How to Communicate Peace and Harmony in Schools

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Abstract

The Culture of Peace consists of values, attitudes and behaviors that reject violence. In a peaceful world, problems are generally solved through dialogue and negotiation. Communication finds centre place in peace. Peace would not exist, until and unless the people throughout the world give up their believe that world peace is attainable through a multifaceted effort but realize that starting with the education of children and youth. Although, inner peace is acquired and spread in adult stage but seed of this is sown in very childhood.

Teachers should present themselves as peace makers, i.e. the persons having inner peace, recognize their power and act as ambassadors of peace. In this paper, the author has discussed how to communicate for peace, highlighted the role of teachers and the practices which a school can adopt. The paper also deals with a survey conducted in Haryana on pupil teachers to study the knowledge of peace and role of teachers.

How to Communicate Peace and Harmony in Schools

Peace is a state of harmony characterized by the lack of violence and conflict. Peace of mind is generally associated with bliss and happiness. Peace education in UNICEF refers to the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, inter-group, national or international level. Building and maintaining peace requires active involvement.

How to communicate for peace?

Communication plays a vital role in maintaining peace and harmony. Healthy communication is a key element in keeping peace and harmony in one’s life and in others too. Good communication eliminates being misunderstood and prevents stressful situations. Saying what one mean not only gives a sense of peace but also earn the respect from others when they know that he/she is true to words.

Disappointment of any kind directs to the state of mental restlessness, frustration, discomfort and eagerness which result into disturbance and ultimately to an unrest soul. For peaceful communication,
humour, tolerance, listening, clarity of massage etc. are personal qualities on which the potency of peace depends.

Humor allows one to release tension and to show up the suppressive tendencies of extremist thinking. It is the technique through which even extensive disapproval squeezes out and makes the person feel lighter by helping him/her to forget the bad conditions. Humor makes the person stress free and the situation becomes tolerable.

Tolerance in all that one think and do will make a difference in his/her life and in the lives of others also. Tolerance for others is about appreciating diversity, the plurality of modern society, and being willing to live and let others live too. When we fail to tolerate others’ beliefs, ways of being, views and opinions, the end result can be discrimination, domination, dehumanization, and ultimately violence. Practicing tolerance is at the heart of living peacefully. To tolerate is to accept others in their natural condition no matter how he/she is and to listen and understand his/her situation.

In true listening, one can reach behind the words and even see through them. Listening is a search to find the treasure of the true person as revealed verbally and non-verbally. The importance of reflective listening to living a peaceful life is that one should stop seeing people purely from his/her perspective and start trying hard to dig down into what another person is really saying and meaning. This can lead to effective give-and-take rather than reacting according to what one thinks, one hears by inferring and guessing. Listening is an act of attentive mind and kind heart before reaction. To feel the words during listening, transparency of matter is equally important. One can only understand if the massage which is being conveyed is clear to him/her.

So, the clarity of the message is always vital to ensure peace. Further, much conflict arises out of misunderstandings. When communicating with others, seek to avoid ordering, moralizing, demanding, threatening or excessively needling them with questions aimed at eliciting too much information. Each of these forms of communication will create confusion and give rise to conflict with others who feel that other is trying to control them rather than speak with them as an equal. Even in our schools, this should be kept in mind to avoid conflict. In today’s classroom, constructive approach are being followed in which everyone, teacher and taught are given equal level and teacher should act like a guide and facilitator. They should communicate through supporting individualism of the students and maintaining diversities.

These are important, constructive communication skills that help the teachers to avoid or effectively move through conflict with others. Long-lasting peace may depend on educating future generations into the competencies, perspectives, attitudes, values and behavioral patterns that will enable them to build and maintain peace. Although, inner peace is acquired and spread in adult stage but seed of this should be sown in very childhood. It is very difficult to change the attitudes, values and behavioural patterns developed in childhood. Types of these attributes seen and acquired in early days of life always persist in brain though in unconscious mind. If the person wants to change these and tries to reflect only positive qualities, even then, at the stage of mental pressure or acute stress, the attitude and behavioural
patterns present in unconscious mind finds the way to squeeze out and overpowers the positive one which he/she has presents to others through control.

Realizing the power of child, Mahatma Gandhi once stated, “If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children.” Peace would not exist unless people throughout the world believe that world peace is attainable through a multifaceted effort but starting with the education of children and youth.

“No one has yet realized the wealth of sympathy, the kindness and generosity hidden in the soul of a child.”

