

**Core Curriculum for  
Spiritual Education  
and Training**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Elements of a Successful Course	p. 3
Program Success Factors Checklist	p. 6
Supplies and Equipment Checklist	p. 8
Specific Activity Notes for Facilitators	p. 10
Guidelines for Facilitators	p. 28
Collaborating with Other Trainers	p. 37
Sample Letter of Invitation	p. 38
Sample Flyer	p. 39
Training Report Form	p. 40
Moving to Action	p. 42
Working with Bahá'í Institutions	p. 43

**Spiritual  
Foundations  
for  
Marriage  
and  
Family  
Life**

*Facilitator Guide*

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Bahá'ís of the United States

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Printed in the United States of America

## Purpose of the Course

The purpose of Spiritual Foundations for Marriage and Family Life is to foster loving and unified marriages and families.

Trainings are offered under the sponsorship of Local Spiritual Assemblies or Regional Training Institutes.

## *Elements of a Successful Marriage and Family Life Course*

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Well-prepared facilitators provide the key to the success of this Spiritual Marriage and Family Life program. Please consider the following elements for success:

### Planning and Implementation Procedures

All these gifts and bounties depend upon love for the Beauty of the All-Glorious, and on the blessings in the teachings of the Most High, and the spiritual instructions of the Supreme Concourse, and on ecstasy and ardor and diligent pursuit of whatsoever will redound to the eternal honor of the community of man.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ. *BAHÁ’Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1999, NO. 61

As a Marriage and Family Life Facilitator, you collaborate with Bahá’í Institutions (Regional Training Institutes, Local Spiritual Assemblies, and/or Auxiliary Board Members), to set up and deliver Marriage and Family Life Workshops or Study Circles. Please inform the NCERC of all trainings in the United States, through consultation before the implementation of Training Sessions, and through training reports afterward.

- Core Curriculum Spiritual Marriage and Family Life Workshops are conducted with the sponsorship of Local Spiritual Assemblies, or Regional Training Institutes, or Auxiliary Board members. These institutions may contact the NCERC if they are not aware of Marriage and Family Life Facilitators in their area.
- After you have scheduled Spiritual Marriage and Family Life sessions in collaboration with your sponsoring institution, please inform the NCERC of your plans.
- You may wish to consult, schedule, and plan with the assistance of Teacher Trainers, Youth Empowerment facilitators, and other Core Curriculum facilitators. The role of other Core Curriculum facilitators may be one of collaboration, logistical support and encouragement.
- When possible, a National Bahá’í Education Task Force advisor will visit a portion of your Spiritual Marriage and Family Life sessions to provide support and encouragement.
- At the conclusion of the training, please send a brief report to the National Children’s Education and Research Center. The report form is provided on p. 35–36 of this facilitator guide.

### A Joyous Training Environment

Create an atmosphere of love, joy, cooperation and discovery throughout your training. To enable closer interaction, sharing and fuller participation among the group members, we encourage you to limit the number of participants to 25.

## Creating an Environment for Spiritual Education

Prepare and maintain a reverential, dignified, and beautiful environment throughout the training. Some possibilities for enhancing the environment are:

- Arrangements of fresh or dried flowers in vases.
- Photographs of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.
- Bowls of potpourri or drops of rose oil.
- Candles, if permitted by hosting facility.
- Soft instrumental music from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Sharing devotions in a separate location from the work area.
- Photographs of great teachers, heroines, and heroes.

## Possible Devotional Activities

Consider a variety of reverential and inspirational ways to share the Sacred Writings and prayers together. Some possibilities are:

- Share prayers in different languages.
- Listen to prayers and sacred writings recited with music as a background.
- Encourage chanting, singing, and melodious recitation of prayers.
- Share recordings of prayers or passages that have been set to music.
- Encourage incorporating movement, dance, or sign language into the recital of prayers.
- Prepare, in an attractive manner, pre-selected devotional readings for distribution.
- Prepare pre-selected passages on small slips of paper, rolled up and tied with a ribbon; present these on a tray as “special treats.”

## Emphasis on the Sacred Texts

Naught but the celestial potency of the Word of God which ruleth and transcendeth the realities of all things is capable of harmonizing the divergent thoughts, sentiments, ideas and convictions of the children of men.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *TABLETS OF THE DIVINE PLAN*, REV. ED. 1993, p. 103

The Bahá’í writings are the foundation, the standard and the inspiration of the Core Curriculum. Therefore, the study of the Sacred Texts, the writings of the Guardian and those of the Universal House of Justice is the most essential element of the Core Curriculum Marriage and Family Life Workshops. Any content of the training program beyond the actual writings represents the efforts of the National Bahá’í Education Task Force to apply the principles and characteristics of Bahá’í education to the dynamic practice of marriage and family life.

## Modeling and the Principle of Example

In thy school, instruct thou God’s children in the customs of the Kingdom. Be thou a teacher of love, in a school of unity. Train thou the children of the friends of the Merciful in the rules and ways of His loving-kindness. Tend the young trees of the Abhá Paradise with the welling waters of His grace and peace and joy. Make them flourish under the downpour of His bounty. Strive with all thy powers that the children may stand out and grow fresh, delicate and sweet, like the ideal trees in the gardens of Heaven.

Your conduct in the Marriage and Family Life Workshops should mirror for parents the distinctive qualities of a Bahá’í training process. This will be reflected in the set-up of the physical environment, in your loving attitude toward the friends, and in your appreciation and honoring of the diversity of your participants. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s example and presence should be a constant, conscious, and primary reference throughout.

### **Team Facilitators**

The National Bahá’í Education Task Force urges you to work in teams of two to offer this Core Curriculum Spiritual Marriage and Family Life Program to provide a consultative and supportive learning model. Please discuss any special circumstances with the National Children’s Education and Research Center by phone at 810-653-5033, or by email at [NCERC@usbnc.org](mailto:NCERC@usbnc.org).

## *Program Success Factors Checklist*

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- \_\_\_\_\_ My co-facilitator and I met with the sponsoring institutions (RTI, LSA, or ABM) and received their guidance and support for our plan.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We have informed National Children's Education and Research Center of our session dates.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We consulted with our Core Curriculum mentor, if applicable.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We consulted with our Auxiliary Board Member and assistants about creating more readiness in our community.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Letters of invitation are sent to surrounding Bahá'í communities, including teachers, education committee members, Local Spiritual Assembly members, and those who plan deepenings and community events.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Follow-up phone calls are made to be sure that Bahá'ís in the area know about the Marriage and Family Life Workshops and schedule.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Books are ordered for each participant (participants' course books; small copies of Bahá'í Prayers and The Hidden Words; *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*, if desired).
- \_\_\_\_\_ The facility is inspected and plans made to assure that it is clean, pleasantly fragrant, comfortable, and attractive for the workshops.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Appropriate arrangements are made for children during the programs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Arrangements are made for refreshments to be served.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We reviewed carefully each session to be offered, listed the materials needed, and decided who will present each activity.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Materials are copied and prepared for each participant.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We arranged for music, art supplies, and audio-visuals to create a beautiful atmosphere for presentation of the modules.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We arranged to make Bahá'í prayer books and other Bahá'í holy books available during the workshops.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Our mentor or other experienced facilitator was consulted to help us evaluate and problem-solve during the progress of our work plan.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We sought divine assistance for our work with participants.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We sent our report to the National Children's Education and Research Center at the end of the course. See page 35.

