



# PROTECT THE PLANET

## Study circle



### Management of Physical and Mental Energy in a time of Crises.

#### PART 1

OPENING AND INTRODUCTION			
ACTIVITY	NOTE TO FACILITATOR	RESOURCES	DURATION
3 AUMs (or a minute's silent sitting) followed by an opening prayer	Whether Omkar or silent sitting is used depends on the audience this study circle is being delivered to. Either way, the objective of this activity is to help settle the group and establish group dynamics. This is the same for whether a prayer or short reading is used. Example of a prayer that could be used to start the session: <i>"Dear Swami, we, your children have gathered here today so that we can be your instruments in protecting and serving Mother Nature. You have blessed us with Mother Nature. Please guide us on your mission to serve Her. Please let our words, thoughts and actions be of your accord. Please bless us to be open minded and to learn from one another, so that we can truly embrace the inherent divinity within us, in all beings and Mother Nature."</i>		<b>1 MIN</b>
Introduce today's topic	This study circle is part of the Serve the Planet (STP) initiative of the SSIO. <b>The purpose of this study circle is to better understand the importance of managing our physical and mental energy on a daily basis, and during crises (whether personal, National or Global).</b>  It is important to remain respectful and open at all times. Keep in mind that the Study Circle is about sharing and exploring the topic and inspiring each other rather than 'finding right answers'. It is important to also note that these two energy forms and sources complement our spiritual energy, which is covered separately.		<b>2 MINS</b>
TODAY'S DELIVERY			
ACTIVITY	NOTE TO FACILITATOR	RESOURCES	DURATION
Question 1a: How is physical energy generated in the body? Question 1b:	Physical energy is 'the strength and vitality required for sustained physical activity'. <sup>1</sup> There are two things that power the human body: 1. The internal source or divinity, which is manifested as the soul or atma and gives life to the body		10-15 MINS

