My Clean – Getting Started.

TO HELP YOU GET STARTED WITH My Clean

Here are some tips to help you be involved with My Clean (MC) and achieve satisfaction with your community. As you can read on the website www.mycleanindia.org, this initiative will change the way our communities connect, takes care of the environment and creates people who are confident and satisfied with life.

The key thrusts of My Clean are to support and promote what is good in our environment and then builds on that. It does so by:

- Acknowledging those making a contribution in the world (ie. certificates, awards, prizes for those making a difference). It is not about you.
- Encouraging people to keep their environment clean as an opportunity to practice enrolling others.

In other words, My Clean:

- Does not primarily look for problems to fix but looks for the good things as seeds and builds on that (Appreciative Inquiry); and
- Aims to empower the individual and to create change in a sustainable way (some might say, from the heart) which comes about being in action.

My Clean School

Creates students who can be described graphically as having one side of their hand with scholastic skills and the other with a way of confident being, so with both sides of the hand complete, feeling empowered.

As described in a separate document of My Clean School, it is for the students to feel proud of their education and the school that supported the spirit of My Clean. The spirit can be incorporated in most activities of the school curriculum without adding to the workload of teachers or distracting the students from scholastic needs.

My Clean School can be described as a concept that acknowledges and encourages. It promotes the empowerment of young people for them to feel proud of their schooling having created the opportunity to own the change.

Why My Clean?

My Clean acknowledges that cleanliness is just a symptom of society. A clean society is a prosperous one and so our motto therefore, is “Prosperity and Beauty through Community”.

My Clean is a concept and network to help everyone to make a contribution and feel satisfied by representing a:

- Bannerhead to support a range of community activities.
- Network to:
  - Share ideas and experiences and learn from each other.
  - Identify worthwhile projects.
  - Acknowledge people and organisations.

Under the My Clean banner, sponsors (ie. businesses and organisations) can:

- Use that banner to sponsor profile activities in the community.
- Support and sponsor broader opportunities for schools, groups and individuals otherwise unavailable to them.

My Clean creates:

- Successful models of action or outcomes to
**My Clean – Getting Started.**

- Empowered and satisfied people and groups.
- Cooperative communities and groups.

Acknowledging people and groups makes a difference and inspires others into action in the spirit of My Clean.

Always look for opportunities to acknowledge others. At schools begin by acknowledging them for making the time to listen to you given how busy and pressed for time society is. And in school situations you can share that you know how important education is, and for its staff how important it is to demonstrate good (academic) outcomes to the parents. Assure them that My Clean is not a distraction, but a complement to their academic studies and a way of thinking (such as Appreciative Inquiry as described in the My Clean School document).

You might consider sharing that like them you too are busy and have a family, a job and so many obligations, but you are there with an opportunity for them with a lifelong reward. You could say you woke up to the awareness that there are two sides to the hand of living life fully - with one side as their scholastic education, and the other being who they are in life as promoted by My Clean: two sides of the hand making a strong hand (and you could demonstrate that visually perhaps creating a fist). Whatever you say, consider talking about yourself as a fellow citizen with life experiences that encourages you to speak with them and that you are thrilled to experience them listening and responding.

At the conclusion of any presentation, acknowledge them.

My Clean as a forum to be seen to support those making a difference. Sponsors providing awards.

Businesses and organisations are always keen to be seen as good community citizens. My Clean presents as a neutral forum to raise their stature and of course, to promote the champions. Encourage people to identify potential sponsors and activities that could be sponsored and supported with prizes and awards. Sponsors help expand the network and build community spirit.

**Find Sponsors**

My Clean is like a ‘journey’ which is about:
- Creating leaders,
- Practicing acknowledgement, and
- Supporting the good things of society.

Like a journey, it can be life changing for everyone, including yourself.

You could say that My Clean is a journey where we are the passengers of a ‘train’ with ‘carriages’, ‘rails’ and a ‘destination’:
- The ‘carriages’ on the train are groups, or our communities of people with a leader (Facilitator) that you will discover during this journey. Each carriage is independent and can engage an ‘engine’ and find its own way to the My Clean ‘destination’.
- The train is travelling on ‘rails’ which represent the good or working parts of our society. This feature is what Appreciative Inquiry and Progressive Inquiry focuses on. As passengers, we go about acknowledging people, organisations and communities that are contributing to the good working features – ie. the ‘rails’.
- The ‘destination’ of our journey is where the communities are connected and with the passengers feeling satisfied with their life, career and relationships.

