

## Peace Literacy Curriculum: Lesson Plan 1

Understanding and Healing Aggression | Recognizing and Applying the Power of Respect | Resolving Conflict and the Power of Calm



Lady Justice, Frankfurt Germany (istockphoto/delectus)

## Peace Literacy Curriculum: Lesson Plan 1

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### Targeted Skills:

This plan focuses on **three main areas of peace literacy**: Understanding and Healing Aggression; Recognizing and Applying the Power of Respect; and Resolving Conflict/The Power of Calm.

For ease of presentation, it helps to think of each of these three areas as themselves comprised of three Peace Literacy skills. So there are a total of **nine Peace Literacy skills** targeted in this plan.

#### Understanding and Healing Aggression

- Skill #1 - Learn how to see aggression as a distress response.
- Skill #2 - Learn the four-step process that helps us heal aggression in others.
- Skill #3 - Learn the four-step process that helps us heal aggression within ourselves.

#### Recognizing and Applying the Power of Respect

- Skill #4 – Learn how to listen with empathy.
- Skill #5 – Learn how to lead by example.
- Skill #6 – Learn how to speak to people's potential.

#### Resolving Conflict/The Power of Calm

- Skill #7 – Learn how to calm others down during conflict.
- Skill #8 – Learn how to calm ourselves down during conflict.
- Skill #9 – Learn how to grow from conflict.

## Peace Literacy Lesson Plan 1

### Instructions for Use

What follows are goals, resources, and notes on each of three main areas of Peace Literacy, organized in the form of **Socratic-style Dialogues**, to help guide discussion.

The dialogues ask questions at a number of levels and these are highlighted in the text:  
**Level 1 = gathering info; Level 2 = processing info; Level 3 = applying info.**

These dialogues have been used successfully across education contexts, from grades 4 through 12, in a variety of classes such as language arts, history, and social science, as well as in higher education and adult education classes.

A team of educators at Oregon State University is working with faculty across the US and Canada to **tailor these dialogues** further to meet the needs of younger students and/or to other subject areas across the K-12 curriculum and higher education classes. We can also help you identify how the skills highlighted in this lesson plan can be used to meet national, state, and provincial standards for a number of subject areas and age-levels. Contact Sharyn Clough (<mailto:Sharyn.Clough@oregonstate.edu>) for more details.

We are pleased to share this curriculum at no cost and ask only that you cite us, as below, when you use direct quotes or paraphrased passages from this lesson plan:

Paul K. Chappell and Sharyn Clough. 2021. *Peace Literacy Lesson Plan 1*. <http://peaceliteracy.org/curriculum/>

And please send us copies of any materials you produce that are based on this lesson plan so we can put them up on the Peace Literacy website as models for others. Peace Literacy is meant to be shared!

This lesson plan can be used to guide a number of hour-long discussions (as few as three and as many as nine) depending on the number of exercises, projects, and films that are incorporated into the plan. We are building a compendium of ideas for group projects, in-class exercises, and community activities around the themes in this plan. We also have resources for teachers. Visit <http://peaceliteracy.org/resources/> to download ideas or to contribute your own.

You can find the relevant sections on the following pages:

- **Understanding and Healing Aggression, pp. 4-12**
- **Recognizing and Applying the Power of Respect, pp. 13-21**
- **Resolving Conflict/The Power of Calm, pp. 22-32**

# Peace Literacy Lesson Plan 1

## Understanding and Healing Aggression

### Essential Question:

What causes human aggression and how can we heal those causes?

### Learning Outcomes:

- Understand the difference between aggression as posturing and aggression as violence.
- Learn how to notice posturing in human and non-human animals.
- Recognize posturing in humans at the interpersonal, national, and international level.
- Develop these three skills for understanding and healing aggression:
  - Skill #1 – Learn how to see aggression as a distress response.
  - Skill #2 – Learn how to heal aggression in others.
  - Skill #3 – Learn how to heal aggression within ourselves.

### Readings:

From Paul K. Chappell:

- *Will War Ever End? “Why Bears Roar”*
- *The End of War*, Ch. 2, “The Nature of Human Aggression”
- *Peaceful Revolution*, Ch. 2, section “The Many Faces of Dehumanization”
- *The Art of Waging Peace*, Ch. 1, “The Labyrinth of Trauma” and Ch. 2 “The Siren Song of Rage”
- *The Cosmic Ocean*, Ch. 1, section “The World’s Most Unusual Predator”
- *Soldiers of Peace*, Ch. 2, sections “The Art of Listening” and “Authentic Communication”

Supplemental readings such as:

- Homer's *Iliad for Kids*, and *Odyssey for Kids* available from <http://greece.mrdonn.org/iliad.html>
- *Social Aggression Among Girls* by Marion K. Underwood, Ch. 1 “Girls’ Anger and Aggression,” pp. 3-6
- *On Killing*, by D. Grossman, Ch. 1 “Fight or Flight, Posture or Submit,” pp. 5-9
- *Why?* by Nikolai Popov (a picture book that forcefully presents the endlessness of retaliation and escalating violence)

## Peace Literacy Lesson Plan 1

### Understanding and Healing Aggression

#### Videos:

- Animals Posturing
  - Wolves and Bears  
<https://youtu.be/OhyLJeBuvos>
  - Mother Elk / Mother Bear Posturing Against Hunting Wolves  
<https://youtu.be/A56wgWDAYmM>
  - Chimpanzees Posturing  
<https://youtu.be/Pt1zRkjuiwk>
- Humans Posturing
  - From Southpark (this is a 20 second clip, it contains some profanity)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WoudYNeVn5E>
- The Fires of Aggression
  - With their characteristically brutal and incisive humor, comedy duo Key and Peele illustrate the vulnerable emotional life of a bully in “School Bully” (Comedy Central, this is a 3 min clip with some profanity)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUvFeyGxaaU>

#### Web Resources:

- “It has a Name: Relational Aggression,” [Girls’ Relational Aggression Curriculum from the Ophelia Project](#)

#### Exercises:

- We are building a compendium of ideas for group projects, in-class exercises, and community activities around the themes in this lesson plan. Visit <http://peaceliteracy.org/resources/> to download ideas or to contribute your own.
- One example designed for middle school students to accompany the lesson on warning aggression in animals was developed by Susan Radford, available [here](#)
- **The Aggression Journal:** Have students keep a journal where they note the times they have felt aggression in themselves; and ask them to see if after this lesson they can reach deeper to identify the underlying fires (pain, discomfort) that are causing their aggression (fear? embarrassment?). They can use the rubric on the following page to guide their observations.

## Peace Literacy Lesson Plan 1

We have developed a **rubric** to accompany this section of the Lesson Plan:

### Rubric for Skill #1 - Learning how to see aggression as a distress response

Criteria	Level I Competency	Level II Competency	Level III Competency	Level IV Competency
Individual is developing self-awareness of distress when acting aggressively or thinking aggressive thoughts.	Can recognize feelings of distress underlying aggressive thoughts and actions <b>after</b> conflict/incident has occurred.	Can recognize feelings of distress <b>during</b> the conflict/incident and is able to <i>attempt</i> to stop or minimize the behavior during the conflict/incident.	Can recognize feelings of distress <b>before</b> aggression or aggressive thoughts. Can redirect these thoughts or actions and keep them from occurring.	Can recognize that this skill is context dependent – that is we can be skilled at this in some contexts but not others. Can exercise self-compassion when skill levels fluctuate.
<b>Teacher self-check:</b> Are you modeling this for your students and colleagues? 😊	<b>Depth/consistency:</b> You might have deep competency at this level but not at other levels, and not all the time.	<b>Depth/consistency:</b> You might have deep competency at this level but not at other levels, and not all the time.	<b>Depth/consistency:</b> You might have deep competency at this level but not at other levels, and not all the time.	<b>Depth/consistency:</b> You might have deep competency at this level but not at other levels, and not all the time.

