

LET THERE BE...STUFF? A SPIRIT-FILLED RESPONSE TO A CONSUMER-CRAZED WORLD

A Baha'i - inspired Program for Youth created by

www.storyofstuff.org

www.greenfaith.org

Story of Stuff Baha'i Team

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SESSION 6: ONTO A PATH OF SERVICE

These materials contain three main sections:

- * TO THE FACILITATORS: Explanations about how to facilitate Session 6.
- * SESSION 6 LESSON PLAN: A step by step guide through the session. Each activity is explained here.
- * SESSION 6 HANDOUTS: These are all the readings and materials that need to be copied for each participant. They will be used throughout the session as indicated in the Session 6 Lesson Plan.

TO THE FACILITATORS

Preparing for Session Six

Overview

This is the last session in our journey and it's time to review the course, to celebrate what the group has learned, and to decide on actions. The main purpose of this session is to provide the time and guidance for the youth to prepare for their next steps as Earth Stewards. They will consult and decide on a group project, such as a presentation to the community or a service project that helps your community to tread lighter on the earth.

Goals

- Develop the virtues of **courage** and **service** by taking action.
- Create inspiration for action beyond the course, individually and as a group.
- Motivate and prepare the youth for service.
- Send participants forth with love!

Themes

Secular:

- Explore many choices of actions possible for the group and for each individual participant.
- Practice mindfulness in our every-day life and commit to at least one individual action.
- Develop a group service project.

Spiritual:

- Put our minds and hearts into protecting the earth.
- Discuss the significant role of youth in transforming our world.

Notes for the Facilitator

This is the culmination of the whole course. Bring a spirit of celebration to it. If your group decided to invite the parents for this session, you can include parents in all the activities, especially in the consultation on the group action. **Have fun!** And keep the energy going. It might be helpful to get feedback about the course from parent(s)/guardian(s) after the session.

Materials for Session 6

- Your computer for the three videos [Blessed Is the Spot](#), [Young Voices for the Planet](#), and [Mi meta es servir](#) (see instructions in To Do List right below.)
- Snacks, Music
- Decorations, try to use recycled and/or biodegradable materials.
- Butcher paper
- Tape
- Colored pens
- Course Review Sheet, just one copy for yourself. You will find it after the Session 6 Plan before the Handouts.
- Handouts for Session 6. You will need one copy for each participant. The Handouts include an Opening Prayer, Introduction and Discussion, Spiritual Reading Session 6, Closing Prayer, Onto a Path of Service Action List, Resources List

Session 6 To Do List

- Make copies of Session 6 Handouts for each student.
- Print out the Course Review Sheet for yourself.
- On your computer, open the following two videos
 - Blessed Is the Spot: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=InnEhUtjgao>
 - Young Voices for the Planet: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7i0rUAEY-wk&list=PLXSe9MpMn_8EX4uSPnWcCg9d5svk62OHd&index=10
 - [Mi meta es servir](#)
- Set up snacks, music, decorations, etc. for a festive atmosphere.
- Post all murals or posters from the past sessions on the wall.

SESSION 6: OVERVIEW

ENTER AND CONNECT (8 MIN)

- Opening prayer
- Sharing and Getting Organized

INTRODUCE (8MIN)

- The Story of Stuff Review

INSPIRE (5 MIN)

- Young Voices for the Planet

REFLECT (22 MIN)

- Introduction and Discussion
- Spiritual Reading 6 - Youth Can Transform the World

ENGAGE (14 MIN)

- Individual Actions - "Let deeds not words be your adorning."

ENACT (35 MIN)

- Group Action - Onto a Path of Service

EXIT (7 MIN)

- Closing Circle
- Song
- Closing Prayer

TOTAL ESTIMATED TIME 1 Hour 39 Min.



SESSION 6 - PLAN

The Story of Stuff - Onto a Path of Service

ENTER AND CONNECT (8 Min)

Preparation: If parent(s)/guardian(s) were invited, make chairs ready for them in the circle.

Opening Prayers

Warmly welcome everyone and distribute the handouts for Session 6. Then listen and watch another beautiful rendition of the prayer "[Blessed Is the Spot](#)": The length of the video is 3:22.

Then ask one or more participants to say a prayer. You will find one prayer as a suggestion in the Handouts for Session 6. (Just scroll down.)

Sharing and Getting Organized

Welcome and Introduce the Parents – if they joined you in this last session

- Welcome parent(s)/guardian(s), if they are present, and thank them for coming and for supporting their children in becoming Earth stewards.
- Have the adults introduce themselves first by saying whose parent(s)/guardian(s) they are and identifying one aspect of Creation that they appreciate.
- Then ask everyone else to very briefly share one aspect of Creation they appreciate.
- Once everybody has spoken, acknowledge how good it is to be in a room with people who love God and Creation so much. Let the parents know that they are invited to witness, participate in some activities, but mostly to support, and celebrate the youth and their work.

