

Every Youth Should Know Peace and Conflict:

Building Capacity for Peace

EVERY YOUTH SHOULD KNOW PEACE AND CONFLICT:
Building Capacity for Peace by Uduak-Abasi Akpabio

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1

Peace

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Let us look at some definitions of peace

- Common definitions: a state of harmony, the absence of war, a quiet state, a state of friendship and harmony without violence¹.

This definition captures peace as a state. Either a state where there is no violence or a state where there is harmony.

¹ Wikipedia, (2021). Definition of Peace; Scribbr;
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace>

Activity

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- Definitions from renowned peace scholars and institutes:
 - Johan Galtung: According to him, there are two types of peace - ***positive peace*** and **negative peace**.

Positive peace is when all the elements for harmony or harmonious co-existence are in place. It could be simple elements such as the availability of food, access to education, security, respect for human rights etc.; or other elements such as mutual respect in friendships.

Negative peace is when there are no fights, but the elements for harmony are absent.

Activity

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- The Kroc International Institute of Peace Studies: ‘Peace is not just the absence of war (negative peace), but also the presence of the conditions for a just and sustainable society such as access to food and clean water, education for women and children, security from physical harm and other inviolable rights.’

- Other definitions: Albert Einstein defined peace as not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice, of law, of order².
- Martin Luther King: True peace is not merely the absence of tension: It is the presence of justice³.

With these definitions, we can see that peace is more than just the absence of war, it also involves the presence of certain conditions for an equitable group or society.

In the first part of this section, we noted that peace has to do with how a person interacts, how we organize ourselves and our activities and how we handle conflict. Hence, peace is not just an end, but also a capacity.

Let us look at a definition of peace that captures peace as both a state and a capacity.

- Author's definition: **'The capacity to interact, govern and handle conflicts, positively and creatively for meaningful co-existence and growth'.**

² Vesilind, A. P. (2005). Peace Engineering: When Personal Values and Engineering Careers Converge. Lakeshore Press.

³ Coretta S. K., (2008). The Words of Martin Luther King, Jr., Newmarket Press, p. 83.

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Elements of Peace

We can see in this definition that peace as a capacity has three elements:

1. WHAT: the capacity to engage in interaction, governance and address conflicts
2. HOW: do it positively and creatively
3. WHY: for meaningful co-existence and growth

Let us take a look at the three elements

1. WHAT? Capacity to engage in Interaction, governance and conflicts.
 - Interaction: It means to communicate; to relate; to have an effect on something or someone, or to be involved with something or someone. We can interact with people, with animals, with objects or with our environment. It could be socially with family or playing with friends, it could be economic, when we are buying something, it could be spiritual when we meditate or pray, it could be with the environment regarding how we

dispose of litter and so on. Interaction takes on many forms.

In life, we are relating to one thing or the other, in one way or another. Since interaction is part of life, how we interact is an important element of peace.

- **Governance:** Governance is how we oversee and organize things and people. It may be to oversee or organize a project, a game, a country, a class, a group, an environment or a family.

If there is more than one person or element involved, then, some level of organizing is required. It could be formal or informal. So, the way we approach and engage in governance is a very important element of peace.

- **Conflicts:** As we go further in the book we will see that conflicts happen in the course of interaction. Whether a conflict becomes a fight depends on how we handle it. Being able to handle conflict is an important part of peace.

2. **HOW?** The second element is how we interact, organize and address conflicts. For it to comply with the definition of peace, it should be done positively and creatively

- **Positively:** doing something positively means that it is done in a way that is constructive, practical, useful, productive, helpful, and/or worthwhile.

- **Creatively:** Robert E. Franken gives us a very good definition of creativity. Franken defines creativity as ‘the capacity to generate ideas, alternatives or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining ourselves and others’⁴. Creativity implies that we are open to options and willing to think and look outside the box. In the process of interacting, governance of addressing conflicts, we may encounter challenges, even while engaging in positive means. At this point, applying creativity should help overcome the challenges.