## Peace Literacy Lesson Plan 1 Introducing the skills for Understanding and Healing Aggression

## using Socratic Dialogue

- **Have students imagine a pack of wolves and a grizzly bear in a forest. Between them is a dead deer. The wolves and grizzly bear are all hungry and want to eat the dead deer. Ask students, “What usually happens in this situation?”**

If students say, “The bear eats first” or “The wolves eat first,” remind them that it depends on how many wolves there are and how big the bear is. It might be nine wolves and a small bear, or two wolves and a large bear. How do these animals figure out who gets to eat first, and who gets the leftovers, if there are any leftovers?

When students say the animals fight or share, remind the students that in most cases, the animals don’t fight or share. They do something else. If you want to give them a hint, you can ask, “Why does a bear roar? Why do wolves growl?” If a student mentions “roaring,” “growling,” or “intimidation” in their response, they have the answer, because these are all examples of *posturing*, which is how wolves and bears usually respond in this situation.

- **When animals in nature posture, they make noise and want to appear larger. Have pictures or videos available to demonstrate examples. Ask students, “What does a cat do?”**

Cats not only posture by making noise, but they also posture by appearing larger when they arch their back, or when the hair on their back stands up.

- **“What does a rattlesnake do?”**

Rattlesnakes not only posture by shaking their tails to make a rattling sound, but they also coil their bodies, which serves the dual purpose of allowing them to appear larger and giving them the option to strike if they need to.

- **“What does a cobra do?”**

Cobras not only make noise, but they also lift their head and spread their hood to look larger.

- **“What does a gorilla do?”**

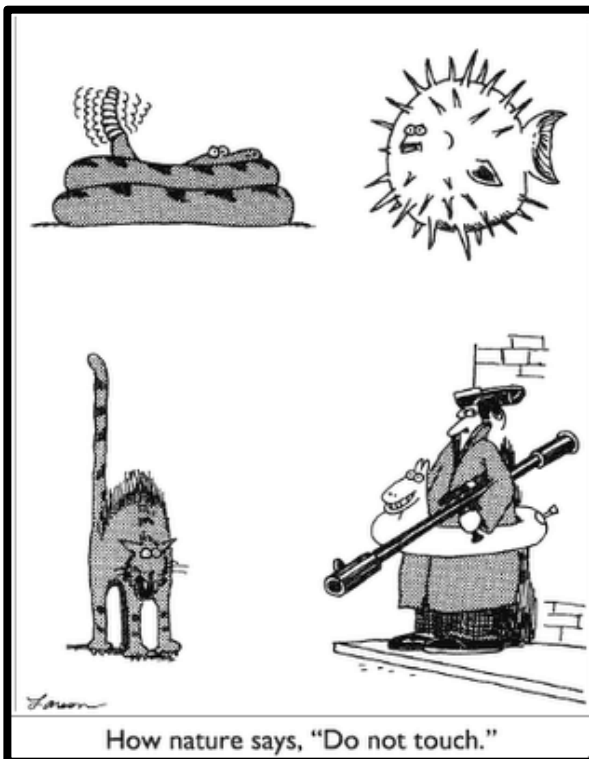
Gorillas posture by beating their chest, showing their teeth, standing on their back legs, or charging.

**Here’s a Level 1 Question that involves gathering information:**

- Ask students, “Why do animals in nature posture as their first method of defense? Why don’t they just fight instead?”

The reason for their aversion to danger is because there are no hospitals in the wild. Even when animals win a fight, they might suffer life-threatening injuries. When animals in nature posture, they are basically saying that they don’t want to fight you. They are basically asking you to leave them alone.

Note: this is why we should not use the words “violence” and “aggression” as synonyms, because most aggression in nature is actually trying to deter and prevent violence. We can use the term “warning aggression” to describe posturing, because posturing is a form of aggression trying to deter and prevent violence.



If a student asks, “What about when animals of the same species fight over mates or territory, such as buffalo ramming horns?” you can explain that this is an example of intraspecies conflict, which is often *less lethal* than interspecies violence, such as that between predator and prey. (For more info on intraspecies conflict, see *Peaceful Revolution*, Ch. 2, pp. 48-49, “The Many Faces of Dehumanization.”)

- If we see an animal posturing, but ignore the warning, the animal has two options. Ask students, “What are those two options? If you keep walking toward a posturing rattlesnake and ignore the warning, what are the snake’s two

options?”

The two options are fight or flight. Remind students that posturing is a warning and if we ignore this warning we might get attacked.

- Ask students, “Do human beings posture? What are examples of human posturing?”

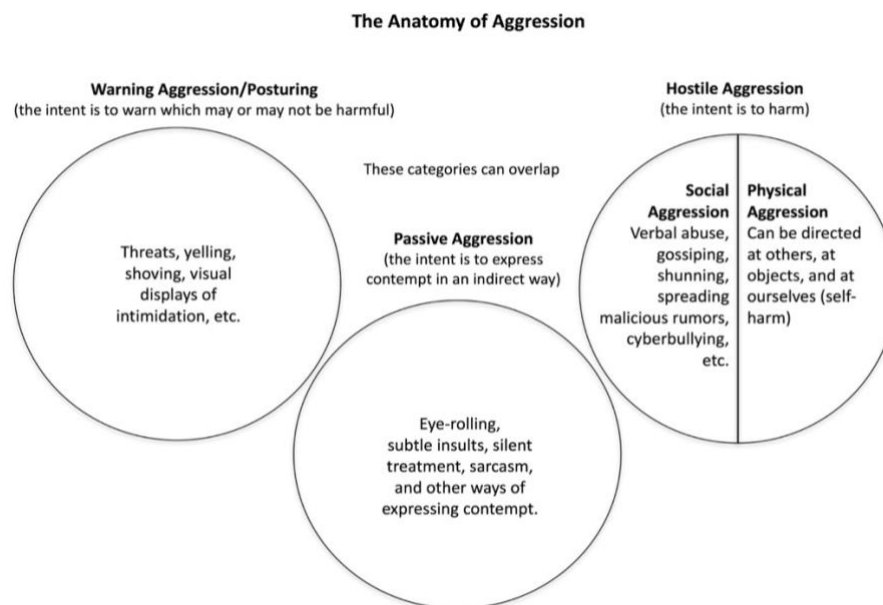
There are many examples that you can use, such as ancient Greek soldiers wearing big helmets, soldiers screaming when they go into battle, posturing between men or women before they get into a fight (e.g. standing tall, puffing out their chests, yelling), the Haka of



the Māori people, the loud noise of a gun, death threats, the many forms of posturing between nations, etc.

Help students recognize and understand the psychology of posturing, which happens on the personal, national, and international levels. This will help them see events on all of these levels in a deeper and more realistic way. For example, you can discuss a current conflict between nations (such as the conflict between the United States and North Korea) through the lens of posturing. The stockpiling of nuclear weapons often functions as a form of posturing. Wars often result when posturing is not resolved peacefully and escalates from warning aggression to hostile aggression.

