

Protective Behaviors for Children:

Training the Trainers Program

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I. Introduction:

My name is Phyllis Peterson and I am a survivor of incest from the ages of 2 through 8 years old. The effects of this abuse have lasted for a life time because these were my developmental years in which sexuality and immorality was approved by a perpetrator that was the most important authority figure in my life. I was a sexualized child which, I believe, led to my becoming bi-polar and acting out sexually as a teenager and adult.

This excerpt from my book “Assisting the Traumatized Soul: Healing the Wounded Talisman,” shows you where I was 20 years ago: Please don’t look too closely at me. You might see my secret. Please don’t talk to me. I might accidentally tell you my secret. No, I don’t want to be friends. Friends tell secrets. No, I don’t want that promotion. I’m too occupied with my secret. And I can’t express an opinion either.

You might guess my secret. No, I'm not going to invite you to my home. We have a houseful of secrets! What's the sense of sharing feelings? People with secrets avoid them. And no, I can't tell you what my secret is. It's so secret, I may not be fully conscious of it.¹

Being able to tell my secret hundreds of times within the safety of a support group helped to validate my experience and helped me to recognize that it was not my fault. Most survivors of incest believe, incorrectly that they were responsible for the abuse. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

My journey has led through a series of miss-diagnoses, wrong medication and a skewed perception of what life is truly meant to be....to a life that is fulfilling and creative, with relationships that are loving and trusting. In order for this to happen, I had to define and discover a just, nurturing authority and the importance of obedience to authority. I had to lead that sexualized child to grow and develop morally through a process of education. I wish that my education on sexual boundaries had begun when I was at least 3 years old. I am one of the fortunate ones. I did receive an education and I attribute that education...and my growing faith and ever developing morality to the teachings of a great philosopher who taught me to follow higher principles.

Throughout my journey of healing I have attended many conferences on Child Abuse. I am here today to teach you what I have learned about how to protect children by making them aware of sexual boundaries. I am not a therapist but I can teach prevention. I can teach parents and children how to be aware of sexual boundaries. And

¹ Phyllis K. Peterson, "Assisting the Traumatized Soul: Healing the Wounded Talisman", Baha'i Publishing Trust, © 1999, page 5.

I can train you in how to teach awareness of physical boundaries to children as young as 3 years old, children who are old enough to sit still and listen to a story and enjoy arts and crafts. There are simple techniques that can equip a child with acute awareness. And just as we repeat to children the need for manners on a regular basis, so too, we need to follow up and reinforce the teachings of physical boundaries on a regular basis. So I encourage you to take notes so that you can repeat these techniques as you see a need for them.

II. Why is prevention important?

We know the horrific statistics on sexual abuse of children. Here are some facts and figures from the United States. One in four females is molested in childhood. One in seven boys is molested before the age of 18. 150,000 to 200,000 new cases of sexual abuse are being reported each year. In England a quarter of all rape victims are children.

In South Africa the largest group of perpetrators (33%) was school teachers. The findings suggest that child rape is becoming more common, and lend support to qualitative research of sexual harassment of female students in schools in Africa. South Africa has one of the highest rates of rape in the world, mostly against children. Every half an hour, a child is sexually abused in Brazil. Sometimes by Brazilians, sometimes by foreigners, who are presented the children by an intermediary who has rented them by the day from their families.

Regarding sexual violence against children in Eastern Europe, Sexual violence against young boys and girls up to 15 years old accounts for 30 per cent of all crimes in this category, and it is most often children between 8 and 12 years old who are attacked. The perpetrators are known to their victims in 50 per cent of

cases, and roughly 40 per cent of crimes of this kind are committed by relatives. The enormity of the problem can be realized by the fact that in India alone, at least 25 percent of the adult population has been molested before the age of 16. At least 27 million females are adult survivors of child sexual abuse. In Thailand it is estimated more than 200,000 children have been sold into sexual slavery. It is a multi-national, multi-billion dollar industry in cities like Pattaya, a city with a population of 100,000 of which 20,000 are prostitutes, men, women and children. These are but samples of a world wide problem that should have all of us working on it. The sexual abuse of children is everyone's business and we must be about how to remedy it.²

We also know that immoral, degenerate or ignorant people prey upon the fact that children and their caregivers are not aware. Perpetrators seek out the compliant child. Sadly, some of our youth are acting out the immorality that they have been taught. Power over one's body and path in life starts with knowledge. Remarkably, the moral education of children can start very young. Not only does it include teaching children virtues such as kindness, compassion, love, understanding and friendship, but it includes knowledge of personal boundaries.