So, how interactions, governance and conflicts are done is very important. In the context of peace, these should be done **positively** and **creatively**.

3. **WHY?** For meaningful co-existence and growth: In the context of peace, it is not just enough to interact, organize and handle conflicts well, it should be done in a way that encourages meaningful co-existence and growth.

- **Meaningful co-existence:** For example, let us take a look at the fingers. We have different sizes of fingers but they meaningfully coexist together to deliver tasks. At times like in the case of clapping they need to physically come together. In some cases, like holding a pen to write, they may have no obvious contact with each other,

⁴ Franken R. (2020). Concept and perception of Human Motivation, 3rd ed, NPPC press

but they work together to hold the pen and deliver the writing task.

Meaningful coexistence might translate to friendship, attachments or close relations, but this is not always the case. In some situations, it may only require courteous relations. This means that you may not be friends, but you can work together where needed.

- **Growth** is one of the characteristics of any living thing. Growth refers to the stage or process of increasing, developing or expanding. It could be in size, weight, power, value, importance, character etc. It could happen in an individual, organization, industry or idea. When something is not growing, it can become stagnant or deformed.

In any entity, be it a family, organization, community, country or classroom, it is important to assess if our engagements with other entities are peaceful. In our interactions, in governance, in conflict, ask the question: is my action or choice positive? If you are finding it difficult ask yourself am I being creative? Then ask, will it facilitate meaningful co-existence and growth? If the answer is no, then it is not peace.

Equally, even if your actions and interactions, are done positively and creatively, if it does not facilitate meaningful co-existence and growth, it can at best be a negative peace. For our interaction and actions to qualify as peaceful, they should encourage meaningful co-existence and growth.

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What is conflict?

Let us look at some common definitions of conflict

- Common definitions: Disagreement, clash, contradiction, to be incompatible, the opposition of interests or principles.

- Definitions from renowned conflict scholars:

Digvijaysinh Thakore: Struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals⁵.

Johan Galtung: Perceived clash of goals.

Is conflict good or bad?

The outcome of a conflict depends on how we handle it. Like fire, it is not inherently good or bad but takes on the nature of engagement with it.

How and why does conflict happen

Conflict is a normal part of life. Where there is interaction, the possibility of a conflict is there, especially where parties perceive a clash in goals or incompatible goals.

What are goals, where do we get goals from?

A goal can be defined as an objective or target we want to reach. Underlying our goals are human needs. That means that If we

⁵ Digvijaysinh T. (2013). Conflict and conflict management; *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*. Volume 8, Issue 6, PP 07-16

take a look beneath our goals there is a need that is common to all human beings.

Human Needs

Human needs are what we require to live an all-around healthy and fulfilling life. They are important for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of any human and they are a vital element for healthy meaningful living. It is important to note that needs are not the same as wants.

According to Abraham Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs, human needs are generally categorized⁶ into Physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs.

In the Non-Violent Communication technique introduced by Marshal Rosenberg, the lists and classification of human needs have been expanded and simplified for easy application.

⁶ Elizabeth, H. (2020). Abraham Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs; Scribbr;
<https://www.thoughtco.com/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-4582571>

Here is a table of needs, based on that of the Centre for Non-Violent Communication (CNVC)⁷.

