

How to be a Peacebuilder

A model workshop according to the principles and methods of the practical guide on peace education and global learning

www.peace-learning.org

Introduction

The traditional definition of peace being merely the absence of war is losing ground. And rightly so! Peace is maybe less a state or goal than a process and a means in itself. Most people want peace, but the ways towards it are not so obvious. So let's try – first at an individual level – to find characteristics and competencies which would contribute to becoming a "peacebuilder" in daily life. In this sense the idea is to reflect on how each one of us can promote a process of peace at our personal level of choices and actions.

This interactive workshop invites participants to discover and discuss the "human factor" of peace. Stipulating that every individual can contribute to peace through his or her conscious lifestyle, it aims to identify characteristics, competencies, skills, capacities, attitudes and forms of behaviour useful to promote peace in our daily environment. It also aims to raise awareness about peace as a personal process rather than an abstract and distant goal, and that developing one's own competencies – and ultimately one's own personality – might be an equally important commitment and contribution to peace than starting a public campaign. In the meantime, peace can be understood in many different ways, and again hundreds of ways can help someone to get closer to what that very person defines as peace. In this sense, this workshop aims to encourage participants to find their personal definition of peace, to make them reflect on the competencies and attitudes necessary to contribute to this form of peace, and to provide inputs on how these competencies could be continually fostered and nourished. On the meta-level the workshop furthermore aims at raising awareness that personal development is an integrative and essential part of peace-learning.

Practical information

The present workshop is aimed at anyone interested in the issue of peace in its various forms and open to consider peace not only as an ideal goal but also as daily praxis (combining reflection and action). It can be facilitated for groups of 5 – 25 people and takes between 1 ½ and 3 hours (depending on the size of the group and on how many activities you choose to implement). If the participants are younger than 16 years old, the content would have to be adapted accordingly.



ACTIVITY 1

Definition of peace (15-25min)

After introducing the framework and the objectives (!) of the workshop as well as yourself, the workshop can start with an interactive reflection on the various definitions and aspects of peace. The peace quotes (annex A) and the motivation quotes (annex B), together with any regular post cards or pictures, are displayed on a table or on the floor. Every participant is invited to take one card that represents peace for him or her. Participants take turns in introducing themselves shortly (if the group doesn't know one another yet) and explain their vision of peace with the help of the quote or picture they have chosen. The objective is to discover as many different personal definitions of peace as possible.

Tips:

- > *Make several subgroups if you have a large number of participants, otherwise the activity takes too much time and becomes boring. The ideal size per group is 6-8 people.*
- > *Pay attention to participants' definition and inputs, and raise them in later parts of the workshop. The more you use their words and reflections, the more attentive and involved they will be until the end.*

Alternative or bonus activity: Famous peacebuilders of world history (30-45min)

Participants can be invited to brainstorm about big peacebuilders of world history like peace Nobel Prize winners Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Theresa, Rigoberta Menchu, Aung San Suu Kyi, Al Gore and many others. The objective is to highlight their specific characteristics and competencies and not to focus on their biography or specific political or social achievements. Participants could be given the choice to either impersonate the chosen peacebuilder through a short role play or mime, or then draw a picture of him or her – letting the other participants guess the person. After the presentation the concerned participant names one specific competence or characteristic of the peacebuilder that inspires him or her the most (like for example Gandhi's implementation of non-violence (ahimsa) or his extraordinary patience.

Tips:

- > *This activity can take a lot of time for bigger groups, so be careful with time management.*
- > *Make sure that the role plays, drawings and resulting discussions focus on characteristics and competencies, and not on "political milestones" or anything similar.*

ACTIVITY 2

What makes a peacebuilder? (25-40min)



In groups of 4-5 participants identify and discuss characteristics and competencies of an "ideal" peacebuilder. The different keywords and ideas are being noted on coloured cards (one idea per card). Participants can be inspired by people personally known to them or simply by what they could imagine to be a "perfect peacebuilder". Also, the term peacebuilder should be understood in its very large sense: it is not (only) about UN peacebuilding missions or a mediator between two conflicting parties, but about characteristics that help to promote and nourish peace and harmony in a family, among friends, in school, in a community or neighbourhood, and ultimately with oneself. The idea is that 1) peace can be enhanced even if there is no apparent conflict and that 2) everyone can contribute to foster peace around him or her.

After about 15 minutes of brainstorming, each group presents the identified points by sticking the cards on a wall, flip chart or board. The second and third groups to present can directly start to order/cluster the different points.

Tips:

> *Be clear about the large understanding of a peacebuilder from the very beginning.*

> *A personal example can be very helpful ("As an example, my grandmother has a lot of empathy and can listen to anyone for hours without getting impatient")*

Bonus activity: Peacemaker monument (10-15min)

After the brainstorming the whole group could be invited to invent a monument – made out of the participants themselves – that symbolizes a peacebuilder. During their performance a picture should be taken.

