



## 10 Workshops to Change the World



### 6. Walking the Talk

*"Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does." - William James*

#### Aim

To give people who are interested in green issues, spiritual tools and insights to change their way of thinking and being with a view to improving the global environment and, in particular, our relationship with Nature (i.e. the land, sea and air and all living beings, including the plant and animal kingdoms).

**Note:** The word 'physical' is used on occasions in relation to the self - this refers both to the way we treat the body, for example what we eat and drink, but also to the physical actions we might perform e.g. down-sizing our home or riding a bicycle more often.

#### Materials

- CD player with appropriate instrumental music or songs to create a relaxed atmosphere
- Paper and pens for the participants
- Flipchart and pens for the facilitator
- '10 ways to Change the World' spiritual reflection cards
- Definition of 'Walking the Talk' on a card or flipchart:  
*When we remain true to our inner values and follow our conscience, despite resistance from others, our actions bring benefit to others.*

#### Resources for the facilitator

- '10 ways to Change the World' poster
- 'Living Our Values' book published by B K Publications - optional

#### Duration of workshop

To be decided by the workshop organisers

The materials provide a framework/structure, which can be condensed or extended according to the time available.

# Workshop Structure

## 1. Introductory remarks, including

- Welcome and general introductions
- Domestic arrangements (fire exit, water and toilets, switch off mobile)
- Outline of the programme (facilitators, timings and refreshments break)
- Sharing in pairs 'Why you have come to the programme and what you hope to get from it?'
- Minute of silence

## 2. Background to the Initiative

a) *The current state of the world* – Top 10 facts on climate change (see Appendix 1)

b) *Information about the BK Environment Initiative*

- The Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative started in 2009 in order to meet the need for a higher environmental awareness within the international BK community, and also to add the inner dimension to discussions at the UN Climate Change conferences.
- It operates with BK Regional Green Co-ordinators in each part of the world. Many centres have a local "Green Angel" appointed to look after the environment issues locally.
- The UN conferences on the environment - climate change, biodiversity, sustainability - are looked after by a team under the Brahma Kumaris UN office. So far we have worked with around 40 different partners and organisations.
- The main communication tool is our webpage - [www.eco.brahmakumaris.org](http://www.eco.brahmakumaris.org), where you can find workshops, meditations, articles, news, information on our use of solar energy and yogic agriculture etc.

c) *Underlying BK spiritual perspective*

- Everything is interconnected
- We are all part of one highly complex, self-regulating natural system
- Every human being is a powerful soul
- We are innately good and have unlimited potential
- Each of us has the ability to think about and decide/choose our actions
- All our thoughts, words and deeds have an impact on the world, for better or for worse
- We create and are responsible for the state of our own inner and outer world
- The current state of the world is a reflection of the state of our collective consciousness and, in particular, what we value (e.g. competition, consumerism, economic growth or peace, love and co-operation)
- The world will only be restored to its former glory when we return to our original state of pure, positive consciousness, free from greed, lust, ego, anger and attachment.

We will achieve this state through recognising the importance of

- Non-violence (to humans and animals)
- The law of karma i.e. we reap what we sow
- Trusteeship
- Consciousness (it determines everything)
- Personal responsibility (not blaming others)
- Inner values
- Inner work on ourselves (becoming pure, positive beings)
- A daily spiritual practice
- An environmentally friendly lifestyle.

End with a minute of silence

### 3. Introductory remarks on 'Walking the Talk'

There is a lot of concern and talk about the perilous state of the planet. Most scientists agree that urgent action is needed if we are to avert a crisis and save the Earth for future generations. Politicians and NGOs spend millions of dollars/pounds gathering together to create and implement action plans to make things better but achieve little. The collective will to change is just not there. Generally we do not want to accept the political and social consequences of dramatically altering our way of life on this planet. In other words we do not walk our talk.

Each of us has our own addictions, which we do not want to give up, regardless of the consequences for the environment. We justify and make exceptions for our own lifestyle and behaviour and put the responsibility onto others to change.

For example, one of the most powerful and effective actions that anyone can take to contribute to the welfare of the planet is to be a vegan and eat only fruit and vegetables and products that do not involve the exploitation of animals. How many world leaders or heads of NGOs and environmental organisations are vegan, or even vegetarian? How many environmental organisations promote or advocate this lifestyle to their supporters?

To pretend to be in support of environmental change for social, political or economic gain is unhelpful. Any contradiction between what we say or do completely undermines our position and depowers us. As hypocrites the difference between what we say and what we do will be seized upon by others to justify the status quo and could demoralise and dishearten those who really do want to radically change our way of living and being.

The world is crying out for inspiring, authentic leaders who walk their talk. Like Gandhi, who apparently was once asked by a mother to tell her boy not to eat sweets. He refused and told the mother and son to come back in three weeks time. On their return he did as requested. When asked why he had not done so before he replied that he could not ask the son to give up sweets until he had given them up himself.