NEEDS		
<i>Physical</i> <i>Physical</i> Air, food, water, shelter, movement, health, rest, sexual expression, touch, protection from threats to life: viruses, bacteria, predatory animals.	<i>Independence</i> Love, honesty, reassurance, respect, trust, understanding, acceptance, appreciation, closeness, community, consideration, emotional safety, empathy, contribution to the enrichment of life	<i>Celebration</i> Celebrating the creation of life and dreams fulfilled; Mourning losses: of loved ones, dreams etc.
<i>Independence</i> <i>Autonomy</i> Choosing dreams/goals/values; Choosing plans for fulfilling one's dreams, goals, values	<i>Spiritual Communion</i> Harmony, inspiration, order, peace, beauty	<i>Play</i> <i>Play</i> Fun, Laughter
		<i>Integrity</i> Authenticity, Creativity, meaning, self-worth

⁷ Centre for nonviolent communication, (2015). Feeling/Need Inventory; Scribbr; <https://www.cnvc.org/training/resource/needs-inventory>

Linking goals and needs:

Conflict has been defined as a perceived clash of goals. If the focus is on goals, they can appear to be incompatible and that is why they seem to clash. If we identify the needs underneath the goals, it is possible to then express these needs into goals that can be compatible.

Not all goals may be legitimate or compatible, but all needs are legitimate and can be compatible. So, anytime we are faced with what looks like incompatible goals, it is important to dig under to see the underlying need. When we identify the need, we can carve out legitimate and compatible goals. This can help transform a conflict positively.

How do we identify the need underlying a goal?

We identify the needs under our goals by asking the question, ‘why’?

For example, a conflict arises over a ball and the goal for both parties is to get the ball. If you ask the question why and look underneath the goal of getting the ball, the need behind could be to play. This is a legitimate need. The next question will be to ask, can another legitimate goal be created to meet this need, how can both parties have their goals met?

The options could be to expand the playgroup, get new balls or initiate new games. Any of these options can accommodate the need for the various parties to play. This would not only address the immediate conflict but would end up fostering meaningful

co-existence and growth. There has been growth in the options of games, the number of balls and the number of persons that can play.

Criteria for compatible goals:

For goals to be compatible, they must be legitimate. So, it is important to form legitimate goals from our needs. For goals to be legitimate, they must meet the following criteria:

- Must not violate another person's basic need
- Must not go against human dignity

Activity

1. Identify an issue of conflict. What are the goals?
underneath
2. Define two new goals that can capture

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Dealing With Conflict And Possible Outcomes

Ways to Deal with Conflict

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Violence

When you hear the word violence, what comes to mind?

What is violence?

Within every conflict, there is the opportunity for peace and the danger of violence.

Violence is not conflict. We often interchange the word violence with conflict. This should not be the case. It is therefore important to distinguish between conflict and violence.¹⁰

Violence is a possible outcome, a possible response, and possible behaviour in conflict. This also means that violence is not the only possible outcome, response or behaviour in conflict.

¹⁰ Akpabio U. (2021). *Peace by Piece: Harnessing Peace, Conflict and Dialogue*

Beyond these, violence can also be a mode of interaction or engagement on issues.

Let's look at some definitions of violence

- Common definition of violence: The use of physical force to injure, hurt, abuse, damage or destroy. It is the use of physical force that causes or intends to cause harm¹¹.
- Definitions from peace and conflict scholars and institutions
Hossein Danesh defined Violence as ‘any act, physical, psychological, verbal or otherwise that intentionally or otherwise results in harm, whether physical, psychological or otherwise¹².

The World Health Organization (WHO) in its World Report on Violence and Health defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or have a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation.’¹³

¹¹ Britannica, (2021). Definition of Violence; Encyclopedia Britannica Inc.; Scribbr; <https://www.britannica.com/topic/violence>

¹² Danesh H. B. & Clarke, H. S. (2005). Education for Peace Curriculum Manual: A conceptual and practical guide. EFP press, Vancouver

¹³ World Health Organization, (2002). World report on violence and health: summary. Geneva.

Types of Violence

From the definitions, we see that violence is not only about physical force. The World Health Organization's definition includes the use of power. It can be emotional, psychological, cultural and much more. Examples of non-physical violence include bullying; malice; shaming; us against them; bias; stereotypes and many more.

Johan Galtung classified violence into direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence.