Successful schools promote students who are globally minded with leadership skills.

Successful schools are extending education beyond academic excellence into promoting life skills. For example, the Indus International School in Hyderabad, India declares the following as its aims....

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1 Appreciative Inquiry and Progressive Inquiry are separately described in the My Clean School document.
SCHOOLS DESIRE
MORE THAN
ACADEMIC
EXCELLENCE

- to accomplish more than mere academic excellence
- there is much more beyond the horizon of just studying
- to encourage, among other attributes—a socially caring person
- the education being provided must infuse a sense of community
- to nurture globally minded citizens who are thinkers, enquirers..............who care......
- to give your child the greatest gift of all—the ability to be a leader........

Many schools are already involved in working on environmental issues. What is missing sometimes are opportunities for students to see possible solutions and opportunities beyond insurmountable problems of impacted-pollution, disease, water shortages and stress that they feel are beyond them. *My Clean* creates awareness that they can make a difference and be rewarded in the process through building life skills.

**OUR AIM**

A model for taking responsibility and promoting empowerment.

*My Clean* is focussed on empowerment and uses the pathway of cleanliness which is the single most common and urgent problem for our beautiful planet Earth. It is also not just about cleanliness of the environment, but also cleanliness of our mind and our conduct in life as routes to empowerment.

Everyone can make a contribution to *My Clean* no matter how small and, by being in action, we contribute to a *Tipping Point* for our community—creating a permanent shift in community spirit.

At every opportunity we acknowledge people who are making a difference and helping our community reach its goal of a cleaner environment.

By our conduct we are creating a model and source of inspiration for others also to be in action.

By being in action and by taking responsibility for our world, we will feel satisfied and empowered. We will learn to step through issues and precepts where we have previously been stopped. Participation in *My Clean* can therefore be life changing.

**AN OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERYONE**

All can participate by being in action.

*My Clean* represents an opportunity for everyone to make a break with our past habits and our ways of thinking. We might tell ourselves that we are “too busy”, but in reality it might be that we once had a bad experience or event that we subconsciously hold as a reason for not being in action. So if we are stuck not being in action with *My Clean*, it is likely there are other areas in our lives where we are also stuck or resigned. By being in action, we can break the mould that we have created for ourselves and enjoy more fulfilling lives.

**WHY SHOULD THE STUDENTS LISTEN TO ME?**

Creating opportunities for action that they want.

In this highly competitive world, it is a challenge to enrol the teachers, the principals, and even the parents, never mind the students themselves. So be in their world, especially of the young people. Imagine how you would feel as one of them listening to you. Practice your talk and listen to yourself as a student might listen. This is a competitive world and they are inundated with (about) problems and what they *should* do. They are numb to calls to action with “should” words. Offer something interesting and relevant to their future.

So, for the students, try to be sensitive to the fact that they want good academic grades and be mindful of how under pressure they and the teachers are. Create a possibility for them to feel satisfied
and make it clear that My Clean is about empowerment that comes through being in action and especially in out-of-comfort initiatives including the practice of enrolment of others. My Clean presents many opportunities for practising life skills for the students to be satisfied with their schooling.

My Clean represents an opportunity to interact with the community and to practice enrolment such as with the shop merchants to sign an agreement to supply bins for their customers, or for the community to take care of a designated street or whatever makes a contribution to a cleaner place. Opportunities are everywhere and often so very close. Being in action can bring a general change in attitude and approach towards fellow students, the teachers and one’s family. My Clean in action can help people see beyond themselves and be rewarded in the process with lifelong valuable skills.

Encourage others to create a vision for their community

The students can be so inspired that they will ask the principal and the teacher to conduct activities that they identify (especially through the process of Progressive Inquiry). They should feel that the topics are to be owned by them and they might for example come from a previous essay competition or some source that they identify.

You may wish to create a forum to speak (or to write) about what they think of society, their environment and their role in it. Even writing about the future can stretch them into areas beyond simply regurgitating what they have been taught or conditioned to think. Initially they may be challenged, but the process of looking at what is working can make them more creative and in the end more employable and satisfied.