If we wish, we can all become a Gandhi in our own way and be an inspiring example of change. Remember, when we change the world will change.

Minute of silence

### 4. Definition of 'Walking the Talk'

Handout or write on a flipchart the definition of 'Walking the Talk'

*When we remain true to our inner values and follow our conscience, despite resistance from others, our actions bring benefit to others.*

Ask participants to reflect for two minutes then discuss the definition in pairs and feedback to the whole group any suggested amendments.

*For example*

To 'walk our talk' means to:

- Practice what we preach
- Be authentic i.e. to be the embodiment of what we are talking about
- Stand up for what we believe in
- Remain true to our inner values no matter what others may think
- Be open and honest in our intentions and communication.

Question

*On a scale of 1(not at all) -10 (completely), to what extent do you 'walk your talk' with regard environmental issues? Share answer in pairs*

## 5. Cost benefit analysis of 'Walking the Talk'

Discuss in small groups (after two minutes of silent reflection)

- The cost to the self, others and the world (including Nature) of not 'walking our talk'
- The benefits to the self, others and the world (including Nature) of 'walking our talk' - physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

Ask groups to feedback to the whole group. Make a list of the benefits.

## 6. A Role Model

Ask participants to think of someone (living or dead) who is an inspiring example of walking their talk. For two minutes silently reflect on:

- How do/did they behave?
- What impact does/did their behaviour have on others and the world (including Nature)?
- What particular values and qualities do/did they embody?
- How do/did they sustain themselves - physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually?

Ask participants to share the above with someone they do not know.

Ask 2-3 people to feedback their example to the whole group.

## 6. Visioning Exercises

### a) General

Create small groups and ask participants to imagine and then draw a picture of a world where everyone 'walks their talk'.

Discuss

- What is going on?
- What does it look like and feel like?
- How are people treating each other and Nature?
- What qualities and values are they expressing?
- How can we make this vision a reality?

Feedback main points to the whole group

Facilitator to make a list of the key points

### b) Personal

Imagine yourself in one year's time being the embodiment of 'walking your talk'.

- What is your life like?
- What are you doing, thinking and feeling in relation to the self, others and the world (including Nature)?
- How has the environment benefited from the change?
- Draw an image of yourself as an embodiment of 'walking the talk'
- Looking back over the past year, what steps did you take (physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually) to achieve this state?

The above to be done as a coaching exercise in pairs.

Ask 2-3 people to feedback to whole group.

### c) An image from Nature

Ask participants to think of an image from Nature that embodies 'walking the talk'

e.g. a tree, stream, flower etc and share it with someone they do not know.

Ask 2-3 people to feedback to whole group.

### d) An Affirmation

An affirmation is a short, life-affirming, positive statement about the self which, if repeated regularly with feeling, will change our way of thinking and being.

- Ask everyone to create their own affirmation based on 'walking the talk'.
- Give your own example.
- Ask participants to share their affirmation with three other people.
- Ask 2-3 people to share with the whole group.

## 7. Summary

After two minutes of silent reflection:

- Ask participants to summarise and share in pairs what they have learned from the workshop
- Ask 2-3 people to share with the whole group.
- Ask for general feedback on the changes we need to make on the 'inside' for things to improve on the 'outside'. Facilitator to make a list of the key points.
- *Give some spiritual input about raja yoga meditation and how connecting with the Divine gives us the power to change*
- Is the BK approach valid and useful? Will it make a difference to the environment? Yes or No? Ask for a show of hands.
- Ask everyone to complete a feedback form (see Appendix 2)

## 8. Action Plan

Following two minutes reflection ask participants to write down their answers to the following questions:

- What I am I going to do on a *regular* and *consistent* basis to make 'walking the talk' a reality in my life?
- What changes – behaviourally, physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually - do I need to make in my lifestyle in order to sustain and empower the change I want to make?

Ask everyone to share in pairs

Ask 2-3 people to share with the whole group.

## 9. Closing Moments

- Thank everyone for coming
- Future programmes
- Recommend the Raja Yoga course and other appropriate BK courses
- Recommend BK books and CDs
- Do meditation commentary based on what has been learned during the workshop
- Give out '10 ways to Change the World' spiritual reflection cards

## **Top 10 facts on climate change**

### **1. Global ecological footprint**

The global ecological footprint - How many earths do we use? If everyone on earth lived like the average American, we would need 4.6 planets to support us. Today, we need about 1.6 planets to provide the resources for our consumption and absorb our waste. Current overuse is due to our consumption of goods and services. The extraction, production, distribution, use and disposal of the stuff we buy. Source: <http://www.theworldcounts.com>