Direct violence: Direct violence is the type of violence that is aimed at a particular person or direction. It can be visible like assault, murder, rape or war. Or not visible like verbal abuse, psychological and emotional trauma. Direct violence is one of the most obvious types of violence.

Structural violence: refers to social, economic and political structures that can prevent us from meeting our needs or achieving our potential. It is often invisible and manifests in inequalities, injustice, exploitation and unequal access to basic human needs.

So, a lack of basic infrastructures such as clean water, healthcare and schools can be considered a form of structural violence, because it makes it impossible for citizens to achieve their potential. For instance, poor health facilities can compromise health and make it impossible to work and earn a decent living.

Structural violence can also be seen in personal relationships where the opportunities for achieving our potential are deliberately frustrated.

Cultural violence: Cultural violence has to do with beliefs and attitudes that limit a person or group's capacity because of their gender, race, class, religion and so forth.

Cultural violence can be experienced and expressed through art, media, language, religious symbols or other mediums. An example is when we represent certain genders and nationalities in a negative or restricted light or character. Or when we have certain expectations of certain genders or ethnic groups because of how they have been portrayed in the media or religion. These representations and expectations perpetuate exclusion, and other forms of violence.

PART TWO

Building Capacity for Peace and Conflict

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Building Capacity For Peace And Conflict

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8

Toolkit For Peace And Conflict

1. The principle of Unity in Diversity

The principle of unity in diversity can be seen in how the universe is constructed. There are different species of living and nonliving things ranging from humans to trees, animals, rivers, air, constellations and much more, that exist harmoniously in the universe even though they are different.

Diversity has been defined as a range of things which are very different from each¹⁴. It also refers to the deliberate inclusion of people who are of different races, genders or religions in a group or activity.

Unity is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as a condition of harmony. Other definitions of unity include the state or quality of being one; the quality of forming a whole from separate parts; the state of being joined together in agreement.

Unity does not connote uniformity. Rather, it acknowledges the existence of differences and the need to view these differences as a potential advantage, rather than in a negative light.

¹⁴ Merriam Webster, (2021). Definition of Diversity; Merriam Webster Incorporation; Scribbr <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diversity>

A practical example of unity in diversity can be found in music. Music is made up of different notes brought together, harmoniously, into a good melody. Each note, if played individually without due consideration to other notes would produce what could be considered noise. So Unity is not clashing, but a coming together harmoniously. Art is another example of where different colours, shapes and themes, are brought together to create a meaningful piece.

Imbibing the principle of unity in diversity in our world requires that we acknowledge our physical, linguistic, religious, ideological, social, ecological diversity and more. Diversity finds expression in the various fields and spheres of life. For example, we can find it in a family unit with different talents, personalities and likes; in a school setting that represents different capacities, genders, ages, ethnicities and religions; or even in the context of a brainstorming session, where a diverse range of ideas can come up.

The principle calls for us to acknowledge our differences, to value these differences, as well as what the different parties and elements bring to the table. It calls for us to engage the spirit of collaboration and understanding, rather than that of competition or an adversarial mode. Achieving unity in diversity often requires some form of coordination and cooperation. Adopting this principle will facilitate acceptance, understanding, growth, beauty, and trust - rather than hostility, estrangement, rivalry and unhealthy competition. This, in turn, will create an atmosphere

for meaningful co-existence, growth and development that is beneficial to all.

Activity:

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2. Non Violent Communication – NVC.

Non Violent Communication was introduced by Marshall Rosenberg¹⁵. According to him, ‘while we may not consider the way we talk to be violent, words can lead to hurt and pain, whether for others or ourselves’. From the earlier definition of violence, it means that when words cause emotional, psychological and other harm, then those words and the communication can be deemed violent.

Poor communication, miscommunication, and violent communication can cause misunderstanding, affect harmony, and fuel conflicts. The words we use in communication, and how we communicate, can determine our understanding and acceptance of what is conveyed. Words, if properly used can fuel understanding, meaningful co-existence and peace. The nonviolent communication technique offers a tool for this.