Men and women, boys and girls, are often conditioned by society to display aggression in different ways. Warning aggression is posturing, while hostile aggression is intent to harm. Humans can harm not only with physical violence but also with words and other hostile forms of social aggression. Girls are more often conditioned to display social aggression rather than violence, although this is changing. You might illustrate these different forms of aggression with the following diagram:



Note: Passive Aggression is discussed on p. 28 in the section **Resolving Conflict/The Power of Calm**

**Here's a Level 2 Question that involves processing information:**

- Explain to students that human aggression is similar to the heat emitted from a fire, because aggression is always caused by deeper emotions (fires) that cause discomfort or pain. Ask them, "What are some of the fires that can cause the heat of human aggression?"

When people become aggressive, they are feeling some kind of discomfort or pain. These painful emotions can include fear, shame, humiliation, betrayal, frustration, and feeling disrespected, just to mention a few examples. It might help to write these on the board while you discuss them. There is a list of some of these underlying emotions on p. 100 of *Soldiers of Peace*.

Fear
Disrespect
Frustration
Insecurity
Humiliation
Betrayal
Shame
Physical Discomfort
Psychological Trauma
Loneliness
Alienation
Low Self-Worth
Disappointment
Despair
Rejection

- **Ask students, “Thinking about the underlying fires that can cause the heat of human aggression, do you think people can be aggressive today because of something that happened to them when they were five years old?”**

Students are usually quick to agree. This is an opportunity to discuss the role that psychological trauma can play in causing human aggression.

- **You can make use of Greek mythology to better illustrate the role of trauma. Have students read pp. 26-30 from *The Art of Waging Peace*, Ch. 1 “The Labyrinth of Trauma” which details the story of the Minotaur and the labyrinth in which it was hidden.**

**Here is an excerpt:**

*“Around every psychological wound, a labyrinth is built deep in our unconscious mind. The more traumatic the wound, the more complex the labyrinth. The Minotaur symbolizes our psychological wounds, agonizing humiliations, and dark secrets . . . Our psychological wounds can destroy us when we become lost in the labyrinth.”*

**Here’s a Level 3 Question that involves applying information:**

- **Ask students, “What are the wounded parts of yourself that you would most like to make peace with?”**

Aggression is only one outlet for our pain, although in our society it is an outlet that people, especially boys and men, are encouraged to use. Other outlets for our pain can include talking with our friends, artistic expression, and crying.

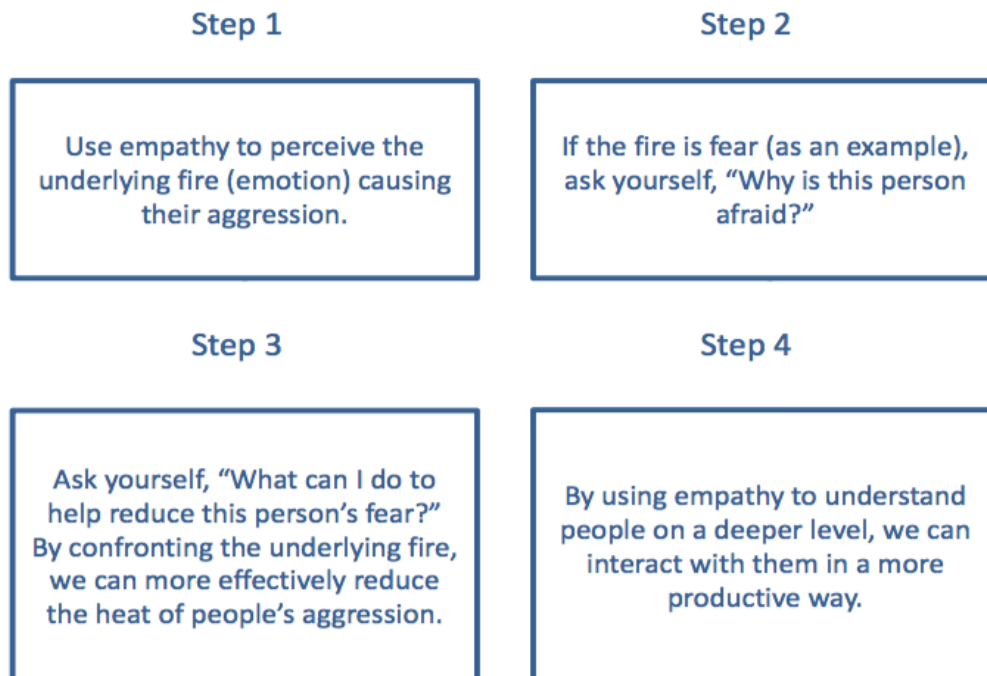
This next section of dialogue is organized around the diagram below, titled “Four-Step Process for Reducing the Heat of Aggression.” Begin by getting the students to think about empathy.

- **Ask students, “What is empathy?” Once you get some examples, ask them “How can empathy help us recognize and diminish the fires underneath the heat of people’s aggression?”**

By using empathy, we can train our mind to see aggression as a distress response, since aggression is caused by some form of discomfort or pain. Training our mind to see aggression as a distress response allows us to interact with aggressive people in a calmer and more empathetic way that reduces the likelihood of escalation and increases the likelihood of a positive outcome.

Discuss the diagram below illustrating the “Four-Step Process for Reducing the Heat of Aggression,” which helps us heal aggression in others. Based on everything the students have learned so far, they may be able to come up with elements of this four-step process before you show them the diagram.

### Four-Step Process for Reducing the Heat of Aggression



Remind students that when we ask ourselves “why is this person afraid?” we may never know, and because we live in a society where people are not trained to listen to their innermost thoughts, they might not even be self-aware of the fires causing them to act out aggressively.

We begin by asking these questions silently, in our own mind, in order to summon our empathy and to give us a starting point to behave empathetically toward the person who is behaving aggressively. Asking these questions out loud, such as “Why are you afraid?” might offend them, since there is a lot of shame in our society around fear. Asking some questions out loud in the right context can be ok though, such as “Did I disrespect you in some way? I did not mean to disrespect you.” This question, if asked in the right tone of voice, is less likely to cause offense. We return to questions of respect in the next section.

- This next section of dialogue is organized around the last diagram below, titled “Four-Step Process for Dealing with Our Own Aggression.” Begin by asking students, “What do self-reflection and self-awareness mean? How does turning our empathy inward to understand the root causes of our own aggression serve as a form of self-reflection? How does understanding the root causes of our own aggression increase our self-awareness?”

Self-reflection and self-awareness basically mean listening to ourselves, which some people also call mindfulness. The better we understand the anatomy of aggression and other aspects of the human condition, the more deeply we can listen to ourselves and others.

Discuss the diagram below showing the “Four-Step Process for Dealing with Our Own Aggression,” which helps us heal the root causes of our aggression. This diagram allows us to add self-reflection and self-awareness to the discussion. The techniques referred to in Steps 3 and 4 of the diagram are discussed in the last section of this plan on resolving conflict, and in *Soldiers of Peace*, Ch. 2.

### Four-Step Process for Dealing with Our Own Aggression

#### Step 1

Identify the underlying fire causing the heat of your aggression. For example, “I feel afraid.”

#### Step 2

Identify the fuel that is feeding your fire. For example, ask yourself, “Why do I feel afraid?”

#### Step 3

Use techniques to calm the fire within you.

#### Step 4

Use techniques to confront the source of fuel.

## Peace Literacy Lesson Plan 1

### Recognizing and Applying the Power of Respect

#### Essential Question:

- What does it mean to convey respect and how does respect help us solve our personal, national, and global problems?

#### Learning Outcomes:

- Students will understand the three elements of respect that are considered respectful in every culture:
  - **Skill #4** — Learn how to listen with empathy.
  - **Skill #5** — Learn how to lead by example.
  - **Skill #6** — Learn how to speak to people's potential.