Teachers as creative managers should cash this wealth of children for peace and harmony.

So, what the researcher think is if a person doesn’t have any idea of violence since birth, he/she has not seen or felt any kind of insult, negativity, at the early days of life then the person will not behave violently at any time, even at the stage of acute stress or tension. Further, teachers are next to the family members who are close to child in early days. The most important role of teachers in the whole educational system is to interact closely and harmoniously with the children, parents and families.

For peaceful world, the first thing is to know what is to be given to the children, what is to be taught, the objective of the teaching i.e. what matter should be given to the children which will influence the thinking process and ultimately add to their personality for their future life. Teachers, especially of primary and secondary level should have the competencies to distinguish what is required to teach the children or as an adult what they would be going to tackle or face the problems of a global interdependent nature, be the problems of peace, security, quality of life, inflation or scarcity of natural resources. In keeping with the requirements of the times, consideration should be given to teaching the concept of world citizenship as part of the quality education of every child. Citizenship education can be defined as educating children, from early childhood, to become clear-thinking and enlightened citizens who participate in decisions concerning society. So that children can understand in very early stage of their life about their role and responsibility in the society especially for world peace.

Here is some outline that can be introduced for education for peace. Children from an early age can first begin learning and practicing human values in groups through cooperative learning and cooperative games, both of which improve social interactions. The children can be engaged in a variety of participatory and play activities to develop these values. They can sing peaceful songs, chant, listen to peaceful music, draw peace symbols, listen to stories about topics such as love, peace and kindness and so forth. They begin to learn the consequences of a person's actions upon another person, another aspect of the process of becoming a peaceful person and a peacemaker. In this connection, they begin to learn how to solve conflicts between people in order to make everyone happy and this is reinforced through the use of problem solving. Acceptance of the oneness of mankind is the first fundamental prerequisite for reorganization and administration of the world as one kingdom, as the home of humankind. Universal acceptance of this principle is essential to any successful attempt in the way of world peace.
Once recognized what to be given to the children, the next is to how to be given? i.e. the most important part of teaching.

How do teachers, schools, and school systems get started in educating for peace?

Education for peace will not be much effective through traditional teaching methods. Violence in the classroom in any form of punishment, insult, aggressive behaviour, negative comments etc should be stopped immediately. Teacher should realize that the children are not the medium to outlet their stress and frustrations. For peace loving children, they should be nurtured in a stress free atmosphere with full of love, sympathy, cooperation and appreciation. Appreciation has a great impact and plays a vital role for peaceful mind. The amount of appreciation invested at the stage of childhood will pay much more in adult. Although, the teacher should be conscious regarding the amount and cause of appreciation to be given because, if it is not given in the appropriate manner, it may result into the development of ego (I) among the students.

Further, the content, method and process of teaching should be improved in the light of achieving living with harmony and peace. In addition to this, first the teachers should be satisfied and peace loving persons. They should have inner peace and then only they will be able to spread, generate and develop peaceful souls leading to peace in World.

Communication for peace should also include the use of cooperative learning for all school subjects as well as the cooperative games so that peace education in one form or another can impact schools in all subjects each and every school day. Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning. Any assignment in any curriculum for the students of any age can be done cooperatively. This approach that has been developed in India aims at producing peaceful, morally mature individuals who are active peacemakers and contribute to a more unified, peaceful, progressive nation and world. Since education for peace is value-centered, peace being a value itself, the primary means to achieve this aim is a growing understanding of what are termed universal human values and the various ways and means of practicing them according to the capacities and potentialities of the students.

In India, emphasis on value education has been given since long ago which is integrated with peace education. There is enough content in early education system related to values and peace. But the method of teaching needs to be moulded in the desired direction of fear free conducive environment which governs peace. The Government of India has taken steps to provide such type of environment and emphasized on constructive approach of learning in education. The teachers have to change their traditional and easy way of teaching to challenging, creative and cooperative style. Teacher’s own personality should be like a cooperative person having inner peace, which can guide and facilitate tranquil learning. Create situations to learn the way of Peace and use cooperative learning. But even till date, teachers are not efficiently trained in cooperative learning. Even, they don’t have inner peace and suffer with anxiety and frustration, further are loaded with stress, not free, not present as role model of
ideal and peace loving person. They have not been trained in such manner. At present, social complexity and living patterns including lifestyle also add up in making the teachers more unpleasant. Some of them having desired personality are due to their ‘Sanskaar’ only.

