

January 2009

Dear Subud Members:

How's it going with you, and how are you feeling about your role in the Subud organisation? Are you getting enough support or communication? What would make your Subud work more fulfilling?

There's a general sense of taking stock, noticing how we do things – what's going well and what we might want to do differently. We invite you to join in a worldwide conversation (if you aren't already doing so), to arrange a time with your group, or at a regional or national meeting to see how yourself and others are feeling. What would you and others like to initiate to support Subud's sustainability and development?

On the following pages are some conversation starting-points. I have compiled these in consultation with Frederic Richard and Osanna Vaughn, based on 12 topics and suggestions voiced by members. Do any of these match with your own questions and proposals? Which ones are most relevant to your group? We'd love to hear from you. It would also be really good to hear from members in Asia, Africa and South America, where perhaps you may experience other challenges and have different ideas from those we've been hearing about.

In offering discussion starting points I sometimes quote Bapak. This is because his words give me helpful starting points for introducing a particular subject. Bapak urged us to develop as individuals, to be courageous and to stand on our own feet so I don't intend to imply that we should always be standing on his feet or quoting him.

There's great value in hearing and understanding one another. A healthy organization needs to encompass diverse people with differing views, so the funny thing is ***we don't have to reach 100% agreement***. The aim is to become a broad-based association which is good at learning and developing. What you think and say really matters.

Your feedback will help to shape discussions and decisions at the coming world congress.

E-mail me –

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1. START AT HOME

How do you feel about your group?

- How at ease & “at home” are you in your group?
- What might improve communications among group members?
- If communications are good, how is this maintained? (So that others might learn from your experience)
- What do you see as your Subud group’s strength?
- Your group’s challenge?
- Your hope or aspiration?
- How could you realise this hope?

2. HARMONY AND CONFLICT

“One of the most important points that Bapak wants you to understand is the fundamental need for unity, for harmony, a feeling of mutual love between all of you, a feeling of respect and mutual help” (Bapak 1983, quoted in *Advice & Guidance For Helpers*, p.128*)

- Are you aware of any conflict in your group?
- How do you manage it? If testing has been used, was it useful?
- How would you like to see us approach and resolve differences or conflicts in Subud?

3. INDIVIDUALITY

“Every person will find out for himself the right way towards God, and what may be the right way for one may be completely wrong for another. Therefore, you must not suppose that you have to follow or become like Muhammad Subud. You must become your own self” (Bapak’s *Talk To Applicants*, Singapore, 1960, provisional translation, as quoted in *Advice & Guidance For Helpers*, page 49*)

- How do you feel the Subud organisation could better support your development as an individual?
- How are your interests and abilities reflected in Subud-related activities? What skills would you most like to offer or to develop?

4. FOR ALL HUMANKIND

“In Subud, there is no discrimination between the different religions...” (Bapak’s *Talk To Applicants*, Singapore, 1960, provisional translation, as quoted in *Advice & Guidance For Helpers*, page 49*)

- Do you think that the language we use to describe the latihan succeeds in its aim to encompass people of all beliefs?
- How might Subud broaden its welcome to people of diverse faiths?

5. “MIXING”

There are differing understandings about which other practices are compatible with the latihan.

- Do members of your group ever compare notes or discuss this question?
- Has an enquirer ever interpreted advice about “mixing” as out of tune with their life-style or beliefs? What response did they hear? (How – ideally - might one respond?)
- The word “meditation” is increasingly employed to mean a short spell of peaceful relaxation. In today’s terms one might now describe the quiet before each latihan as a short meditation. Do you think it would be useful to review our ideas or explanations in line with modern usage?

6. IS SUBUD EVOLVING?

Sometimes we might strike non-Subud people as set in our ways and out-of-touch with today's world. On the other hand there is an energetic youth association and a growing interest in becoming a learning organisation and improving our public interface.

- Is there any aspect of Subud that you would like to take part in improving?
- How could Subud become a more dynamic and relevant organization in today's world?
- What role might you play in achieving this?

7. TESTING OR COMMON SENSE

“Bapak has always advised against too much testing. Deal with ordinary matters in a practical way...it is too much to test always, asking God for help, depending on God, it means that we never make efforts to do something...then we lose confidence.” (Ibu Rahayu's talk to the dewan of international helpers, Cilandak, July 1984, as quoted in *Advice & Guidance For Helpers*, p. 87.*)

- What do you find it useful to test about?
- Are there questions tested that you would prefer to deal with in a practical way? (Give an example)
- What has been your best and worst experience of testing?

8. SENSITIVE SUBJECTS

It seems that some of the guidelines and advice that we may have derived from Bapak's answers to members questions can touch a raw nerve for members and applicants. For example members living in liberal countries may have gay work colleagues, family members and friends who would feel hurt and excluded by any hint of a moralising attitude. *“Bapak wants you to be aware that the latihan kejiwaan is not for you but for mankind. The way to spread it to them is not by lecturing them but by loving them?”* (Bapak, 84 JKT 4)

- Are there any subjects that you feel Subud should address in a more open way?
- Should we re-evaluate the section about homosexuality in the helper's handbook?

9. IMAGES OF OUR ASSOCIATION

The next 3 questions could be used to help members take a fresh look at Subud...

- If the Subud organisation were an animal, which would it be (and why)?
- Picture Subud as an iceberg. What is above the surface and what is hidden?
- What new image might support Subud's sustainability and development?

10. EFFICIENCY & CONTINUITY

The helper and committee structure was created for the growing worldwide association that Bapak and all of us dreamed of.

- Do you think that for our current needs it is top heavy?
- How could we make our committee structure simpler and more efficient?
- With rotating voluntary committees one challenge is continuity (not having to reinvent the wheel every time). Any suggestions?

11. APPLICANTS

As a publicity shy association with a long application period it's vital that enquirers get everything they need to support their interest.

- What is your overall opinion concerning the application period?
- In what ways could the applicants experience be improved?
- What – in your experience – has worked well?

12. OUTREACH

For Subud to be part of everyday society, our usefulness in tandem with recognised bodies may make a difference. Several new initiatives are bubbling, on both a local and an international scale. Subud members are getting involved in arts, community, peace, wellbeing, U.N.O and interfaith projects. Others are cooking up small-scale local projects or social events which require minimum start-up funds or can be run in by people in their spare time.

- Is there a project that you would like to initiate or to get involved with?
- What would you need to get started?

*With appreciation for the quotes from Bapak and Ibu Rahayu, several of which are found in *Bapak's Advice & Guidance for Helpers* – selected and edited by The Dewan of International Helpers 1983-88.

Select any discussion topics that are alive for you and your Subud peers. Or – of course – feel free to choose something else which is locally relevant.

We'd very much like to hear your feedback and suggestions. Thank you.