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<p>What is the role of food in generating physical energy?</p> <p>Question 1c: How can choosing the right food provide sustained energy levels throughout the day?</p>	<p>2. The external source, which comes from the food and beverages that we consume daily</p> <p>Participants will discuss food as the source of physical energy. Probe further with question 1b.</p> <p>Food is one of the most important energy sources for the body and essential to help the body to function properly. The food we eat is composed of the following key components, some of which directly provide the body the energy it requires, but all of which are important for good health and well-being:<sup>2</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Carbohydrates and fat – for energy</li> <li>● Protein – for growth and repair</li> <li>● Fibre – for a healthy digestive system</li> <li>● Vitamins and Minerals – these will be present in trace amounts in the food we eat and provide essential nutrients to help the body function properly</li> <li>● Water – 60% of our body weight is water, and the body uses water in all its cells, organs, and tissues to help regulate temperature and maintain other bodily functions.<sup>3</sup> According to two studies conducted at the University of Connecticut's Human Performance Laboratory, 'even mild dehydration can alter a person's mood, energy level, and ability to think clearly.'<sup>4</sup></li> </ul> <p>The key to good health is to:<sup>5,6</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Limit the amount and variety of simple sugars you consume through foods such as sweet biscuits, cookies, cakes, lollipops, ice cream, carbonated drinks, juices, sweets and chocolates. This is because these are exactly the type of foods that will spike your glucose levels and boost your energy suddenly, only to be temporarily followed by an "energy low".</li> <li>● Instead opt for complex carbohydrates that release energy gradually in the body and maintain constant energy supply. A good way to tell how quickly foods release energy in the body is to look up its the glycaemic index which indicates whether food raises blood glucose levels quickly, moderately or slowly.<sup>7</sup></li> <li>● Avoid refined carbohydrates such as white bread, white pasta, and white sugar as the process of refinement strips these foods of their nutritional value. Instead opt for plant based proteins, healthy fats and lots of vegetables, especially green vegetables.</li> <li>● Replace fewer, big meals with more frequent, smaller meals, so that the body has a constant energy supply throughout the day. It is also important to eat breakfast to kick-start the body's metabolism after a gap of about 6–10 hours during</li> </ul>		
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	<p>sleep and it is important to have heavier meals earlier in the day rather than at night.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The amount of food we eat is also very important. If we eat more than the energy needs of our body, the excess gets converted to fat and stored in the body. If we consume less, the body will convert fat into glucose to make up for the shortfall. However, if we consume the right amount, there is neither storage nor shortfall, which is the ideal state to aim for.</li> <li>● Lastly, every human being is a combination of the three basic gunas (attributes, qualities) – namely sattva (relates to order and equilibrium, goodness), rajas (relates to activity, passion) and tamas (relates to inertness, darkness). Food too is split into these three categories, depending on their effect on the body when consumed. For spiritual growth, a sathwic diet is best as it promotes the quality of purity and goodness. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sathwic – food that can strengthen the mind as well as the body (pure). Examples include nuts, seeds, oils, fruit, dairy, and vegetables.</li> <li>○ Rajasic – food that excites and intoxicates (i.e. passionate - too salty, too sweet, too hot, too sour, too odorous). Examples include caffeinated drinks such as coffee, tea, cola drinks, energy drinks, brown or black chocolate, and spicy food.</li> <li>○ Thamasic – food that promotes dullness. Examples include meat, fish, fertilised eggs, onion, garlic, scallion, leek, chive, mushroom, and alcoholic beverages.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
<p>Question 2a: How is your food and physical activity altered during a crisis?</p> <p>Question 2b: What is the reason for this change in behaviour?</p>	<p><i>“The Annamaya Kosha is the sheath, consisting of the material, flesh and bone, built by the food that is consumed by the individual. Food is generally looked down upon by ascetically minded sadhaks and seekers and treated as something which does not deserve attention. But, since the body and the mind are mightily interdependent, no one can afford to neglect it. As the food, so the mind, as the mind so the thought; as the thought, so the act. Food is an important factor which determines the alertness and sloth, the worry and calm, the brightness and dullness.” – (SSS 14.31: 21 September 1979).</i></p> <p><i>“Catering to the cravings of the tongue and swallowing heavy foods three to four times a day can only add to the heap. Only regular and limited intakes can enable a person to discharge one’s duties.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 15.54: 11 November 1982)</i></p> <p><i>“Take another example, when you are hungry, you may decide to eat a Chapati (flat bread). When you finish it and have a feeling that you can eat one more, you must stop. Do not proceed to eat more and more. Overeating results in chubbiness initially and gradually leads to</i></p>		10 min

	<p><i>obesity. Physical appearance also gets affected by overeating. Hence one must cultivate limits for everything – eating, walking, talking, etc. This limit should act as a warning signal to us.” – Sathya Sai Baba (Prof. R.K. Bhaskar, Man Management A Values-Based Management Perspective, p 240–241)</i></p>		
<p>Question 3: What is the definition of mental energy? And what is its source?</p>	<p>What is mental energy (mind)? Mental energy is ‘a mood, but can also be defined as the ability or willingness to engage in cognitive work’.<sup>8</sup> Mental energy can be further explained as<sup>9</sup>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The ability to persist for long periods when thinking productively about a problem</li> <li>● The ability to focus attention</li> <li>● The ability to shut out distractions</li> <li>● The ability to persist in search of a solution</li> <li>● The power to listen, comprehend, understand, discriminate, assimilate and absorb</li> </ul> <p>Sathya Sai Baba defines the mind as: <i>“Mind is just like the cloth. Our thoughts are the cotton, the desires which they mould are the threads, and the intermingling and the interaction of these desires is the cloth i.e. the mind, made out of warp and woof. When the threads (desires) are removed one by one, the cloth (mind) disappears. It is best to have as few desires as possible.”</i> – Sathya Sai Baba (Summer Showers 1970.13: June 2, 1976 and SSS 10:33. November 24, 1970).</p> <p>According to Sathya Sai Baba, the mind is the primary source of mental energy powered by the buddhi (intelligence). <i>“The buddhi (intelligence) is very close to the Atma (Soul) and therefore, well situated to receive 90 percent of the Atmic (spiritual) energy and illumination. The mind derives its power from the buddhi, the senses from the mind, and the body from the senses. In this process of the flow of power from the Atma to the body in stages, there occurs a gradual quantitative and qualitative diminution of the power.”</i> – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 23.16: May 26, 1990)</p> <p>The spiritual energy flows in this direction, from the soul all the way to the body, changing name and form and diminishing in power as it progresses. Soul &gt; Intelligence &gt; Mind &gt; Senses &gt; Body</p> <p>It is also interesting to note that the buddhi (or intelligence) which powers the mind, is derived from the Vedic Sanskrit root Budh, which literally means ‘to wake, be awake, observe, heed, attend, learn, become aware of, to know, be conscious again’.<sup>10</sup> To be conscious of what exactly, we might ask? Conscious of the purpose for its existence here on earth.</p>		20 min

