

Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program

Junior Youth are the Future Leaders towards Unity

The period between the ages of 11 and 15 represents a special time of every individual, where physical, emotional, intellectual & behavioural changes take place. This special group of individuals are known as junior youth.

Various factors influence the way they think, act and behave such as the environment, culture, upbringing, and the society. Junior youth are observant and often question about the world around them.

It is vital then, to assist them in recognizing the moral issues underlying everyday decisions, besides empowering them to channel energies towards strengthening their own character and serving their nearby community. Therefore, creative attention must be devoted to them via development programs that will engage their interests, involve them in social interaction with older youth, as well as mold their capacities to serve the community.

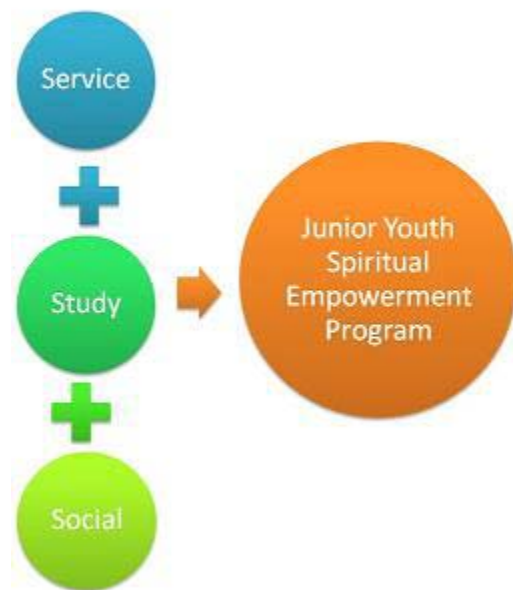
The purpose of Junior Youth Gatherings (JYG)

A junior youth group is a group of youth that meet regularly with the purpose of fostering each member's spiritual development. Meetings are carried out in a supportive environment, allowing group members to voice their thoughts and opinions while at the same time learn to understand the wider implications of their beliefs.

An "animator", usually an older youth but not restricted by age, accompanies group members as they engage in a variety of activities which will help them to accomplish this goal.

Together the group studies materials¹ from a curriculum which has been developed to introduce critical moral concepts and simultaneously enhance the member's power of expression. While each of the books in the curriculum explores universal spiritual principles, they have been developed around the world and provide members with an opportunity to explore cultural aspects of each society from an uplifting perspective.

Groups plan and engage in service and social activities², allowing members to practice the concepts which they have studied, and to develop new skills. As the group members grow and develop, so too does the level and complexity of group activities.



YOU! Yeah You too, can be an animator to help junior youth navigate their life at this crucial stage!

Who are animators?

Animators are older youths or adults that accompany a group of junior youth at their own community or neighbourhood to study the JYSEP books³ as well as engage in a variety of activities or community services.

Anyone can be an animator! There is so much demands for us to assist young people navigate through a crucial stage of their lives. We are inviting those who have the longing desire and passion to serve and join⁴ the league of animators!

“I hope that each one of you will become just, and direct your thoughts towards the unity of mankind; that you will never harm your neighbours nor speak ill of any one; that you will respect the rights of all men, and be more concerned for the interests of others than for your own.”

–Abdu’l-Bahá

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Junior youth spiritual empowerment program

Since its inception, the Ruhi Institute has attached special importance to its work with youth aged 12 to 15; specifically, it has sought to understand the dynamics of maintaining small groups in local communities that offer a setting in which young people can discuss ideas and form a strong moral identity. The Institute has found the titles noted below, some of which are developed by other organizations, useful for this purpose. They are divided into two categories and are listed in order of difficulty. Several other titles will eventually be added to the Institute’s program for the spiritual empowerment of junior youth.



All of the titles are concerned with developing language skills and the power of expression. Some in the first category also address mathematical concepts and social issues, while others seek to prepare young people to approach the investigation of physical, social and spiritual reality in a scientific manner. Though the moral concepts in the materials in the first category are drawn from the Bahá’í teachings, they are not religious in nature, nor do they treat subjects that are specifically Bahá’í. Many kinds of organizations, including academic institutions, will therefore find them useful for their educational programs with junior youth. The current titles in this category are:

- Breezes of Confirmation
- Glimmerings of Hope
- Thinking About Numbers
- Walking the Straight Path
- Learning About Excellence
- Observation and Insight (not yet available)
- The Human Temple
- Drawing on the Power of the Word

In its own work with young people, the Ruhi Institute includes the items in the second category, which address Bahá'í-related subjects. Among these subjects are those with which adolescents most often struggle, such as, free will and predestination and the complex relationship between will and knowledge. Currently, the following titles are in this category:

- Spirit of Faith
- Power of the Holy Spirit

The spiritual empowerment program is offered to junior youth in small groups, usually formed in a village or neighborhood by an older youth. The Ruhi Institute is developing a series of branch courses, beginning with Book in its main sequence, to prepare older youth and adults to serve as "animators" of such groups.