Non Violent Communication (NVC) is about: 1) engaging empathy; 2) recognizing and acknowledging the legitimacy of human needs and feeling, and 3) also acknowledging that meeting these needs is vital in the process of communication. This NVC technique applies a four-step process:

- **Step 1 – Observation:** in communicating, it is important to identify and present the facts or actions (what we see, hear

¹⁵ Rosenberg M. (2003), Non Violent Communication: A language of life. Puddle dancer press

or touch) rather than conclusions, meanings, criticism or judgement.

Let us take the example of a scenario where you were speaking to someone and the person was reading a book while you were talking to them and you believed you did not get attention.

Instead of saying '*when I was speaking to you, you were distracted or you ignored me*'.

Using the NVC technique, you will convey the exact actions that took place. You could say, *when I was talking to you, you were looking into a book or you were reading a book.*

In each case, you present the action (looking into a book, or reading a book) rather than your judgement or conclusion (you were distracted or you ignored me).

The chances are that a person is more likely to be defensive or close up if he or she senses or perceives any form of criticism or judgement. Presenting the facts or action makes the person more likely to be open to your feedback and to keep the communication line open. So remember to present the facts or actions, not the judgements or conclusions.

- **Step 2 – Feelings:** Articulate the feelings that were evoked as a result of the action.

Again, the feeling, not the meaning of the feeling.

So, for example you could say, '*I felt puzzled or I felt annoyed*', rather than, '*you didn't make sense*'.

The focus is on how you were feeling. This puts the power and control over your feelings in you. Both parties in the conversation need to acknowledge these feelings as legitimate.

- **Step 3 – Needs:** Identify the need (needs) that was (were) not met.

As a third step, it is important to let the other know the need that was not met. The feelings we experience are often evoked as a result of our needs being met or not. We must be conscious of our needs as humans.

In the scenario we are working with, what need was not fulfilled? It could be the need for consideration, acknowledgement, to be respected or to be reassured. You could let the person know by saying *‘My need for consideration was not met’*.

Need here refers to the universal human need, not a wish list of wants. All needs are legitimate and should be considered with empathy.

- **Step 4 – Requests:** Make a request of what you desire, not a demand.

This should use clear, positive language. Rather than reacting and expressing our dissatisfaction with demands and ultimatums, take time to articulate your preferred response or engagement from the person.

For instance, rather than demand *‘don’t ever ignore me again’*; a good example of a request would be, *‘next time, I would appreciate it if you actively listened to me’*.

Using a request rather than a demand gives the opportunity or chance to let people know how you want to be treated.

Pulling together the scenario used here in the four-step process:

rather than say:

‘Yesterday when I was talking to you, you were distracted with your book and ignored me. Never ignore me again when I am speaking to you’.

One could say:

‘Yesterday, when I was talking to you, you were looking into a book (or you were reading a book) I felt puzzled (or I felt annoyed). My need for respect (or my need for attention or consideration) was not met. Next time, I would appreciate it if you actively listened to me.’

Non Violent Communication is an important tool in fostering peace and handling conflicts positively and effectively. I would encourage us to learn more about this process and technique. To effectively apply the technique requires a knowledge of human needs and feelings. See the following table of needs and feelings culled from the Centre for Non-Violent Communication (CNVC)¹⁶

¹⁶ Centre for nonviolent communication, (2015). Feeling/Need Inventory; Scribbr; <https://www.cnvc.org/training/resource/needs-inventory>

The table expands the list of human needs beyond the basics laid out under Maslow's hierarchy of human needs.