Gandhiji said that power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the power gained through threat of punishment. If you’ve learned to “control” other people through threatening behavior, demeanor or actions, those persons subjected to your power will be responding out of compulsion, not out of respect or care for you. This is not a peaceful way to live.

Therefore, teachers should learn the skills of negotiation, conflict resolution and assertive communication. These are important, constructive communication skills that help the teachers to avoid or effectively move through the conflicts with others. Not all conflict can be avoided, and not every conflict is bad provided one know how to manage it skillfully in time. Keeping peace is also associated with the managerial skill. If teachers feel that they don’t have enough skills in these forms of communication, they should try to on the ways to improve further or training should be given.

Listening, peaceful talk, a kindly tongue, seeing good in others, associating with good massage and people, avoiding conflicts, skillfully managing bad situations, discovering emotions, sharing feelings, understanding and respecting others’ feelings, being kind, helpful and polite, the cooperation and encouragement, the justice and fairness, encouraging others to do good, appreciation, controlling the anger, etc adds for peace. Ways and means of developing these peaceful values or virtues or good qualities as a means of attaining inner peace and peace in society are of great importance.

Other excellent ways of developing peaceful values that can be practiced daily are prayer and meditation. Development of a peaceful, moral person of real benefit to society is an active peacemaker teacher. Teachers need to consciously base their actions as a peacemaker upon the application of universal or near-universal values such as justice and fairness, truthfulness, trustworthiness, honesty and equity. All such developments require collaboration and effort.

First, teachers should look at the interest as well as wealth of talent that they already possess, give it a common aim, set it in the right direction and train it, overcoming the obstacles. Creative teachers introduce peace education into their classes. Some introduce new ideas into existing subjects in the curriculum using the infusion approach. They should respect the diversity within children and develop human values among them and use collaborative and constructive approach in teaching.

Teachers are key drivers for attainment of world peace. Realizing the significant role of teachers in making peaceful souls and bringing peace in world, a survey was conducted in Haryana on pupil teachers to study “the knowledge of peace and role of teachers”. The data was collected with the help of a questionnaire having statements related to peace, its symbol, conflict, its causes and danger, situational conflict, conflict resolution, managerial skills, quick decision making and peaceful classroom practices. The data obtained is presented below (table -1)
Table-1: Attitude of pupil teachers towards peace and role of teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Peace Symbol</th>
<th>Concept of Peace</th>
<th>Concept of Conflict</th>
<th>Causes of Conflict</th>
<th>Danger of Conflict</th>
<th>Responsible For Conflict</th>
<th>Conflict Manager</th>
<th>Knowledge of Managerial skills</th>
<th>Decision making practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>43 %</td>
<td>88 %</td>
<td>78 %</td>
<td>61 %</td>
<td>57 %</td>
<td>38 %</td>
<td>47 %</td>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>41 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the result obtained, it was concluded that 88% of the teachers understand what is peace and 78% what is conflict. It means the pupil teachers are conscious about the meaning of peace and conflict. 61% and 57% of them were aware about the causes of conflict and dangers of conflict respectively i.e. how conflicts can get worse and what can happen as the result of these actions. Only 38% agreed being responsible for solving conflicts and how to avoid and resolve conflicts through cooperation, listening, talking, sharing, taking turns, helping, apologizing, appreciating and compromising. 47% agreed that they behave as conflict managers and try to resolve or avoid conflicts. 20% of them were unaware about what to do if their peacemaking activities fail and if they quickly have to do something to avoid people getting hurt. 41% of them practice quick decision making in a crisis. They practice having a peaceful classroom in which there are rules and come to understand that rules and laws can help bring peace. Whereas, 43% of teachers studied, recognized some of the peace symbols which are found worldwide.

After this work, the pupil teachers were given peace lessons. After peace lessons, they reported that their own attitudes have changed and that they have learned a lot and will practice the same in their job world in future for peaceful world. Their training as peaceful, moral people who are peacemakers contributing to a more unified, more peaceful, through world peace activities. This includes peace and the practice of love, the further development of the concept that humankind is one family, inner peace within and outer peace throughout the whole world, developing inner peace by helping others and making peace in world, our greatest desire and the ultimate goal.

Teachers need to have access to existing resources provided by the institution. But above all, teachers need the understanding and long-term support of their school heads and fellow teachers. At present, a few teacher education programs are preparing teachers with the required skills and knowledge to teach peace education.

**How teacher can communicate peace in a variety of ways**

“Teaching our children to treat others as they wish to be treated is one of the most fundamental values we adults can pass on. We would have a different country and world if this lesson was learned and followed.”