The workshop entitled "Protective Behaviors for Children" is a one hour *preventive* workshop that teaches children how to be aware of boundaries for the private areas of their bodies *before* someone does something that is inappropriate or harmful. The program incorporates all of the senses, the different ways of knowing, plus the power of speech to help children fully retain what is learned.

² These statistics were taken from the Internet. Simply go to Google and explore by putting in (Country) and the words "child sexual abuse."

Participants in this workshop will learn how to teach children to ask for help, who to ask, how to conquer their fears and how to say NO, STOP, and HELP! They will learn to be aware of three different types of touch: Gentle touch, hurting touch and secret touch. Moreover, this is a vital language skill for the morally educated child. For how else would they be able to define or describe what has happened?

One of the most instinctive virtues a child, even a baby, has is empathy. Perpetrators prey upon this and prey upon the unaware, compliant child. What you can do is teach children to not be compliant in specific situations.

There is a simple song everyone will learn, plus arts and crafts such as the “Fear-A-Lizer” with which they learn to pulverize their fears. They can make a Magic Warrior Shield (made from a simple paper plate or the handout pattern at the back of this paper) that reinforces where internal and external confidence comes from. (*Internal* being the special strengths each individual child has and *external* referring to the system of support that surrounds the child – parents, village mentors, counselors, professionals, etc.) There are two coloring sheets and an outline that will be provided for each participant in this workshop so that attendees such as children, parents, grandparents, babysitters, teachers, therapists, counselors and trainers can have tools to take home with them enabling them to demonstrate the program in their own locality. There is no cost for these tools.

The Protective Behaviors for Children workshop has been presented to schools, orphanages, and Catholic Social Service Agencies in Thailand as well as in Japan, China and the United States. Staff training has also been conducted so that teachers can follow up 3 months or so later.

III. How do we teach our children boundaries?

When my grandson, Tanner, was 3 years old, he asked my daughter-in-law, “Who made all the people in the world?” She answered, “God (or a Supreme Being).” Then he asked, “But who made all the bad people?” She answered, “God made all the people and allowed them to make choices, but some people chose to do bad things.” A Great Educator that has taught me said that “The root cause of wrong doing is ignorance.” So we have a need to educate both the wrong doer for the protection of society and to educate those who are innocent. The following is one method of teaching children to be aware of boundaries.

1. Opening: What children will learn:

- a. How to ask for help
- b. Who to ask for help
- c. How to conquer their fears
- d. That they have permission to say NO! STOP! And HELP!

2. There are three kinds of touch: Gentle touch, hurting touch and secret touch.

Describe them. Pat yourself on the arm or cheek very gently to demonstrate gentle touch; pinch yourself and say “OUCH!” to illustrate hurting touch. You can also use a doll or a stuffed animal to give the children a visual image of gentle touch, rocking the doll or stuffed animal. You can also speak of bullies at school or in the neighborhood and the types of behaviors that they exhibit, such as hitting, kicking, punching, twisting arms, and other types of fighting

3. Ask them: “Where are your private places?” And then tell them, “Anywhere you can cross your arms on your body. No one is allowed to do hurting touch or secret touch there. Secret touch is when someone tries to put their hands under your clothing or inside your panties and tells you not to tell Mommy or Daddy (or the authorities)”. Talk about people who are trying to do good for them such as a Doctor or a Nurse and differentiate when it is appropriate. Babies and small children, for example, need help with cleaning their private areas and the changing of their diapers. Remember that 80% of cases of sexual abuse are done by family members and therefore the child has to be told that Mommy and Daddy cannot do secret touch, too. Hand out pictures #1 through #4 to demonstrate the following.

- a. Face: Have the children (or workshop participant) cross their arms over their face as the boy is doing in picture #1. Talk about the feelings they would have if someone did hurting touch there. Tell them. “No one can touch your face without your permission. Unless they have a good reason to help you.” (Don’t have them start coloring here yet. Just talk about the pictures and ask them questions about the picture. Ask them what they think the boy is feeling.)
- b. Chest: Cross arms over the chest as the girl is doing in picture #2. Talk about the feelings they might have if someone touched them there. Tell them, “No one can touch your chest without your permission.” Ask them what they think the girl is feeling.

