

CHAPTER 2

Peace

Pace is intent, process, and outcome. The intention of Peace is the commitment to chosen values and actions that consistently bring about harmony, trust, and constructive solutions to differences and disagreements. The process of Peace is what you do together. The outcome of Peace is the actual experience of harmony, trust, and constructive solutions to problems.

The kind of Peace that this book is about requires conscious awareness of what happens in a group and in a community. Peace requires that you know what you do as an individual when you interact with others. Peace requires that your chosen values guide your actions. Peace is the means and the end, the process and the product.

The acronym that follows defines the idea of Peace. Each letter of the word PEACE represents a commitment that guides the ways individuals can choose to relate to one another within the context of a group.

P Praxis

E Empowerment

A Awareness

C Cooperation

E Evolvement

PRAXIS

Praxis is thoughtful reflection and action that occur in synchrony, in the direction of transforming the world¹. Most people have limited understanding of praxis because we live in a time when “knowing” and “doing” are rarely the same. In western cultures, the message “Do as I say, not as I do” is all too familiar. When you choose to convey the message that “I know what I do, and I do what I know,” you begin to live your values.

Praxis is values made visible through deliberate action. Your actions, chosen to reflect values of Peace and Power, become an ongoing cycle of constant renewal. As your actions are informed by your

¹ Charlene Eldridge and I adapted this definition of praxis from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire (New York: The Seabury Press, 1970), p. 36. Our adapted definition emphasizes the synchronicity of thought and action.

awareness of values, your thinking and your ideas are shaped and changed by your experiences with those actions.

EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is growth of personal strength, power, and ability to enact one's own will and love for self in the context of love and respect for others. Empowerment is not self-indulgence, but rather a form of strength that comes from real solidarity with and among those who seek Peace. Empowerment grows not from an individual quest for personal strength and influence, but from active engagement with others whose values you share. Empowerment requires listening inwardly to your own senses as well as listening intently and actively to others, consciously taking in and forming strength. Empowerment is not power over other people, other creatures, or the earth. In fact, empowerment is only possible when individuals express respect and reverence for all other forms of life and ground the energy of the Self as one with others and with the earth.

AWARENESS

Awareness is an active, growing knowledge of Self and others and the world in which you live. This means tuning into the moment and valuing your own experience. This kind of awareness sees beyond the present to integrate the past and the future. This is a vital transformation in a society that treats the knowing and experience of minority and marginalized groups—and of women—as abnormal or nonexistent. With awareness comes a consciousness of double-speak, where what is defined as normal is really abnormal and what is defined as peace is really war.

COOPERATION

Cooperation is an active commitment to group solidarity and group integrity. A group's commitment to cooperation grows out of mutually defined values, where each individual's viewpoint and abilities are honored equally. It means moving away from any action that exerts power over other individuals or groups. Rather, cooperation means encouraging everyone to use their abilities, ideas, and energy to join in creating a coordinated, cohesive whole. As individuals excel in a skill or ability, their achievements are celebrated by all and shared with others according to need and ability².

EVOLVEMENT

Evolvment is a commitment to growth where change and transformation are conscious and deliberate. Evolvment can be likened to the cycles of the moon where new and old, life and

² For a fun look at how to teach children and those who are children at heart the ways of cooperation, read *Everyone Wins! Cooperative Games and Activities*, by S. Luvmour and J. Luvmour (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 2007).

death, and all phases are ultimately one. What remains constant is the cycle itself. As you experience group processes based on PEACE, you are changed. A group changes as circumstances shift, as individuals move in and out or become more or less involved, and as purposes or activities change. Growth and transformations are valued and celebrated with each new cycle. You create your realities as you live them. There can be no mistakes, no disasters -- only opportunities for re-creation.

Peace Is Not . . .

PEACE, when you embrace Peace and Power processes, is very different from typical ways we have learned to “keep the peace.” It is important to recognize and move away from the old ways that actually create dis-ease and distrust. Peace is not:

- Letting things slide for the sake of friendship
- Doing whatever is required to keep on good terms
- Criticizing people behind their backs
- Being silent at a meeting only to rant and rave afterward
- Letting things drift if they do not affect you personally
- Playing it safe in order to avoid confrontation
- Manipulating someone to avoid open conflict
- Coercing someone to do what you want
- Hearing distortions of truth without refuting them
- Indulging another’s behavior when the behavior is destructive
- Withholding information to protect someone else

Having Good Intentions Is Not Enough

Having the intent of PEACE is critical when you enter a group interaction; however, intent is not enough. Actions that flow from intent are essential. Examine how fully your actions flow with your intent by asking questions like these:

- Do I know what I do, and do I do what I know? (Praxis)
- Am I expressing my own will in the context of love and respect for others? (Empowerment)
- Am I fully aware of others and myself, and do I bring these awarenesses to our discussions? (Awareness)
- Do I honor and encourage everyone’s opinions, skills, and contributions? (Cooperation)
- Do I welcome practices that encourage growth and change for others, the group, and myself? (Evolvement)