Tips:

> *This can be a funny group task ideal for teambuilding.*

> *The picture could be sent to the participants together with their own letter (see last bonus activity).*



ACTIVITY 3

Ten hypotheses (10-20min)

As a somehow “scientific” or objective input the facilitator can shortly introduce the Peace Counts Project (www.peace-counts.org) and present the ten characteristics and competencies of an ideal peacebuilder which are formulated as hypotheses in an article written by Michael Gleich (available on www.peace-learning.org). These points can be prepared beforehand on small cards and added on the flip chart to the points raised by the participants during the brainstorming in activity 2. A natural discussion on similarities, complementarities and differences between the various points can follow.

Tips:

- > *Directly relate the ten hypotheses with the points mentioned by the participants.*
- > *Offer the participants to send them the article by Michael Gleich by email.*

Alternative or bonus activity: Peacebuilder role play (30-45min)

After having compared their brainstorming with the ten hypotheses of the Peace Counts Project, participants could be invited to prepare several short role plays in small groups. The task would be to choose three specific competencies/characteristics from the collected list and so make a story out of it. The role play is then presented to the other groups, who have to guess the three competencies.

Tips:

- > *Creativity is highly welcome for this type of activity; encourage them to use their imagination.*
- > *Depending on the group (age, familiarity with the topic etc.) it could be better to choose only one competency.*

ACTIVITY 4

From the theoretical to the practical (15-25min)



So far the discussion was on an abstract level and outside the “daily reality” of the participants. The objective of this last part is therefore to move from the general level (what is an ideal peacebuilder?) to the personal level of the participants (how can I become a better peacebuilder?). This can be achieved through several specific questions to be discussed in small groups, which ideally should not exceed five people. The questions are thought to foster reflexion about one’s own priorities, as well as one’s own competencies, and the resulting coherence (or divergence). Then it continues into an inquiry into what can actually be trained, and how, where, with the help of whom etc. The idea is also that participants provide inputs to the others on what actions could be undertaken (ranging from reading books over joining a workcamp to doing yoga or a meditation retreat – the potential list is large).

Tips:

> Some of the questions are very personal and should therefore be voluntary to be answered. Some specific groups might need adapted questions.

> If people do not answer straight away, make them feel comfortable by offering more time, asking a similar but less personal question, answering yourself first etc.

Possible questions include:

- > Which competencies (2-3) do you consider the most essential ones?**
- > Which competencies are learnable, which aren't?**
- > In which competencies you consider yourself rather strong?**
- > In which competencies you consider yourself to be rather weak?**
- > In which competency would you like to train yourself?**
- > What would you need in order to carry out this intention?**
- > What concrete action can you undertake to train yourself in a chosen competency?**

Alternative or bonus activity: Position game (10-20min)

After discussing the quite personal questions about how to enhance our own potential as peacebuilders a position game could allow for a deeper discussion about some of the mentioned aspects. Two contradictory or opposite statements are displayed on two walls facing each other, creating two poles with a continuum between them. Participants have to position themselves physically in the space between the poles according to their personal opinion on the two statements. The facilitator then invites different participants to explain their reasons for their position. If somebody is convinced by a specific argument, he or she should physically change position and share his or her thoughts with the others. In an ideal case the participants take over the discussion themselves without intervention or further questions from the facilitator.

Tips:

> Statements to be used can be prepared beforehand, but taking up and adapting contradictory points from participants' opinions expressed during the brainstorming would yield the highest learning effect.

> In order to prevent that everyone stands in the middle, it is useful for some questions to add that they have to take sides, yet choosing their distance from the middle line.

Learning and teaching about peace is an objective undertaking based on rationality



Learning and teaching about peace is a subjective undertaking based on intuition

A peacebuilder is neutral



A peacebuilder stands with the victims

Peace needs science



Peace needs spirituality

Everyone is a peacebuilder



One needs to learn to become a peacebuilder

I am a peacebuilder



I am not a peacebuilder



ACTIVITY 5

Final discussion (15-20min)

At the end it is very useful to have an open discussion with the whole group in order to round up the workshop. Topics that came up only sporadically can be discussed in more depth; some important points can be summarized again; participants can express their impressions as well as their feedback and evaluation to the facilitator and so on. It is necessary to have a prepared plan or some guiding questions for the discussion, but it certainly needs to be adapted to what really happened during the workshop. The overall goal is to finalize and close the workshop; no participant should be left with the feeling that something is still open or unanswered.

Tips:

> *Be attentive during the whole workshop and write down important thoughts from participants which you could raise in the final discussion.*

> *For your own learning, prepare a specific evaluation method (handout with questions, target chart on a flip chart, little cards for short notes to the facilitator etc.) in order to get some constructive-critical feedback from the participants.*

Bonus activity: Letter to yourself (20-30min)

At the very end of the workshop you can invite each participant to write a letter to him- or herself. The idea is to let them express and keep a record of their feelings, emotions and intentions after the workshop, similar to writing a diary. As it is a very private matter, it should be a fully voluntary activity. Participants put the letter into an envelope which they directly address to themselves, and which can be sent to them some 2-3 months after the workshop.

