

PRACTICING PEACE: FOUR LEVELS OF PEACEMAKING

by

Joan Steffy, M.A. and Arne Collen, Ph.D.

Saybrook Institute
1772 Vallejo Street, San Francisco, CA 94123

Presented at

The First International Conference
on Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies

Suva, Fiji

January 1986

PRACTICING PEACE: FOUR LEVELS OF PEACEMAKING

ABSTRACT

In addition to the national level, peace involves conflict management on the intrapersonal, interpersonal, community and global levels. Practicing peace offers pragmatic and innovative tools for conflict resolution at each level. Examples of these tools serve to illustrate the range of techniques for peacemaking.

INTRODUCTION

The development of peace and the management of our global conflicts is far more than an arms agreement between superpowers. In addition to the national level, peacemaking involves a fundamental, whole-system change in our political, economic, and attitudinal systems. Attitudinally, peace development consists of people and cultures all over the globe participating in an individual yet evolutionary shift of consciousness. This essential shift will allow that our conflicts can be managed and resolved in socially positive and constructive ways rather than by building and stockpiling ever more deadly weapons.

Our positive participation in peace begins with work on an internal, individual basis in terms of the attitudes and belief systems by which we conduct ourselves in the world. From this intrapersonal level, the management of our conflicts moves to our interpersonal relationships with our families and colleagues, then to our communities and nations, and finally, our planet.

Through our work in the multi-dimensional field of conflict

resolution, we have developed a series of tools for managing tension on these various levels. Worthy of note is our learning that conflict is more realistically "managed" than "resolved," since the presence of tension is likely to be an ongoing aspect of the human condition. Thus, we have sought to develop a vital, action-oriented process and a series of techniques which we can employ again and again in conflict situations.

INTRAPERSONAL PRACTICE

There is a well-worn cliché among peace makers that we are either part of the solution or part of the problem. For many, becoming "part of the solution " means assuming the role of community activist, volunteering for a door-to-door campaign or signing a petition to freeze weapons. While these are valuable endeavors, all too often such activities become a tool to alleviate a guilty conscience or to avoid the examination and resolution of our personal tensions and conflicts. They become an escape from exploring those deeply held beliefs and attitudes which direct our actions in the world.

Practicing peace on the intrapersonal level means that we each take the time to explore our own internal attitudes and the habitual thoughts which guide our lives. We have found that the resolution of intrapersonal tensions is essential to the management of tensions in our lives, our homes and our nations. We see, for example, that our personal experience touches those around us when one individual in the office is having a "bad day" and we are all negatively effected. On the macro-level, can we

truly manage global conflict when we cannot manage our own personal tensions? Can we care for the planet when we cannot care for ourselves?

On the intra-personal level, then, a healthy self concept and personal awareness become the foundation for individual peace of mind. We can suggest that each individual conduct his or her own "peace survey" by asking oneself such questions as the following:

- * Do you see your life as a struggle wrought with problems, or as an adventure -- full of opportunities?
- * Do you exercise and eat properly?
- * Do you like yourself? Do you accept yourself as you are while also being able to work on and improve your weaknesses?
- * Do you take time for a walk in the countryside? To stop and smell the flowers?
- * To what degree are you doing what you "should" do instead of what you want to do?
- * To what extent is your present life style contributing to a constructive, cooperative amelioration of human suffering or to destructive estrangement and pollution on the planet?
- * What are your beliefs about war and peace? Do you believe that world peace is possible?

Our individual answers to these basic questions shape our thinking about and actions in the world. Modern psychological studies at research institutions conclude that we are experiencing a "contagion of reperception" in which as many as 50% of the adult population of the United States are espousing

values that are significantly different than those of the 1950's and early 1960's (Harman, 1984, p. 3) These studies conclude that what we believe and consciously or unconsciously affirm to be true is what we tend in subtle ways to bring about in our lives. Hence, one of the greatest impediments to the achievement of peace is the widely held negative belief that war is an inevitable aspect of "human nature" and that peace is not possible - at least not in OUR generation. Simply stated, individuals are beginning to perceive that since we do not believe we can have peace, we do not have it. Instead, our beliefs tend to reinforce projects like Star Wars and angry walk-outs from Geneva.