### **2. Temperature increases**

Tipping point theories predict that temperature increases will create effects such as the melting of the arctic permafrost that could release greenhouse gasses equivalent to 17 times US yearly emissions. The increase of this and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere has warmed the earth. Due to Climate Change, the world's average temperature could rise up to 6.4 degrees Celsius (11.5 Fahrenheit) during the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Source: <http://www.theworldcounts.com/>

### **3. CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere**

PPM above 400 ppm: what does this mean? The concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere, is increasing at an accelerating rate from decade to decade. The safe level of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the atmosphere is 350 parts per million (ppm). It serves to show how much carbon dioxide has been put into the atmosphere since preindustrial times. A level of 400ppm, indicates the high consumption of energy from fossil fuels. Atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> is measured daily and monthly, at the Manua Loa Observatory in Hawaii and registered in March 2015 value of 401.5ppm. The only way to get there is the transition of the global economy away from fossil fuels into renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainable farming practices in all sectors (agriculture, transport, manufacturing). Source: [400.350.org](http://400.350.org) and [www.CO2now.org](http://www.CO2now.org).

### **4. Sea level rise**

Scientific research indicates sea levels worldwide have been rising at a rate of 3.5 millimeters per year since the early 1990s. The trend, linked to global warming, puts thousands of coastal cities, like Venice (Italy), London (England), New York (USA), Barcelona (Spain), and even whole islands at risk of being claimed by the ocean. The rise in sea levels is linked to three primary factors: thermal expansion, melting of glaciers and polar ice caps, ice loss from Greenland and West Antarctica. Source: National Geographic.

### **5. Overfishing**

Overfishing is a major problem. A study shows that if nothing changes we will run out of seafood in 2048. Oceans are draining of seafood at an alarming rate. Nearly 80% of the world's fisheries are already exploited, over-exploited, depleted, or in a state of collapse. Worldwide 90% of the stocks of large predatory fish such as sharks, tuna, marlin and swordfish, are already gone! Source: <http://www.theworldcounts.com/>

## **6. Water resources**

Water resources are already being used to the limit and we are using more and more of it. Over 10 billion tons worldwide! Every year we use a massive 4 trillion cubic meters of freshwater. This amount is equivalent to 50 Olympic swimming pools every second, comparable to if everyone on the planet would drink over 4 glasses of water, every single minute. Source: <http://www.theworldcounts.com/>

## **7. Garbage in our ocean**

We have a garbage island floating in our ocean, mostly comprised of plastics –the size of India, Europe and Mexico combined-. Environmental degradation is one of the most pressing current issues at present time (earth, water, air). Each year, we extract an estimated 55 billions tons of fossil energy, mineral, metals and biomass from the earth. The world has already lost 80% of its forest and we're continually losing them at a rate of 375 km<sup>2</sup> per day! Source: [www.theworldcounts.com](http://www.theworldcounts.com)

## **8. Food waste**

Almost half of all food in the world is lost or wasted. It's hard to believe! A lot of massive food loss is happening because of crop pests and ineffective harvesting and irrigation. Huge amounts of food is also lost simply because we throw it away! The amount of food lost and wasted every year is equal to more than half of the world's annual cereals crops (2.3 billion tons in 2009/10). The loss of food is also problematic considering the water that went into producing the food. Most of the water used on this planet is used for food production. Source: <http://www.theworldcounts.com/>

## **9. Health issues**

Particulate matter is an air pollutant in the form of extremely small toxic particles. Inhaling them can cause asthma, lung cancer, cardiovascular diseases, strokes, acute respiratory infections and premature death. Annual estimations show that there are 7 million premature deaths linked to air pollution. Car exhaustion is a major source of particulate matter and the problem is therefore worse in cities. In some cities, the level of particulate matter is 8 times higher than the recommended maximum level. Source: [www.theworldcounts.com](http://www.theworldcounts.com) and World health Organization.

## **10. Meat production**

Meat requires great amounts of energy and water to produce. It has a higher "energy footprint" than any other food. It takes 75 times more energy to produce meat than corn and it takes an area of vegetation of 7 times the size of the EU to produce food for cattle and other livestock animals in Europe. Almost half of the world's harvest is fed to animals. Source: <http://www.theworldcounts.com/>

( 1. maj 2015)

## **Brahma Kumaris Green Workshop on Walking Your Talk**

We would be grateful if you could complete this questionnaire. Thank you

Q1. What was the MAIN thing that attracted you to attend this event?

- ☐ The theme/topic
- ☐ A speaker
- ☐ Spirituality
- ☐ General curiosity
- ☐ Opportunity to meet like-minded people / network
- ☐ Other, please specify below

Q2. What have you enjoyed MOST about this event?

Q3. What have you learned / experienced today?

Q4. Is there anything we could have done better?

Q5. Have you any suggestions for future topics/speakers?