

Educating for Peace through Countering Violence:

Strategies in Curriculum and Instruction

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Chapter 9

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Appendix A

Data from Our Research

Table 1

Communication at home considering the variable “Sex”

	Item 1 At home, we do not talk about what affects us personally	Item 2 At home, we do not debate about current affairs	Item 3 When a topic is controversial or problematic, we prefer not to address it with children	Item 4 At home, we spent more time listening to music, watching videos, or playing videogames than talking to each other	Item 5 When in need of talking about their concerns, our children confide more in their friends than in us	Item 6 Our children do not much appreciate our opinion concerning their decisions	Item 7 In family arguments we lose respect for each other, shout, and become aggressive	Item 8 Communication with our sons and daughters is unsatisfactory	Item 9 In family arguments, we find it difficult to put in each other's shoes	Item 10 Sometimes, we do not pay attention to our children's opinion
Bil. A. Sig.	.000	.113	.061	.061	.076	.094	.783	.202	.577	.499
a. Mann-Whitney U test										
b. Grouping variable: Sex										

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for each group considering the variable “Sex”

Sex		Item 1
Man (N= 264)	Mean	1.76
	Standard Deviation	.746
Woman (N= 1,214)	Mean	1.55
	Standard Deviation	.774
Non-binary (N= 2)	Mean	1.50
	Standard Deviation	.707

Table 3

Communication at home considering the variable “Age”

	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8	Item 9	Item 10
Bil. A. Sig.	.050	.051	.265	.005	.000	.039	.691	.010	.044	.938
a. Mann-Whitney U test										
b. Grouping variable: Age										

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations for each group considering the variable “Age”

		Item 1	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 8	Item 9
Under 30 (N= 12)	Mean	1.92	1.92	1.67	1.83	1.5	2.42
	Standard Deviation	0.966	0.9	0.888	0.937	0.905	0.9
Between 30-50 (N= 1,231)	Mean	1.57	2.21	2.01	1.85	1.79	1.99
	Standard Deviation	0.766	0.771	0.746	0.742	0.788	0.779

Table 9

Means and Standard Deviations for each group considering the variable “Typology of school”

Typology of school		Item 5
State, charter, private (N= 73)	Mean	2.22
	Standard Deviation	.692
Charter (N= 481)	Mean	2.00
	Standard Deviation	.739
Public (N= 926)	Mean	2.05
	Standard Deviation	.744

Table 10

Communication at home considering the variable “Children’s age”

	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8	Item 9	Item 10
Bil. A. Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.114	.013	.750	.138	.660	.971
a. Mann-Whitney U test										
b. Grouping variable: Children’s age										

Table 11

Means and Standard Deviations for each group considering the variable “Children’s age”

Children’s age		Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8
Under 12 (N= 650)	Mean	1.79	2.08	1.85	1.80	1.87	1.74
	Standard Deviation	.805	.780	.793	.764	.804	.810
12 or more (N= 454)	Mean	1.64	2.33	2.26	1.94	1.82	1.85
	Standard Deviation	.734	.735	.658	.669	.753	.753
Both under 12 & more than 12 (N= 376)	Mean	1.68	2.38	2.12	1.91	1.96	1.90
	Standard Deviation	.774	.738	.713	.733	.804	.788

Appendix B

Tools and Strategies for Reconstruction and Reconciliation Within the Family:

Communication Skills to Agree and Disagree in Peace

«What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family»

Mother Teresa, Nobel Prize 1979

Peacebuilding at Home

The aim of this appendix is to suggest paths for dialogue, conflict resolution and peacebuilding at home. Caring for oneself, for other members in the family, and for all human beings and the planet is a real way of making the world a better place.

Any family is a true laboratory of peace in which the interactions between adults and children challenge and enrich each other, always under conditions of respect, empathy, confidence, and mutual support.

To become everyday peacemakers, it is essential to have an idea of what peace and conflict mean. Both concepts are complex and dynamic and still “under construction” in many different contexts.

Peace

Peace is not simple lack of conflict, conformity and order, nor balance of power or security. Peace encompasses inner harmony and social justice (liberty, equality, solidarity) which require nonviolent ways of settling conflict and creating conditions for everyone to have their human rights granted. Thus, peace is intentional.

Conflict

Conflict is a natural part of life that brings opportunities for change. Conflict itself is not positive nor negative, it depends on how we respond to it. In most conflicts there are three elements to be considered: substantive (what’s on stake), subjective (perceptions and feelings), and relational (power and process). Then, life is conflictual.

Peace and conflict are usually coupled with violence and its many manifestations.

Violence

Violence entails a deliberate use of power or force against oneself, others or the planet resulting in harm. There are direct forms of violence caused by a recognizable actor (physical, verbal, psychological), structural forms of violence where it is not so easy to identify an actor (unjust norms, inequality, exploitation, poverty), and cultural forms of violence rooted in collective traditions that justify oppression through direct and structural violence (racism, sexism, homophobia, fundamentalism...). Nevertheless, to use violence is a choice.