Review and Reflection:

- What did we do last week? What did we learn?
- **How were you able to practice the virtues of compassion?**

Right Stuff Action Board - Discuss actions from last sessions. Let them post any pictures they brought on the Right Stuff Action board or poster. (Or let them write a sentence about it.)

INTRODUCE (8 Min)

The Story of Stuff Review

Preparation:

- Have the posters or mural from the whole course displayed or otherwise ready to show.
- Have Course Review Sheet handy to help you as a facilitator to remember the main topics discussed during this course. You will find it after the Session 6 Plan before the Handouts.

Instructions:

Tell the group: We have been on quite a journey together to learn what effect our consumer society is having on God's Creation and to become better Earth Stewards. Let's honor our journey together by telling the story of our Story of Stuff program. Parents are free to ask questions.

Invite the participants to share a short description of what they learned in each session. The murals will help them remember each session and you can assist them by checking the Course Review Sheet. Ask the youth how they feel about what they have learned and done, and to celebrate whatever new awareness and growth they have experienced. (Keep it short, crisp, and under one minute per session).

REFLECT (22 Min)

Introduction and Discussion (7 Min)

Have a youth read the **Introduction** in the Handouts. Then invite the participants to provide brief responses to the following questions, which are also listed in the handout:

- What have you learned during the past five weeks that will help you change your thinking and habits of consumption?
- How can we keep from getting sucked into the Stuff craze and help steward Creation when it gets hard?
- How do you imagine your life changing as a result of this course?
- How has your faith grown during this course? How will it help you face these challenges?

Spiritual Reading for Session 6 - Youth Can Transform the World (15 Min)

Read the Spiritual Reading for Session 6 taking turns after each paragraph. You will find the Spiritual Reading in the Handouts for Session 6, just scroll down.

INSPIRE (5 Min.)

Young Voices for the Planet

Tell the group that you will be watching a brief video, which is actually a trailer to a movie. It shows young people who are committed to protect the Earth and its people. The video focuses on climate change. The worst environmental impact of our stuff is on the climate. As the youths in the video say, we all can play a part to keep our Earth a good place to live on.

Watch this inspiring video: [Young Voices for the Planet](#). Stop the video at 4:15. (If that link doesn't work for you, go [here](#) and scroll down to the trailer.)

ENGAGE (15 Min.)

INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS - "Let deeds not words be your adorning."

Preparation:

- Post a piece of paper. Have large colored markers ready to capture the group's ideas.
- Participants will need their Actions Lists from Sessions 1 - 5.

Instructions:

1. Let the group know that there are unlimited ways that individuals can keep the momentum going as Earth Stewards. Have them brainstorm, popcorn-style, some of the things they can all do individually. Let the youth write their ideas on the large piece of paper. (Examples: bring your own reusable bags to the grocery store; take along a reusable water bottle (BHA-free!); find a place to recycle electronics)
2. Point out that the Actions lists of the previous sessions contain lots of ideas, too.
3. Have the participants choose one activity (or perhaps two) they want to commit to doing as individuals. These can come from prior session action plans, or the brainstormed list.
4. If present, have the parent(s)/guardian(s) consider how they will support the youth in their actions.
5. Once they all have decided on their action, have those who want stand up and announce their commitment to the group to a resounding applause!

ENACT (40 Min.)

GROUP ACTION - Onto a Path of Service

Explain to the youth that the most important part about acquiring knowledge is to apply it for the benefit of others and society, and that our highest aspiration is to serve humankind.

In previous sessions you have already asked the youth to think about actions they could possibly take together. Now is the time to consult and decide on a group action, and to plan the action steps. Allow sufficient time for that process, so that all participants can share their views and find a consensus for action.

The action could be educational or practical, for example:

- An educational action could be a brief presentation about the Story of Stuff by the group at an up-coming Baha'i gathering, such as a 19-Day Feast. One easy way would be to present some of their murals/posters and explain their content. It could also be a presentation at a school or for a Baha'i children's class.
- A practical action could be a trash cleanup in a certain area and recycling what is recyclable. The *Onto a Path of Service Action List* in the handouts contains many ideas and resources some of which you may choose to mention to the group if they need more ideas.