In this context, we are reminded of a recent study conducted by the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (Boston, 1984) which questioned American and Soviet children as to their attitudes toward nuclear war. To a dramatic degree, they found that American children believed that they, and their world, are doomed to nuclear destruction. The Soviet children, on the contrary, believed that "somehow" the United States and Soviet Union would find the path to peace and survival. Which attitude are you holding and passing on, perhaps unconsciously, to your children?

Although seemingly farfetched, such self-awareness forms the basis for peace development by easing s in our privately held, and critically important, attitudinal systems. We begin to weave the tapestry of a world at peace when we develop and affirm peace

in our own lives, by creating and maintaining a positive attitude premised on the belief that "Peace is Possible."

INTERPERSONAL PRACTICE

We are not alone. We must interact with others and practice peace in our relationships if we are to build a world beyond war. The challenge becomes: Can we practice what we preach. We want peace in the world, but do we have peace in our homes? Can we manage conflict and tension when it arises at work or with our loved ones? This day-to-day practice is trying for many of us, and requires patience as well as tools for conflict management.

We can offer several pragmatic tools with which to gain competence in peace by practicing it with our friends, colleagues and loved ones. In each relationship, we can instigate and apply "win/win" principles to conflict resolution and management. The following ideas can serve as guidelines for the implementation and practice of peace with others in our lives:

1. Practice positive reinforcement instead of negative. Give compliments and support for the positive actions of others rather than only criticizing what is wrong.
2. Learn to say the good to someone before stating the bad. You will find the other person is usually more able and receptive to listening when he or she feels less attacked.
3. Be willing to drop insignificant issues in order to deal with deeper and more important problems. (We are reminded of the Vietnam conference in Paris which never began because the representatives would not agree on the shape of the

- table! After several weeks, a round table was agreed upon.)
4. Practice the skills of effective listening . Listen intently as the other person is speaking rather than building your own defense. Prior to stating your argument, restate what the other person has said in order to be certain that you are both talking about the same issue.
 5. Practice skills of win/win in managing tensions. Take responsibility for some aspect of your own negative behavior in the situation, and agree that, "Yes, I was a little stubborn" or "Yes, you're right, I did ..."
 6. Be willing to compromise. It is far more important to have cooperative relationships than it is to be right.

The Dance of Resolution

In applying these concepts to interpersonal peace practices, we have created a game we call "The Dance of Resolution." It occurs when two people are willing to share responsibility for an issue or point of tension which comes between them.

Dancing with a partner requires that both people move at least one step. A dance stops when one person is no longer willing to move. Thus, the dance of resolution requires the movement of at least two people. It cannot occur unless the dancers want to resolve the issue and are willing to participate in the dance.

There are three key elements in the dance. They are: 1) a willingness to listen; 2) a desire to understand; and 3) the capacity to take responsibility for your own actions, past,

present, and future. To fully exemplify the techniques of this game of conflict resolution, we offer you the "Dance" in the present, as though you are participating in it now. Take a moment to recall someone with whom you have a conflict or some tension and imagine you are moving with us through your interpersonal issue.

Before beginning to dance, find your dance floor, or neutral territory: Narrow the issue and focus on a specific incident, event or occasion. This may be a source of marital discord, a disagreement with your employer, or a dispute with a neighbor or relative. We have found that sweeping generalizations and large scale patterns of behavior are much too large of a dance floor! You may not agree on the reasons WHY the difference occurred, but you must find an occasion that you both agree was a problematic stalemate, for whatever reasons.

The choreography of the dance will become more clear as we proceed, but some parameters can be presented in brief:

1. Take turns
2. Don't interrupt
3. Start sentences with "I", not "You"
4. Don't stop dancing until you BOTH feel better
5. Be willing to take honest responsibility for yourself without blaming the other for everything.
6. Instead of saying "but", say "and"
7. Don't answer a question with a question.
8. Whenever possible, find the humor in the situation. Laugh.

The steps of the dance are as follows:

Step One. Person A begins by stating their perception of the problem situation. Sentences must begin with "I" and not "you." "This is how I saw, heard, or felt it..." This reduces the blame factor - that is, one person verbally "pointing a

finger" at the other, which leads to defensiveness. For example, "I felt hurt when you" is easier to hear than, "YOU really hurt me when you..."

