

ISA Curriculum Content

Compassion in Action: The 4 Initiations

Session One: The Realm of the Soul

There are three major areas of focus in the first initiation: *The Universe as a Sacred Marriage of Opposites*, *The Seven Laws of Sacred Activism* and *The Four Kinds of Sacred Practice* needed for a Sacred Activist. The aim of this first session is to provide all participants with a coherent mystical vision of the universe, a coherent vision of the path to radical embodiment and an extremely practical vision of the kinds of sacred practice that enable anyone to create a container for divine transformation in the middle of the difficulties and dangers of working in the world.

Session Two: The Realm of the Heart

The second training session will concentrate on the heart. The heart, as the mystical traditions understand it, is the center of the psychophysical body. It is called the *anahata* in Hinduism, *the royal center* in Sufism, *the sacred heart* in Christianity, and *the jewel in the lotus* in Buddhism. When this center is awakened, it makes accessible to human beings the highest kind of intelligence that Rumi defined as "*a perpetual stream of wisdom refined by love.*"

It is this "*wisdom refined by love*" that the Sacred Activists learn to cultivate to be able to find sensitive and balanced solutions to the problems of our time. This second session will concentrate first on methods to awaken heart intelligence and secondly on practices that help the heart center stay open when dealing with suffering and conflict.

The Session will concentrate on six major themes:

1. the practice of gratitude - that helps one stay joyful and humble,
2. the practice of deep listening with spaciousness - which allows one to hold another's anguish,
3. the practice of forgiveness - which clears out resentment and anger,
4. conflict resolution - that helps all parties in a divisive situation find common ground,
5. skills of conscious and effective dialogue - that enables each person to appreciate deeply the world views of the other.
6. and techniques that enable the Sacred Activist to maintain heart presence in all interactions - which enables him or her to become a channel of grace.

The history and practice of non-violence will also be taught from its beginning in Hindu and Buddhist mysticism, and the teaching of Jesus Christ, to the unfolding of its truth and effectiveness in the lives of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parks, and the Dalai Lama.

Most important of all, we will teach, in detail, ways of engaging in the kind of inner shadow work that every Sacred Activist will need to maintain to be open to divine guidance. This work will be rooted in Jungian psychology and in the core recovery practices of the 12-Step Programs.

Awakening and focusing the intelligence of the heart in practical situations is the key to the transformation of the planet and the core of what is uniquely powerful about Sacred Activism. An activism that is rooted in a profound spiritual knowledge of the heart center and in the practices that can sustain its wisdom in all situations will be of great effectiveness and provide the kind of integrated and harmonious solutions in crisis that activists will need.

Session Three: The Pathways of the Intellect

The third session will be focused on the training of the intellect to understand the different interrelated aspects of the world crisis and its potential solutions. Special attention will be given to the work of David Korten, Tim Flannery, Paul Friedrich, Jarred Diamond, Gustav Speth, Paul Ray, and Paul Hawken. It will concentrate on the environment, population growth and shortage of resources, the relationship among globalization, poverty and corporate responsibility.

During the session we will develop a vision of the birth of a new kind of humanity that is struggling to take place and our role in it. Special emphasis will be placed on critical thinking, learning how to disentangle our thought process from the ruling paradigms of our culture, and how to cultivate clarity in the midst of confusion. At the core, of our training of the intellect, will be a strong and powerful presentation of systems theory drawn from the work of Joanna Macy and Dennis Emberling.

We will also look at Full Spectrum Thought, which helps us understand and interconnect the 3 main aspects of the contemporary crisis; its underlying causes (which springs from the deep ground of the self), the systems causes (which arise from the different interconnected economic, political and social systems) and the immediate causes (which are the present symptoms and problems that need urgent attention) We believe that without a comprehensive understanding of full spectrum thinking, the power for effecting change will be limited.

During this third training session, powerful concentration practices taken from the Buddhist, Christian and Hindu traditions will be offered to help people attain a marriage of intellectual and spiritual clarity in dealing with often disturbing and challenging information.

Session Four: The Wisdom of the Body

The fourth training session will be devoted to the body and the crucial necessity of learning how to embody spiritual energies at ever greater levels of effectiveness. Special emphasis will be placed on Andrew Harvey and Karuna Erickson's Heart Yoga – a unique fusion of yoga, mysticism and sacred practice designed to help Sacred Activists marry spiritual and physical strength.

We will also look at family as the beginning of community and as an extension of our bodies, either as parents or as children, and how to support and re-sanctify this central part of our lives that has become fragmented. As part of looking after the physical body, we will also teach how to be masterful with resources and money and help people to uncover and integrate their blocks relating to the energy of money.

The care of the instrument of the body is essential to being a Sacred Activist, since leadership in a new and dangerous era demands tremendous physical and spiritual energy, strength, and stamina. Emphasis will be given to the instruction of simple

and effective self-care techniques both for oneself and for sharing with others: diet, nutrition, advanced self care balance, stress relief and healing techniques. Sacred healing visualizations and walking and breathing meditations drawn from the mystical traditions will also be given to help fuse physical activity with contemplative peace.

We will introduce you to Andrew's theories of the transformation of the body that we are currently undergoing. We will also explore the major mystical philosophies that deal with this transformation; Kabbalah, Alchemy, Esoteric Christian Mysticism and the visions of Sri Aurobindo, Teilhard de Chardin, Tibetan Buddhism and Sat Prem. A cultivation of the energies of joy and passion are essential features of Sacred Activism because they give Sacred Activists the steady energy, power, and capacity to endure and persist, which they need to do their work most effectively.