The **process** for finding consensus and for planning an action could happen as follows:

1. All participants share their ideas about possible group actions.
2. Consult on what action could be the best for their group. Ask them to *consider their capacity, age, time and resources available, the special needs of their community, and the action's effectiveness for Earth stewardship.*
3. Come to a consensus on the action.
4. Plan how, when, and who is going to do what to make this idea come to reality.

EXIT 8 Min.

Closing Circle

- Invite everyone to share briefly what the class has meant to them and how they feel going forth. You go last and say that you are impressed that the group has completed these sessions, even though some of the information and topics have not been easy to learn. End with some encouraging comments about the possibility of them making real change in the world!
- Encourage the youth to continue to learn and serve together with the Ruhi [Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program](#).
- You may like to inform them that learning is a lifelong process and that the Wilmette Institute offers courses on Sustainable Development and Climate Change for adults and older youth.
- Take a group picture.
- Optional: Plan another session in three months to reflect on your individual and group actions, to support each other, have fun, and perhaps to watch another short film from the [Story of Stuff website](#), or to consult on further actions.

Song

Listen together to this song in Spanish. It inspires youth all over the world to develop their talents and abilities while contributing to the betterment of the world: [Mi meta es servir 3:14](#)

That's the translation of the words:

*While I ponder my future
I know I must discover my talents
And making the right decisions
If I try I will receive confirmations
Many doors open
When I serve others
I know that my efforts bear fruit
Because God will assist me
Today I walk determined to serve
Serve mankind*

*The wind blows and urges me to press on
And discover new ways of life
Like a bird that wings its flight
The sky is its greatest yearning
Many doors open
When I serve others
I know that my attempts bear fruit
Because God will assist me
Today I walk determined to serve
Serve mankind*

Closing Prayer

We suggest that each youth will say the short prayer by the Bab for the removal of difficulties printed in the handout. Encourage the recitation of the prayer in different languages if you have participants from different backgrounds in the group.

After the Session

- If the group planned a presentation for the community, assist the youth to make arrangements with the community or Local Spiritual Assembly.
- In an ideal situation, after the youths' presentation, the community will want to consult on what they can do. If your community is interested in social action, you may point them to a questionnaire on the website of the Baha'i-inspired International Environment Forum for [community solidarity conversations](#) that includes a section on environmental concerns.
- Optional: Send a group picture and/or a digital certificate of completion to each youth.
- Optional: Help the youth to draft a press release or letter to the editor about the course, their presentation, or the service project. It may include a group photo and quotations from the youth about the project. You can offer these guidelines. Perhaps you can ask the youth to make a list of local media outlets with contact information. Your Local Spiritual Assembly may be able to help with this.

Feedback on the Course:

Your feedback will help shape the program and make it more fun, effective and usable for future groups. What worked? What didn't? What do you think would work better?

Please send your comments and suggestions to bahaistoryofstuff@gmail.com

Course Review Sheet - Print out for Facilitator

Session 1 – Caring for Creation

Themes:

- Awe and wonder at God's Creation
- Our role and responsibility as stewards of Creation

- **Virtues of caring and stewardship**

Activities:

- Web of Life Activity
- Promises
- Mural – Caring for Creation

Session 2 – A Call for Spiritual Transformation

Themes:

- The real cost of our stuff on people and the planet
- We are trashing the planet, poisoning ourselves, and not even having fun

- **Virtues of justice and moderation**

Activities:

- The Story of Stuff Film
- Film discussion

Session 3 – What Are We Creating?

Themes:

- Learning the secret life of clothing, jewelry, electronics, and cosmetics
- Destruction of ecosystems, poisoning the workers, and putting toxins in the environment and into our stuff

- Taking our role as Earth Stewards seriously.
- **Virtue of independently investigating the truth**

- Importance of using both science and religion

Activities:

- The True Cost group activity

Session 4 – Think... Before You Buy!

Themes:

- Understanding the way advertisements manipulate us to keep buying Stuff
- Planned obsolescence - Designed for the dump.
- Perceived obsolescence – needing the latest Stuff in order to be happy
- The true source of happiness comes from God and relationships with others

- **Virtues of contentment and detachment**

Activities:

- Looking at Ads and seeing how they manipulate us
- Making up skits about commercials

Session 5 – What a Waste!

Themes

- Our toxic waste streams
- The impact on vulnerable populations
- The ethical issues of wasting things
- Experiencing humankind as one family
- **Virtue of compassion**

Activities:

- Videos about the harmful effect of waste on Birds (plastics) and the poor (electronics).
- Waste quiz
- Garbage audit

SESSION 6 HANDOUTS

The Story of Stuff - Onto a Path of Service!