This is one facet of being willing to take responsibility for our actions: I was hurt, not YOU hurting this helpless victim. When we are accused of something negative, our natural tendency is to defend ourselves and to make ourselves right rather than to admit that we have done something wrong.

During the first step, Person B is simply to listen, without interrupting. This will be easier when you're not being accused, so you need not be building your defense while the other person is talking. Just listen openly. Often, when we're trying to resolve a difference, we hear one phrase that triggers us, and we start mentally building our defense. Then we stop listening, our feet stop moving toward resolution, and we are back at the beginning with, "Yeah, well YOU said..."

If, as Person B, you find yourself feeling cramped or caged by the hostility that your partner is venting -- Take a breath. Take another deep breath if you need to, and KEEP BREATHING. Listen to every word your partner is saying, and try to empathize with their feelings. "Gee, she was really hurt," or "Humm, I guess he felt pretty battered." We have found that this is easier as the initial rush of negative feelings is released.

Let the speaker say everything they need to - you will find that there is a natural stopping place, since most of us can't rant and rave for hours simply because we run out of steam. If

this becomes a problem, set a time limit on your turns - five minutes or 15.

To conclude this first dance step, Person B now restates what Person A has said to you. Retell the story briefly as though you were Person A, without comment or judgement of your own. This will let Person A know that he/she has been truly listened to and that you have heard what they have to say. (This is harder than it sounds!)

Step Two. The listener now becomes the speaker. It is Person B's turn to say how YOU felt during the event. Do NOT try to respond to what you have just heard. Simply return to the beginning and take your turn: "This is how I saw, heard, or perceived it..." Reverse the process we have just explained, being sure that Person A repeats what Person B has said as in the final segment of Step One above.

Step Three. Person A can now respond. Based on what you have just heard of Person B's experience of the incident, tell Person B how you feel about what has just been said. This step in sharing is founded in the oft-ignored emotional plane, so attempt to keep to those areas of our human experience. Use words that refer to the emotional rather than the intellectual realm, and stay with the original rules by beginning sentences with 'I' rather than 'you'. "I felt sad when you said I was ugly." When Person A is finished responding, Person B can do the same.

Continue in this two-step until you are operating in the

moment, that is, until you are no longer saying how you felt during the previous event, but how you are feeling NOW, during THIS conversation. You will be speaking in the present tense, and the same rules apply, "I feel angry when you say that."

We have learned that in many cases the game ends here, simply because often we have misunderstood the perceptions and feelings of our partners. We frequently hear, "I feel good now, since I didn't know how YOU were feeling then! I understand." If this is not the case, we continue with Step Four.

Step Four. Person A now takes responsibility for SOME aspect of his/her untoward behavior during the incident. You must be able to find SOME part of the event for which you were responsible, since it took two of you for it to happen in the first place -- we're not living in a solitary vacuum!

Now is the time to do your soul searching. This step is critical to the dance, and now is the time to move. The dance stops unless both partners are willing to honestly acknowledge responsibility for some aspect of the difference.

This means, give something. "Yeah, I guess I was a little stubborn," or "Yes, I guess I did ... like you said". None of us wants to feel wrong or defeated, and in order to avoid feeling that way, we must all be willing to concede something to our partner. So find something in what your partner has said about you with which you can agree. Even if you feel your partner is wrong and does not see the situation clearly, be willing to look honestly at yourself, and take responsibility for the fact that

something has triggered your partner into an unhappy state. Probably you had something to do with it.

The Dance of Resolution is a win/win design rather than one person winning and the other losing. In order for both partners to win, both have to gain something; hence, both have to give something. That something is often the simple knowledge that the other person had some responsibility for the incident and KNOWS they had responsibility.

Thus, at this phase of the dance, our small inner thoughts may sound like, "Well, I may have been nasty and unreasonable yesterday, but HE was stubborn, and he knows it!" Or, "I may have been stubborn, but SHE was nasty, and she even SAID so!" These feelings of mutual gain are a means for keeping us from harboring a grudge that says, "I'm not understood; she/he never listens to me; he/she is always wrong."

When Person A has thought of and said everything with which she/he can possibly agree and take responsibility, in Person B's perception, then change roles. You may find that your difficulty is reconciled, but even so, we like to move into Step Five of the dance, since we find the next phase to be particularly elucidating and fun.