Give students the freedom to communicate in their way, without rules, be it by art, essays, by singing, or practiced enrolment, but always by being in action. Whatever you do, encourage them to be in action doing things that stretch them into initiatives especially if with a little personal discomfort. We are promoting breakthroughs and these don’t come without a little personal discomfort.

Ask questions

This is about enrolling (inspiring into action) people into the vision (of Prosperity and Beauty through Community) for your community be it a school, the town, a society or whoever you a talking with.

We have found that if you want to be effective, avoid making requests or push and cajole people however meritorious you feel the cause is. Signs that you are doing that are when words like, shall, should, must, and guilty words like your responsibility etc) are used or Asking questions can be very effective, so for example if you see that your icecream vendor doesn’t have a bin to dispose of your wrapper, consider asking him if he cares to join the movement, eg the My Clean School campaign. He will probably ask what it is about and you could then respond with this is a campaign to make xxxx a Prosperous and Beautiful place (with an emphasis on cleanliness). Who can resist not to say “yes” to you? So having gotten an affirmation, the next thing will be that you will get a how can I help? That then becomes your opening to say, what about providing a bin? This is just one example of how a question can inspire people into action by offering something that they want.

By the way, when you are being asked the inevitable question after a presentation of “How can we join you?” one response you could offer is “How can we join you?”. You can add that My Clean has the experience, connections and talents to help them achieve their goals.

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2 In 2009, My Clean India ran an essay competition called “What your (city/town/village) could look like in 2012 and what is necessary to make that happen?”
My Clean – Getting Started.

We are a resource to help them and we do that without judgement of them. It may be helpful to condition them that “No!” is just a word, without meaning.²

Being ‘yourself’ creates empathy and support.

Humility and passion enrolls people. Yes it is hard to be humble in this world of walking egos. It is hard to expose oneself especially to one’s juniors. It is difficult to declare how one is evolving in the process of promoting My Clean. But your humanity, experiences (including your disappointments and many setbacks that were overcome) and insights will be inspiring. Few people are prepared to stand vulnerable in front of an audience but those who do, will engage them. Reflect on what you can share with them and your insights gained.

It is hard to accept that it is not about you, but about them. For the students, the teachers, the people in general to own whatever they do. And by that...for you to be just the wind beneath their wings. For example, if you use the expression “I need to convince them” then you are not practising this and you are, sadly showing signs of doing this for yourself and not so much in touch with their needs.

People will remember how you made them feel more than what you said.

Your passion will speak. Your humility will speak and the stories of your breakthroughs and insights will inspire especially if in detail. (Remco said his life began to transform since jumping on a plane in 2007 not knowing a soul in India and saw students with passion in their eyes wanting to be in action but not knowing how. He woke up to feeling he was more than a chemical engineer but a citizen of the Earth who could make a difference.) We are clearing the path for empowered people not waiting for others to be in action and by that, to wake up from a conditioned torpor.

The passion of the Facilitator is a critical factor. The people involved with My Clean are passionate about the youth, the people and the environment. That passion is contagious and so if they are not responding, then first look at yourself.

Note that if the Head of the school is keen and supportive it is likely the teachers and students will also be more willing to get involved. So try and get the Head on your side first.

Obtain agreement for action and create milestones.

You have made a presentation about My Clean and they indicate support – what next? Once you have that commitment for action (eg a date for a clean-up), make sure you also create a timeframe to complete their commitment. In other words, don’t create open-ended commitments as they could lead to excuses for not having completed on time.

Encourages small steps in small areas which when on transforming (ie. become cleaner) remains the property of those promoting the change. They must own the change and that will promote sustainable change and pride in those making the change.

As group activities take time to organise each student could make a list of what an individual at school and at home could do such as save water, electricity, and handle litter. This could become a written oath.

Also create longer term commitments and visions with commitments and again, with milestones or agreed times. Use your discretion but always create milestones and have the next step agreed to even before the current step is completed. The My Clean School document has many examples of initiatives including the Clean Up the World day (or pick a cooler season date) or “Pick Up A Tonne” etc.,

² It might be useful to pair up students and to practice receiving a firm, (shouted) “no!” to condition them that it is just a word and not a reason to stop their initiative based on a less than supportive response from any group or individual.
My Clean – Getting Started.

