves, normally as part of the discussion around the campfire in the evenings. These sessions have been particularly enjoyed by all, perhaps because of the control that the youth have over them and the freedom that it gives for emotions to be expressed in a friendly environment.

One of the most delightful things has been the increasing emphasis placed on the youth in the organisation of the event. This year a planning committee was formed, more than half of which was made up of youth, and people under twenty-five ran the majority of the sessions. As always, it has been a great opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones and the atmosphere has been as loving as ever.

For those of you that didn't make it this year, we hope to see you next year!

To be chaste or to be chased!

Apologies from the Editor that the first feature article in Youth Space is on "chastity". It isn't because that's the first thing we thought of regarding youth, far from it. The reality is that this was the first article to appear - and very good it is too, for everyone to read, not just the youth...

We know that we are Bahá'ís and we LOVE Bahá'u'lláh yet still we struggle with some of the laws.

It is important when we talk about laws to remember why we have them. It is like remembering why there are rules in any situation. Bahá'u'lláh says: "Think not that We have revealed unto you a mere code of laws. Nay, rather, We have unsealed the choice Wine with the fingers of might and power." (1)

It is the laws of the Faith that FREE AND RELEASE us spiritually. They are spiritual laws which must be obeyed for spiritual health. Think of a physical parallel situation which explains how this works: a good one is the "Highway code". All the cars that drive around on the road are doing so according to strict rules and laws. Although at a first glance they may seem to restrain the driver, a more mature look will reveal that it is these rules that keep him/her safe! It is the "Highway Code" that makes us FREE OF THE DANGERS of driving around like crazy uncontrolled people (a bit like in India!). Imagine what would happen if you ignored these rules. Imagine driving up the motorway in the wrong direction or pulling out of a junction when another car is whizzing past! The results are tragic and unhealthy!

It is because of God's love for us that He gives us similar SPIRITUAL laws to stop us from getting spiritually unhealthy.

Now what about chastity? Chastity is not something that you have and then you lose it when you take drugs, get up to stuff with a girl/boy, drink alcohol, wear immodest clothes etc. It is a quality or virtue of the human which has to be developed and worked on.

OK, I've done a lot of beating around the bush, what we always want to know is: as Bahá'ís, what can we do and what can't we do in order to be chaste? There is no complete and easy answer to this question because chastity is a quality, not a law itself. One part of being chaste is black and white obvious, Shoghi Effendi says: "Chastity in the strict sense means not to have sexual intercourse, or sexual intimacies, before marriage". (2) Of course Bahá'ís believe that the sexual impulse is a normal and healthy part of human physiology but that it is only healthily expressed within the stronghold of marriage.

There are other straight forward "no nos" and to list them is a bit clinical but stuff like: marijuana, nudism, alcohol, living with a partner, opium etc. etc.

The other aspect of chastity is much more nebulous and involves things which are not as black and white, stuff like "modesty, purity, temperance, decency, and clean-mindedness, involves no less than the exercise of moderation in all that pertains to dress, language, amusements, and all artistic and literary avocations." (3)

This is no easy ride! Not only do we have to keep our bodies chaste but also our minds! Bahá'u'lláh says: "Let your eye be chaste". The Guardian also talks about the control of carnal desires, corrupt inclinations, frivolous conduct, promiscuity and easy familiarity.

Imagine a HUGE mountain, the summit of which you can barely see in the distant heights. There are many rocky and difficult trails leading to the summit, some with snow and ice, others with dangerous animals stalking.

The summit of that mountain is CHASTITY in its full glory. It is our job throughout life to travel towards that peak, constantly working to become closer to our purpose. Our supplies and aids for the journey could be our Faith, the daily recital of the obligatory prayer and reading of Writings, teaching the Faith etc. One MAJOR AID for this journey of developing our chastity could be to obey the more black and white laws that we have. By obeying the laws we lead ourselves to the easy paths that take us more directly to the top of that beautiful mountain. So let's go to it! What a wonderful thing, to be crowned with chastity!

Habib Behi

1. Bahá'u'lláh, Kitáb-i-Aqdas
2. Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a local Assembly, 25th Nov 1947
3. Shoghi Effendi, Advent of Divine Justice, p30



Junior youth and children chilling out on the bouncy castle at Sidcot summer school in August.