Step Five. You have both now heard and reasonably accepted some part of the other's perception of the event. Now is the time to be humorous and UNreasonable! Person A can begin by making demands on Person B and continue making demands until the steam runs out. Or, you may want to take turns after each demand or two. Be utterly UNreasonable. "I demand you do everything I

say exactly as I say it!" "I demand you never contradict me again!" "I demand you fix me breakfast in bed every morning!"

Let your imagination run wild, and you will soon find yourselves laughing. We have found that the laughter is virtually inevitable. The partners have released their negative feelings, and have gained a deeper understanding of each other, making the letting go of tension in the form of laughter quite natural. As we hear each other making grossly unreasonable demands backed by wildly stupid expectations, we can't help but laugh and learn about ourselves.

In this learning, we become more relaxed and comfortable, and begin to see our differences as less important than our experience of sharing and enjoying each other. We allow more opportunity to recognize and appreciate our assets and our contributions to the lives of others.

Step Six. This final step has been important in our effort to create a process which will allow for the management of conflict on an ongoing basis. At the end of the dance, the partners can take a few minutes to ask what can be done should a similar situation arise again in the future. Ask yourselves questions like: How will we react or behave differently? What do we know about each other now that we didn't know before? What will we be able to give each other the next time that we didn't give this time?

We have seen this final step in the game lead to deeply informative conversations in that positive actions or ideas often surface which will help in future tension situations. It is

important to remember that being "Right" isn't as useful or as much fun as being clear of frustration and in a happy, cooperative relationship. To that end, we recommend rewarding yourselves for a dance well done. Take Step Seven: Celebrate. Do some activity together which reaffirms the meaning and importance of your relationship.

In our work we have found that as we begin to use these tools of interpersonal conflict resolution, we gain competency in the practice of peace in our lives. As we practice the techniques, there is a natural shift in attitudes toward more positive, cooperative relationships. In order to create a world at peace that supports the harmonious evolution of life, we must learn to practice peacemaking in our relationships.

COMMUNITY / NATIONAL PRACTICE

As individuals begin the personal process of moving toward peace, each will find his/her unique interest and make a contribution to peace, whether that contribution means participating in a demonstration at a missile base, a monetary donation, volunteering to work in a local peace group, signing a petition, or taking a position of leadership in a community or national organization.

In defining various levels of peacemaking, we find that a community is defined by its common interests. Thus, the concept of practicing peace in a community can be a small interest group or a large institution or organization which crosses geographical boundaries to include the nation. Our

techniques for community practice, then, are equally applicable to local, state or national organizations.

In recent years, it has been these levels of community and national activity which have been most touted in the world press. From peace marches across Europe to nuclear freeze initiatives, we see people involved in their community and empowering themselves to act on their beliefs in creating a positive future.

The phrase, "thinking globally, acting locally" has been coined to highlight the importance of community action which exemplifies and models possibilities for global cooperation. For some people, their contribution may be forming a group to pursue a particular interest, project or action. The possible activities for group action are endless - limited only by our imaginations! We offer here a sample of the diverse activities which are being undertaken by peace groups in our own San Francisco Bay Area, as well as the techniques we have found successful for community peace practices.

While the forms for local action vary widely, peace workers frequently recommend establishing peace support groups which meet on a weekly or monthly basis to assist individuals in gaining knowledge and competence in peace development. Such groups can meet in living rooms, churches, or schools to discuss issues, invite speakers, present slide shows, or show films. Well-informed members can then begin to speak at schools, churches, or community centers in order to bring information to the community at large.

We have seen that community efforts are most effective when

focused on a specific issue such as a nuclear freeze, media coverage, or writing a peace curriculum for schools. By gaining expertise in a particular area, the groups can then branch out to become facilitators for local community groups that are interested in becoming better informed about the nuclear situation and the peace movement in general.

Community groups can offer workshops concerned with peace, nonviolence, and direct action training, nuclear information, personal awareness, and psychological support. Speakers and workshop leaders are lecturing and facilitating workshops for people of all ages, discovering the issues which are key to the audience. The workshops are largely educational and informative in nature and many provide guidance and follow-up for the participants. Resource lists, leaflets, and flyers are usually provided by the workshop coordinators.

