The Art of Teaching and Presenting

By Roger Gabriel

There is artistry in being a good teacher, and as with any discipline, this quality grows and improves with practice. When you complete the training, you will be a qualified Primordial Sound Meditation teacher; in time you will become a good teacher, and with practice and experience, a great one!

As teachers of meditation, we are helping to raise collective consciousness. Fine-tune and perfect your skills, and together we will enlighten the world.

The five qualities of a good teacher:

1. **Passion for the subject.** By virtue of the fact that you have used your time and resources to complete the training and have been meditating regularly, we can assume you are passionate about meditation and sharing it with others. Allow your passion to shine throughout your teaching.

2. **A good knowledge of the subject material.** If you have watched all the videos and studied all the required readings (hopefully several times), then by now you should have a strong understanding of the practice and philosophy of Primordial Sound Meditation. Share this knowledge.

3. **The ability to present the material in a clear and compelling manner.** When you prepare your lectures, make your presentations flow in a logical, easily understandable sequence. Let your words express the wisdom and teachings of meditation.

4. **The ability to apply the material.** This means being able to answer your students’ questions, by sifting through the material in your mind and selecting the most appropriate piece of information. This becomes easier with time and practice. Welcome all questions.

5. **Enjoyment of teaching.** If you’re enjoying yourself, there’s a very good chance your students will enjoy the course too. Be responsible but always plan to have fun teaching.
Practice, Practice, Practice

As mentioned above, your teaching skills will improve with practice. First you will practice on your own during this course. Try standing in front of a mirror to see how you look when discussing the material. Practice with a friend or family member and ask for feedback.

When you complete the training, start teaching as soon as possible, even if you only have one or two students. The longer you wait, the harder it becomes to get started. Take every opportunity to teach that’s offered. The more you teach, the more effortless it becomes.

Respect

To be a teacher, you need students, so it’s important to always respect them and their needs. Thank them for taking your course and for taking this step in their own growth and evolution.

Arrive early for your lectures and always be on time for any follow-up meetings, phone calls, etc. Allow time for your students’ questions and concerns and answer them fully, no matter how simple they are.

Dress respectfully and appropriately for the settings and groups you will be teaching.

When you respect your students, they will respect you and the teachings. Keep in mind that many students feel a sense of love and gratitude towards their teacher. However, as their teacher, it’s necessary to be professional and not to abuse or take advantage of these feelings.

Know Your Audience

Knowing who you will be speaking to helps you to tailor your presentation to their specific needs. While you will always be sharing the same basic content, the way you teach a group of Wall Street bankers will probably be different from the way you teach a surfers’ club.

Don’t be rigidly attached to one style of teaching, plan ahead, and be prepared to make changes during a lecture if necessary.
Preparation

When you have a presentation scheduled, allow time earlier in the day to run through what you plan to say. Check your materials and any equipment to make sure you have everything you need. Make sure your tools are compatible with anyone else’s you will be using.

If you are teaching anywhere other than your own home, arrive early to give yourself enough time to check the arrangements and any equipment you will be using, such as computers, projectors, sound systems, etc.

Before giving Personal Instructions, allow time to set up your table, check the pronunciation of the mantras, and chant the Shanti mantra to yourself.

Also remember that a good Primordial Sound Meditation teacher is always prepared to talk about meditation, whenever the opportunity arises.

Choosing the Space

Primordial Sound Meditation has been taught in almost every possible location you can imagine. However, it’s best to choose a comfortable, inviting space that will be large enough for the size of your group. For Personal Instruction, you will need a smaller, private room and a place for people to meditate.

Choose suitable seating and remember that sometimes it may be appropriate for people to sit on the floor. Position yourself so everyone can easily see and hear you.

Presentation Style

We all have our own personalities, which will be reflected in the style of our presentations. Your style will probably evolve over time as you become more comfortable teaching.

Be yourself, be natural. Avoid trying to create the impression that you are someone other than yourself; it takes too much effort and will distract you from the teaching. Remember, meditation helps us escape from illusions, not create them.

Speak clearly and calmly, using language that best suits your audience. Make sure your presentation fits into the time allotted, allowing enough time for questions. Always define any Sanskrit words or terms that might be new to the group. People are there to learn from you, not to be impressed by a lot of complicated jargon. Keep in mind that any fool can make something simple sound complicated, but it takes a wise person to make something complicated sound easy.
Be warm and friendly, without gushing. Most people will only remember a small part of what you say but they will always remember how you made them feel. Whatever your style, be inspirational and let the wisdom shine through you. Set the example, so your students will want whatever it is you have!