#### Readings:

- From Paul K. Chappell:
  - *The Art of Waging Peace*, Ch. 3 “The First Line of Defense” and Ch. 7 “West Point and World Peace”
  - *Peaceful Revolution*, Ch. 2 “The Muscle of Empathy”
- Supplemental readings such as:
  - *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr.*
  - *Malala Yousafzai: Warrior with Words* by Karen Leggett Abouraya

#### Videos:

- Using infants to help elementary school children learn empathy:
  - The Roots of Empathy Project:
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gIgLt4hZuY>
    - From the PBS NewsHour (2013) coverage of the study <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNxnTVBuy70>
- Using shelter dogs to help prisoners learn empathy:
  - *Dogs on the Inside*
    - Trailer: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7ZjxPqL\\_EQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7ZjxPqL_EQ)
- Using respect in policing:
  - Segment from CBS, *On the Road*
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErASUGL00gQ>

## Peace Literacy Lesson Plan 1

### Recognizing and Applying the Power of Respect

#### Exercises:

- We are building a compendium of grade-level ideas for group projects, in-class exercises, and community activities around the themes in this lesson plan. Visit [peaceliteracy.org/resources](https://peaceliteracy.org/resources) to download ideas or to contribute your own.
- Here's some sample exercises that have been used successfully in concert with this material:
  - **Building the Muscle of Empathy**  
Building appreciation can help us build empathy. Have students write something they appreciate about each of their classmates, and then each student receives a copy of the things others said about them. Be sure to set up the activity so that the comments are anonymous, but so you can still track who wrote each comment for each student. Also be sure to read every sheet to ensure no negative comments are made.
  - **Selfie Project**  
Have students identify one person they really don't know and engage in interviews with each other where they practice skills of communication with respect (listen, speak, act) and empathy. Take a selfie together and create a "Get to Know You" summary of each other.

## Peace Literacy Lesson Plan 1

### Introducing the skills for Recognizing and Applying the Power of Respect using Socratic Dialogue

- Ask students, “Think about the times in your life when you were most angry at someone. It was probably because you felt disrespected in some way. Is this true?”

This Socratic Dialogue relies on personal stories as a teaching tool, since everyone has stories of being involved in a conflict because of disrespect. The older the students are, the more effective this question can be, because they will have had a larger number of personal experiences involving disrespect and conflict to reflect on.

If students ask what disrespect means, a general definition is that disrespect occurs when we feel that another person has violated us in some way.

#### Here’s a Level 1 Question that involves gathering Information:

- Ask students, “Most conflict is caused by people feeling disrespected. What does it mean to feel disrespected? What does it mean to feel respected?”

When students reflect on and discuss what it means to feel disrespected, they will reveal various forms of disrespect. It might help to write these on the board.

When they reflect on and discuss what it means to feel respected, they may reveal aspects

of the three elements of universal respect, discussed later in this dialogue, namely: Listening with Empathy; Leading by Example; and Speaking to People's Potential. We'll return to these.

To begin, one form of disrespect that you can discuss with students is disrespect caused by cultural differences. This discussion can be used to increase cultural awareness, and understanding this form of disrespect is especially important today since cultures interact more often.

As this example from *The Far Side* shows, disrespect caused by cultural differences can happen when a custom that is considered respectful or benign in one culture causes disrespect in another culture.



Inadvertently, Roy dooms the entire earth to annihilation when, in an attempt to be friendly, he seizes their leader by the head and shakes vigorously.

- **Ask students, “Disrespect can be caused by differences in culture, but are there any elements of respect that are valued in every culture?”**

Building on the students’ discussion of what it feels like to be respected, help them understand what aspects of respectful behavior may differ from culture to culture, and what aspects of respectful behavior are shared by all cultures because they are part of our shared humanity.

Shared humanity refers to the aspects of our humanity that are common to all people, regardless of their skin color, religion, gender, nationality, or what time period or culture they live in. Greater literacy in our shared humanity makes it more difficult to dehumanize people.

- **When students discuss what it feels like to be respected, they usually mention listening. If they don’t mention the first element of universal respect – listening – then prompt them by asking them to raise their hand if they hate being listened to.**

If a student raises their hand, mention that the very act of raising their hand expresses a desire to be listened to. If a person truly hated being listened to, that person would not raise their hand, would never talk, and would never express themselves in any way.

Discuss how all human beings like to be listened to, and how no one in human history has ever seriously said, “I hate it when people listen to me!”

When you ask students to raise their hand when asked if they hate being listened to, they might have confused listening with eavesdropping. People like to be listened to, but people can find it disrespectful when someone is eavesdropping on a private conversation. The difference between eavesdropping and listening is that listening implies consent, whereas eavesdropping implies lack of consent. Help students understand the concept of consent, and how listening differs from eavesdropping.

#### **Here’s a Level 2 Question that involves processing information:**

- **Ask students, “How do you show that you’re listening to someone?”**

In many countries such as the United States, people show that they are listening by making eye contact. If someone from the United States is speaking to you and you don’t make eye contact, it can be considered disrespectful.

For example, if a student in the United States is being interviewed by a college or for a job, they can make a bad impression if they don’t make eye contact when the person interviewing them is talking.



Help students understand that when a guest speaker from a culture where eye contact is expected is giving a talk at their school, they should make eye contact with the speaker to show that they are listening. If they don't look at the speaker, they may unintentionally disrespect the speaker.

- **Ask students, “Do you know of cultures where people have different ways of expressing that they are listening?”**

Some of your students might be able to share that in some African countries it is disrespectful to make eye contact when someone “higher ranking” than you is speaking. To show that you are listening, you are supposed to quietly look down.

- **Have students read the following excerpt from Ch. 3 of *The Art of Waging Peace*:** *“To truly listen we must develop empathy. If we do not empathize with people we cannot really hear what they are saying. When we do not listen with empathy we hear only their words. But when we listen with empathy we also hear their emotions, hopes, and fears. We hear their humanity.”* **Then ask students, “What does it mean to listen with empathy?”**

Emphasize that the key to listening is empathy. This can build on the discussion of empathy in the previous Socratic Dialogue, taking students' understanding of empathy to a higher level.

- **Ask students, “Would you rather work for or be around people who listen to you with empathy, or people who don't listen to you and have absolutely no empathy for you?”**

If humans weren't supposed to listen with empathy, then why does it feel so good when people listen to us with empathy, and why does it feel so bad when people don't listen to us and have absolutely no empathy for us? If humans weren't supposed to listen to each other, why does every culture view listening as respectful and not listening as disrespectful?

Explain that while all cultures agree on the importance of listening, cultures can differ in terms of who they include in the circle of people worth listening to. Some cultures have larger circles than others, and some cultures exclude specific groups of people from the circle of listening.

Historically, the right to vote has often been seen as a symbol of who should be listened to in a society. In ancient Greece, most Athenian men thought that their fellow male citizens should be listened to, but that Athenian women, and men and women who were slaves (none of whom had the right to vote), should not be listened to. In United States history, the circle of who should be listened to expanded in the early 19th century beyond white male property owners, when white men who don't own property gained the right to vote, and then the circle was further expanded when other groups, such as African American men, white women, African American women, and Native Americans won the right to vote.

**Here's another Level 2 Question that involves processing information:**

- **Voting is only one way that people can be listened to. Ask students, “When people with the right to vote feel that they are still being ignored, what are some other ways that they can make their voices heard?”**

Now might be a good time to discuss the role of nonviolent movements in expanding the circle of who should be listened to and helping people make their voices heard.

