

Workshop on making decisions collectively

Summertimecamp Echternach Youth Hostel - Sa 31.7.21 & Mo 2.8.21 from 4-6:30pm



I'm Jean-Marie Nau, born in 1962, live in Steinsel, teaching Luxembourgish in adult education. I was delighted to be asked whether I could do a workshop with you today & Monday and what I would like to do. Bahá'í consultation is a topic that is close to my heart and that I wish to study further. So thank you for this opportunity to learn with you.

Activity 1: [30'] In order to get to know each other, could each one say a few words that describe your character. How would you describe your neighbour? Could you listen & speak a few minutes to your neighbour, share the things you liked & learned so far. Then we come back in the big circle and then you will present your neighbour. Also, take a decision together and share it with us. It can be a project coming out of this gathering that you plan to undertake.

Passages from the message addressed to you by our National Spiritual Assembly may guide our discussions. We are here to reflect about our role in today's society. How enriching to have with us friends from different cultural & religious backgrounds. You are discussing community-building capacities that we all will develop: our two-fold moral purpose: acquiring a deeper understanding of our own personal development & contributing to the betterment of the world. What does it mean to become an active member of a world community. Here, Bahá'í texts give the following meaning to what it means to be a member of the human race: He who today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race. You are as much human inasmuch you are of service to the entire human race.

During this workshop, I will offer you a number of tools that you may use as you take decisions. It may be decisions you take alone, with friends, in the family, at school or outside of school. These tools are already mentioned in the letter addressed to you.

Tool 1: I will refine my character & my intentions

Tool 2: At the end of each day, I will go over my day & decide what actions were good, in line with my objectives & what actions did not help towards my noble goals.

Tool 3: I will be thankful, grateful for what I've been given & try with all my heart to be a better person than yesterday.

Tool 4: I am aware that my peers and the younger ones look up to me & that I am their role model.

Tool 5: What I am learning each day, I will reflect & act upon it.

So, let's start our first activity! **Material provided:** Paper & pen if needed

Activity 1 Feedback & sharing [30']

Activity 2: [10'] Let us watch a few minutes the start of a film called Human. If we can focus & listen & be present for this time together.  HUMAN VOL.1 We can watch it here.

Activity 2 Feedback & sharing [15'] What did you hear, see & feel? Again, you may first discuss it with your neighbour or another neighbour.

Activity 3: [20'] As we now prepare ourselves to take decisions in a group, we should be aware of our emotional state and our state of mind. Please complete the sentences for each of the following words: ¹ When we come back and share our results, please do so in a creative way, for example without words but with gestures, pantomime.

- ❖ agitated / opgereegt
- ❖ angry / rosen
- ❖ at peace / am Fridden
- ❖ calm / roueg
- ❖ confident in divine confirmation / op göttlech Bestätegunge vertrauen
- ❖ distracted / onkonzentriert
- ❖ fearful / ängschtlech
- ❖ focused / fokusséiert
- ❖ hopeful / hoffnungsvoll
- ❖ worried / maache mer Suergen

- a. I take better decisions when I am and not
- b. I take better decisions when I am and not
- c. ...
- d. ...
- e. ...

Activity 3 Feedback & sharing So it is helpful before a meeting with others, to look within yourself & see how you feel & if needed move to those states of mind.

Tool 6: Before a meeting, I reflect on my state of mind & if necessary move towards a positive state. To do that, I can say a prayer, meditate or contemplate beauty.

Activity 4: [20'] I would like to share a short story that can help us in our learning to take decisions together & investigate the truth. We then take a 20' reflection time.

WHATEVER WHICH WAY YOU DO IT A father goes with his son and their donkey at mid-day through the dusty streets of a village. The father sits on the donkey, led by the son. «This poor boy», says a woman reproachfully. «Look, how he tries with his short legs to keep up with the speed of the donkey. How is it possible to sit on the donkey so heartlessly, watching the child getting so tired.» The father takes it to heart, gets off the donkey and lets his son sit on it. Not long after that, a passer-by shouts: »Is this possible? This little urchin sits on the donkey like a king, and the poor father walks beside him.» When the son hears this, he asks his father to sit

¹ DL Publications, Observation & Insight, Lesson VI, Extension 6

next to him on the donkey. Shortly afterwards, an elderly lady shouts angrily: «Have you ever seen such a thing? Such cruelty to animals! The poor donkey, his back is already bent in this heat and those two are enjoying their ride on the donkey, the poor creature.» Father and son look at each other and both get off the donkey, without saying a word. Now they are walking alongside the donkey. A few minutes later, a stranger passes and laughs at them: «How can you be so stupid? Why do you take the donkey for a walk? He doesn't do anything, is of no use to you and he doesn't even carry one of you.» The father gives the donkey a handful of straw, puts his arm around his son's shoulder and says: «Whatever we do, there will always be someone who doesn't agree. I think we need to know by ourselves what's right for us.»²

Activity 4 Feedback: Please share with your neighbour what you heard & why this story may help us when we take decisions in groups. What is your own experience when it comes to decision-making? Have you watched how people take decisions?