Tips:

> *Writing a letter to yourself is especially interesting if the group has spent several days together and not just this workshop. If the participants have diverse linguistic backgrounds, precise that they can write in the language of their choice.*

> *Ask participants to leave the envelope open so you can add some pictures from the workshop or other activities the group has undertaken. Make sure though to underline that their letter won't be read by anyone!*

Principles of peace-learning



This workshop intends to be an applied example of peace-learning as suggested in the practical guide on peace education and global learning (available on www.peace-learning.org). It specifically focuses on the approach of self-development and highlights the importance of working on oneself in order to contribute to peace and global understanding.

The workshop gives specific attention to the principles of promoting a pro-active learning culture, seeking participation and ownership as well as assuring critical empowerment. It is mainly the participants who bring in knowledge and opinions, and their inputs fully shape the content of the workshop. Even though the topic is predetermined and most of its structure is decided by the facilitator, there is a lot of space for spontaneous contributions. Ownership could also be enhanced if participants can choose the specific activities to be implemented.

The principle of holism finds expression in the large variety of opinions concerning the overall question "what constitutes a peacebuilder". Participants are furthermore encouraged to have differing views and priorities, without judging the views of others.

The other principles – Raising awareness and seeking conscientization, fostering cooperation and reducing competition, putting values into practice – are respected throughout the workshop, but without being specifically highlighted.

For more information about peace-learning principles and peace-learning in general please consult the practical guide on peace education and global learning.

Material needed:

- > regular postcards
- > quote cards (annexes)
- > flip chart paper
- > colored cards and paper
- > markers and pens
- > tape (scotch)
- > Michael Gleich's article
- > envelopes (only for bonus activity)

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Annex A

<p><i>Peace is a human right, as well as a science, a technique and an art. To build it efficiently it shall be studied and practiced.</i></p> <p><i>(Christoph Barbey)</i></p>	<p><i>The opposite of peace isn't war, but indifference.</i></p> <p><i>(Yuri Haasz, paraphrasing Elie Wiesel)</i></p>
<p><i>Peace is the absence and opposition of physical, cultural and structural violence.</i></p> <p><i>(Adapted from Johan Galtung)</i></p>	<p><i>Peace begins in your mind. Only a peaceful mind can lead to peaceful speech, peaceful action and hence a peaceful world. The outer world is a mere reflection of our inner world.</i></p> <p><i>(following Buddhist teachings)</i></p>
<p><i>Peace is living in harmony with one-self, society and nature.</i></p> <p><i>(Pierre Weil)</i></p>	<p><i>Peace is any condition, state, or relationship that permits or promotes the spontaneous development of the human being; any state that fosters the development of human potential.</i></p> <p><i>("Richard Makepeace" – Internet Username)</i></p>
<p><i>Peace is a universal value, the raison d'être of the United Nations Organization and a prerequisite and consequence of the enjoyment of human rights by all.</i></p> <p><i>(From Luarca Declaration of the Human Right to Peace)</i></p>	<p><i>Peace is the ability to handle conflict with empathy, non-violence and creativity.</i></p> <p><i>(The TRANSCEND method)</i></p>
<p><i>Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek but a means by which we arrive at this goal.</i></p> <p><i>(Martin Luther King)</i></p>	<p><i>Peace is not something you wish for; it's something you make, something you do, something you are, and something you give away.</i></p> <p><i>(Robert Fulghum)</i></p>

Annex B

<p><i>To live is to choose. But to choose well, you must know who you are and what you stand for, where you want to go and why you want to get there.</i></p> <p><i>(Kofi Annan)</i></p>	<p><i>Imagine all the people living life in peace. You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will be as one.</i></p> <p><i>(John Lennon)</i></p>
<p><i>There are no passengers on Spaceship Earth, we are all crew!</i></p> <p><i>(Marshall McLuhan)</i></p>	<p><i>Tu me estas hablando de la revolución, pero yo quiero que me hables de tu revolución.</i></p> <p><i>(Sergento Garcia)</i></p>
<p><i>We will have peace on Earth when there is peace in our hearts.</i></p> <p><i>(Dalai Lama)</i></p>	<p><i>Be the change you want to see in the world</i></p> <p><i>(Mahatma Gandhi)</i></p>
<p><i>If you think you are too small to make a difference, try to sleep in a closed room with a mosquito.</i></p> <p><i>(African proverb)</i></p>	<p><i>Tell me and I will forget Teach me and I will remember Involve me and I will learn</i></p> <p><i>(Confucius)</i></p>
<p><i>It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness</i></p> <p><i>(Chinese Proverbe)</i></p>	<p><i>Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.</i></p> <p><i>(Mahatma Gandhi)</i></p>
<p><i>A man is but the products of his thoughts. What he thinks, he becomes.</i></p> <p><i>(Mahatma Gandhi)</i></p>	<p><i>The world is dangerous not because of those who do harm, but because of those who look at it without doing anything.</i></p> <p><i>(Albert Einstein)</i></p>