**WHY DO THEY APPEAR DISINTERESTED?**

An audience that appears not interested is often a mirror on yourself (and not the subject) and becoming aware represents an opportunity to improve your style.

Have you experienced any of these as excuses offered to you for not being in action?

- It’s someone else’s business.
- It’s below my social status.
- I feel uncomfortable asking someone else (eg. to stop littering; to put out a bin; to help clean; inspire a community group etc.)
- I am too busy.

Well, these excuses could be that they did not sense your passion (see Your Passion).

My Clean is a refreshing way of thinking for stepping through where we felt uncomfortable or reluctant to act. My Clean is a journey for everyone. My Clean provides an opportunity for everyone (including you) and if that is not clear, then perhaps that may explain why you are not fully in action or feeling not fully satisfied with your day-to-day life. Outcomes and feelings about the My Clean initiative can be a private mirror on how you deal with your life. Being in action with My Clean, we can take the past out of our future and place it back where it belongs - in the past.

**SETBACKS**

Setbacks are actually opportunities for valuable breakthroughs and insights.

Of course there may be times when some people do not respond in a way that you might hope after having put in a lot of time and you feel disappointed. Ask yourself, could it be that enrolment was missing (ie. putting it coarsely, you haven’t created and shared a “what’s-in-it-for-them” possibility)? Is it that you simply haven’t created an opportunity that motivates them into action because they actually want to? Look at what you offer – make a distinction: is it simply just another call to action based on some moral cause, or are you offering an exciting opportunity for them? So don’t stop with a yawn as we learn by reflecting and that disappointing no response experience is an opportunity to refine your approach and grow from the experience.

**EXCUSES**

Commitments can overcome practices of the past.

Inevitably people will offer excuses why something has not happened by the time they agreed to (“I am busy” is common). While many excuses seem plausible and reasonable, invite them to take responsibility and at the very least, invite them to advise the project leader before the agreed time if they anticipate not being able to comply within their promised schedule. In that process of holding them accountable for their promise, they will begin to understand how we often create excuses and live our lives disempowered.

**FINGER POINTING**

Being in action creates inspiration for others.

You will inevitably encounter the discussion about others and the disappointment with the others. The fingers come out pointing to the institutions, government, the administration or simply an indifferent community. (Note when a finger is pointed, the others point back to the owner. It is amazing what can happen by being in action when all the others are pointing fingers). My Clean is an opportunity to be in action directly, to be model of inspiration and by that, to be satisfied with our achievement. Action contributes to community spirit.
**My Clean – Getting Started.**

**Being stuck is OK**

Sharing experiences of having been stuck and overcoming it inspires and motivates.

Being uncomfortable and stuck is where there are personal growth opportunities. Encourage those who are unable to be in action to come forward and share their feelings with others present. Perhaps you can share your own experiences of where you have been stuck in life and with breakthroughs and insights as an encouragement for others.

Again as a generalisation, be human and share your frailties and by example show how you overcame being stuck and especially where you now see how being stuck in one area was often repeated in other areas of life and career. Acknowledging being stuck is the first step in being more effective in life.

*My Clean* provides opportunities for breakthroughs.

**Leadership – it’s not about you!**

My Clean takes every opportunity to promote leadership skills.

As you might gather, *My Clean* is about creating the skills to be a leader. Not that everyone has it in them to be a leader of a large group, but all can feel more comfortable with themselves by engaging others – and that’s an art. To be an effective leader, we must understand that what we are doing is *not for ourselves*. As hard as it may be for you at first, find leaders to take on the project.

*They must feel it is their project, not yours.* For example, when they ask the inevitable, “*How can we join you?*” one possible response is a mirror: “*How can we join you; how can we help you achieve your dreams and ambitions to contribute to our environment and community*.”

Here is the reward for you – to discover what real leadership is. It is *not* about you but who you are being.

**Only on invitation no burden**

Again we are here on invitation and we simply create opportunities (*not* impositions)

My Clean creates empowering opportunities and we are not imposing or requesting additional effort. We only function if we are invited to participate.