- **As a follow-up question, you can ask students, “Are there people in our society and around the world who still don't get listened to?”**

They might say “kids” in which case you have a good set up for the discussion below regarding when it's appropriate for children to be treated differently than adults and when it's not.

- **At this point introduce the second element of universal respect: leading by example and not being hypocritical. Ask students, “What does hypocrisy mean?”**

While all three elements of universal respect are important for good leadership, this discussion of hypocrisy is an especially useful way to introduce the characteristics of good leaders (see *The Art of Waging Peace* Ch. 3 “The First Line of Defense” and Ch. 7 “West Point and World Peace,” especially pp. 65-68).

- **Ask students, “Can you name examples where adults are hypocritical?”**

I have asked this question to fifth graders and they talked for over an hour about the hypocrisy of adults. They were deeply angered by this hypocrisy, such as when adults tell children not to yell at people, but then adults yell at children and other adults. If students in school talked to each other the way that many American politicians talked to each other, these students would get in trouble.

Students have told me that hypocrisy means, “Do as I say, not as I do,” and they can find it very frustrating when adults behave this way. This is one among many examples that show how peace literacy is vital and helpful not only for students in school, but also for adults of all ages. Hypocrisy and other forms of disrespect are not only a problem in schools, but also in workplaces, communities, families, nations, and the international community.

**Here's a Level 3 Question that involves applying information:**

- **You can also tie the discussion of hypocrisy to a discussion about international relations. Ask students, “Can you think of examples when the US or other countries had domestic or foreign policies that were hypocritical?”**

Not listening, along with hypocrisy, causes conflict not only on the personal level, but also on the international level. To provide deeper insight into international problems, you can help students view these problems through the lens of hypocrisy, where powerful nations basically tell weaker nations, “Do as I say, not as I do.” Listening with empathy and reducing hypocrisy, not only on the personal level, but also on the national and international level, would help us solve many problems around the world.

Students might not fully understand all the nuances of hypocrisy. In many cultures, rites of passage are used to distinguish between activities adults can engage in that children are denied access to. For example, in the United States a driving test can be seen as a kind of rite of passage that allows adults to drive while denying this to children. However, our society for the most part lacks rites of passage.

- **You can discuss rites of passage with students and ask questions such as, “Should our society have more rites of passage?” and “What are positive aspects to rites of passage, and what are examples in cultures where rites of passage can be harmful?”**

Rites of passage can be helpful or harmful in a variety of ways, and we should think about how our society can have helpful rites of passage. As an example of a harmful rite of passage, in ancient Sparta it was a cultural rite of passage for elite Spartan men to spend time in the “krypteai,” which was basically a state-sponsored terrorist organization that intimidated and even killed slaves, in order to keep the slaves afraid and under control.

Rites of passage also create a sense of belonging and shared struggle. This is an opportunity to have students think about how rites of passage in gangs and fraternities, which are meant to create a sense of belonging, can also be harmful. There are news stories about how people die during fraternity rites of passage.

- **Explain to students that sometimes conflicts are caused not by disrespect but by scarce resources like land or food. In these cases disrespect still plays a critical role, however, mostly by amplifying the conflicts. Ask students, “What do you think happens when those who have a conflict over land or food also disrespect each other?”**

Conflicts over territory or resources are most severe when people feel that they are being disrespected (e.g. when we feel that we are being treated unfairly, this can anger us not only because we sense hypocrisy, but also because it can attack our sense of self-worth, which ties into the third element of universal respect discussed below). Conflicts over scarcity often involve feelings of unfairness and become much more severe when disrespect is involved. This can be an opportunity to discuss with students contemporary conflicts that involve both land and feelings of disrespect.

In this way, understanding the three elements of universal respect is vital for resolving any kind of conflict, even conflicts that involve scarcity. Diplomacy, negotiation, and other forms

of mediation are ways to resolve these kinds of conflicts, and some of your students might be interested in pursuing careers in these fields.

- **Now we move to the final element of respect—speaking to people’s potential—which basically means talking to people like they are worthy rather than worthless. You might get the students’ attention by saying, “Raise your hand if you like feeling worthless.”**

Explain to students that societies vary on whom they consider to be “people” and worthy. In ancient Greek city-states such as Athens, only men could be citizens. In ancient Athens, denying all women citizenship resulted from the view that they have less worth than men. And most non-Greeks, both men and women, were also considered to have less worth, especially when they were held as slaves. For Athenian men who were citizens it was usually acceptable to talk down to those who had less worth.

This can begin a discussion about *dehumanization*, where a society can view some people as human and deserving of respectful treatment and other people as subhuman and not deserving of respectful treatment. Dehumanization is a root cause of racism, sexism, slavery, war, genocide, and many other problems. We focus on dehumanization and rehumanization in Peace Literacy Lesson Plan 2.

- **All people like to feel worthy rather than worthless. Ask students, “How do we talk to people when we want to show them that they are worthy?”**

Get students to talk about how we can communicate with someone in a way that increases the person’s sense of self-worth. Also, how can we speak to people’s potential in a way that encourages them to become more empathetic, conscientious, appreciative, rational, and courageous?

**Here’s another Level 3 Question that involves applying information:**

- **Finally, it’s important to acknowledge that people’s feelings of disrespect are not always justified. You might ask students, “When are people’s feelings of disrespect *unjustified*? For example, if a slave owner says that it is disrespectful when their slaves talk back to them, is the slave owner’s feeling of disrespect justified? If a king or queen says that it is disrespectful when peasants criticize the monarchy, is their feeling of disrespect justified? If a man says that it is disrespectful if a woman questions him, is his disrespect justified?”**

Students are often taught that cultural norms and customs are always good and something we should always respect and never question, but all long-standing societal injustices have been a part of cultural norms and customs.

- **Ask students, “Can you think of leaders who promoted justice but were viewed in their own time period as disrespecting cultural norms and customs?”**

The movements that abolished state-sanctioned slavery and promoted women's and civil rights questioned and challenged culture. People such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Susan B. Anthony were viewed in their own time period as disrespecting culture, because segregation by race in the American South was a part of culture, and the oppression of women regardless of their race was also a cultural phenomenon.

State-sanctioned slavery was once a deeply ingrained feature of cultures around the world. In countless societies, animal sacrifice was both a religious and cultural practice. When European monarchs ruled societies with nearly absolute power, this was also a cultural tradition. Today many people justify bullfighting, dogfighting, and other forms of animal cruelty as part of their culture.

When a person has difficulty rationalizing an injustice, the rationalization of last resort is, "Well, it's just a part of our culture."

Help students understand that Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, Wangari Maathai, Malala Yousafzai, and many others were viewed as disrespecting the culture they live in, but they got their moral authority by conveying the three elements of universal respect to all people, even many of those who opposed them.

Help students understand that culture by its very nature is fluid and constantly evolving, and how people have worked heroically to align culture with justice. The three elements of universal respect, however, do not change over time and are universal to all cultures, and we must work to increase these three elements in all cultures and in our global community as a whole.

- **Here are several open-ended questions to consider as you conclude this section: "How can we criticize unjust cultural practices while emphasizing the best aspects of culture? What are the best aspects of culture? How have people in history used the sense of cultural superiority to dehumanize and harm people in other cultures, and how can we protect against this in the twenty-first century?"**

The issue here is that dehumanizing people by saying they have an inferior culture can lead to injustice, but viewing culture as something that belongs on a sacred pedestal—as something that we should never question or critique—can also lead to injustice.