- c. Pelvic area or genitals: Cross arms over their pelvis. Talk about the feelings they perceive on the boy's face in the picture. Tell them, "No one has the right to touch your genitals without your permission." (We will discuss later on what they can say verbally. Because we are an international group and because the children you will teach are at different developmental stages, know that you must choose wording that is familiar to their experience and your locality. You don't have to be limited to this language. You can be creative.)

- d. Buttocks: Have them cross their arms over their buttocks. Again, talk about the feelings the little girl in the picture might have or they might have. If you have a mixed group of boys and girls, don't forget to address this issue with the boys, even though there is a girl in picture #4. So it is with all of the pictures.

A word on "Feelings"...children can be taught at a very young age to express their feelings. Feeling language can be very difficult even for adults. To give you an example, I was present when my niece came screaming into a room where all the family was gathered for a holiday. We did not know what was wrong, but my sister held her and said, "Tell Momma, I'm frightened of the helicopter! Tell Momma, I'm frightened." She was teaching her feeling language at 2 and ½ years old. It's as necessary as teaching a child manners and boundaries. The words for feelings in English are on the coloring sheet and there are lines for which the children can write out their own feelings in their own language.

4. Song: This is My Private Place. If you are a musical person and like to sing, make up your own tune to the following words. And if you are not a musical person, just teach them to recite the words like a chant, a nursery rhyme or a poem. I will sing it for you:

This is my private place. (Cross arms over the face.)

This is my private place. (Cross arms over the chest.)

This is my private place. (Cross arms over the pelvis.)

One, Two, Three, and Four!

When you say “one”, demonstrate by crossing arms over the face.

When you say “two”, demonstrate by crossing arms over the chest.

When you say “three”, demonstrate by crossing arms over the pelvis.

Then quickly turn around and slap both hands on your buttocks saying,

“And four!”

After you have demonstrated it for them two or three times, have them stand up and sing it, going through the motions. You are, in fact, teaching them through movement, motion, music, speech and visualization.

5. Now, hand out the coloring crayons or markers and have them color the pictures. This will be the third or fourth time you have gone through these concepts with them which will help fix it in their memories. Walk around the room from table

to table or desk to desk and encourage them and review the information as you acknowledge each one of them individually. Say things like:

What a good job you are doing.

I like the way you color.

Can you tell what feelings are in his or her heart by the expression on the face?

You have a special way of coloring.

What's your favorite color?

Do you like to color at home and at school?

(Translate what feeling words are written in English for each picture. If they can write, have them write the feeling words in Chinese, Thai, Japanese, German, Indian, the African languages, etc.)

6. Ask the children "Have you ever felt embarrassed, afraid or ashamed? Did your stomach hurt?" "What are your favorite foods?" "What foods make you feel sick in your stomach?" "That sick feeling can be called a yuckie feeling. Secret touch can make you feel many different types of feelings which are like warning signs." "If you feel yuckie, uncomfortable or ashamed when someone does secret touch, it's not because of something you did, but because of what THEY did. What I want you to do is run away as fast as you can. That yuckie feeling is a RED FLAG that tells you something is not right and you need to run to someone who is safe and tell them what happened. You can also tell the person who is making

you feel uncomfortable ‘NO! Stop that! I don’t like it when you do that!’”³ Next we will learn how to teach them to ask for help and who to ask for help if they couldn’t run away.

7. Hand out the picture of the hand and the pencils. If you do not have the picture of the hand, you can make one by simply placing your hand on a blank sheet of paper and tracing around your fingers and your thumb and making copies. Or have the children trace around their own hands on a blank piece of paper. There is a sample provided with this paper.

Have them write NO! STOP! And HELP in large letters or characters in the palm of the hand or write it for them if they are too young, teaching them what the words mean. Have safe scissors ready. Tell the children “To stop hurting touch and secret touch you have to be able to tell someone who is safe, someone you can trust, someone who would only do something good for you and to you.”

Then ask them “Who is a safe person? Who would you ask to help you? Who would listen to you and believe you?”