OPENING PRAYER

O Thou kind Lord! Graciously bestow a pair of heavenly wings unto each of these fledglings, and give them spiritual power that they may wing their flight through this limitless space and may soar to the heights of the Abhá Kingdom.

O Lord! Strengthen these fragile seedlings that each one may become a fruitful tree, verdant and flourishing. Render these souls victorious through the potency of Thy celestial hosts, that they may be able to crush the forces of error and ignorance and to unfurl the standard of fellowship and guidance amidst the people; that they may, even as the reviving breaths of the spring, refresh and quicken the trees of human souls and like unto vernal showers make the meads of that region green and fertile.

Thou art the Mighty and the Powerful; Thou art the Bestower and the All-Loving.

'Abdu'l-Baha

INTRODUCTION AND DISCUSSION

Today is the last session of this course. You have gotten lots of support to learn and make changes while we have been here together. Today we are going to prepare ourselves to sustain those changes after our class ends.

It can be challenging being targeted by 3000 ads a day, walking past a store when cool stuff is on sale, and seeing your friends getting new stereos, tablets, sneakers, jeans, you name it, on a regular basis and NOT thinking you just have to have them, too.

Briefly discuss the following questions:

- What have you learned during the past five weeks that will help you change your thinking and habits of consumption?
- How can we keep from getting sucked into the Stuff craze and help steward Creation when it gets hard?
- How do you imagine your life changing as a result of this course?
- How has your faith grown during this course? How will it help you face these challenges?

SPIRITUAL READING – YOUTH CAN TRANSFORM THE WORLD

The Story of Stuff shows how harmful materialism is. Materialism means giving Stuff too much importance in our life. The Universal House of Justice, the supreme institution of the Baha'i Faith, wrote about the destructive force of materialism:

Materialism, rooted in the West, has now spread to every corner of the planet, breeding ... a culture of consumerism. It ... promotes a habit of consumption that seeks to satisfy the basest and most selfish desires, ...

2 April 2010, Letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is in Iran

Humanity will be able to solve its many problems when there will be a balance between the material and spiritual aspects of life. Therefore, we need to nurture spiritual qualities and act according to the ethical standards of our faith. This will also lead to our individual happiness.

... What will attract God's blessings and ensure true happiness both in this world and in the next is the development of spiritual qualities, such as honesty, trustworthiness,

generosity, justice, and consideration for others, and the recognition that material means are to be expended for the betterment of the world.

2 April 2010, Letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is in Iran

In another letter, the Universal House of Justice says that the social problems of our time are now in the hands of a young generation that lives according to higher standards. The House calls on youth to

- believe that human beings are created noble;
- seek a “deeper understanding of the true purpose of existence”;
- accept both science and religion as two important tools for human progress;
- appreciate the “beauty and power of unity in diversity”;
- understand that happiness is “found in service to one's country and to the peoples of the world”;
- and that wealth is praiseworthy only if it is “attained through just means” and used for good purposes such as the “promotion of knowledge” and “serving the common good”.

The letter explains that working on the above standards will help the youth to “shoulder the tremendous responsibilities that await them”. It will also protect young people from “the atmosphere of greed that surrounds them” and will help them achieve “their exalted goals”.

(Taken from 2 April 2010, Letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is in Iran)

As we are going forth now with taking actions to help protect the Earth and everything that lives on it, we need courage. Courage is an important spiritual quality. We talked about other spiritual qualities in previous sessions. Do you remember them? They were caring, justice, moderation, investigating truth with an open mind, contentment, detachment, and compassion. When you put your ideas into action and follow a path of service, you will continue to develop these spiritual qualities. While you are striving to improve the world, you are at the same time improving yourself, which will help you in future service.

As you are embarking on action, you may realize that not everyone will share your environmental awareness. You may need to patiently assist others to learn more about the story of our stuff. Change comes from within. You can lead by example! Always work for **unity** and remember to practice the **virtue of courage** and **a spirit of service**.

For closing, read these inspiring words from the Baha'i Writings:

Purge your hearts of worldly desires, and let angelic virtues be your adorning. Strive that by your deeds you may bear witness to the truth of these words of God, ...

The days when idle worship was deemed sufficient are ended. The time is come when naught but the purest motive, supported by deeds of stainless purity, can ascend to the throne of the Most High and be acceptable unto Him.

Heed not your weaknesses and frailty; fix your gaze upon the invincible power of the Lord, your God, the Almighty. ...

Arise in His name, put your trust wholly in Him, and be assured of ultimate victory.

The Bab, as retold in *The Dawnbreakers* by Nabil, p. 93/94

CLOSING PRAYER

Is there any Remover of difficulties save God? Say: Praised be God! He is God! All are His servants and all abide by His bidding!