Help students understand that culture by its very nature is never static, and we can play a role in shaping culture in ways that increase peace and justice.

## Peace Literacy Lesson Plan 1

### Resolving Conflict/The Power of Calm

#### Essential Question:

What is the universal human phobia and how does our understanding of it help us resolve conflict?

#### Learning Outcomes:

- Understand the universal human phobia and its relation to trauma and conflict.
- Learn the importance of maintaining empathy when we are in conflict with someone.
- Learn to give people the benefit of the doubt when we are in conflict with them, which means seeking clarification rather than acting from a position of ignorance.
- Learn not to personalize the conflict, which means using empathy to escape the confines of our own ego, and training our mind to see the other factors playing into the conflict.
- Learn to keep things in perspective, which means training our mind to think about reasons why we appreciate people when we come into conflict with them.
- Develop these three skills:
  - Skill #7 – Learn how to calm others down during conflict.
  - Skill #8 – Learn how to calm ourselves down during conflict.
  - Skill #9 – Learn how to grow from conflict.

#### Readings:

- From Paul K. Chappell:
  - *The Cosmic Ocean*, pp. 29 – 47 (on trauma); pp. 155-156 (on growing from conflict); and pp. 210 – 216 (on the universal human phobia)
  - *The Art of Waging Peace*, pp. 69-77 (on calm); and pp. 244-289 (on terrorism)
  - *Soldiers of Peace*, pp. 122-123 (on learning from conflict)
  - *The End of War*, pp. 80 – 100 (on moral fury)
  - “A New Peace Paradigm: Our Human Needs and the Tangles of Trauma” (Pamphlet excerpt from Chappell’s forthcoming book *The Transcendent Mystery: A New Paradigm for Understanding Peace, Trauma, and the Human Condition*, available for download at [peaceliteracy.org](http://peaceliteracy.org).)
- Supplemental readings such as:
  - *The Gift of Fear* by Gavin de Becker, esp. p. 15

#### Videos:

- On training for remaining calm/using non-violent techniques under duress:
  - *PBS The Freedom Riders: Strategy* (5 min trailer)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KREQGwC\\_cFY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KREQGwC_cFY)
  - *PBS The Freedom Riders: Tactics* (5 min trailer)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmUrg5j4K\\_0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmUrg5j4K_0)
- Have students rewatch “School Bully” from Key and Peel but this time have them attend to how Kegan Michael Key’s character stays calm.

## Peace Literacy Lesson Plan 1

### Resolving Conflict/The Power of Calm

#### Exercises:

- We are building a compendium of ideas for group projects, in-class exercises, and community activities around the themes in this lesson plan. Visit [peaceliteracy.org/resources](https://peaceliteracy.org/resources) to download ideas or to contribute your own.
- Here's a sample exercise that can be used to reinforce this material:
  - **Staying Calm on Social Media, or Don't Feed the Trolls**  
After working through the material in this section, have the students brainstorm ideas for calming themselves down. These may include the 4 ideas they learn here:
    - Maintain empathy.
    - Give people the benefit of the doubt.
    - Do not personalize the conflict.
    - Keep things in perspective.

But students are bound to add others (breathing techniques, time outs, etc.). For this to be a true brainstorming session, no ideas are rejected at this stage. Write them all down on the board or a flip chart. Have students break into groups and choose one or two of the techniques that they are going to practice for the exercise. Have students share with their group one of their favorite short (3 mins max) videos on youtube (it helps that the video is not something they themselves have written or created), then have them read through the comments until they get to a negative comment. Have them reflect on their feelings at this stage. Are they angry? If so, why? Has the comment hit an emotional button that is unrelated to the video? Is the anger on behalf of someone else? What is the best way to respond? Help them see that replying to the comment might not be a good response in this context, but do discuss if there are ever times when replying might be helpful and what such a reply might look like. Alert students to the possibility that they might be calm now but get angry later, perhaps in the middle of the night. Or they might not realise they are angry and take their anger out on others. This calls for deep reflection. They might surprise you.

## Peace Literacy Lesson Plan

### Introducing the skills for Resolving Conflict/The Power of Calm using *Socratic Dialogue*

- **Begin by asking students, “What is a phobia?”**

Phobias are irrational fears. Sometimes students will say that phobias are simply “fears,” and it is important to mention that phobias do not simply refer to fears, but “irrational fears.”

- **Follow-up by asking for examples of phobias.**

This is a question that students can easily relate to and can give them an opportunity to share how much they know. When I ask this question, the students sometimes tell me about some obscure phobias that I didn’t know about.

Remind the students that almost everyone has a phobia, and it’s nothing to be ashamed of.

#### **Here’s a Level 1 Question that involves gathering information:**

- **Some phobias, such as fear of heights, spiders, or snakes, are common. Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman talks about the most common phobia of all—a phobia that ninety-eight percent of humans share. He calls this the *universal human phobia*. Ask students, “There is a phobia that ninety-eight percent of humans have; can you guess what it is?”**

Ninety-eight percent of humans have a phobia of human aggression directed at them. If students respond by saying “public speaking,” they are partially correct, because the universal human phobia is the underlying fear that causes people to be afraid of public speaking. If students respond by saying being humiliated, betrayed, or anything to do with human beings hurting us, they are also partially correct. The universal human phobia encompasses all forms of malicious human harm that seem to directly target us, which can include humiliation and betrayal.

As this excerpt from *The Cosmic Ocean* makes clear, our fear of human aggression directed at us can be even greater than our fear of death.

*“Fear of human aggression can be even more terrifying than fear of death. For example, every year in America hundreds of thousands die from the effects of smoking, but every day millions of people smoke without worrying. Every year in America tens of thousands*



*die in car accidents, but every day millions of people drive casually to work. However, a few murders by a serial killer can cause a city to go on alert, striking terror in many of its citizens. The September 11 attacks, even though they killed far fewer people than car accidents and smoking related deaths annually, created so much fear that our country has never been the same since.*

*In an article in The Atlantic titled “Americans Are as Likely to Be Killed by Their Own Furniture as by Terrorism,” Micah Zenko wrote: “Of the 13,288 people killed by terrorist attacks [around the world] last year [2011], seventeen were private U.S. citizens, or .001 percent ... The number of U.S. citizens who died in terrorist attacks increased by two between 2010 and 2011; overall, a comparable number of Americans are crushed to death by their televisions or furniture each year. This is not to diminish the real—albeit shrinking—threat of terrorism, or to minimize the loss and suffering of the 13,000 killed and over 45,000 injured around the world. For Americans, however, it should emphasize that an irrational fear of terrorism is both unwarranted and a poor basis for public policy decisions.”*

*The death of every person killed by terrorism is tragic, yet if fifteen thousand Americans were killed by terrorism every year (a thousand times the fifteen Americans killed in 2010), this would still be less than half the number of Americans killed in car accidents annually (usually between thirty and forty thousand).” From *The Cosmic Ocean*, pp. 212-213.*

- **Ask students, “If car accidents and smoking are statistically more likely to kill us, why do people tend to be so much more afraid of terrorism, mass shooters, and violent home invasion than they are of car accidents and smoking?”**

If students say the reason we are more afraid of terrorism than car accidents is because we do not have control when terrorism or other incidents of human violence are concerned, but we do have control when driving is concerned, you can reference pp. 213-214 of *The Cosmic Ocean*, which discusses the lack of control we have when riding in a taxi or sleeping while someone else is driving. Also, accidents and natural disasters are an example where we lack control, but most of us still fear these events less than we fear human aggression directed at us (the universal human phobia).