## Double-Checking Our Preparation

1. Make sure you have all your materials and are well prepared.
2. If a public place can't be found, you can use someone's home. Don't be afraid to host the training in your home.
3. Ask the sponsoring Local Spiritual Assembly or Regional Training Institute to provide refreshments if possible.
4. Assess if there is a need for childcare and if so, request that the sponsoring Assembly assist with the necessary arrangements.
5. The fee that is assessed to the participants for the classes should cover all expenses, including the travel and hospitality for of your advisor's one-time visit. Ask the Assembly or Institute to handle all money affairs.
6. Suggest that the Assembly may wish participants to prepay for the class.

Potential costs for each participant might include:

Participant course books	\$ 8.75
small copies of Bahá'í prayer books and other small gifts	\$ 3.00
art supplies, candles, assorted items	\$ 2.00
miscellaneous photocopies	\$ 1.00
Total	\$14.75

Other considerations: food, facility rental, travel if facilitators or advisors are going to a non-local community.

## Workshop Supplies & Equipment

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The following is a list of suggested supplies and materials to have on hand for use in the training. Share this list with the sponsoring institution to determine what is available and what needs to be purchased or collected.

### Material to be ordered from the National Children's Education and Resource Center

\_\_\_ *Spiritual Foundations for Marriage and Family Life* course books

\_\_\_ small copies of Bahá'í Prayers and The Hidden Words\*\*

\*also available from the Bahá'í Distribution Service, [www.bahaibookstore.com](http://www.bahaibookstore.com), or 1-800-999-9019

\*\*available from Special Ideas, [www.special-ideas.com](http://www.special-ideas.com), or 1-800-326-1197

### For the Facilitators

\_\_\_ white board & pens or chalk board & chalk

\_\_\_ CD/cassette player

\_\_\_ pad of large chart paper, easel, markers

\_\_\_ small bell or chime (optional)

### For the Environment

\_\_\_ recorded music: instrumental, prayers, cultural

\_\_\_ photo of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

\_\_\_ TV and VCR, if you plan to show part of a Bahá'í video during your devotions

\_\_\_ throw pillows, floor mats

\_\_\_ potpourri, candles, table cloth

\_\_\_ boxes of tissue

### For the Participants

\_\_\_ name tags or cardstock for name boards

\_\_\_ gifts quotations for participants

\_\_\_ pens, pencils pencil sharpener

\_\_\_ paints, paint brushes (if available)

\_\_\_ felt markers and crayons

\_\_\_ tape: transparent & masking

\_\_\_ glue, glue sticks

\_\_\_ ribbon, glitter, beads, feathers

\_\_\_ scissors

(if available)

\_\_\_ construction paper, tissue paper, wrapping paper, writing paper; lined or unlined

\_\_\_ musical instruments (if available)

\_\_\_ containers to hold and display art material

### Books

\_\_\_ dictionaries

\_\_\_ The Kitáb-i-Aqdas

\_\_\_ The Hidden Words

\_\_\_ Foundations for a Spiritual Education

\_\_\_ Bahá'í Marriage and Family Life

\_\_\_ Prayer books

\_\_\_ Some Answered Questions

### Materials to photocopy:

- \_\_\_ agendas
- \_\_\_ maps (to restaurants, park, child care or overnight facilities)
- \_\_\_ handouts selected after reviewing the training materials
- \_\_\_ participant roster

\*During your training additional items might come up which you will need to copy and distribute. Plan how this will be done, and identify a person (a youth or other person not taking the training) who can assist in this way.

### **A Note on Scheduling**

The activity times suggested on the following pages are offered as an aid in maintaining a schedule for each session. Of course you will make necessary modifications to fit the needs of your group. For example, a large group of 16-20 parents might require more time for sharing working groups' insights. Another group might wish to spend more time with Parents Helping Parents. Some groups might enjoy 20 minutes vs. the allotted 15 to create an art project. The key is that these times merely provide boundary indicators, and *you* will make choices to attentively serve the friends, and assure that they receive a "complete" session.

You may also involve participants in consultation about the schedule by asking such questions as: Are we allowing ourselves enough time for the activities so that we consider the questions carefully and also have a good sense of forward movement?

Participants should feel confident that this program is well-planned, and that there is enough time to accomplish their task. The following suggestions are helpful to many facilitators:

- Use of music, a bell, a raised hand or other simple signal often serves well to call groups back to a new focus when time frames are short, rather than constantly announcing, "You have 2 minutes," or "Your time is up."
- Tell participants the length of time allotted and when they should return as part of directions, especially when groups may disperse.
- Let the time "flow." For example, if it is 2:16 and the activity takes "15 minutes," ask for a return by 2:30.
- Give groups gentle signals, such as, "Do you think you can finish in three minutes or would you like more time?" Smile, letting them know that you are confident in their capability.
- Provide a more generalized schedule for participants, so they are unaware of the many time frames you are manipulating—make it feel easy.
- Plan grouping strategies in advance, perhaps placing stickers on chairs, or colored hearts at places, etc. during a previous activity, so that grouping is both fun and fast.
- Cut strips of masking tape in advance to hang artwork or flipchart lists.
- Write activity directions and journal focus questions, etc. on board or flipchart in advance.
- Other ideas that you know or develop and will share with the rest of us!

## SPECIFIC ACTIVITY NOTES FOR FACILITATORS

### INTRODUCTORY SESSION

#### *Birds of the Nest of Love*

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Activities and Suggested Times		Materials Needed
Opening Devotions and Welcome	20 min.	● Photograph of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Introductions–Birds of the Nest of Love	30 min.	● Pictures and/or statues of various birds. Use a real bird if you have access to one!
Overview of Marriage and Family Life Program	5 min.	● Recorded bird song (optional)
History of Core Curriculum	5 min.	● Art supplies, cardstock for name boards and “nest” illustrations
The Learning Model	20 min.	
Conclusion	10 min.	● Bird stickers, stamps, and other decorative items

- Have available an art table that includes photos of birds cut from magazines, and various art supplies.

#### *Opening Devotions and Welcoming*

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pp.

- Create a beautiful environment, with a lovely carpet, and some flowers. Consider arranging chairs in circle. Consider using a light fragrance such as attar of rose in the room.
- Use prayers and the writings on marriage, BIRDS OF THE NEST OF LOVE, and the set of writings often referred to as “The Marriage Tablet.” Add other prayers if desired. Be sure to include music, either sung live or recorded. Consider using music that includes references to the soul as a bird.

## *Introductions: Birds of the Nest of Love*

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- Remind the friends that one of the metaphors used in the Bahá'í Writings to describe the human spirit is the metaphor of the bird.
- Show many photos, paintings or other images of birds of every kind. If desired, play a recording of birdsong.
- Continue: “Now, taking into account all you know about birds, if you were a bird, what kind would you be?”
- Invite the friends to introduce themselves by name, by number of years married, names and ages of children, type of bird they might be, and **one single** word to describe the nest of their marriage.
- Then ask each couple to create a name-board (or poster) illustration of their marriage, showing a nest with two birds. This can be drawn simply with markers or crayons or use photos cut from magazines and/or other art materials.
- Alternatively, use modeling wax or other materials and ask the participants to create together a nest that represents their marriage.

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### **Process the Activity:**

Consider the readings at the beginning of this session, BIRDS OF THE NEST OF LOVE. How does the image of birds in these writings aid our spiritual understanding of the concept of marriage?

## *Overview of the Marriage and Family Life Program*

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- Share a brief overview of the topics covered in this course for couples.
- Mention that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has supplied us with much guidance (some of which can be found in the book *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*) about the use of a variety of learning tools which include music, art, drama, nature, manipulatives and peer questioning. As we share this explorative journey, we will follow this guidance. Hopefully each person will experience learning methods that are most comfortable for their style, and grow through their experiences of those methods that are more comfortable for others.
- Mention the companion course designed to prepare for marriage and family life.
- Mention that this course should not be looked upon as therapy. Some other resources for referral include the Local Spiritual Assembly and the Auxiliary Board members in the area served. This course can be likened to systems of public health that create the conditions in which health is the natural outcome. Bahá’u’lláh has put in place the Institutions of the Rulers and of the Learned, as well as helping professionals, which serve like the hospital or medical team that is needed for the highly individualized circumstances of illness or injury in the human body, or issues that face a marriage in distress.