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What is Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment?

The objective of the junior youth groups are the empowerment of participants through the development of spiritual perception, the enhancement of their power of expression, and the building of a sound moral structure. The program molds the capacities of all the junior youth for service to humanity, releasing their energies for a purposeful and constructive life. Now tell me, who doesn't want to do that??

The Junior Youth Empowerment Project

The junior youth program is a globally developed social and economic development initiative that began some thirty years ago in a number of countries around the world. Its purpose is to empower young people to contribute effectively to the advancement of civilization. Today there are junior youth groups in every part of the world, who meet in various places (homes, schools, under trees, centres).

Why Junior Youth?

Junior Youth are young people between the ages of 11-14 years old. This is a very important time when jr youth are transitioning from being children into being youth. It is during this period of life that the majority of behaviours and habits are developed. They are impacted by a number of different forces (media, society, friends etc).

Why Service?

Empowerment

One of the main objectives of junior youth groups is to empower the young people to be able to contribute to the advancement of world civilization. Individual and social transformation go hand in hand, there is a great need to encourage young people to better their environment through service. It is impossible to chance just the individual or society, it must be a dual process to be effective.

Why Language?

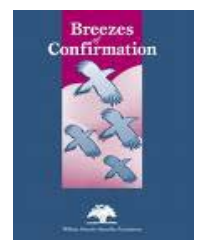
There is great importance in developing a rich vocabulary and eloquent speech. Junior youth are dis-empowered when they cannot express what they see and experience in the world. More on Saturday!

Why Religion?

The majority of junior youth believe in religion, or 'a' religion, and this is a topic could not be avoided. In families, and all around the world, religion is a powerful social force, and the majority of the peoples of the world have beliefs. Junior youth groups make a space so that people from all religions could come together and make the world a better place and at the same time talk about what spirituality is.

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1) **Breezes of Confirmation** ~ Breezes of Confirmation, prepared by the William Mmutle Masetlha Foundation in Zambia, tells the story of Musonda, a young girl who has just turned 13, and her older cousin Rose, who has come to visit for the school holidays. A theme that runs throughout the story is that of making an effort and receiving God's confirmations. While the book maintains a certain level of simplicity in terms of sentence structure and flow, the use of difficult words is not avoided. By placing such words in different contexts, and drawing out their meaning through exercises, the text builds vocabulary and strengthens literacy skills.

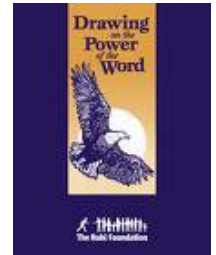


The book works best with youth aged 11 and 12.

2) **Walking the Straight Path** ~ Stories have traditionally been a means for conveying moral concepts from one generation to the next. The Badi Foundation in Macau draws on this tradition by bringing together twenty stories from different cultures in *Walking the Straight Path*. Each story is relatively short and followed by a series of exercises designed to further comprehension, build vocabulary, and enhance moral reasoning. Short quotations for memorization are also provided. The book is intended to be studied by young people aged 13 to 14.



3) **Drawing on the Power of the Word** ~ *Drawing on the Power of the Word* by the Ruhi Foundation in Colombia seeks to enhance the power of expression and explore the moral implications of speech and action. It consists of twenty readings, each of which is complemented by exercises in language skills. The readings begin simply, but gain in complexity both in terms of thought and language. The first reading introduces Diego and his youth group, who live in the small town of Alegrías. With the help of a tutor from the nearby institute named Elisa, the group thinks about the power of enlightened words and pure deeds to bring about social change. The book is designed for youth aged 14.



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**If you are between the age of 11 and 15,
If you are a concern parent with junior youth at home,
If you want to be an animator to serve your community,
If you want to help in building a better community,
If you are staying on this earth,
please kindly contact Su Mei (ric.src@gmail.com).**

We are just normal beings who would like to serve at our own locality.
Your supports and opinions are very much appreciated.

Thank you.

“ All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization...” ~ Bahá’u’lláh

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[Source: <http://jysep-sj.webs.com>]