It is the mind positioned in between the soul and the body that often succumbs to its vagaries.

**Soul > Intelligence < Mind > Senses > Body**

INTERNAL WORLD <

> EXTERNAL WORLD

On the one hand, the mind is pulled strongly towards the external world by the body and senses, and on the other is the gentle voice of the Soul and Buddhi, discerning and telling the mind 'not this, not this.' *"It is in this reference that the Vedanta teaches the principle of "not this, not this (neti, neti)." The body, the mind, the intellect, the mind-stuff, and the senses —all these are mere instruments. You are the Divinity, which is beyond all these. It is Divinity that is responsible for their functioning."* – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 26.40: September 4, 1996)

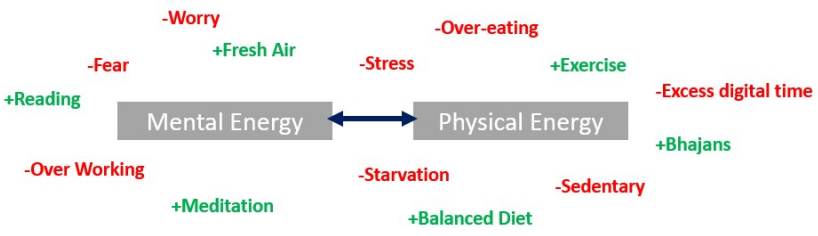
The power of thought and discrimination - It is the power of discrimination, which is perhaps the most useful tool in helping the mind to choose between:

- Right vs. wrong
- Internal vs. external
- The soul vs. the body and senses
- Long-term gain vs. immediate pleasure
- Self-realisation vs. worldly gains

*"Before you undertake any task, always enquire, "Is this good or bad, is this right or wrong?" You will come up in life if you develop this one quality in you. This itself is self-realisation. So, it is important to have discrimination first. Unfortunately, people use their discrimination to suit their self-interest. This individual discrimination varies from person to person. The same thing is viewed by ten people in ten different ways. You must adopt fundamental discrimination which is beneficial to society at large. Only fundamental discrimination will give you self-satisfaction, which in turn will lead you to self-realisation. So, proper discrimination is of prime importance for self-realisation."* – Sathya Sai Baba ('Discrimination is the means to self-realisation' Discourse on 22 August 2007)

**The power of the senses**

The pull of the senses towards external objects is perhaps one of the most powerful forces preventing the mind from going within. The material world appears so real, that unless we are taught about the Body-Mind-Soul complex, we would never seek to know anything else, until we possibly accomplish everything in the outer world (money, success, good relations, spouse, children, etc.) and still find ourselves feeling empty. *"In order to purify the senses, you should make use of them in a sacred way. Purity of the senses is purity of the*