## SESSION ONE

### *Self-Knowledge: Foundation for Marriage*

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Activities and Suggested Times		Materials Needed
Opening Devotions	10 min.	• Chart paper and markers
Knowing Your Own Self	5 min.	
Self Has Two Natures	5 min.	
The Foundation for Marriage	5 min.	
Call Yourself to Account	15 min.	
Spiritual Transformation Plan	45 min.	
Closing devotions	5 min.	

### **Journal Writing**

- Explain process of Journal Writing.
- At the back of each workbook is a section designated for use as a journal. Throughout the course participants will be asked to reflect and record in their journals. The contents of a participant's journal will not be shared unless a participant wants to share the contents. Participants should be encouraged to express themselves in their journals throughout the course.
- Ask each participant to take 60 seconds and write down 10 most important things they need to do/achieve, in order to know themselves better.
- Ask them to take another 60 seconds and choose 3 of these special tasks or goals.
- Finally ask them to take 30 seconds and pick the most important.
- Have participants discuss this process.

## SESSION TWO

### *True Spiritual Consultation*

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Activities and Suggested Times		Materials Needed
Opening Devotions	10 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chart paper and markers</li> </ul>
True Spiritual Consultation	25 min.	
The Nature of Consultation	30 min.	
Closing devotions	10 min.	

#### **Possible Answers:**

##### **Consultation is. . .**

Speaking for yourself

Loving, frank about your concerns

Acknowledging others thoughts

Acknowledging others feelings

Encouraging others to finish thoughts

Inquiring about others thoughts/feelings

Listening to understand

Reflect on what others express

Controlling/managing your thoughts

Looking for the truth

Being objective/opened minded

Working for points of agreement

Respecting others view

##### **Consultation is not. . .**

Speaking for others

Avoiding the issue

Pretending everything is OK

Dismissing/undermining

Interrupting

Assuming you know all

Reacting to what others say

Paying lip service

Asking questions that prove you right

Blaming

Attacking

Justifying your actions

Using sarcasm

## SESSION THREE

### *Practicing Consultation*

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Activities and Suggested Times	Materials Needed
Opening Devotions	10 min. ●
Unique Virtues and Gifts	20 min.
Practicing Consultation	45 min.
Closing devotions	5 min.

Gifts can bind us together and they can also be a source of conflict. In families, we not only have our own unique virtues and gifts, not just the virtues mined in our families or culture of origin, but also those created through the new bonds of unity in marriage. These gifts can sometimes also be potential sources of conflict. But working through these brings a higher level of unity and wholeness to ourselves, our families and our world.

Justice is necessary in marriage and family life. It can be as simple as the acknowledgment of the truth, the objective reality of needs, resources and opportunities within the family and facing the family, and then, acting upon this truth. Justice is necessary for continued growth of love.

Loving consultation is the panacea for domestic conflict. It is a search for truth in which all participate. All may not have the same role in decision-making (parent v. child), but all have a view of the truth that is necessary to contribute to the best decision. Allowing this to happen unifies and advances the family. It becomes illuminated, spiritual and prospers, contributing to society and creating a source of happiness.

#### **Journal Activity**

- Have participants write in journals their reflection of the themes of Module Two
- Explain that Module Three will be discussing how to create a fortress for well-being.



## SESSION FOUR

### *A Chaste and Holy Life*

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Activities and Suggested Times		Materials Needed
Opening Devotions	10 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chart paper and markers</li> </ul>
Themes and Objectives	5 min.	
What Is Love?	30 min.	
A Chaste and Holy Life	40 min.	
The Meaning of a Chaste and Holy Life	30 min.	
Closing devotions	5 min.	

- A few letters of the Universal House of Justice are included in the back of the course book.
- Point out that this list of Key References on the issue of sexuality within marriage should be seen as the beginning of a resource list. Hopefully, they will be able to add more references as they continue their study and reflection on this issue.

## SESSION FIVE

### *Overcoming Difficulties*

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<b>Activities and Suggested Times</b>		<b>Materials Needed</b>
Opening Devotions	10 min.	• Chart paper and markers
Themes and Objectives	5 min.	
The Power of Love	15 min.	
Love and Justice	15 min.	
Overcoming Difficulties Within Marriage	30 min.	
Marriage Questionnaire	45 min.	
Closing devotions	5 min.	

## SESSION SIX

### *A Divinely-Ordained Institution*

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<b>Activities and Suggested Times</b>		<b>Materials Needed</b>
Opening Devotions	10 min.	• Chart paper and markers
Themes and Objectives	5 min.	
A Divinely-Ordained Institution	45 min.	
The Purpose of Marriage	30 min.	
Closing devotions	5 min.	

## SESSION SEVEN

### *Preserving Marriage*

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Activities and Suggested Times		Materials Needed
Opening Devotions	10 min.	• In advance, practice reading stories below
Themes and Objectives	5 min.	* Resources for the facilitator during this section
Preserving Marriage, Preventing Divorce	5 min.	might include the compilation “Preserving Bahá’í
The Lover and the Divine Beloved	5 min.	Marriages” and the section in the manual
Closing devotions	5 min.	“Developing Distinctive Bahá’í Communities” prepared as a guide for Local Spiritual Assemblies.

There is much contrast between the marriages in these two stories. Basically, they illustrate that marriage, even in cases where hardship is present, leads to joy, and divorce leads to despair.

- Following each story there are some questions for reflection. The facilitator might ask these questions about the stories, but not give or ask for any concrete answers. These stories, and the questions, are more for quiet reflection than for analysis. Participants may offer some thoughts or feelings about the stories, and then give them some quiet journal time.

## Baskets



*There is a story from the Bushmen of South Africa about a man who had a herd of cows. Each day he left them in the open pasture and each night they came home rich with milk. One day he noticed with alarm that they were coming home quite drained. And so he hid himself in the bushes, determined to catch the thief. The cows grazed contentedly, and as the evening star rose in the sky, the farmer saw a strange sight. A white rope tumbled out of the clouds and, quick as gossamer, the sky-maidens descended, settled down immediately, and drank the full day's milk. The farmer roared out of the bushes in a fury, but the maidens were too quick for him. Fleet as fantasy they fled up the rope and disappeared, except the last, whom the farmer seized by her fair wrist and held fast. As he raised his knife to stab her, his eyes fell full on her face – and she was beautiful. So he loved her instantly, and she became his wife.*

*Long and mellow were their years of marriage and the farmer was content although he never knew much about his maiden. She cherished him with gentleness and shared with him his troubles and his joys, and so he was in paradise. Until one small thing began to spoil his ease. At her belt, the sky-maiden always carried a small straw basket, which she laid beside her pillow every night. This, she said, contained the secrets of the sky which might never be lost, and so her husband did not touch it. One night, however, his curiosity overcame him.*

*“Why does my wife keep secrets from me?” he thought. “I must see what she keeps inside this basket . . .” and, waiting for her to fall asleep, he opened the basket and looked inside.*

*When she awoke the next morning the sky-maiden heard a mocking voice: “So! You tried to fool me, did you?” said her husband. “For all these years you have been giving me this nonsense about secrets from the sky! Why, the basket's empty!”*

*“Empty?” she repeated, looking at him strangely.*

*“Yes, empty!” he retorted with a scornful laugh. “There's nothing in it at all!”*