Start with the thumb and have them write in a name of someone who is safe...

Mom or Dad, for instance. If it is Mom or Dad who is perpetrating the abuse, ask for another name. Go on to the pointer finger (the first finger) and ask them who else can they think of that is safe who would never do secret touch or hurting touch. Have them write in the name of whoever they can think of. They may say Auntie, Grandmother. Move on to the second finger and ask again. If they are

³ This phrase was adapted from Sandy Kleven, LCSW, The Right Touch, Illumination Arts Publishing Company, Inc. Bellevue, Washington. This is a read-aloud story to help prevent child sexual abuse.

having difficulty thinking up people, make suggestions such as brother, cousin, friend. Do the same with the third and fourth fingers, suggesting Doctor, policeman, nurse, or teacher. One boy in an orphanage in Thailand said he would call in the army!

Have them color the hand red and cut it out with safe scissors. Red is a universal color for STOP! Have them raise their paper hands together and shout out as a group “NO! STOP! HELP!” Raising the hand is also a universal sign for HELP!

If you are in a class room situation, all the hands of the children can be placed on a bulletin board to remind them of this exercise. Attention can be drawn to the bulletin board after a two week period has passed and the techniques can be reviewed.

Then tell them, “If the person on the thumb doesn’t listen, tell the person on the pointer finger. If that person doesn’t listen, tell the person on the next finger, and the next, and keep telling until someone listens. Don’t stop! Be brave! Keep telling and telling and telling and don’t stop!”

8. Skills and Tools:

Bravery and courage come from having skills and tools. Children become fearful and compliant because they are either unaware of what is happening or they don’t know what to do. The equipment you will need for this part of the workshop are crackers, plastic bags, scotch tape, markers and a rolling pin or other long round object (like a tall glass or a long 1 inch wooden dowel) that can crush the cracker that is in the plastic bag. The following list of skills should be written on slips of

paper. Each child will tape the skills to the rolling pin or tall glass or even a piece of wood. Be creative. Have at least three or four different slips of paper for each child.

- a. I know what hurting touch and secret touch are.
- b. I can go to a safe place that I know ahead of time, as fast as I can
- c. I can yell for help and say NO! STOP! And Help!
- d. I'm a quick thinker!
- e. I'm a smart and brave kid.
- f. I know ahead of time who to ask for help!
- g. I can tell 5 people and keep telling until someone listens.
- h. I can say "Stop that! I don't like it when you do that!"
- i. I know my body belongs to me and nobody can touch it.

After all of the children have read their skills aloud, tape them with the scotch tape to the rolling pin or cylindrical object. Then hand out the crackers, plastic bags and wide-tip Sanford Markers. Have them write FEAR on the cracker and put the cracker in the plastic bag, sealing it shut. Now one at a time, have them crush their fear with their powerful skills that are taped to the rolling pin, telling them "Look how strong you are! You know what to say and do! Good for you! You can conquer your fears because you have special powers." Say the verbal skills out loud again to all of them. These skills give them powers. Tell them

that they can take their plastic bags home with them, open them when they are outside and let the wind blow all the cracker crumbs away, releasing their fears. Be sure to have extra crackers so that the children can have a treat to celebrate this moment. Do warn them not to eat the cracker that they have written on with the marker because it has chemicals on it.

9. Every country has its Warriors! The next craft project you will teach the children to make is a Magic Warrior Shield. The pattern for it is attached to the back of this paper. You should copy it onto card stock or card board that is thin enough to cut out. The strip on the bottom is to be stapled to the back so they can slip their hand into it and hold it in front of themselves as a Magic Warrior Shield. (You could also use paper plates if they are available in your country.) Hand out pencils, markers and a stapler or two.
 - a. Have them draw a picture on the Shield of someone who would protect them, such as parents, the family dog, a policewoman or a doctor. One child asked me to draw an attack cat on hers! This is their outside help (external guidance).
 - b. Tell them to write NO! STOP! HELP! On the inside of the Shield. This is their personal, inside strength.
 - c. If there are any of the SKILLS left over from the previous project, have them tape some to the inside. Discuss these skills out loud as they work, telling them that they have the personal power of a Warrior.