*Marian Wright Edelman*
Peace is an active process, not a passive state because it directly influences the behaviour. School and Teacher can communicate peace through following activities

1. School should function as ‘peace zones’, where children are safe and free from any kind of conflict.
2. Develop a climate, within the school, that models peaceful and rights-respectful behaviour in the relationships between all members of the school community: teachers, administrators, other staff, parents, and children.
3. Celebration of International Peace Day on 15 September in which parents, families and the local communities can be invited.
4. Celebration of Special Peace at schools and inter-school peace programs in which public can be invited.
5. Organization of conflict prevention and resolution training program at the school.
6. Promoting activities for peace. Train teachers having clear concept of peace in total environment i.e. for all living and non-living things.
7. Publicity of peace activities in schools through media and face-to-face contacts between parents with teachers during which peace issues can be discussed and the development of the positive potentialities of the students should be explored.
8. The school should provide opportunities for continuous reflection and professional development of all educators in relation to issues of peace, justice and rights.
9. Teachers should be as role models for inspiring harmony and peace, they should be happy persons having inner peace.
10. Teachers should be competent in life skills. They should act as conflict managers. Handle conflicts—whether between children or between children and adults in a non-violent manner that respects the rights and dignity of all.
11. Integrate an understanding of peace, human rights, social justice and global issues throughout the curriculum whenever possible.
12. Provide a forum for the explicit discussion of values of peace and social justice in the classroom.
13. Action should be taken to keep away children from violence.
14. Women teachers should be motivated to have a special role in creating a culture of peace.
15. Training of democratic citizenship and motivating children for universal brotherhood. They should be helped to understand responsibility.
16. Teachers should actualize the importance of bio-diversity.
17. Use teaching and learning methods that promote participation, cooperation, problem-solving and respect for differences.
18. Promote and develop human values including, moral, spiritual, social and environmental.
19. Using cooperative and interactive methods that allow for active student participation and practice
20. Incorporating conflicts analysis and resolution patterns.
21. Providing young people with the opportunity to engage in constructive, peace-building activities in their school and community
22. Provide opportunities to children to practice peace-making, both in the educational setting and in the wider community
23. Train teachers, so that they can both internalize concepts and skills of peace education for themselves, and be adequately prepared to convey those concepts and skills to others.

24. Developing awareness for biosphere, teachers not only encourage children to plant a flowering seedling but also provide space for it and instruct them to take regular care. This will release the daily tensions pertaining to the studies and improve the behaviour.

25. The teacher can organize Peace Fair in which an assortment of student projects that demonstrate how we can create or reinstate peaceful communication with others can be displayed.

   Additionally, experts can present their views to inspire and teach students how to incorporate the concept of peace into their everyday lives which will become a life style.

However, there is a clear need for more systematic research and evaluation of education for peace in order to provide more information on factors that contribute to effectiveness in the wide range of social and cultural contexts. Peace education is more effective when it is adapted according to the social and cultural context and the needs of a society. It is enriched by that society's cultural and spiritual values along with universal human values.

Technologies can’t create peace. But they can certainly contribute to an environment where people can more easily communicate, understand the current situation, visualize the implications of their actions, understand each other’s point of view, and form meaningful relationships with people who are geographically or culturally distant. All of these are important aids in the peace-building process, as we move, one step at a time, towards a world of lasting peace.

As the children grow older, they come to grips with the higher and lower values possessed within themselves and within others through overcoming violence with peace, overcoming hatred through love, overcoming indifference with compassion, overcoming falsehood with truth, overcoming unreliability with trustworthiness, overcoming injustice with justice and reaching the goals through developing virtues.

In short, all teachers will make a big difference within and outside your schools as true "ambassadors of peace." It has been said that one inspired, dedicated person can have the power of 10,000 but one inspired, dedicated teacher can have the power of 10, 00,000. Now is the time to channel the power that is within teacher. The way of peace is overcome evil with good, falsehood with truth and hatred with love. And the practice of it should be initiated at the personal situation. If as a teacher, anyone wants to teach people, young or old, he/she must start where they are and at their level of understanding. Physical violence can end before we have learned the way of love, but psychological violence will continue until we do. Only outer peace can be had through law. The way to inner peace is through and via love. A handful of concerned people definitely breaks the ice and bring peace in society.

“Our children and grandchildren – and unborn generations to come – are depending on teachers…to make the wise decisions that will determine their future. The choice is in our teachers hands."
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“Om Shanti”