Activity 5: [20'] Reflection Time. In your group, you may now reflect on what we have done so far. Try to do it in a creative way; in writing, poetry, a song, a dance, a drawing or a combination of them. Material provided: paper & pens. The following questions will help you in your discussions.

Questions: What is a decision? Which decisions are easy? How many decisions do I take in a day, from morning till evening? Do I take decisions in my dreams? Can I decide about everything? Is it possible not take decisions? What is a good decision? What helps us to take the right decisions?

Activity 6: [30'] As we are reflecting during this summercamp on our role in today's society and how we learn ourselves, and find out if and how we can help others to become an agent of change, we will take 20' to read the youth declaration from the book *Drawing on the Power of the Word*. We try to understand the text and decide in our group what we can do with it. As we engage in this process of consultation, let us remember to apply the tools we have seen so far, as well as the following tools:

Tool 7: As I try to understand the text, I ask & give my views in a humble posture of learning

Tool 8: I see in each of my friends and in every human being someone who is created noble, a person that I respect & value

Tool 9: I aim to be & become more united with the people I take decisions together

Tool 10: I put my point of view on the table and then it becomes part of the group.

Tool 11: I ask questions when I am uncertain, don't follow or don't understand.

Tool 12: I am aware of and avoid prejudices

Tool 13: I speak in a calm, frank & polite manner

² nau, jean-marie. Wäisheeten aus aller Welt - Eclats de Sagesse - Words of Wisdom: Op Lëtzebuergesch / En Français / In English (Luxembourgish Edition) (p. 116).

Tool 14: When a decision has been reached, unanimously or by majority, I wholeheartedly adopt it and the decision become the decision of the group

Tool 15: I look at the meeting as a spiritual conference, with the attitude & atmosphere of love, not just giving my personal views

Tool 16: In the meeting when we consult & investigate the truth, my aim is the interest of the entire human family

Tool 17: As I cannot know everything on every subject, outside expert advice is necessary

Tool 18: As I consult with others, understanding increases & the consultation becomes a lamp of guidance that leads the way. The aim of consulting is to arrive at a solution to a problem

In most decision-making meetings or groups that investigate the truth, a chair-person ensures that each person is participating and suggests, after every one has shared their views, that a vote be taken. Often, unanimity is preferred. In our exercise, we can all act as a chair-person and make sure, the voice of each participant is heard. We can imagine, that once we have given our view on a matter, it is as though we put this point of view in the middle of the circle and then we become detached from it. What we need to pay attention is to consider all the views put forward.

Activity 6 Feedback [20']

Activity 7: This almost concludes our workshop on collective decision-making. Imagine that you get back home and your friend or family member asks you what you did that afternoon. Could you find a joyful way to share with him? Is it necessary to share some unpleasant things that you may have experienced? Could it be recorded in order to be shared with other for educational purposes? Let me know if you would not like your voice and/or face to be seen.

Activity 7 Feedback. We will ask some of you to share what you say to your friend.

Additional Topics that may be brought into the workshop, time permitting

What does empowerment mean? The Empowerment Program seeks to foster a sense of constructive agency in adolescents as they move through this period of life so that they become oriented toward a life of selfless service to humanity.

What we can do: Elevate the mind, challenge assumption, redirect perspectives, raise awareness, focus energies, (Ridvan 2011)

Religion & Science: Two sources of knowledge that we should use to progress

Spill 1: Wat kënnt dir alles mat dësem Seel maachen? Variatioun: Kënnt dir e Krees, en Dreiech, e Quadrat, eng Pyramid mam Seel maachen?

Spill 2: Stronger Thoughts, GSC, page 7

Spill 3: Get to know each other, GSC, page 10

Spill 4: Survey Interview, GSC, page 12-13

Spill 5: Face, start & finish of session, GSC, page 19-20

Spill 6: Optical illusions and what they tell us about our perception of things