In the workshops, individuals are encouraged to become involved in working for peace in a variety of ways, including volunteer work with their preferred organization, voter registration, and organizing additional neighborhood, school, or community groups for disseminating information. Cinema and video presentations are also provided by various peace groups, as well as longer seminars geared to leadership development, management, and personal and psychological support, as well as information and education (Steffy, 1985, p. 4).

Numerous community groups concentrate their influence on seeking radio, television, and newspaper coverage in an attempt to affect public opinion. Their activities range from direct

action sit-ins at nuclear plants designed to attract national media coverage, to writing articles for publication. One unusual effort to practice peace on the community level includes a humorous stage production, a nuclear comedy, entitled "The Fran and Charlie Show".

Yet another focus for community peace action is to support the broader peace movement through fundraising activities. Non-profit foundations have been explicitly created to encourage donors to contribute to peace-oriented programs, and screen potential projects for prospective funders. Other groups provide consultation in fund-raising, and assist in arranging benefits, dances, dinners, media presentations, and publicity campaigns for peace groups.

In San Francisco, approximately one-third to one-half of the local peace groups publish a newsletter, pamphlet, or brochure for public dissemination and education. Several organizations share newsletters and costs, or publish resource lists, slide shows, magazines, cassette tapes, or video programs. Most of the groups also offer buttons, bumperstickers, posters, or tee-shirts, while fewer provide artwork, banners, books, flags, poetry, songbooks, or theatrical scripts (The Disarmament Directory, 1984).

A final aspect of community peacemaking concerns the business community. In San Francisco, many businesses which are ideologically affiliated with the movement contribute in-kind services to groups that are participating directly in the

movement for peace. Such services available to the movement include reduced rates on audio-visual production, media consultation, design, photography, printing, and writing.

Community action for peace development has a broad spectrum of application, from tree planting campaigns to sit-ins at local nuclear plants which are harming the quality of life in a community through air and water pollution. Still other individuals and groups concerned with the practice of peace are working on another level of peacemaking, the planetary practice.

GLOBAL PRACTICE

Since humankind first saw the picture of the azure Earth from space, our sights have shifted. The global community is realizing its unity as individuals begin to practice peace on a global scale. Throughout the world, citizens are actively involving themselves in the emerging global paradigm, and taking responsibility for designing their own positive future.

Prior to his death, Buckminster Fuller often spoke of the need for "Design Science" in our society. Rather than continuing our present analytical approach to "what is" or "what was", he urged us to design "what can be". Design Science for a positive future applies not only to macro-design, such as his idea to rid ourselves immediately of nuclear weapons by launching them into space, but to the micro-designs of our personal and community lives.

This concept of designing "what can be" in our future was dramatically portrayed in the Summer of 1985 by the "Live Aid"

concerts which urged global participation in the African hunger crisis. Over one and a half billion people were touched by these broadcasts, and millions of dollars were raised to assist Africans. Michael Mitchell, one of the prime coordinators of the planetary event commented, "We didn't know what 'couldn't be done', so we DID IT!"

In addition to rock and roll musicians, ordinary citizens throughout the world are also "doing it": practicing peace on a global scale. One broad rubric which defines the practice of peace on a global scale has been termed "citizen diplomacy." Thousands of citizens, young and old, have begun to participate in the myriad of programs which serve to empower people to design their common future.

Again focusing on the San Francisco efforts with which we are most familiar, we have selected three exemplary organizations which have been successful in practicing peace at the global level. Because of the obvious tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, many of the practical efforts by citizens have focused on that area of concern.

Creative Initiative

This organization is composed primarily of middle income families who have dedicated themselves to creating a world "Beyond War." Originally based in Palo Alto, California, many members have begun moving to other localities in order to begin activating the global vision of "what can be."

Like other groups, Creative Initiative conducts workshops

for the purpose of education and information. Over 3,000 San Francisco women recently attended a three-day symposium entitled "Beyond War" sponsored by the organization, while over 20,000 individuals throughout the country have participated in their seminars and evening gatherings on the same topic (Rathbun, 1894). On the famed "Sunset Strip" in Los Angeles, you will find their immense billboard asking simply, "Can we create a world beyond war?"