	<p><i>mind. The mind is the master of the senses. If the mind is to be pure, the senses have also to be pure.” – SSS 31.34: 29 September 1998)</i></p> <p><b>The power of desire</b></p> <p><i>“Our life, when it is covered with the husk of desire, has rebirth. Once we remove this husk of desire, there is no birth. In this context, it has been said that man’s mind alone is responsible for his bondage as well as liberation. Thus, in the content of God (Brahman), life plus desire is man and life minus desire is God. How can it be possible to live without desires? It is not possible to eliminate all desires. If, however, we turn all our desires towards God and whatever we do, if we do it remembering that we do it for the pleasure of God, those desires will not bind us for rebirth. Whatever work we wish to undertake; we should do so without the desire to claim the fruit thereof. We have the right to do work, but we have no right to the fruit thereof. This is what the Gita also says. One may ask for what it matters if we desire to enjoy the fruits of work. It is possible to have peace in our life only if such desires are limited and kept under control.” – Summer Showers Part I 1974.6: May–June 1974)</i></p>		
<p>Question 3: What are the ways in which we change (increase or decrease) our physical and mental energy during a crisis?</p>	<p>Physical and Mental energy are linked to each other and can influence each other. A positive influence on either one has an overall positive impact on the individual.</p>  <p>We have a finite amount of physical and mental energy each day, so this energy needs to be used wisely and maximised where possible. In essence, anything that takes our attention and awareness away from the present moment and the task at hand, is a drain of our mental and often physical energy.</p>		15 min
<p>Question 4: We are all aware of the Fear of the Pandemic. What are your thoughts on the Pandemic of ‘Fear’?</p>	<p>How can the Pandemic of fear be vanquished?</p> <p><i>“Fear has gripped everyone. You are haunted by fear whether in your home or out in the streets. Fear grips you when you get into a bus or a train, whether you are going in a car or in an aeroplane. How is life to be rid of fear?” SSS 23.7: 27 April 1990.</i></p> <p>Stress and fear can be curbed by taking some precautions to safeguard the mind during a crisis <sup>13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18;</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Limit your media exposure.</li> <li>● Use trusted sources for information e.g. World Health</li> </ul>	<p><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RaR8RrjrNR_E">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RaR8RrjrNR_E</a></p>	15 min

	<p>Organisation, US Centre for Disease Control (CDC), etc. This will ensure you receive trustworthy information and prevent the spread of rumours, hatred (racial/ ethnic/ socio-economic), and the sale of untested cures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Do not share misinformation.</li> <li>● Use any time of isolation/social distancing to focus on personal improvements - cleaning items from storage that can be reused or redistributed, learning a new skill (cooking, baking, sewing, writing, painting, gardening, playing an instrument, singing etc.),</li> <li>● Focus on positive aspects of your life.</li> <li>● Be supportive - follow guidelines set out by your national and local government.</li> <li>● Follow the Principles of Ceiling on Desires.</li> <li>● Shift your current routines and activities to focus on what gives meaning, purpose, or fulfilment. This can also require a shift in personal expectations and properties.</li> <li>● Think of ways you can be a resource for support/service to others, even if it were from a distance.</li> </ul> <p>Think of ways you can be a resource for support/service to others, even if it were from a distance.</p> <p>Please see the Appendix for stories to illustrate the link of Fear and Death.</p> <p>Thoughts play an important role in our daily lives and needs to be monitored more closely during a crisis. Sathya Sai Baba declared in a discourse on 23 May 1999 “by our thoughts we can even cure the ills of others”<sup>19</sup>. This powerful message is important for all spiritual aspirants. Major scriptures of the world have all implored followers to develop good and noble thoughts even in times of crises:</p> <p><i>Bible: “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”<sup>20</sup> 2 Timothy 1:7</i></p> <p><i>Quran: “Those who say, when afflicted with a calamity, ‘We belong to Allah and to Him we shall return’<sup>21</sup> al-Baqarah 2:156</i></p> <p>Thoughts take on a different form once they are created and are released into the air. Bad thoughts do not just harm the person who has created it, it has the power to harm everyone on earth. Bad thoughts rise into the atmosphere along with other pollutants and negatively impacts all the creatures on earth. What can be done?</p>	<p><a href="https://youtu.">https://youtu.</a></p>	
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	<p>Emphasis is placed in our daily lives on the impact of doing good deeds or helping others during a crisis (i.e. Seva or community service). Ultimate personal refinement is when the same noble action is also turned inward and we are thinking along the lines of the five human values- Truth, Right Conduct, Peace, Love, and Non Violence.</p> <p>Group devotional singing is a powerful action that can be taken- the positive vibrations are amplified and can reverberate around the universe. If you are not able to congregate and or such activities are not possible in the community, there other actions that can be taken. We all have a direct and unbroken connection to the indweller in our hearts. Repetition of the Lord's name (<i>Namasmarana</i>), singing of devotional songs (bhajans/hymns), controlling our thoughts, constant prayer are actions that can be taken every day, any time of the day and by everybody to fight the pandemic of fear and have a positive footprint on Mother Earth. This may take time and effort, but with constant focus and attention, anything can be achieved.</p>	be/46V j4a5TH 9s?t=1 551	
<b>SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION</b>			
Self- Reflection (at home exercise)	Everyone can undertake a short self-reflection exercise whereby each person focuses on the activities/habits that are causing them to feel drained of mental energy.		<b>2-3 MINS</b>
<b>CLOSE</b>	Closing prayer or reading. Prayer for universal peace – Om Shanti, Shanti, Shantihi		<b>1 MIN</b>