**Introducing Yourself**

Start your first presentation to a group by saying a few words about yourself. Include any qualifications you have that might be relevant to the group. Since most of your students will be there because they have heard of the Chopra Center, talk a little about your connection to the Center and mention that you are a certified *Primordial Sound Meditation* instructor.

Also say a few words about what initially drew you to meditation and perhaps share some of the benefits or changes you have noticed with your practice. Keep this introduction short and lighthearted, avoiding the temptation to give a long monologue or go into too much detail about your own story.

During your presentations, see if you can include experiences and stories from your own life or meditation practice to illustrate points so that your personal introduction unfolds as the course progresses.

**Teaching Aids**

Teaching aids help to keep you on track and ensure that you don’t omit any valuable information. Create whatever tools you need to help you deliver your lectures. Visual aids will also keep the students more engaged.

PowerPoint slides projected on a screen are very useful for larger groups but can also be displayed on a laptop for smaller groups. You will receive simple presentation templates as part of your training but feel free to modify these to suit your own style. Avoid including too much text on a slide, and wherever possible, use a diagram or picture to illustrate the point. Including some humor in your slides always helps the group to connect, but be very careful not to use anything that could be construed as offensive.

If you aren’t technically savvy or don’t have the necessary equipment, you could create a flip-chart version of the slides, which would work well for small to mid-sized groups.
If you aren't using visual aids, it's perfectly acceptable to refer to a set of notes or cue cards listing the main points of your lecture. It's fine to read relevant quotes or passages from a book; however, don't read your whole lecture from written copy because this will quickly become tedious for students.

**Questions**

Always make sure you allow enough time for questions, which are an excellent way to let you know the needs of the group. Decide ahead of time how you will handle questions during your presentations and announce this at the beginning of the course. If you are comfortable doing so, you can invite people to interrupt you at any time during the presentation. However, as the question may take you away from the topic you were discussing, make sure that you return to it once you've given your answer.

Alternatively, you can tell people that you will be pausing periodically for questions and ask them to please hold their questions until then. You can then ask for any questions after you finish each section of the lecture. If a person asks a question relating to material that you intend to cover later, it's fine to let them know that you will be discussing that information and ask them to hold their question and ask it again if they still need to.

Always listen to a person's full question, rather than thinking you know what they are asking and cutting them off midway through. If you aren't clear about what they are asking, ask them to explain further.

Provide simple, clear answers rather than long, rambling responses. You can ask the student if you answered their question and, if not, you can go into a fuller explanation. When answering questions, always try to give an answer that is appropriate for the person asking but is also broad enough to engage everyone else in the group.

At the beginning of the *Primordial Sound Meditation* classes and during Lesson Three, Perfecting the Practice; and Lesson Four, The Higher States of Consciousness, it is useful for you to ask your students questions about their meditation practice and experiences. This will enable you to assess their progress, correct any misunderstandings, and give helpful advice.

Sometimes people are a little reserved during Lesson One, the Introductory Lecture, and may not ask any questions. If you've paused several times to take questions and received no response, a good “ice breaker” is to ask, “Well, if you did have a question, what would it be?”
Arrive early before the lessons in case someone arrives with a question they would like to ask privately before the class.

Always allow time for questions at the end of every lesson and invite people to remain after you have finished if they have more questions or something they want to ask in private.

On occasion, someone will try to monopolize you with their questions or ask questions of a personal nature. Here you will need to use your judgement to decide when it is appropriate to ask the person to meet with you later to continue the discussion.

When you don’t have an immediate answer to a question, tell the student that you will find the answer for them. Contact the Chopra Center Certifications department and someone there will help you with a response. You can then relay it to your student at your next meeting or by phone or email.

Helpful hint: If you lose your train of thought during a lecture, rather than grinding to a halt or saying *umm*, smile and ask, “Does anyone have a question?”

**Feeling Nervous**

It is normal to feel nervous, particularly when giving your first few classes. Even after years of teaching, a little nervousness indicates that you want to do the best possible job. If you get to a point where you are just on autopilot, it’s time to stop and reassess your teaching skills and desires.

A simple empowerment exercise to do before you give a lecture is Deepak’s “See and Be” technique. Stand in front of a mirror and look directly into your own eyes. This is the soul reflecting back into itself. Then repeat the following three statements silently or out loud:

- I am immune to criticism and flattery.
- I am above no one and beneath no one.
- I am fearless in any situation.

Then seal the exercise by repeating the mantra *Ahum Brahmasmi* (I am the universe).