In 1984 the organization sponsored a live, two-way satellite broadcast between in the Soviet Union and the United States. In it, two physicians, Dr. Yevgeny Chazov and Dr. Bernard Lown were honored by the satellite broadcast as two individuals who had contributed significantly to the peace movement through their work with the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. The one-hour documentary of the film was aired on American television in September 1985. Most recently, the world honored these men, and more subtly the work of Creative Initiative, by awarding them the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize.

The US-USSR Youth Exchange Program

Founded in January 1984 by two San Francisco women, the Youth Exchange Program responds to the need for communication between young people who are caught in the nightmares of nuclear warfare between their countries. In their first endeavor, the program established relationships with Soviet schools which enabled them to initiate an ongoing pen pal exchange between Soviet and American school children.

In their growing citizen diplomacy efforts for young people, the program led 10 Soviet and 10 American teenagers on a three week wilderness trek in the Caucasus Mountains of Soviet Georgia in July 1985. There, the teens climbed Europe's highest mountain together, and triumphantly planted their nation's flags side-by-side at the top. The inspirational trek was videotaped and in November, 1985 was broadcast as a special one hour documentary on American television. In 1986, the program will be shown on television throughout the world.*

The Peace Quilt Project

The broad spectrum of ways to practice peace on the global level is evinced by the The San Francisco Peace Quilt Project, which included over a hundred citizens sewing on a quilt for peace that was displayed throughout the city and later delivered to Leningrad by a group of eleven San Franciscans. Funds were raised on a dollar-by-dollar basis through poster sales, bake sales, and fundraising events.**

Academicians Practicing Peace

In thinking specifically of academicians such as those of us who are attending this conference, we recall a precedent for our own practice of peace in the successful campaign which halted nuclear testing from 1958 to 1961. In 1957 Dr. Linus Pauling

* US-USSR Youth Exchange Program. 3103 Washington Street, San Francisco, CA 94115.

** The Peace Quilt Project. 1772 Vallejo Street, San Francisco, CA 94123.

conducted a landmark study investigating the permanent fallout due to nuclear testing and birth defects occurring in relation to the radiation. The study resulted in a petition calling for the cessation of nuclear testing which was signed by 9,000 scientists and academicians (Bloom, 1984).

Following its presentation to the Secretary General of the United Nations in 1958, the UN passed a resolution calling for such a cessation. The Soviet Union agreed and proceeded to announce a unilateral cessation of weapons testing, and the United States followed suit. The resulting three years without nuclear testing attests to the powerful capacity of academicians to investigate an issue, inform and raise public awareness, and to successfully initiate positive activity on a worldwide scale.

CONCLUSION

These are but a minute portion of the activities being conducted by individuals and groups who are practicing peace on multiple levels. Beginning with the reconciliation of our intrapersonal tensions, the practice of peace grows into an integral part of our interpersonal relationships, and can lead to community involvement. In addition, initiatives and actions of individuals who are committed to the practice of peace can have global consequences.

We believe peacemaking begins within the individual. It starts at home and spreads to others through our individual efforts to promote it. As individuals we can make an impact on a

group, and as a group we can broaden our spheres of influence. Each level appears prerequisite and inclusive in increasingly more collective efforts to make peacemaking paramount and enduring.

The practice of peace involves us all, and the possibilities for participation abound. Henry Ford noted that there are people who believe their life is worthless and insignificant, and there are people who believe that they CAN make a difference in the world and can contribute to change. "Do you know what?" he concluded, "They're BOTH right!" We hope that each of us truly makes a difference through our practice of peacemaking.

REFERENCES

- Bloom, Saul. (Director, Disarmament Resource Center, San Francisco). Personal communication, December, 1984.
- The Disarmament Directory, A Guide to the Movement Against Nuclear Weapons and War in Central and Northern California. Santa Cruz: Harbinger Communications, 1984.
- Harman, Willis. The President's Letter. Sausalito, CA: The Institute of Noetic Sciences. October, 1984.
- Rathbun, Carolyn. (Creative Initiative) Personal Communication, November, 1984.
- Steffy, Joan. The San Francisco Peace Movement: A Survey. New York: Professors World Peace Academy, 1985.
- What Soviet Children are Saying about Nuclear War. A joint project of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War and the Harvard Medical School, Department of Psychiatry, Nuclear Psychology Program. Boston: 1984.