- **To demonstrate the universal human phobia, ask students, “I am going to give you two scenarios, and you tell me which scenario is more traumatizing. In the first scenario you are riding your bike, you fall off your bike, and you break your leg. In the second scenario you are riding your bike, a group of people grab you, hold you down, and break your leg with a baseball bat.”**

The students usually understand that it would be far more traumatizing to have a broken leg caused by malicious human intent, than by a bike accident.

**Here’s a Level 2 Question that involves processing information:**

- **Ask students, “If the physical injury—a broken leg—is the same in both scenarios, then why is it more traumatizing if people intentionally break our leg?”**

If students say that it is more traumatizing to have our leg broken by attackers because the attackers can come back, remind them that accidents can also reoccur. We could experience an accident at almost any moment of any day, but accidents do not cause as much fear in most people as malicious human attacks do.

One of the reasons that physical injury is more traumatizing when it is caused by people maliciously intending to hurt us, is that it involves a breakdown of trust. The ability to trust other human beings is crucial for human survival. Another reason that human-induced injury is traumatizing is that when someone hurts us and breaks our trust we might have to go through the process of forgiveness in order to fully heal. People don't usually say, "I need to forgive the tornado for destroying my home." Forgiving other people for the harm they have caused, or forgiving ourselves for harm we have caused, can be a difficult process. In *The Cosmic Ocean* pp. 32-39, the nature of trauma caused by malicious human intention is discussed in greater detail.

- **If students return to the lack of control as a significant variable affecting trauma, remind them that we don't have control over natural disasters like earthquakes, tsunamis, tornadoes, hurricanes, wildfires, and mudslides, but we don't fear these events as much as we fear harm caused by malicious human intention. Ask students, "What is more traumatizing, being a black family in the South and having your house destroyed by a tornado, or having your house destroyed by the Ku Klux Klan?"**

Even though the physical result—a destroyed home—is the same in both scenarios, most students will agree that it is more traumatizing if our home is destroyed by people who hate us, rather than by a natural disaster. If a student says that having a house destroyed by the Ku Klux Klan is more traumatizing because the KKK can come back, remind them that, like accidents, natural disasters such as tornadoes can also reoccur, sometimes seasonally.

Although this Socratic Dialogue is focused on conflict resolution and the power of calm, understanding the universal human phobia in terms of the pain that can result when people aggressively hurt us and the power of forgiveness and reconciliation for healing this hurt, can give us a lens through which to better understand conflicts in the classroom, along with conflicts in communities, nations, and the world.

You can also use the universal human phobia as a lens to discuss a variety of historical and modern topics in politics and social studies.

- **You might ask students, "How have political leaders used the universal human phobia to manipulate their people?"**

Discuss how fear, especially in the form of the universal human phobia, can impair our empathy, reason, and even our conscience. When our empathy, reason, and conscience are impaired, we become more susceptible to propaganda and manipulation.

The reading on terrorism from *The Art of Waging Peace* (pp. 244-289) discusses terrorism from a foreign policy perspective, especially the way Osama bin Laden took advantage of the universal human phobia to set a trap for Americans.

You can also have students read from the pamphlet “A New Peace Paradigm: Our Human Needs and the Tangles of Trauma,” which discusses how trauma and our human needs can urge some people toward joining violent extremist groups.

**Here’s a set of Level 3 Questions that involves applying this information:**

- **You can ask students a number of questions about the topic of terrorism, such as: “What are some of the root causes of terrorism? How did Osama bin Laden try to manipulate the universal human phobia within Americans? Did he succeed? How can people react to terrorism in ways that cause them and their country even more harm?”**

Be clear with students that terrorism is certainly a problem, but understanding the universal human phobia reveals deeper dangers of terrorism, such as how we can react to terrorism in ways that make our country less safe, and how people can use fear of terrorism to manipulate us.

Also, we should remind students that it is important to have empathy and not belittle people’s fear of terrorism. People want their families to be safe, and having our family members hurt by other human beings in a terrorist attack can be devastating. Although fear of tragedies such as terrorist attacks, mass shootings, and violent home invasions can seem irrational from a statistical perspective (since they are so unlikely to happen to us), fearing these events is not completely irrational in the sense that these kinds of harm can be far more devastating to our psychology than other forms of harm not caused by malicious human intent.

- **Returning to questions of leadership from the dialogues for skills 4, 5, and 6, and keeping in mind what we now know about the universal human phobia, ask students, “How can leaders make us more courageous rather than afraid in the face of terrorism?”**

Leaders can nurture courage in people by helping us identify the root causes of terrorism and other problems, and also by showing ways to heal those causes. We also become more courageous when we are empowered to take some kind of constructive action, since helplessness and fear tend to go together. Finally, we can build courage when we are not naive and bewildered by violence, but instead understand violence on a very deep level that allows us to better predict it.

To reinforce this last point, have students read this excerpt from Gavin de Becker’s *The Gift of Fear*:

*“The human violence we abhor and fear the most, that which we call ‘random’ and ‘senseless,’ is neither. It always has purpose and meaning, to the perpetrator, at least. We may not choose to explore or understand that purpose, but it is there, and as long as we label it ‘senseless,’ we’ll not make sense of it. Sometimes a violent act is so frightening that we call the perpetrator a monster, but as you’ll see, it is by finding the humanness—his similarity to you and me—that such an act can be predicted.” (p. 15)*

The universal human phobia not only helps explain the behavior of national governments and political organizations but also interpersonal relations. Fear of aggression from other humans is one of the reasons that people are often afraid of interpersonal conflict. Another reason people are often afraid of interpersonal conflict is that they have never been trained in effective techniques to resolve conflict.



When we’re afraid of conflict, we often try to avoid it. However, if we don’t want to directly confront the conflict and still want to express our anger, this can lead us to act out our aggression in a passive or indirect way.

- **Ask students, “What are examples of passive aggressive behavior?”**

Passive aggressive behavior is very common and can happen in a workplace, school, home, or anywhere humans interact. Eye-rolling and sarcasm are forms of passive aggressive behavior that students are familiar with. You can have a very lively discussion with students about sarcasm. Even though it can sound funny at times, sarcasm indirectly communicates aggression. This *Far Side* cartoon shows an example of passive aggressive behavior.

Even though this kind of aggression is passive (in the sense of communicating in an indirect way), it is still hostile. Returning to the first diagram from the dialogues for skills 1, 2, and 3, remember that hostile aggression involves intent to harm. Passive aggressive behavior involves intent to harm through indirect communication.

- **Ask students, “What are some things we can do to help calm other people down when they are in distress and feel aggressive? When you are in distress and feel aggressive, what are some things that people have done to help calm you down?”**

The reading from *The Art of Waging Peace*, pp. 69-77, is called “The Power of Calm,” and it discusses three ways to calm people down: 1) Be Calm; 2) Listen and Be Respectful; and 3) Show Care and Concern.

- **Ask students “How does the escalation of aggression make it more difficult to resolve conflict? How does being calm help us resolve conflict?”**

Harnessing the power of calm can make us much more effective at accomplishing any challenging task we are involved in, including resolving conflict.

This is explained in *The Art of Waging Peace*, “Calm reduces the chaos, confusion, and unpredictability in a situation . . . Aggression increases the chaos, confusion, and unpredictability in a situation. Calm and aggression are both also contagious. Calm people can transform a hostile situation into a peaceful and productive discussion, whereas aggression can have a domino effect, causing the situation to spiral out of control.” (p. 108)

You can also relate the power of calm to students’ everyday experiences by discussing how people who are involved in martial arts, musical performances, various team sports, and even boxing know that when they are calm under pressure, their minds function optimally and they can perform better. In the following quote, Lt. Col. Dave Grossman discusses why the power of calm is even important when waging war. So why wouldn't the power of calm be even more important when waging peace?