*“Nothing?” she echoed, and her voice was as frail as the breeze at dawn. And turning from him disappointed, she began to walk away. He called to her, but found he had forgot her name. He ran to reach her, but she passed and vanished like a cloud on the horizon. All through his life he stumbled after her, but the sky-maiden was never found by him again.*

**After telling the story, pose these questions and ask the friends to silently reflect upon them:**

- *Who among us has not experienced the confusion of separation and anxiety conveyed in a story like this?*
- *Who has not been filled with delight at the promise and potential of new connections, and despair to find ourselves empty handed, lonely and far from home?*
- *How can we share the truths we value while learning from those whose experience may differ?*
- *What truths do we carry in our own baskets?*
- *If the friends seem confused by the story, ask: If the secrets of the sky were in the basket, how would we know? What does the sky look like to us?*

**Provide a short time for comments from the friends.**

## *The Good Marriage*



*It had been a hard winter. The snows had come early, forcing the animals to a different migratory path: the people had not been able to hunt. The snows had come early, covering the berries that ripened on the bushes: the people had not been able to gather food for the winter.*

*An old couple not blessed with children lived at the edge of the village. The old man saw his wife slowly starving to death: her stomach beginning to distend, her body weak and frail. He, too, was weak from hunger, but went out to hunt each day: it was his duty. She tended their home and their fire.*

*For many days he found nothing. Finally, one day he saw the little whiskey jack. The whiskey jack is associated with the moose; sometimes the whiskey jack can call to the moose. For this reason the man hesitated to take the little bird: perhaps it could bring the moose. The man thought of his wife: he killed the bird.*

*They rejoiced to have food. She made soup; a little thin soup, for it was a very small bird. They ate the soup in gratitude; it had been many days since they had eaten at all. But, the woman said, "Let's save these little drumsticks for tomorrow."*

*The next day, as always, the old man prepared to hunt. His wife brought him the drumsticks. "Take them...you will need the strength." "No, you eat them," he replied. "You need them more."*

*That day, he did see the moose. Being a good hunter, he killed it, giving thanks for the food. Though he was too weak to drag home the moose, he took his knife and cut out the liver and the other special parts that the people like best. He carried them home to his wife.*

*How happy she was to cook again, and to know that she would cook for many days! She called her husband to eat, and said, "Let's eat these little drumsticks first."*

A story from the Tlinket people of the Yukon, as told by Louise Profeit LeBlanc, Association of Bahá'í Studies Conference, October 1989

**After telling the story, pose these questions and ask the friends to silently reflect upon them:**

- *What kind of love would leave the drumsticks home for a spouse?*
- *What kind of love would not eat those drumsticks, but wait for the other spouse to return?*
- *What can this tell us about the kind of love, knowledge, and actions needed to lead the richest of lives in even the most adverse conditions?*
- *How well is it said, "Let deeds, not words, be your adorning." (Bahá'u'lláh)*

**Provide a short time for comments from the friends.**

## SESSION EIGHT

### *Equality in Marriage*

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Activities and Suggested Times	Materials Needed
Opening Devotions	10 min.
Themes and Objectives	5 min.
Equality in Marriage	25 min.
Roles of Family Members	30 min.
Promoting the Principle of Oneness	15 min.
Closing devotions	5 min.

- Chart paper and markers

- Mention to the group that there is a training program on Equality of Women and Men available from the National Spiritual Assembly through the National Children’s Education and Resource Center at Louhelen Bahá’í School. For more information, email [ncerc@usbnc.org](mailto:ncerc@usbnc.org) or phone (810) 653-5033.

## SESSION NINE

### *Family Life and Childrearing*

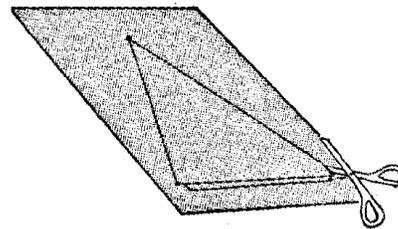
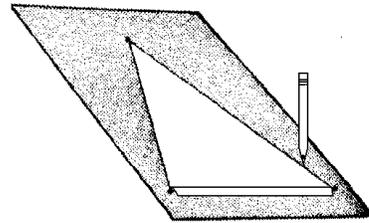
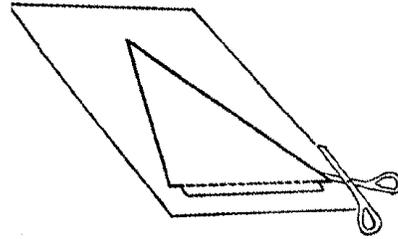
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Activities and Suggested Times		Materials Needed
Opening Devotions	10 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chart paper and markers</li> </ul>
Themes and Objectives	5 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A piece of flat posterboard about 1 foot square for the base</li> </ul>
The Purpose of Childrearing	25 min.	
Balancing Family Life and Service to God	35 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• four pieces of 8 1/2" x 11" tagboard, or thin cardboard</li> </ul>
Closing Thoughts	15 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• triangle template</li> </ul>
Closing devotions	5 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ruler</li> <li>• scissors.</li> </ul>

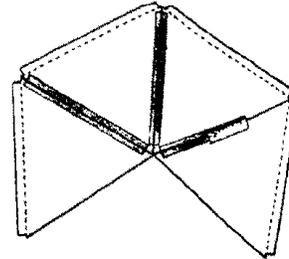
- Facilitator should make the pyramid (instructions on next page) ahead of time, labeling each side: Spiritual Development of the Individual; Family Life; Teaching and Serving the Cause of God; and Service to Humanity/Career.
- Point to the base of the pyramid and say: "This is the plane of earthly existence and people wonder how to make it all fit."
- Point to the side of the pyramid and show how as we "ascend," all these apparently conflicting goals actually grow closer together.
- Point to the tip of the pyramid and say; "And when seen with the eye of God, there is no difference.

## Steps to building the pyramid

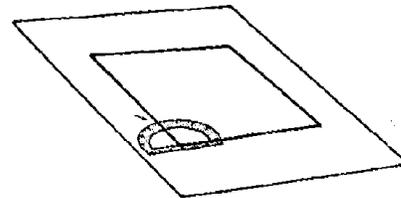
1. Cut out triangle template (attached).
2. Lay it on your tagboard as shown.
3. Mark dots for each point of the triangle.
4. Join these dots with a ruler.
5. Trace the tab on the triangle.
6. Do this to three other pieces of tagboard.
7. Label each triangle on the outside with one of the following titles:
  - Spiritual Development of the Individual
  - Family Life
  - Teaching and Serving the Cause of God
  - Service to Humanity/Career



8. Carefully cut out all triangles drawn on tagboard (include tabs.)

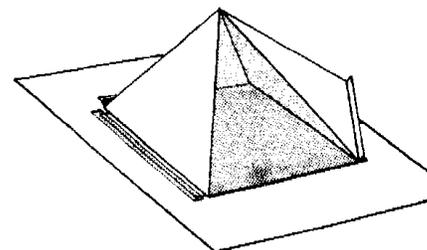


9. Lay the four triangle As on your desk like this, with long edges together and tape the seams.



10. Using a protractor and ruler, draw a perfect square, 6-1/2 inches to a side, in the middle of the posterboard. Make sure that the four corners are 90°. Do it lightly in pencil first!