10. There are three more important points to teach the children.

- a. They have to tell one of the five people on their hand even if the person doing the secret touch says they will harm someone the child loves. Sex offenders count on the fear of the child as their ally. They count on the child being unaware and powerless. This workshop teaches children what to do ahead of time. This is prevention before it happens, before the abuse is buried, so that the child will have the opportunity to talk things out.
- b. The children must be taught that if someone does secret touch, it is not the fault of the child. Some children think that it is their fault and that may keep them from saying something out loud. So tell them over and over throughout the work shop, “It would not be your fault.”
- c. The final concept to bring before them is this: “Nothing that can happen to me is so terrible that I can’t say it out loud to someone I trust.” Have them say it out loud to you, too. “Nothing that can happen to me is so terrible that I can’t say it out loud to someone I trust.”

11. Now, have them stand up and repeat the song: “This is my Private Place!

This is my private place! (Cross arms over face.)

This is my private place! (Cross arms over chest.)

This is my private place! (Cross arms over pelvis.)

One, two, three, and four!

(On one cross arms over face, on two cross arms over chest, on three cross arms over pelvis, and on four turn your back to them and slap your hands on your buttocks.)

IV. Closing

In the book, “The Right Touch”, author Sandy Kleven makes several very good suggestions on how to get help for the child and how to rectify the situation. If a child comes to you and tells you that someone has touched them inappropriately, BELIEVE THE CHILD! Give the child plenty of reassurance that it was right to tell and that it was not his or her fault. Remember that you are not qualified to confront the accused offender, so you must turn it over to the authorities. You can request assistance from the police, sheriff, or a child protection agency.

I know that we have many countries represented here today, so I couldn’t begin to know the many agencies that are and are not available to you. I can give you an example from the United States. There is a Childhelp USA Hotline at 1-800-4-A-Child that has trained counselors available 24 hours a day for crisis intervention. They can also offer referrals to counseling agencies and support groups. They offer literature upon request. Children and adults may be connected to counselors in 144 languages as needed.

Ms. Kleven says you can also use the Internet to find a vast network of resources to help deal with this unfortunate but all-too-common problem that is an epidemic world wide. The Childhelp USA site is a good place to start: www.childhelpusa.org or you can e-mail them at help@childhelpusa.org.⁴

⁴ Sandy Kleven, “The Right Touch”, © 1997, Illumination Arts Publishing Company, Inc., Bellevue, Washington.

What else can you do? You can recognize that this is a community problem as well as a world wide problem, not an individual problem. You can start a support group with the women and men in your community, teaching this work shop on a regular basis in order to empower both the children and the adults. Adult mothers who have not received counseling for their own abuse are known to not have good boundaries and skills and awareness to prevent this injustice happening to their own children.

If we go back to the statistics, say in India alone where at least 27 million adult females have experienced child sexual abuse, imagine the percentage that don't have good boundaries or awareness to protect their own children so it becomes a generational problem that could have been prevented with education for sustainable development.

When I was teaching protective behaviors in Thailand to a group of teachers, a woman approached me after my talk. She said that a 4 year old neighbor boy had forced her 2 year old granddaughter into the oral sex position on his body. She didn't know what to do. She was afraid of offending his father who was a well respected man in town. Yet she did not know how to interpret the boy's behavior...if it was something he had seen in the home or on TV, she couldn't be sure...but she felt a great need to protect her granddaughter.

I told her it was time for her to rise up to leadership in her community and act as though this was a community problem not an individual problem. She could gather the adults and children in her community to teach them the concepts in this workshop to create awareness as a preventive measure and continue to teach her grand child through

the years to protect her. That way she would not have to point a finger at any individual, but enlighten the entire community.

At one time I was at a conference in New York City when a woman revealed to me that she allowed a trusted male friend to baby-sit her 6 year old daughter while she attended a meeting. Her husband was out of town. When she returned home and her friend, a member of her church, had left, she started putting her daughter to bed. It was then that her daughter said, "I hope Mr. Smith never touches me again like he did tonight."

Her mother's heart was in her throat! But she remained calm. "Where did Mr. Smith touch you?" The little girl said, "Right here," pointing to her pubic area. The first thing her mother did was believe her child. Then she said, "How did it make you feel?" The little girl said, "Yuckie!" Her mother asked her, "Do you want to talk about it?" The little girl said, "No, not right now, I just want to go to bed." "Well," said her mother, "If you want to talk about it later, I have a special friend who is really good about talking about such things and we'll go and see her. But I want you to know that it wasn't your fault that Mr. Smith did that and you will never have to be alone with him again."