NEEDS		
<i>Physical</i> <i>Physical</i> Air, food, water, shelter, movement, health, rest, sexual expression, touch, protection from threats to life: viruses, bacteria, predatory animals.	<i>Independence</i> Love, honesty, reassurance, respect, trust, understanding, acceptance, appreciation, closeness, community, consideration, emotional safety, empathy, contribution to the enrichment of life	<i>Celebration</i> Celebrating the creation of life and dreams fulfilled; Mourning losses: of loved ones, dreams etc.
<i>Independence</i> <i>Autonomy</i> Choosing dreams/goals/values; Choosing plans for fulfilling one's dreams, goals, values	<i>Spiritual Communion</i> Harmony, inspiration, order, peace, beauty	<i>Play</i> <i>Play</i> Fun, Laughter
		<i>Integrity</i> Authenticity, Creativity, meaning, self-worth

FEELINGS
When Needs Are Met
Amazed, comfortable, confident, eager, fulfilled, glad, hopeful, inspired, intrigued. Joyous, moved, optimistic, proud, relieved, stimulated, surprised, thankful, trustful
When Needs Are Not Met
Angry, Annoyed, Concerned, Confused, disappointed, discouraged, distressed, embarrassed, Frustrated, helpless, hopeless, impatient, irritated, lonely, nervous, overwhelmed, puzzled, reluctant, sad, and uncomfortable.

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3. Transcend approach

The transcend approach to conflict was introduced by Johan Galtung. The approach recognizes conflict as perceived incompatible goals and applies dialogue with empathy and creativity to transform conflicts.

Steps to apply transcend as a tool

Step 1: Identify legitimate goals. As explained earlier most goals are underpinned by legitimate needs. So, it is important to find out the underlying needs. To do this, ask the question “why?” you may need to ask the question, “why?”, several times to get to find the needs. Once the need has been identified, legitimate and compatible goals can be created.

Step 2: Apply dialogue and creativity. The process of unveiling the needs and creating legitimate and compatible goals requires dialogue with creativity.

In addition to creativity, a principle that can be used is that of the **point of unity**. A point of unity can be anything both parties value and agree upon. This can be a rallying point for both parties. It can help encourage cooperation.

Step 3: Create a new reality. Capturing the goals of all the parties involved in a conflict often requires looking beyond what is currently being done. It often involves creating a new reality that can accommodate their needs. This calls for thinking outside the box and having a mindset of possibilities.

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4. Dialogue

What is dialogue? Webster's dictionary defines dialogue as discussions directed towards the exploration of a subject or resolution of a problem(s).

Other definitions of dialogue include conversations between two or more persons; an exchange of ideas or opinions; as well as discussions between representatives of parties to a conflict that is targeted at resolution²². Based on these definitions, it can be said that the aim of dialogue is not only focused on settling or addressing conflicts. it can also be used to explore issues creatively so that we can foster harmonious and meaningful co-existence.

We all engage in dialogue, whether casually or in more serious forms²³. Although dialogue does not necessarily imply

²² Oxford Dictionary, (2021) Definition of Dialogue; Scribbr;
www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american_english/dialogue

²³ Akpabio, U. A. (2021). PEACE BY PIECE: Harnessing Peace, Conflict and Dialogue

agreement, it creates an opportunity for communication and mutual understanding.

Jay Rothman identified four approaches to dialogue²⁴:

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Afterword

Beyond knowing peace as a state of existence, or an end where everything is in harmony, we also need to know peace as a process and as a capacity. Where this lens is applied, we will take responsibility in our various ways and spaces to foster and contribute towards building peace. Good knowledge of conflict will also enable us to take a firm grip on conflicts as they arise and steer them towards more positive outcomes. We may not prevent all forms of violence, but we can reduce the instance where conflicts deteriorate into violence. With the toolkit provided in the second part of this book, we have the information, tools, and principles with which we can ensure peace and handle conflicts positively.

To conclude this book, below is an activity that will enable the reader to apply all the knowledge, tools and principles acquired from this book. The aim is to bring the book beyond theory to practice. To enable a practical application of all these and start on our journey towards deliberate peace and conflict engagements that facilitate meaningful co-existence and growth.

PRACTICE ACTIVITY

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