11. Fold the triangles to a pyramid shape and stand them on the posterboard square.



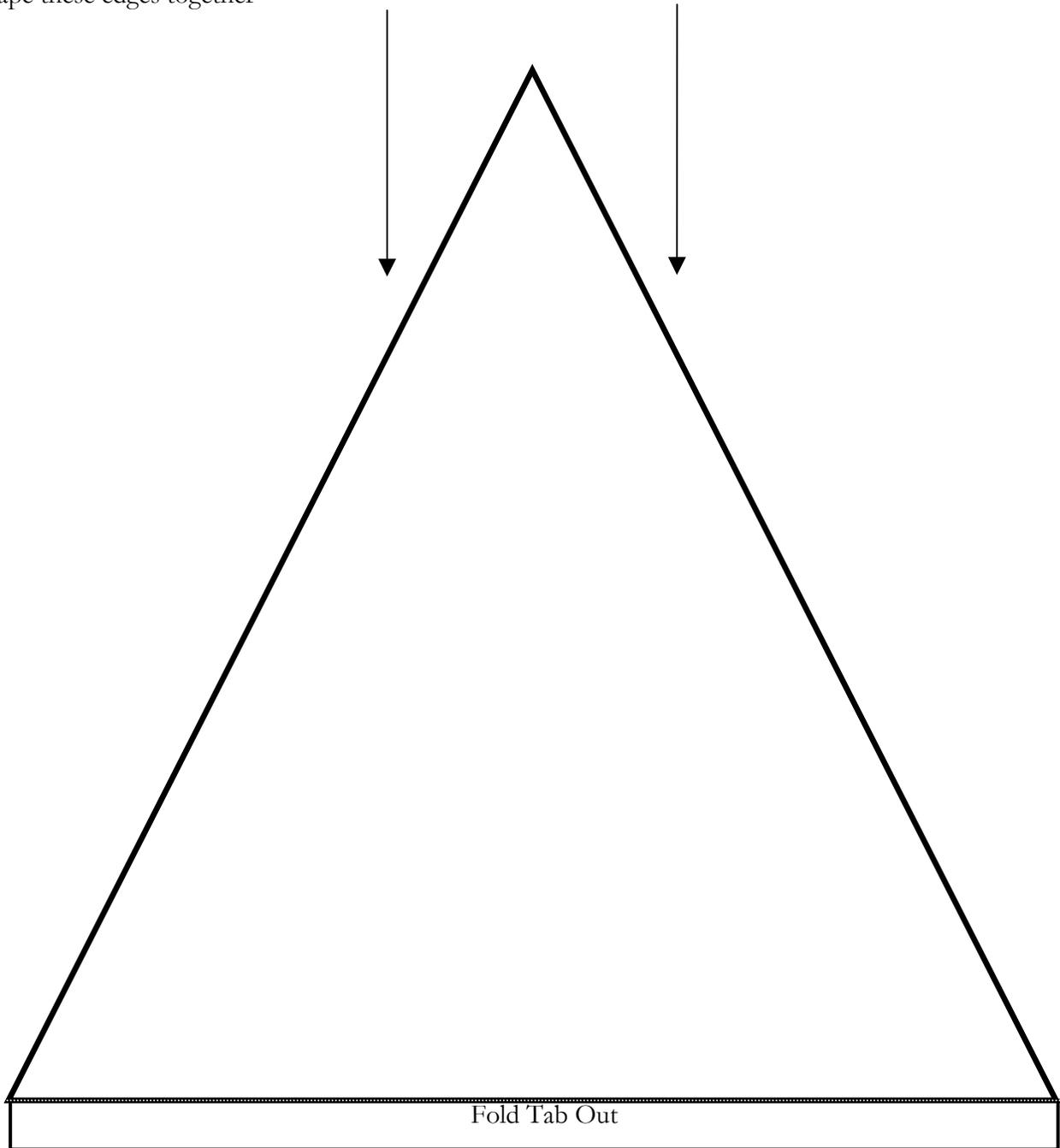
12. When you have “squared up the pyramid,” tape the tabs to the posterboard.

## Triangle Template

Trace on tagboard or thin cardboard.

4 pieces.

Tape these edges together



Tape four tabs to Base

## Journal Writing

- Read quote about the family's relationship to society.

*"Compare the nations of the world to the members of a family. A family is a nation in miniature. Simply enlarge the circle of the household and you have the nation. Enlarge the circle of nations and you have all humanity. The conditions surrounding the family surround the nation. The happenings in the family are the happenings in the life of the nation. Would it add to the progress and advancement of a family if dissensions should arise among its members, fighting, pillaging each other, jealous and revengeful of injury, seeking selfish advantage? Nay, this would be the cause of the effacement of progress and advancement. So it is in the great family of nations, for nations are but an aggregate of families."*

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, p. 157

- Respond to this focus question in journal:

***What is the relationship of family unity to World Peace?***

## Summarize Module Five and the Marriage Course

- Review Themes discussed in Module One, Two, Three, Four and Five.
- Explain that this is only the beginning of their study of self and marriage.
- Have each student complete an evaluation.
- Give each student a momento of the class.
  
- Go back to birds in nest that participants created during the introduction with their spouse.
- Ask them to add to their birds' nest, with their enhanced understanding of marriage and childrearing.
- Read and share with class.

## **GUIDELINES FOR CORE CURRICULUM MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE FACILITATORS**

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### **Definition of Core Curriculum Marriage and Family Life Facilitators**

Core Curriculum Marriage and Family Life Facilitators are those who have successfully completed the two-part Core Curriculum Marriage and Family Life Facilitator Training. Marriage and Family Life Facilitators serve to strengthen the parents' unique role in spiritual education through the enhancement of their station, qualities, knowledge and skills.

### **Distinctive Characteristics of Bahá'í Education and Training**

Among the Bahá'í principles and characteristics that are integral to this training are:

- Reliance upon God through prayer and a spiritual attitude.
- Use of the Creative Word as a foundation for learning.
- Significance of meditation and reflection in the learning process.
- Use of memorization.
- Use of consultation to develop true understanding.
- The importance of diversity to the growth of the individual, to creativity, and to the unity of the group (ethnicity, gender, personality, learning style, capacity, experience, knowledge).
- Teaching the Faith in word and deed as the ultimate outcome of spiritual education.
- Service to humanity as a primary purpose of education.
- Respect for each person's unique contribution to the learning process.
- Excellence in all things as a standard for all Bahá'í activity.
- Genuine love and recognition of each person's spiritual reality.
- Recognition of parents as primary educators of the children.
- Use of the arts to deepen spiritual perception and richness of the learning experience.

### **The Learning Experience**

The training has been designed so that the participants actively engage in their own learning. Consultation and interactive learning activities form an integral part of the training experience. As a parenting facilitator, you will be modeling and utilizing a variety of learning tools and instructional methods as described in the Bahá'í writings, as well as considering a wide array of different learning modalities. Among these are direct use of the Bahá'í sacred writings, including memorization of the writings, experiential learning activities, creative expression, and use of music. The arts are fully incorporated into the learning process as a means to deepen understanding and apply knowledge.

## Conscious Knowledge

Throughout the training the facilitators engage the participants in processing activities to assist them to identify the spiritual and educational principles and practices being modeled and taught. This conscious knowledge enables participants to consider how they can apply these same principles and practices in their child-rearing.

## Journal Work

The journal provides a powerful tool to assist participants in directing their spiritual development process. It offers:

- time to reflect and process the events, new concepts and activities in the training.
- a place to record ideas, insights, questions and concerns.
- a place to recognize understanding, consider past events, and engage in self-evaluation.
- a place to describe aspirations and future action steps.

Participants in the training are encouraged to use the journal to record their thoughts, feelings, visions and fantasy, questions, themes, patterns, memories, mood, personal goals and progress. The journal is most effective when it is used on a regular basis. Questions or prompts for journal reflections are suggested throughout the manual.

