

# PROJECT PROPOSAL

**Name of Organization:** Spiritual Heritage Education Network Inc. (SHEN) [www.spiritualeducation.org](http://www.spiritualeducation.org)

## Mission/Mandate:

Spiritual Heritage Education Network Inc. (SHEN) is an organization dedicated to developing, disseminating and promoting educational programs in the spiritual heritage of humankind. Our goal is to promote the feeling of one human family living in the global village that the world is fast becoming. In local terms, the global village metaphor translates into an integration of the diverse individuals and communities into a socially cohesive society as it does globally into a cohesive humanity in harmony with its natural environment.

The SHEN educational programs are run locally in traditional classroom mode. In addition, they will be available globally, as distance education courses through the medium of the Internet.

The SHEN education is an integrative multi-religious and multi-disciplinary initiative with both cognitive and experiential components. We regard both of these components as equally necessary as the experiential leads to personal insights on ideas planted by the cognitive. Personal insights are effective in helping to transcend narrow selfishness for common good that is the purpose of spiritual education.

We recognize that stress is the biggest barrier to personal insight. Therefore, we teach stress management as tool for spiritual growth.

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## Community Service Learning Opportunity – Description

Who (will students serve or work with)

American Academy of Pediatrics in their 2012 policy statement entitled *Early Childhood Adversity, Toxic Stress, and the Role of the Pediatrician: Translating Developmental Science Into Lifelong Health* regards toxic stress in a child's early life as the origin of many adult diseases. Here is a quote from the abstract of the this report, "Pediatricians are now armed with new information about the adverse effects of toxic stress on brain development, as well as a deeper understanding of the early life origins of many adult diseases."

Stress prevents insight necessary for learning in general and learning new modes of behaviour in particular. It also makes us unhealthy, both physically and mentally. Stress management thus enhances learning ability as it does physical and mental health.

Spiritual development being a matter of learning new behaviour through personal insight, teaching stress management is an important component in teaching of being spiritual.

Activity of the autonomic nervous system (ANS) is said to control the rate of breathing. Stress disturbs the balance of the sympathetic and parasympathetic divisions of the ANS stimulating the former and slowing the latter. This results in shallow and fast breathing.

Spiritual practices long understood that conscious, slow, deep, diaphragmatic breathing reduces stress. Taking conscious control of the breathing process, we learn to establish a balance between the activities of the two divisions of the ANS. Recent studies establish that this type of deep breathing is beneficial in the non-pharmaceutical management and prevention of hypertension, and of other physical and mental health determinants normally under the control of the ANS.

Noting that a large number of adults in North America suffer from hypertension and other ANS related physical and mental health irregularities, SHEN felt it incumbent to use these studies for common good through public education.

SHEN proposes to train students in stress management through physiology based deep diaphragmatic breathing. Trained students will then be expected to reach out to the community by offering similar training to community groups at physical and mental health centers, addiction management and rehab centers, churches, health clubs, workplaces, recreation centers, senior residences, training and educational organizations, etc.

What will students do and how will they do it?(Summary of tasks & activities)

1. The students will attend a two hour long in class lecture/workshop for 8 weeks
2. The students will offer a two hour long workshop (or equivalent) for 8 weeks to clients of community agencies
3. The students will research effects of stress on physical health, mental health, learning ability and behaviour patterns
4. The students will make a presentation reporting on their research.

**Project Start Date:**

The week following the PhiG event

**Project End Date:**

Before the end of July

Date/Time	Activity	Date/Time	Activity
1 <sup>st</sup> term	Students attend 8 – 2 hr lecture/workshops Minimum of 8 hours of research on various effects of stress	2 <sup>nd</sup> term	Students offer 8-2 hr workshops to clients of community agencies

### Learning Outcomes for Student

We have devised a training program for the pharmacy students consisting of eight two hour sessions, normally one per week over eight (or fewer) weeks with each session comprising of the following components:

1. Presentation of related underlying physiological concepts;
2. Practical engagement in the practice of deep breathing; and
3. Mindful listening, group sharing and Q. & A. process.

Additionally, the students will:

1. Learn the use of heart rate variability biofeedback to support personal experience and cognitive understanding of the deep breathing process;
2. Learn simple practical tips to include deep diaphragmatic breathing as a part of regular lifestyle; and
3. Engage in independent study and research in the effectiveness of stress management through deep diaphragmatic breathing in managing various physical and mental health issues related with the activity of the ANS. The students may also be requested to investigate the production and circulation of nitric oxide as a result of the deep breathing technique.

The goal of the program is to experientially and cognitively gain enough conviction in the process to comfortably and effectively offer eight two hour workshops to community groups. The students will be instructed to insist that no one stops or changes the dosage of any medication without consulting one's physician.

Interested students will benefit in various ways through their personal learning and through reaching out to benefit the community groups. They must be able to travel locally to receive and deliver the necessary training and for making the arrangements related to this program.

A list of specific learning outcome will look like the following:

- I. Cognitive Learning
  1. Physiological effects of stress;
  2. Stress and health, physical and mental;
  3. Physiological concepts underlying stress reduction through deep breathing;
  4. Understanding of the process of deep breathing;
  5. Principles underlying heart rate variability feedback;
  6. Nitric oxide, its relationship with the deep breathing process and any role in health maintenance; and
  7. Principles underlying body-mind connection through electro-chemical information systems (hormonal and nervous systems) operating in the human body;
- II. Experiential Learning
  1. Experiencing the opposing stimulating and calming tendencies built in the human body and the physical, mental and spiritual benefits of balancing them;
  2. Experiencing the physical and mental calm resulting from the balancing of the ANS activity;
  3. Experiencing the growth of thoughtfulness at the expense of reactive behaviour as a result of practicing the stress management technique;

4. Mindful and non-judgemental listening in a group process; and
5. Skill in using the heart rate variability biofeedback.

### **How will this project support or benefit your organization, clients, or the community?**

Our mission is spiritual development through education. Stress is a major barrier to personal insights needed for spiritual growth. We enhance spiritual development by the helping to remove what is decidedly a major barrier to it.

What is our experience in teaching of stress management through deep breathing?

A listing of our experience in teaching stress management through deep breathing includes the following:

- We have been training community volunteers to offer workshops in stress management for a number of years,.
- For a number of years, we have been offering stress management workshops for the patients of the Grand River Hospital as a tool in addiction management.
- We have also been offering for the last three years, stress management workshop leader training to the students at the UOW School of Pharmacy under their community service learning program. The School of Pharmacy students trained by us have been helping the clients of the Region of Waterloo Homes for Mental Health, St. John's Kitchen, and senior homes such as the Parkwood Mennonite Home, etc.
- We trained a staff group at the Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre for offering stress managements workshops to their clients/patients.