



Did You Know?

Creating Peace and Harmony



“Like a ripple in the water, each tiny act of peace reverberates out into the world, expanding the experience of peace for all of us.”

How well are you doing at creating peace and harmony in your life?

This is the holiday season—a time of music, cards, family rituals, and various faith traditions that speak of “peace to all,” “goodwill to others,” and “joy to the world.” We find ourselves motivated to strengthen family traditions and create new memories for our children. We seek time to honor important relationships, and we search for gifts to show our love. We are not a solitary people. Everyone--deep down--feels pulled to *connection*. At this time of the year, we feel the pull to connect even more.

What a perfect time to contemplate how we can each contribute to peace. We live in an interconnected world. We are linked by our actions and our stories. Regardless of our differences, we are all the same in our ‘essence.’ What happens to one person/ species/ country/or environment affects another. Even Maria Montessori wanted to teach peace. Many years ago, when she created a model of education to nurture the spirit of young children, she had this goal in mind. Teaching children the value of helping others in the spirit of goodwill, without regard to differences, is a step towards world peace.

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Just as an act of violence sends out shock waves affecting everyone around, so too does an act of peace.
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How can we make a difference today? *Six Billion Paths to Peace* (Shinnyo-En Foundation) is an effort to inspire people to focus on our interconnectedness and reflect upon the individual contributions that each of us can make to a more harmonious world. Their motto says: “*There are a million ways to serve and six billion ways to walk towards a more peaceful global community.*” This is a perfect time to become more conscious of ways to teach our children the walk towards peace.

PEACE-BUILDING POSSIBILITIES

Acts of Service to Make Our World a More Peaceful Place



Each of us has a CHOICE. We can react to challenges in our life and our world with anger and frustration. Or, we can approach our challenges with an attitude of service. We can choose to walk the path of peace-making. We teach our children by how we live our own lives. Be a model of peace in your family. Let your *life* be your child's teacher. Consider some of these possibilities for creating more harmony in your own life. Some have been suggested by the *Shinnyo-en Foundation* and *Six Billion Paths to Peace*.

Create Harmony within Yourself

Increase your sense of peace by expressing your deepest values through your actions. Think about your core values? In what ways are you living out of your core values right now? When have your actions & values felt in sync? When have they felt out of sync? Are they out of sync now?

What You Can Do to Create Harmony Within...

- Take a minute to notice what has made you peaceful today. Pass it on to someone.
- Post an image or quote about “harmony” in your home or work space to remind you of the universal value of peace.
- Create a quiet space for you to sit and slow down. Decorate it with a candle, flowers, or a special memento to calm you.
- Sit for 5 minutes in silence. Breathe in peace... breathe out stress.
- Reflect on what you learned about service to others.
- Write your Service Story and submit it at www.sef.org.
- Say “no” to something being asked of you that robs you of inner harmony.
- Take a few moments to stop and think about how grateful you are to be loved, how lucky you are to be alive, or how in awe you are of nature's beauty around you.
- Establish a “Gratefulness Ritual” with your children. Make a time for them to express their gratefulness for one thing each day—at meal time, bedtime, or just snuggling on your lap.

❄️ Create Harmony with Others

Look at your relationships with others. Notice how trying to come from a perspective of service can bring about greater harmony. Reflect on how adopting an attitude of ‘acceptance’ changes your interactions with loved ones. Similarly, searching for the ‘positive intent’ behind the other person’s behavior can dramatically alter the way you respond to them. Ask: Which of my relationships feel like they are in harmony? Where do I sense uneasiness in my relationships? What type of gesture might I initiate to either increase the harmony or decrease the uneasiness? Harmony between individuals is critical to world peace.

Use the PEACE BLANKET

to solve problems at home!

Introduce your children to the concept of the “Peace Blanket.” Use a small blanket which you spread on the floor when children are having a disagreement. Tell them, *“This is a place for us to sit down together to talk and solve problems when there is an argument or disagreement. We don’t get up until we have found a solution that everybody is happy with.”*

Or try the PEACE ROSE for simple conflict resolution.

Keep an artificial rose in a special place. When two children are having a conflict, ask one to hold the rose and tell what happened and how he feels about it. Then ask the other child to hold the rose and express her feelings. Coach them to come up with their own solution. When they are finished, have them both put their hands on the rose stem and say, *“We declare peace.”*

Good PEACE Books for Children

Peace Begins with You and The Peace Rose

(may be found at www.montessoriservices.com)

What You Can Do to Create Harmony With Others...

- Express gratitude to someone you appreciate.
- Reach out to someone new, or who you don’t know very well.
- Be nice to someone who hasn’t been nice to you.
- Mend a challenging relationship by reaching out, apologizing, or appreciating someone.
- Give 10 words of affirmation for every criticism you make to your child: *Wow! Great! You’re incredible! I knew you could do it! You deserve a hug! Thanks for helping! What a great listener! You really tried hard! Awesome! I love you!*
- Listen FIRST—then respond.
- Stop trying to control life and control others. Make a conscious decision to “stay on your own mat.”
- Practice small kindnesses:
 - Let the motorist turn in front of you on the road.
 - Allow a person with a few groceries to go ahead of you in the supermarket.
 - Hand the tray to the person in back of you in the security line in the airport.
- Spend time in the company of people who have a positive effect on you. Human connectedness is a most powerful healer.

❄️ Create Harmony among Groups, Community, & Nations

Perhaps the most complex level on which to foster global harmony is the organizational and institutional. When we engage with others to work together in partnership, we bring about greater global harmony through service. What clubs, groups or communities are you a part of? What is one value shared by two or more of these groups? Have you ever been a catalyst for bringing greater harmony between diverse groups?

What You Can Do to Create Harmony Among Groups, Community, and Nations...

- Give up ‘scarcity thinking.’ Give a dollar. Give \$20. Save your change and give even more. Know that when we give, we receive.
- Volunteer your time to a worthy cause.
- Suspend your judgment and listen to the history or happenings of a person (or organization) from a country that you don’t know well.
- Find a way to remind people in different groups that they share core values.
- Initiate or facilitate a conversation with a diverse group of people to share stories that matter.
- Encourage grandparents to tell stories about their lives. They can offer the perspective that life is a precious, precious thing.

❄️ Contemplate Your Own Path to Peace

In your effort to help others, what thoughts or actions drain you? How might you change your thoughts or actions so they are less draining? When have you done things for others in a way that gave you energy and joy?

What You Can Do to Contemplate Your Own Path to Peace...

- Appreciate cause and effect: if you don’t like what is happening in your life, look at what *you* are doing.
- Commit to a daily act of service—no matter how small.
- Unexpected difficulties sometimes teach us the best lessons. Instead of feeling bent out of shape if your day doesn’t go exactly as expected, take whatever the day offers as a gift and learn from it.
- Think of the “good stuff.” Let go of what you can’t make different or better.
- Live in the moment. Experience what you are doing-- instead of thinking about what you’ll do next.
- Let go of the past. Forgiving frees us from resentment, which blocks our energy and happiness.
- De-stress by changing the tape in your head. Instead of *“This is terrible,”* say *“I can deal with this.”*
- Reassess your beliefs. Are you living by secondhand values? Do they promote love /self-acceptance?
- Slow down. When you slow down, you relax your body and reduce the demands on your mind.

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In order to model peaceful behavior for our children, we must first have PEACE WITHIN ourselves.