## Resources

Collaborating with other educators and making use of available resources is an important part of the implementation process for the Core Curriculum. While participants will be introduced in Course Two of the Spiritual Marriage and Family Life Program to selected Core Curriculum Lesson Planning Guides and Storybooks as resources for the spiritual education of children, it is useful to have as many resources as possible on hand for the participants to see. It is also helpful to be familiar with online resources such as the national Bahá'í education website ([www.education.usbnc.org](http://www.education.usbnc.org)), the Bahá'í Marriage and Family Life newsletter ([www.bahaiparent.com](http://www.bahaiparent.com)), and *Brilliant Star* magazine, to encourage parents to develop their own resources and activities.

## Instructional Methods

A variety of instructional methods are suggested throughout the training manual. Facilitators may adapt these to fit their own style and to meet the styles of their participants. At the same time, we suggest that you maintain a diversity of methodologies as a model for the parents in their own work with their children. Listed below are a number of ways to diversify the activities in your training.

## Methods for Creating Working Groups

- Table Groups. Those people already sitting together may form a group.
- Counting Off: decide how many groups you need, ask participants to count off ( 1, 2, 3...or A, B, C...)
- Thematic. Have participants gather in designated spots in the room according to themes, such as “everyone whose favorite color is red,” “...who has visited another continent...” Let those who fit more than one category fill in where needed for group size.

- Seat Markers. During a break, place small objects (such as paper clips, pennies, rocks) at each place. When it is time to divide into groups draw attention to the object and form groups accordingly.
- Sounding Off. Pass out or leave small pictures or names of animals at each seat. At a signal, everyone begins making the noise of and/or acting out their animal, trying to locate their group members.
- Scavenger Hunt. Give out slips of paper with instructions like, “Find three people with the same color shoes as you,” or, “Find two people who have been Bahá’ís longer than you have,” and form groups with the results.

### **Group Sharing**

Once the groups have been formed and been given their tasks, you will be asking them to share the results of their consultations and/or work with the whole group at a designated time. There are a number of ways to achieve this. Use a variety in your training. Examples include:

- Verbal Reporting. One or more speakers or all members of the group simply tell the large group their results. Major points may be listed on chart paper by one of the facilitators (hint: alternate colors of pen for each statement).
- Visual Arts. Have all groups create a visual art piece (drawing, painting, diagram, sculpture, construction, etc.) that expresses their findings. They may verbally explain their creation.
- Performing Art. Ask that all groups express their findings through dance, drama, role-play, music, song or other performance. Some verbal explanation may accompany the piece.

### **Group Learning: ‘Jigsaw’ as a group learning method**

Jigsaw works best when there are at least eight participants in the training and there is a large body of material to be read and understood by the group. Jigsaw is a cooperative learning strategy. It is a relatively simple technique designed to increase group interdependence and to increase students’ sense of responsibility for their learning. The idea is for each member of a leading team to become an expert on one part of the material. Once the “experts” have grasped the material they teach it to the others in their team.

## Organizing a Jigsaw

### *Before the Training Session:*

- Once you know how many teachers will be attending the training, divide the material into anywhere between 3-6 parts.
- Assign the participants into heterogeneous teams, i.e., insure a balance of gender, race, and ethnicity. For example, with 20 participants, you may decide to have five teams, each comprising four participants (potential “experts”).
- Decide how you will assess the success of the learning (i.e. evaluate the learning through quizzes, games, or presentations).

TEAMS	Team A	Team B	Team C	Team D	Team E
Experts	2.....	2.....	2.....	2.....	2.....
	3.....	3.....	3.....	3.....	3.....
	4.....	4.....	4.....	4.....	4.....

### *At the Training Session:*

Step 1: Assign teams.

Step 2: Invite teams to choose a name for their group.

Step 3: Plan a short inclusion activity to create a sense of interdependence—prayers, a get acquainted activity or team building game—depending on the time you have.

Step 4: Assign each team member a number according to the number of sections into which you have divided the material. If you have divided it into four parts, then number the members of each team 1-4.

Step 5: Give section 1 of the divided material to “expert” 1, section 2 to “expert” 2 and so on. This means that no person in each team has all the material; each person has a part of it.

Step 6: Team members then leave their teams and form “expert groups.” The task of the “expert” group is to read the material, grasp its content, consult on its meaning, and decide on clever ways to teach it to other team members.

Step 7: All “experts” (now greater experts than before!) return to their respective teams and teach the material in their section to the rest of their team.

Step 8: Assess the team learning. Combine the scores to give a group score. You may, or may not, choose to reward the teams that demonstrate successful learning.

## Prepare! Practical Considerations

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### Site Considerations

Core Curriculum Marriage and Family Life Training sessions have been held in places as diverse as homes, Bahá'í centers, colleges, hotels, rustic conference centers, and pre-schools. There are a number of factors to consider, in consultation with the sponsoring institution. Please note that the size of the group will be an important factor to keep in mind as you plan your Spiritual Marriage and Family Life course.

**Space:** Avoid being cramped! You'll need adequate room for:

- Tables and chairs to be arranged to facilitate consultation and note taking.
- Room for small group break-out work, for presentations, for stretching and movement activities and for fellowship and visiting.
- Comfortable reception and registration area.
- Meditation, prayer or quiet study area.
- Space for doing messy crafts (including appropriate floor space and covering).
- Storage area for training supplies, coats and luggage.
- Outdoor area with convenient access to yard, park, garden or woods for fresh air and sunshine anytime!
- Child-care areas if children will be attending.
- A place for snacks or even a dining area for sit-down meals if you will be including meals as part of your program.

All of the above can be creatively arranged in a large hall, dividing areas with furniture or rugs.

**Aesthetics:** If the facility doesn't lend itself to a reverential, inspirational training, choose another or work to make it so!

**Acoustics:** To facilitate both presentations and group consultation, acoustics need to be good. Also check for excessive noise from traffic, heat and air systems, or other groups of people.

**Food:** Check into the facility's policies pertaining to food service. Ideally you will have beverages such as water, tea, coffee, and juice available and easily accessible. If you are conducting an extended day-long intensive session, meals can be on site in a separate area from the training classroom. If meals are off site, adjust the agenda to allow extra time. Some options for meals are outdoor picnic (bring your own or sponsor provided), nearby restaurants, on-site kitchen with volunteer staff, catered meals by the local community.

### Setting Up Arts, Crafts and Music Resources

Identify a special area in your training facility for arts, crafts and musical supplies. These materials should be available throughout the training for the friends to express themselves and their ideas. Encourage the friends to make creative use of these supplies.

## Visual Aids

You may choose to use some visual aids during your training. Some suggestions are:

- Make posters from enlargements. Some copy centers are equipped to make poster size enlargements from an 8-1/2" x 11" original. You may also wish to protect posters you've made by having them laminated or covering them with clear contact paper yourself.
- Make your own beautiful posters using calligraphy and color!
- Copy the graphic onto transparency film; project it onto the wall adjusting the distance of your overhead projector until you have the desired size; tape a piece of poster board on the wall at the point of projection; trace the image with a pencil or pen.
- Some posters/overheads you may wish to prepare for use as visual aids are:
  - - *The organizing quotation, "Then so much as capacity and capability allow...."*
  - - *Definitions for knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception and eloquent speech.*

## Personnel

Community members can assist by serving in the following capacities:

- Receptionist(s)/hosts/guides/servers. Who will bring cookies? Who will help arrange the furniture? Who could bring art supplies? Who could put a notice about the course in your local newspaper or Bahá'í newsletter?
- Treasurer or designated assistant (for payments/receipts).
- People to help with refreshments, set-up, run errands, clean up.

Involve everyone in your community—encourage children to participate! Involvement brings participants.