Intersectionality

Different kinds of violence combine to harm the same person or group. Factors that nowadays can trigger violence are associated with gender, cultural origin, religion, disability, poverty, sexuality, and physical appearance, among others. In schools, for example, the above-mentioned factors increase the chance of being bullied. Consequently, different kinds of violence add up.

Finally, any family consciously intending to contribute to peace, accepting conflicts as opportunities, and refusing to use any kind of violence should take reconstruction, reconciliation and nonviolence into consideration.

Reconstruction

Damage caused by violence lasts even after the aggressions have stopped, thus after a dispute any harm done has to be repaired. From the point of view of restorative justice, the whole group or community must get involved to make things right. It is the offender who has to start the process of reconstruction by acknowledging their faults and being ready to receive help to mend the harm caused. In this way, the offended will feel supported by the rest of the group that push to restore everyone's rights and dignity. Reconstruction is necessary to transform conflicts peacefully and build safe, caring and nurturing environments.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a process involving truth, mercy, justice and peace that has a healing function. Genuine forgiveness towards oneself and the others is not easy to achieve in the short term. But reconciliation is of utmost significance to be able to live in peace and seek happiness. On the one hand, negative feelings cause permanent discomfort, on the other hand being able to acknowledge vulnerability and imperfection brings hope and helps to get out of difficult situations. A practical way of seeking reconciliation consists of offering proof of good will through positive actions. Everyone in the family has the potential to be a bridge-builder.

Nonviolence

Violence cannot be stopped with violent means, instead, creative and peaceful ways of protest and action against injustice are adopted. Nonviolence implies not to stay indifferent in front of suffering but to embrace in individual and collective action to fight for a positive change for all. Therefore, nonviolence is belligerent.

Peace Through Dialogue

The act of communication implies the exchange of ideas, feelings, dreams, doubts, requests, experiences and so on both in an unambiguous way (effective communication) and creating bonds between people (affective communication). Effective and affective communication at home reinforces a positive family environment where:

- a) All subjects are addressed without fear, because there's respect, empathy, confidence, and mutual support.
- b) Conflicts naturally arise bringing new opportunities to consider, since they are collaboratively and peacefully managed.
- c) Social injustices leave no one indifferent but generate nonviolent action to reverse the situation.

In the family, the door for dialogue must be permanently open. To achieve this goal, three keys are needed: expressions better to avoid, positive conversation skills, and communication strategies to disagree in peace.

Key 1. Expressions Better to Avoid

Everyday language, even without realizing it, is full of expressions that spoil good communication because they are imprecise, offend the listener or try to manipulate him. To “clean” the language it is essential to be precise, talk about facts and be transparent.

Language inaccuracies

It is wrong to say: “I know what you think”, “everyone hates me”, or “same as always” because these expressions do not convey an accurate message. There is a huge gap between what the speaker means and what the listener understands. On the part of the speaker, this error can be avoided by talking clearly and specificizing what is to be said as much as possible: “you think that tomorrow I should not go to the party”, “I have noticed that my sister does not want to play basketball with me”, or “it is the third time I walk the dog this week.” On the part of the listener, before answering elucidatory questions should be formulated: “what exactly do I think?”, “who hates you and how did you noticed it?”, or “what has happened again?”.

Expressions that offend

There are ways of speaking that are humiliating: “you have no sense of humor”, “you are immature”, “if you do not do what I say you will face the consequences”, or “you dress like a clown.” These expressions are offensive because they unnecessarily attack the dignity of the listener by labeling, judging (insulting), threatening, or criticizing them. This mistake is most serious because it creates distance between people and hurts them. In case of receiving this type of comments, it will be necessary to let the other person know that the way they speak hurts us and request them to say whatever they wish in a nonjudgmental way. To avoid damaging others, it is important to focus the message on the behavior and not on the person: “you don't find what I've said amusing”, “you have to assume your responsibilities”, “this task is really important, and I expect that you will do it in due time”, or “this look does not seem appropriate to me.”

Manipulation strategies

Lack of honesty when speaking is another mistake not to be made: “you are the best friend in the world, do you mind taking care of my children this weekend?”, “you will love this sweater, it is perfect for you” (wool is actually itchy), or “don't think about this anymore, let's have fun.” Praise accompanied by a request, hiding or falsifying information with deceit or lies, and downplaying the subject to avoid talking about it are ways of abusing other people. When speaking, it is essential to be transparent, because when the other person realizes that we took advantage of their good faith, they lose their confidence in us and communication in the future will become more difficult.