The Bab

Onto a Path of Service ACTION LIST

Here are a few ideas for projects you can carry over from Let There Be Stuff...? as you continue to engage your community to live in caring relationship with God and Creation. When carrying out your actions, remember to practice the **virtues of courage and service**.

- **The Story of Solutions - a Game Changer:**
Get together again as a group and watch this thought provoking film The Story of Solutions. After viewing it (9 Min.), discuss how the Baha'i Faith is the true game changer for this world. What goals does the world-wide Baha'i community aspire to achieve? How are we going about reaching these goals? How can you get involved?
- **Waste Not, Want Not:**
 - Change the way your family and community uses and throws away stuff.
 - Create and implement a plan to reduce waste at your Baha'i meetings.Look for more ideas in the article about *Environmentally Sustainable Baha'i Properties*:
[https://iefworld.org/fl/Environmentally Sustainable Bahai Properties.pdf](https://iefworld.org/fl/Environmentally_Sustainable_Bahai_Properties.pdf)
- **A Night at the Movies:** Organize an Environmental Film Festival Night. Movies are a great way to spread the word and get people excited about taking action to protect creation. There are so many great films about these issues. For starters you could watch [The Story of Stuff](#) with your entire Baha'i community. You will find links to other good films in the **RESOURCES** section below.
- **Swap It!** Organize a Stuff Swap
Reduce waste, share more, and build community all at once! All you have to do is pick a date and get started planning and publicizing.
Here is an article about how to organize a "Clothes Swap":
<https://www.sustainyourstyle.org/en/blog/2020/6/25/how-to-organize-a-clothes-swap>
- **Be an E-Steward:**
 - Promote using electronics for as long as they last. Be proud to own a dinosaur!
 - Organize an E-Waste Collection at your Baha'i Center. Sponsor an e-waste drive and get those computers and cell phones out of people's closets and drawers. You can help increase recycling and make sure it's being dealt with responsibly by coordinating a drop off with a local E-Steward certified recycler. Better than recycling is up-cycling where the electronics are repaired and used again.
To find one in your area check out the E-Steward site: <http://www.e-stewards.org/>
- **Volunteer for the Planet:** Choose an organization that inspires you and make a commitment to give of your time.



Resources

There are many inspiring organizations and brilliant people doing great work on these issues. The resources below might be particularly useful:

Baha'i Resources:

- **The Ruhi Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program** provides materials for spiritual and moral development: <http://www.ruhi.org/>
- **Tanna after Cyclone Pam**, a 10 Min. video, documents how the virtue of service developed in the Baha'i Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program helped a community cope after a natural disaster. <https://vimeo.com/158819708>
- **One Planet One Habitation**, a statement by the Baha'i International Community, simplified text suitable for the study by youth in seven classes: <https://iefworld.org/children>

Films and Videos:

More videos produced by the **Story of Stuff**:

- **The Story of Bottled Water**, 8 Min. <http://storyofstuff.org/movies/story-of-bottled-water/>
- **The Story of Change**, 6 ½ Min. <http://storyofstuff.org/movies/story-of-change/>

You may especially enjoy these inspiring videos of youth that planned and carried out successful projects:

- **Melati and Isabel Wijsen: Our campaign to ban plastic bags in Bali**, 11 Min. https://www.ted.com/talks/melati_and_isabel_wijsen_our_campaign_to_ban_plastic_bags_in_bali?language=en
- **Kids Turn Grease into Fuel**, 1 ½ Min. <http://www.cnn.com/videos/bestoftv/2012/12/19/cnnheroes-cassandra-lin.cnn>

We also recommend this longer film

- **HOME**, about 1 ½ hours <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqxENMKaeCU>

“Green Websites”

- Living the Change by **GreenFaith** encourages action for social change for the environment: <https://greenfaith.org/living-the-change/>
- The **PeaceFirst** website provides young people with support for projects from mentors. <https://www.peacefirstchallenge.org>
- **Compassion Games** - <https://www.compassiongames.org>
- **Earth Charter Volunteers** - Join a global movement to bring the principles of the Earth Charter to life in your community <https://earthcharter.org>
It has a special youth program: <https://earthcharter.org/get-involved/young-leaders-programme/>
- **Biomimicry Institute** - An incredible network of scientists looking to learn from nature to solve today's problems: www.biomimicryinstitute.org
- **Campaign for Safe Cosmetics** - Fighting to get toxics out of our personal care products, because looking good shouldn't harm you or the planet: www.safecosmetics.org
- **Brower Youth Awards** • A compilation of incredible and inspiring youth making a real difference: www.broweryouthawards.org