## Child Care

Participants in your Spiritual Marriage and Family Life course will need to have appropriate care for their children to be able to effectively participate in this program. In some communities parents make their own arrangements; in others they may choose to jointly hire high quality child care (on-site or off-site). Sometimes parenting sessions are offered at the same time as Bahá'í children's classes. Sometimes participants in study circles are eager to offer service with small groups of children. Please consult with the parents and/or your sponsoring institution to assure that children's needs are met.

## Other Considerations

Provide if possible:

- Photographer for candid and group pictures.
- Transportation to/from site for those using public conveyances (arrange for shuttling to secondary sites as needed, e.g., nature walk).

## **Scheduling Considerations**

Flexibility has been purposely built into the training implementation to allow communities to adapt the schedule to their unique situations. Sufficient time between sessions needs to be allowed for participants to carry out assignments and to reflect on the writings they have studied. Precise organization of each training session will be determined through consultation with participants, the sponsoring Local Spiritual Assembly or Regional Training Institute, and your Core Curriculum mentor (if available).

### **Breaks, Time for Reflection, Fellowship and Devotions**

- To give you flexibility in modifying your agenda to fit your training sessions, breaks are not scripted into your manual. In your advance planning, schedule lunches and breaks where they seem appropriate in your own training sessions.
- Plan to open and close all sessions with devotions and to set an example by encouraging the use of memorized devotions and music.
- Provide sufficient time also for fellowship and consultation. Part of the joy and excitement of the training is the opportunity to share with other Bahá'ís working in the field of education.
- Consultation within the parenting group can effectively resolve many questions related to schedule and other matters.

## **Participation and Registration**

All participants need to be registered in advance so that you can order sufficient books and supplies. A commitment to attend all sessions is strongly encouraged. Should unregistered friends turn up at midway through the course, or should registered friends announce after arriving that they will be unable to attend every session, we suggest you follow these guidelines:

1. Lovingly tell them how happy you are that they are interested in the Core Curriculum Spiritual Marriage and Family Life program.
2. Explain the structure of the training program, that this is a sequential process, and they will benefit most by attending the full training.
3. Encourage them to register for the next training that is offered in the area if their schedule does not permit them to benefit from this particular course offering.

## **Inviting Parents to Participate**

The key to building the participation of parents is your own enthusiasm and the enthusiasm of others. Parents need to feel confident that this course will address their needs, hopes, and interests and that the course will be enjoyable and productive.

A personal approach works best. Announcements, flyers, and general letters can be useful parts of an outreach plan but cannot replace personal contacts (phone calls, conversations, and e-mail) with others. Enthusiastic parents will bring others.

Your introductory session can help parents experience a sample of the sorts of experiences they will have in the course and may be especially effective when you're reaching out to parents in the community at large.

## Cultural Appreciation

The training environment is created through physical surroundings and material preparations that reflect love and appreciation for the individual teacher’s capacities, capabilities, and cultural diversity.

The National Bahá’í Education Task Force trusts that facilitators will closely follow activity directions, ensuring consistent training experiences across the country, and will share elements that work well and those that need refinement. At the same time, facilitators must seek a balance between stretching participants’ capacity to facilitate growth, and respecting cultural diversity.

The following examples illustrate strategies to bridge cultural differences:

- Ask: Perhaps one of the best ways to learn about the needs, hopes, and interests of the people we’re with is simply to ask them what they think and listen carefully to their responses.
- Working in pairs: If close interaction with the opposite sex is culturally inappropriate and the activity suggests working in pairs, direct friends to choose male-male and female-female partners or arrange pairs in advance to quietly accommodate this need.
- Language use: Some individuals enjoy reading quotations in English, others do not. Please carefully observe the group you are serving. Routinely invite individuals to “pass” if they prefer not to read; if possible, organize working groups so that at least one able reader is in each group. Alternatively you may memorize the first quotation for an activity and focus the activity on deep exploration of that one quotation.
- Time: Please be mindful that different groups require more or less time for study depending on such factors as group size, reading ease, familiarity with the Faith, and possibly cultural factors. Consult with the group and adjust the schedule if necessary so that:
- Participants engage thoroughly with the Word of God with both mind and heart.
- There is a feeling of dynamic energetic movement in the study circle without rushing or feeling stressed.
- Recognition of individuals: For those who often find public recognition of individual attributes immodest, try setting the stage by sharing that every attribute is a gift from God. Avoid directing praise to selected individuals. Note that God’s gifts allow His attributes to shine forth within the community.
- Any activity that uses posters or two-dimensional art expression: Some friends come from backgrounds that seldom use two-dimensional, paper art for expression. Clarify that visual art work may be three-dimensional, using a wide range of materials for creation.
- Music throughout the training: Diverse music—and lots of music—enhances any environment. Some favorites include:
  - *Amame* by Leonor Dély y Millero Congo
  - Any of the many *Black Men’s Gathering* albums
  - “Dastam Begir” (any version, such as *Music of the World Congress*) when considering the Example of the Master
  - “Esengo Na Mboka Haifa” by Congo Youth Choir
  - *Keepers of the Dream* by Kevin Locke
  - Louhelen: *Fruits of the Spirit* compilation CD
  - *Hidden Words of Bahá’u’lláh* by Zheng Fei Hong
  - *The Santour* by Kiu Haghighi
  - *Sounds of the World*, music from the World Center Terrace Dedications
  - *We Have come to Sing Praises* – “In this Day Bahá’u’lláh” by the Bahá’í Gospel Choir at the conclusion of a session

## Situations Beyond the Scope of the Core Curriculum Program

While the role of the Marriage and Family Life Facilitators is one of profound service to Bahá'í institutions, families and the community, sometimes situations can arise that are beyond the scope of the Core Curriculum Marriage and Family Life Program. Based on what you already know, consider situations that might be beyond the scope of this program. Some examples include abuse, deeply emotional issues, legal matters, etc.

What can you do should such a situation arise? How could you prepare for such situations?

For example, if a participant is emotionally overcome by a particularly moving activity, one trainer could assist by stepping out of the room with the participant to listen and show love, while the other continues the workshop.

In some instances, be prepared to refer the situation to a Bahá'í institution such as the Local Spiritual Assembly, an Auxiliary Board Member or an Assistant.

Consider the following story as analogy:

There once was a village hospital which every day saw a consistent stream of bloodied, battered people coming with the same injuries. The doctors and nurses were so busy patching people up they had no time to investigate the cause. Finally a youthful, inquisitive soul investigated and found that a commonly used footpath passed a dangerous cliff, and many people were falling off this cliff. The village people then built a fence, and the problem was solved.

As Marriage and Family Life Facilitators, we know there are lots of injured people among us; there are others trained to treat the injured. We are the youthful, inquisitive souls, uniting our communities to work for change.

## COLLABORATING WITH OTHER CORE CURRICULUM FACILITATORS

Identify the Core Curriculum Trainers and Facilitators in your area.

Trainer of Teachers:

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Race Unity Facilitators:

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Spiritual Parenting Facilitators:

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Equality Facilitators:

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Youth Empowerment Facilitators:

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Fundamental Verities Facilitators:

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Schedule a consultation with the facilitators.
2. Discuss areas of common work, potential linkages in parent-teacher relationships, community life, spiritual meetings, teaching and service projects, development of the children's potential as teachers and servants of the Cause, readiness of the community.
3. Develop strategies for collaboration and a process for obtaining the sponsoring institution's approval and support.
4. Keep your advisor and the National Children's Education and Research Center informed! We hope to share news of your community's progress toward child development centered communities.
5. Focus on love and unity.