Allowing yourself enough time for a short, private meditation will help settle you. In addition, taking a few full, deep breaths before you begin will help you to relax and ground yourself in the present moment.
Whenever you feel nervous or hesitant to teach, reflect on why you chose to become a teacher. Remember the personal commitment you made to share this profound wisdom with others and help them on their path of self-discovery. And unless Deepak happens to walk into the room, you know more about meditation than anyone in your audience.

**Connecting with the Audience**

As mentioned above, your students will look to you as the example of the benefits of meditation, so it’s important to make a connection with them during your presentations.

If your group is small and intimate, it’s fine to sit while giving the lecture; however, for larger groups, it’s generally better to stand. If you are standing, move around instead of staying rooted to one spot.

Make eye contact with your audience rather than gazing into space or spending the whole lecture looking at your notes or slide presentation. Making eye contact is easy when teaching a few people. With larger groups, focus on one person for a few seconds and then move to another, making sure you cover the entire group during the presentation.

There is almost always one person in a group who will smile and nod whenever you look at them. Come back to this person to any time you are feeling nervous or need a little reassurance.

Try not to turn your back on your audience, even if you’re writing on a board. Also focusing on staying engaged with your audience at all times during your presentations.

In general, it is better to avoid overt physical contact, such as hugging your students, unless they initiate it.

**Teaching Virtually**

Most of your teaching will be face to face with your students, and this should be your preferred way of teaching. However, if this isn’t possible, use whatever means you have available to offer the course. The Chopra Center’s Online *Primordial Sound Meditation* course has been very successful in reaching people who might otherwise have been unable to receive the teachings.

It is always preferable to have a visual connection using a service such as Skype or WhatsApp but if these aren’t available, the course can be taught via audio only, over the telephone.
If you are teaching virtually, it is still important to include all the material in the course. Schedule the session times with the student and make sure you are in a quiet location where you won’t be disturbed—and ask your student to do the same. The Personal Instruction should be offered exactly as if the student was with you in the same room.

**Advanced Students**

An important part of your teaching practice will be to offer ongoing group meditations, follow-up, and advanced classes. By now the students are familiar with you so it’s fine to be more relaxed, while still maintaining the respect already discussed. Offering informal Q&A and open discussion sessions will help your students to establish their meditation practice.

These meetings will always include a group meditation but can also focus on a particular topic of advanced knowledge or philosophy. Be careful not to step out of your depth. When you do your study and research, these meetings can greatly help you to expand your own knowledge, while also helping to keep your students engaged in their practice.

**Welcome the Unexpected**

If you are prepared, you will be able to handle any situation, question, or comment that might arise. Be open to the field of infinite possibilities!

When something unexpected happens, pause, take a breath, and decide on the best course of action. There’s no need to panic, for the answer will be there in your training. Everyone makes a mistake once in a while. Just try not to make too many and learn from them when they happen. If necessary, correct your mistake the next time you meet with your students.

**Feedback**

When you are just starting your teaching practice, it’s useful to receive feedback from your students. It’s not necessary to tell them that you are a new teacher but you could create a short survey asking questions such as “Were the presentations easy to understand?” “Were the visual aids useful?” “What did they most/least enjoy?” and “What was the most important thing they learned from the course?”

Put your ego aside, listen, and grow from their comments.
Gratitude

It’s a great privilege and honor to be able to share this ancient wisdom with the world. Be grateful to your students for trusting you as their teacher. Be grateful to all the great teachers who have gone before us in this magnificent lineage. Be grateful to your own soul for guiding your journey to this place in your life.

If you are always grateful, you will always be humble, and through humility and simplicity your life and teachings will always be blessed.

About the Author

Born in Liverpool, England, Roger Gabriel spent his formative years in the United Kingdom and first learned meditation there in the early 1970s. It instantly became his passion and he soon trained to be a meditation teacher under Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

After moving to the U.S., Roger began studying Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of health care. In 1985, while helping to establish centers for Ayurveda and meditation, he met and became friends with Deepak Chopra. Since then, Roger has assisted Deepak with numerous training programs, seminars, and workshops; taught thousands of people on all continents to meditate; and assisted in training hundreds of people to become teachers of meditation, Ayurveda, and yoga.

Roger has been blessed to meet and study with great teachers in India and the West, and he has traveled extensively in India. He incorporates much of what he has learned in his practices and teaching. In 2006, Roger received his spiritual name Raghavanand from Shree Satuwa Baba Maharaji of Varanasi, India.

As time permits, he involves himself with charity programs in India and takes like-minded seekers on tours to some of his favorite pilgrimage sites there. Roger currently serves as a member of the Chopra Center Certification’s Advisory Board and is a Chopra Center-certified Master Educator who teaches regularly at the Center’s workshops, seminars, and teacher training programs. When not traveling, he lives in Encinitas, California.