**Appendix:**

There are many stories by Sathya Sai Baba that illustrate the link between disease, fear and death:

*“On one occasion, the epidemic of cholera struck one village. At the entrance to this village, there was the house of the doctor. He was watching as the Goddess of the disease, cholera, was entering the village. He asked the Goddess where she was going. The Goddess replied that she was going into the village to take the lives of a certain number of people. The doctor became very friendly and even invited the Goddess to have a cup of coffee with him. The doctor was informed by the Goddess of Cholera that she will take about a hundred and fifty lives. After some time, the Panchayat President of the Village came to the doctor and asked him to certify that two hundred and fifty persons had been killed by the cholera disease. The doctor then surmised that even the Goddess had not honoured the commitment given by her, according to which she was to take only a hundred and fifty lives. When the Goddess of Cholera was returning, she again met the doctor, who questioned why she had broken her promise and extracted two hundred and fifty lives. To this, the Goddess replied that she stuck to her word and had taken only a hundred and fifty lives but that the other hundred people died because of fear of death and she was not responsible for their death. In a lighter vein, this story reveals the truth that one should not be afraid of death as it will surely overtake you one day or the other. You must develop the capacities to forget the material world, not to forget God and not to fear death.” – Sathya Sai Baba. (Summer Showers Part II 1974.17: May–June 1974).*

Alternate story that can be shared:

*“When this body was seven years old, dreadful and contagious diseases like cholera and plague were rampant in this tiny hamlet of Puttaparthi. Fear-stricken, the parents would not allow their children to go out of the house. But the children, out of their love for Me, would come to Me without even telling their parents. All those children were of the age group of six to eight. One day, nearly 12 boys gathered around Me and said in an anxious tone “Raju, we came to know that cholera and plague are rampant in our village. It seems they are dangerous and fatal. What would be our fate?” I told them, “The body has to perish one day or the other, whatever may be the precautions you take. So, do not be afraid of death. Contemplate on God and take care that the diseases do not afflict you.” The boys asked Me as which form of God they should contemplate on. They were all very innocent. In those days this was a very small village with a population of 106. They had no idea as to which form of God they should worship. I told them to light a lamp, place it in the bazar at 6 o'clock in the evening, and do bhajans. They did not know what bhajans to sing. Then I composed a few bhajans for them. I told them, “We need not search for God outside. He is within us. Let us go around the village chanting the name of Ranga, donning ochre robes and anklets, playing the cymbals in our hands, and getting rid of the evil qualities of anger and desire.” In those days, after 5 o'clock in the evening, no one dared to go beyond the Sathyamma temple, because they considered it to be far off from the village and believed that the area beyond the temple limits was haunted. I infused confidence in them, saying there are no ghosts or devils and advised them to drive away the diseases of cholera and plague by chanting the name of God. We wore anklets and walked up to the riverbed of Chithravathi playing the cymbals and singing bhajans. It was the divine name that eradicated diseases of cholera and plague for good within a short span of three days.”- Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 32:25, October 17, 1999).*

**Note:** Ideally there should be 2 Facilitators in groups of ten or more participants. The first facilitator is the one who is conducting the study circle. The second facilitator observes the group’s dynamics and informs the first facilitator of any lethargy and confusion from participants. This second facilitator also conducts the opening activity (e.g. Omkar) and the sharing of insights at the end. This helps give variety to the participants, but also allows the first facilitator space to capture important feedback and learning points at insight sharing.

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