**Sample Training Invitation Letter from Local Spiritual Assembly  
or Regional Training Institute  
to Neighboring Assemblies, Auxiliary Board Members and Assistants**

Date\_\_\_\_\_

To\_\_\_\_\_

Dear Friends,

We are happy to announce that our [*Regional Training Institute or Local Spiritual Assembly*] has scheduled a Core Curriculum Spiritual Foundations for Marriage and Family Life Course on [*date and time*] at [*place*]. This program, designed to foster loving, unified, spiritually vibrant families, has been developed by the National Bahá'í Education Task Force under the direction of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States.

[*co-facilitators' names*] will serve as facilitators, and our [*Regional Training Institute or Local Spiritual Assembly*] is pleased to be the sponsoring institution for this important program. We invite you to recommend this training opportunity to married couples in your community.

Through a variety of learning activities we will

- Explore the Bahá'í writings as a strong foundation of guidance for marriage and family life.
- Learn practical ways to implement the guidance in the Bahá'í writings.
- Develop the skills of consultation needed for strong and dynamic marriage and family life.
- Realize that all community members collaborate to support growth and development of families.

The cost for all sessions including parenting course book is \$\_\_\_\_\_. We respectfully request that all participants attend all sessions in the training program.

We anticipate that this will be a very rich experience and look forward to your response and our joint venture in this important and timely core activity of the Bahá'í community. Should you have any questions regarding the training, please contact [*facilitators' names and phone No. s*] who will be happy to answer your questions. You may also contact the outreach coordinator at the National Children's Education and Resource Center , (810) 653-5033 or email, [NCERC@usbnc.org](mailto:NCERC@usbnc.org).

Please send or phone registration requests or recommended names by [*date*] to [*contact person's name, phone No. and address*].

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

## *Sample Registration Confirmation*

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We are pleased to confirm your registration!  
Core Curriculum Spiritual Marriage and Family Life, Course One  
Tuesdays, October 6 to December 16, 7:30 pm.



*Location:* Anywhere Bahá'í Center  
99 Unity Lane, Covenant City, USA  
phone 909/909-9999

*Directions:* From Highway 9, take the ...

*Cost:* \$\_\_\_\_ per person, includes:  
Instructional materials for all sessions and lunch each day

Registration fee of \$\_\_\_\_ payable by *(date)* to *(Assembly Treasurer, address, phone)*

*What to Bring:* Prayer book, pen or pencil, sweater or jacket, a smile

*What to Wear:* Comfortable clothes for sitting and moderate activity

*Who to Contact:* Please call either Mary Friend (911/911-9111) or John Helper (919/919-9191)

*Kindly inform us immediately if you are unable to attend all sessions so that your place may be offered to another participant.*

**TRAINING REPORT FOR CORE CURRICULUM  
SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE PROGRAM**

Facilitators are requested to photocopy this form, complete it and send it to:

*National Children's Education and Research Center, Loubelen Babá'i School, Davison, MI 48423*

within two weeks of the completion of the Marriage and Family Life Course.

Email reports prepared using this format are welcome at [NCERC@usbnc.org](mailto:NCERC@usbnc.org)

Please also enclose a roster of participants and a summary or copy of their evaluations.

**FACILITATORS**

Names \_\_\_\_\_

Addresses \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Numbers \_\_\_\_\_

**LOGISTICS**

Sponsoring Institution \_\_\_\_\_ Location of Training \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of Training \_\_\_\_\_

Total No. of participants \_\_\_\_\_

No. completing all modules \_\_\_\_\_

Heritage:

\_\_\_\_ African American

\_\_\_\_ Hispanic

\_\_\_\_ Pacific Islands

\_\_\_\_ European American

\_\_\_\_ Interracial

\_\_\_\_ Persian

\_\_\_\_ Asian

\_\_\_\_ Native American

\_\_\_\_ Other

Auxiliary Board Members present \_\_\_\_\_

Assistants to the Auxiliary Boards \_\_\_\_\_

**EVALUATION**

1. Did you follow the procedures outlined?

2. What were the highlights of the training program for you and for the participants?

3. What problems did you encounter, if any?

4. How far did you achieve the goals of each module?

5. What provisions were established by the sponsoring institution for...  
follow through?

continued support?

networking?

materials development?

evaluation of teachers' work in the local Bahá'í community?

6. Further comments:

## *Marriage and Family Life Facilitators: Moving to Action*

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Work in pairs, preferably with your Spiritual Marriage and Family Life co-facilitator:

**Purpose:** Prepare to offer Core Curriculum Spiritual Foundations for Marriage and Family Life Course One.

1. Considering your community situation, plan the action steps you will take for implementing the Core Curriculum Spiritual Marriage and Family Life program when you return home.
2. Keeping in mind the needs and hopes of the parents in your community, please use your facilitator guide to carefully plan:
  - How will you assist your community to build a unified vision of the importance of the Marriage and Family Life program? How will you encourage the participation of parents? Will you use personal invitations or other means to reach out to the public with this important course?
  - When will you meet with your Local Spiritual Assembly, your Auxiliary Board member or assistant, or the area coordinator for your Regional Training Institute? How will you share with them the Core Curriculum process? What preparations will you need to make? When and how will you collaborate with others to offer this course?
  - When and where will you conduct parenting workshops? What resources will you need? Who can help you?
  - How will you know you have been successful? When will you report to the National Children's Education and Research Center?
3. Be prepared to share your plans either orally, in written form, or through role playing with the larger group, who will then help you to finalize your plans.
4. Reconvene as a whole group and share your work plans. Ask the group to help:
  - a) identify the strengths of your planning.
  - b) anticipate some of the obstacles and bounties you might expect.
  - c) make suggestions for refining the plan.
  - d) Encourage you in your service.

What adjustments, if any, need to be made to the work plans?

## *Working with Babá'í Institutions*

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Compare the nations of the world to the members of a family. A family is a nation in miniature. Simply enlarge the circle of the household and you have the nation. Enlarge the circle of nations and you have all humanity. The conditions surrounding the family surround the nation. The happenings in the family are the happenings in the life of the nation. Would it add to the progress and advancement of a family if dissensions should arise among its members, fighting, pillaging each other, jealous and revengeful of injury, seeking selfish advantage? Nay, this would be the cause of the effacement of progress and advancement. So it is in the great family of nations, for nations are but an aggregate of families.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, p. 157

Marriage and Family Life Facilitators should graciously thank, inform, and collaborate with Local Spiritual Assemblies or other institutions to offer the Core Curriculum Spiritual Marriage and Family Life program. Marriage and Family Life Facilitator procedures include:

1. Partners schedule a meeting with their sponsoring Institution.
2. Partners pray for guidance, review objectives and appropriate materials, consulting with their Core Curriculum mentor as needed.
3. Share information about the Marriage and Family Life Program, including content, training time, and who might participate. Create a vision of the power of parents to bring into being the children of the Kingdom, and strengthen families to build a new civilization.
4. Demonstrate training methods in your presentations: focus on relevant passages from the sacred Writings; use prayer and music to help create the desired atmosphere; emphasize the importance of diversity and consultation; honor the Institution’s role.
5. Review specific needs, requirements, costs, timetables, etc. Provide sample schedules for your sponsoring institution and whatever you think might be helpful to you and to them. (Don’t assume they know about training needs.)
6. Decide who will be responsible for invitations, logistics, etc. Determine a specific date for confirming names/addresses/phone numbers of participants.
7. Obtain firm commitments for sponsorship of workshops. Be certain that the nature and extent of the required support is understood. Ask course sponsors to assume responsibility for as much of the communications as possible. At the same time, you will find that your own investment in personally inviting and confirming participants builds a strong course with high levels of anticipation among participants and institutions alike. Consult with the institution about your plan to invite the participation of parents.
8. Inform the NCERC of dates and locations of planned workshops.
9. Provide a report following the workshop, thanking the institution for sponsorship and showering them with love for their service to the community.

