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The art of living!

By Maria Shirazi

Stress has become a common problem these days. Let alone adults, even the youngsters today are facing problems related to stress in their daily lives. Realising the importance of getting rid of the stress related problems of our youth, some organisations are trying to make a difference. Their aim is to create a violence free, stress-free and crime-free world of peace for our future generations.

The Art of Living Foundation has been educating the youth in life-skills, equipping them to face challenges in a skilful and cheerful manner, for over a quarter of a century, under the guidance of its founder and world humanitarian leader, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

It is a non-profit, educational and charitable organisation that operates in more than 150 countries. As the largest volunteer based NGO in the world with a wide range of social, cultural and spiritual activities, the organisation's membership has reached out to over 20 million people from all walks of life.

The Art of Living Foundation offers new and unique techniques that eliminate stress, calms the mind, improves health and expands awareness. The stress-elimination programmes empower individuals and groups to lead a natural and stress-free life through simple and effective breathing techniques and meditation. They build self-confidence, restore human values and encourage individuals to take social responsibility and work towards common solutions, which provide maximum long-term benefit to all.

Dinesh Ghodke and Khurshed Batliwala are two renowned teachers from the organisation who recently came from India to visit Pakistan. This was their first visit here and their main purpose was to conduct a workshop 'Yes!+' for the empowerment of the youth. 'The purpose of my visit is to help youth to get involved, take responsibility and change the world around them. Yes + is an innovative, educational and life skills programme for



young students and professionals. This is a continuous and intense 26 hour programme that makes you get rid of the system of negative emotions, develop strong social and leadership skills and heighten mental focus,' explains Dinesh about the Yes!+ programme.

'The Art of Living is all about getting rid of the emotional garbage. You have to bring out the capability in yourself to enhance the joy in your life. You should know how to tackle a problematic situation. An option is always available. If there are problems, the solutions are there too.'

The Yes!+ programme is basically for the age group of 18 - 25, that is the time period in a youth's life that is full of dreams, ambitions and idealism, as well as with a lot of problems especially related to handling relationships, pressures and raging hormones. This age needs help to control the emotions and deal with them in a positive manner.

The enjoyable and experiential techniques that are used by the organisation bring real and lasting positive changes. The breathing exercises are very effective, as they link the body and the mind, sensations and emotions. Breathing is under the conscious control of a person and after a little bit of training and regular practice one can feel a huge difference. The organisation also offers various processes, games and exercises including yoga to enhance the concentrations of young students.

From individuals to families to societies to nations, the Art of Living Foundation has fostered a global change inspiring people to move from limited identifications of nationality, race and religion to a broader understanding of the unity of human life, of a One World Family, which can help bring about a more peaceful world.

- Photos courtesy

Art of Living Foundation