Then she tucked her daughter in bed and went to her room and screamed into her pillow. The next morning she called Mr. Smith. Fortunately she had recently learned how to create an I-Statement, so she formed her words very carefully to that format.

And she said, "Mr. Smith, I want you to know that I feel very angry that you touched my daughter in an inappropriate way and I want to know what you plan to do so that you will never touch another child in this way and so that you will stop losing friends

and to correct your behavior in the future? I know that you were to come to my house for a meeting this weekend, but you are no longer welcome in my home. You are never to see my daughter again because I think that would be detrimental to her healing.” Mr. Smith stumbled over his words, said as he wept that he was sorry and that he would get some help.⁵

Today that little girl is about 16 to 18 years old and is whole and healthy because she felt safe enough to communicate this out loud to her mother and the incident wasn't buried without discussion and support. She was told that it was not her fault and she was protected from ever being alone with this man again. Imagine though, if her mother had been able to follow up and teach her the skills in this workshop, to reinforce these concepts.

Here is one last story and then I will open the program up to questions and discussion. I may not be able to answer all the questions, but together as a group I am sure we will find suggestions and solutions that will expand our knowledge on this very important subject.

A more subtle but dangerous form of abuse:

One year when I was traveling from city to city in Wisconsin, my hostess in one home greeted me at the door. Her three year old daughter was at her side. Susan, a former social worker, explained to me that Frances did not like to be hugged or touched. I was very impressed with the fact that this mother was immediately setting boundaries for me in order to support her daughter's feelings and preferences. I always make a point

⁵ Phyllis Peterson, *Assisting the Traumatized Soul*, © 1999, Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, IL, p. 133

of allowing a child to come to me rather than me forcing myself onto a child. Children sense who is to be trusted and if left to themselves will test the water so to speak.

I was there to demonstrate my “Boundary Sculpting Game” which creates consciousness of what we do unconsciously instead of setting clear boundaries with others. Susan invited many of her neighbors and there were plenty of people participating in the game. After the game I provided time for discussion and memories of times we had either crossed the boundaries of others or they had crossed our boundaries.

Susan revealed an interesting problem that was confronting her at family holiday gatherings. Her family knew Frances’ preferences were, yet Susan’s brother would tease and cajole Frances to hug him even though she consistently told him “No!” Then he would make a game out of it, trying to turn her NO into a YES! He would work away at her until finally she acquiesced. Then the entire family would laugh.

Susan would be very disturbed but did not have support in putting her brother in his place, at a safe distance from Frances. She was also afraid of rocking the boat and ruining family gatherings by setting rigid boundaries, or being thought of as rigid. What was really happening was this: In Susan’s brother’s eyes, Frances’ no did not mean NO!

Now, many of us who work with youth, teenagers and women who have been raped on dates, know that their NO did not mean NO to the rapist. Susan’s daughter was in a precarious situation in the developmental years of her life. And after playing “The Boundary Sculpting Game”, Susan had finally found the key, the language, and the concepts to verbalize what was actually going on within this situation.

Through the group discussion that we had, Susan decided that she had to firmly tell her brother “No!” and that if he did not respond appropriately to her authority as Frances’ mother, then she would not attend family gatherings until he did.

Remember, the greatest need with Protective Behaviors for Children is to empower them with knowledge of how to say NO and to support them with awareness of boundaries for the private areas of their bodies. Next they need the skills for asking for help. They need to be told that it was not their fault. And if upon hearing that the child has been abused, the child must be assured that they are believed. Ask questions about their feelings, teach them the feeling language. There are over 250 feeling words in the English language. Use every opportunity to help children to express their feelings from the youngest age possible. And please also remember that you must turn it over to qualified authorities when someone has done something to break the law. There are laws against child sexual abuse and you may not have the authority to confront the individual or enforce the law.

And so I finish the program with these final words that can be said to the child:

There is nothing that can happen to you that is so terrible that you can’t say it out loud to someone you trust.

Thank you for coming today and thank you so much for caring. Questions and discussion. Handouts attached.

** Excerpts from “Assisting the Traumatized Soul” used by Permission of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of the United States.