*“As a warrior, your concern is always to help others, and to do that you must be the rock of calm. When the whole world is coming unglued and all about you are losing their heads and blaming it on you, your job is to be that rock that others can anchor themselves to . . . Panic can be contagious, and so is calm. As a warrior, you must be an example of calm.”* (p. 337)

**Here’s a Level 3 Question that involves applying information:**

- **Ask students “What are some things we can do to help ourselves remain calm in the midst of conflict with someone?”**

To help us remain calm in the midst of conflict we need to focus on four things:

1. Maintain empathy when we are in conflict with someone.
2. Give people the benefit of the doubt when we are in conflict with them, which means seeking clarification rather than acting from a position of ignorance.
3. Do not personalize the conflict, which means using empathy to escape the confines of our own ego, and training our mind to see the other factors playing into the conflict.
4. Keep things in perspective, which means training our mind to think about reasons why we appreciate people when we come into conflict with them.

If we can practice these four behaviors, this will not only help us remain calm, but this will also help us clear up miscommunication and misunderstanding, resolve conflict, and build a culture of trust.

Clearing up miscommunication and misunderstanding is important, since most human conflict is caused by people feeling disrespected (as discussed in the dialogues for skills 4, 5, and 6), and many instances of disrespect are caused by miscommunication and misunderstanding. An example is feeling that someone is demeaning us, which is the opposite of “speaking to our potential” (skill 6), when the sense of being demeaned may actually derive from a miscommunication or misunderstanding. This is why giving people the benefit of the doubt is so important, because it encourages us to seek clarification rather than acting from a position of ignorance, thereby allowing us to clear up miscommunication and misunderstanding.

- **Now you can build on these points. Ask students, “When we are in conflict with someone, how might it help for us to have empathy for them?”**

As long as we maintain empathy for the person, we are less likely to be aggressive with them, and we are more likely to keep our temper under control. We might still become a little frustrated, but having empathy keeps this frustration from building to a flood of rage.

Rage prevents us from being able to reason clearly. That is one reason why we have to put so much effort into strengthening our muscle of empathy.

- **Often when we are in a conflict with someone we learn later that we were mistaken and that we had misunderstood the person. Ask students, “What does it mean to give someone the benefit of the doubt?” and “How might this help us remain calm during a conflict?”**

Giving people the benefit of the doubt means seeking clarification rather than acting from a position of ignorance. When we jump to conclusions we act from a position of ignorance.

- **We next move to a discussion of the problems that can arise when we personalize conflicts. Ask students, “When we personalize a conflict, how can this distort how we see the conflict? How can seeing beyond ourselves help us gain a more accurate understanding?”**

When we personalize a conflict, we put ourselves at the center. Not personalizing a conflict means putting the conflict at the center, and trying to understand the factors revolving around the conflict. We are just one of those factors. We might be the primary factor causing the conflict, or the conflict could be caused by other factors not related to us, such as the person having a bad day at work or reacting to trauma.



You can illustrate this on the board with two diagrams, one titled “Personalizing the Conflict” where you write the word “Me” at the center, and draw the factors revolving around the word “Me” (similar to how people used to think that the Sun and planets revolved around the Earth). And then draw a second diagram titled “Not Personalizing the Conflict” with the words “The Conflict” at the center, and “Me” along with other factors revolving around “The Conflict” (similar to how we now know that the planets, including the Earth, revolve around the Sun). Not personalizing the conflict is similar to the Copernican Revolution that changed what was at the center.

- **When we are in a conflict with someone we often lose perspective. For example, we suddenly dislike everything about them. Ask students “Have you ever suddenly disliked everything about someone when you got into a conflict with them? How did this affect the way you saw the conflict?”**

When we suddenly dislike everything about someone when we get into a conflict with them, this can cause us to lose perspective and make the conflict seem bigger. Share with students that one effective technique for keeping the conflict in perspective is to train our mind to think about reasons why we appreciate people when we have conflicts with them. Even a small conflict can blow things out of proportion and cause us to lose perspective, and cultivating appreciation helps us keep things in perspective. Many people have destroyed friendships and relationships over small conflicts, because they lost perspective.

Remind students that these are skills, and like any skill, we will not master them overnight. Strengthening any skill requires practice and effort.

**Here’s another Level 3 Question that involves applying information:**

- **Even if we can’t avoid every conflict, we can often learn a lot from conflict. Ask students, “How can we grow from conflict? What can we learn?”**

To guide this part of the discussion, have students read this excerpt from *The Cosmic Ocean*:

*“Conflicts in a human community are normal, but they do not have to be destructive. Just as burning embers are an inevitable consequence of campfires, conflicts are an inevitable consequence of living in a human community. If burning embers are not extinguished properly, they can spread fire and destroy an entire forest. In a similar way, if conflicts are not resolved properly, they can spread strife and destroy an entire community. All of us can learn to douse the embers of conflict with the water of effective conflict resolution. **When conflicts are resolved effectively, they give people an opportunity to clear up misunderstandings, better understand each other, and strengthen their bonds of solidarity.**” (pp. 155-156)*

And this excerpt from *Soldiers of Peace*:

*“Martial arts and the military taught me to see conflict as an opportunity, because it can allow us to arrive at greater clarity and understanding. What causes so much harm is not really conflict, but destructive conflict resolution.”* (pp. 122-123)

Learning from conflict is a skill that takes a lot of practice.

- **Finally, acknowledge that sometimes it is important to feel outrage when we witness certain kinds of conflicts. Ask students, “What kinds of conflicts should cause us to feel outrage?”**

Being calm does not mean that we never feel outrage. Confronting injustice can sometimes cause us to feel moral outrage or what I refer to in *The End of War*, as “moral fury.” But our minds function optimally and we are best prepared to solve problems like injustice when we are calm. Martial arts, sports, performance arts, and the military teach people the importance of being calm under pressure.

- **Ask students, “How can the power of calm help us channel our moral fury in constructive ways?”**

Discuss this excerpt from *The Art of Waging Peace*:

*“When people tell us about a truly unjust problem they are having, the moral fury within us can erupt like a burning flame. A flame is calm, but also intense. It is soothing, but also fierce. The flame of moral fury can be calm and soothing to those treated unjustly, while intensely and fiercely opposing the forces of injustice.”* (p. 76)

Moral fury is an emotion, and people with empathy and conscience often instinctually feel this emotion when they witness injustice. This is a good thing. But moral fury is not a strategy. It is not a plan or roadmap for overcoming the root causes of injustice. When people criticize activists for being outraged by injustice and trying to solve problems with emotion rather than reason, we should keep in mind that feeling moral fury about injustice is not the problem, and the world would be better off if more people felt outraged by the injustices that so many ignore. Instead, the problem is when people mistake the emotion of moral fury for a strategy. Moral fury is fuel that can propel a strategy toward practical solutions for reducing and ending injustice.

For a longer discussion of moral fury, have students read *The End of War* (pp. 80 – 100).



## Please Share Your Experience!

If you used ***Peace Literacy Lesson Plan 1*** in your class, **please send a quick email** to our curriculum coordinator, [Sharyn.clough@oregonstate.edu](mailto:Sharyn.clough@oregonstate.edu), and let us know:

- \* the name of your school or school district
- \* how many students were in your class
- \* what parts worked best
- \* any suggestions you have for improvement

**Thank you!**