Key 2. Positive Conversation Skills

Communication is successful when it achieves mutual understanding, so it is effective and affective at the same time. Conversations at home significantly change when they are carried out vertically (judgments, orders, criticism, threats) or horizontally (interest, connection, affection, trust). To have productive conversations it is necessary, first of all, to recognize the dignity of each person regardless of their age, family role, way of thinking or behaving. Second, appropriate tools for talking assertively and listening actively must be used.

Assertive language

Assertiveness consists of expressing yourself clearly without offending or disrespecting others. Sometimes, we do not dare to say something for fear that someone will be upset and stop loving us. However, for interpersonal relationships to be sincere, it must be possible to deal with any matter. The words that are chosen, the tone of voice and the body language must be consistent with the message.

In addition, it is essential to address the listener by name and speak in the first person (step 1), describe the situation (step 2), say how it makes us feel (step 3), make a request (step 4), and ask what the other person thinks in respect (step 5). For example: “John, when I get home and find you playing on your smartphone, I get restless because I think that you haven't done your homework yet, and I would like to see that you value your education, that's why I'd like to ask you to do your homework first thing, do you see it possible?” Assertiveness is commonly identified with “I messages.”

Also, assertiveness is useful to avoid falling into provocations. Instead of giving explanations or excuses to justify a decision, it is more successful (a) to repeat the same message over and over again, (b) to reverse the situation by asking what's wrong, or (c) to give an evasive answer

For example: (a) "will you come to the party? I'm not coming", "is it because you have no money for drinks?" I'm not coming", "don't be a freak and stay at home all night! I'm not coming." Or (b) "what's wrong with not going to the party?", "what's wrong with not having money for drinks", and "what's what's wrong staying at home?" Or (c) "maybe", "perhaps", and "let's see."

Active listening

Active listening is the great toolbox of communication because it indicates that the most important thing in a conversation is to show interest in what the other person says. Among the essential tools to be a good listener, empathy, reflection, paraphrasing, open questions, reformulation, hypothetical questions, and silence stand out. These strategies can be practiced in everyday conversations, but it is also possible to hold a weekly peacemaking circle at home to set aside time exclusively for communication.

Showing empathy

Empathy consists of emotionally connecting with the speaker without agreeing or disagreeing to what they say. This nonjudgmental attitude opens up the possibility for sincerity. To demonstrate empathy, it's necessary to pay full attention, look into the eyes and do not interrupt the speaker.

Reflecting and paraphrasing

An active listener is like a mirror that returns both feelings and words. Emotions and feelings are part of all conversations. Thus, it is basic to reassure the speaker that we fully understand them by giving feed-back. Firstly, it's necessary to name the feeling expressed and check if our appreciation is right: "I realize that you are angry (disappointed, sad, shocked, enraged, frustrated, anxious, suspicious, happy, overwhelmed...), isn't it?" Automatically, the speaker will stop "acting" to concentrate in the message.

Paraphrasing is paramount to a "perfect" understanding. It consists of mirroring the words said, always putting the message in the speaker's mouth, erasing offensive expressions, and asking for confirmation: "if I'm not mistaken you said that my duty was to clean the kitchen and according to you it

has not been properly done, is it?” Paraphrasing is effective in many ways: (1) it keeps the listener concentrated on the speaker’s message rather than in answering or fighting back, (2) it translates the message into a correct one in case of imprecisions or offences, (3) it makes the speaker to listen to their own words, (4) it provides feed-back assuring that the message has been correctly understood, and (5) it slows down the discussion allowing more time for reflection.

Open-ended questions and hypothetical questions

Sometimes it is necessary to gather more information to better understand the issue under consideration. Open-ended questions cannot be answered by a simple yes or not but are an invitation to provide more data and go into detail. While closed questions look like an interrogation to confirm own perceptions, open-ended questions bring the opportunity to explore more in-depth the situation. Examples of open questions are: “could you better explain...?”, “what happened then?”, or “could you offer more information about...?”

Hypothetic questions also help to better explore the situation, but thanks to the use of the conditional tense, they just trigger the imagination without leading to a compromise. However, the prospective answers to hypothetic questions usually set light into the reasons behind a specific behavior. For example: “if it was possible for you to achieve this goal, what would you do afterwards?”, “if you had the power of travelling back on time, what would you change?”, or “imagine that she were here, what would you like her to know?”

Reformulation

Reformulation is to express the same idea but from another view. When a conversation is blocked it is necessary to introduce a nuance that reframes the issue and makes it more approachable. For example: “my son always does ten things at a time, it is useless to ask him to concentrate in class, no way!” could be reformulated like this: “you say that your son is a multitask person, isn’t? What we need here is for him to prioritize one task. Shall it be paying attention in class?”

Silence

Silence is one of the most productive elements in a conversation. Silence is considered one of the paths to wisdom, because it promotes active listening, introspection and prudence.

Peacemaking circle

A circle consists of gathering together with the purpose of talking about a topic of common interest, as well as spending quality time as a group or family. It's mandatory to use a talking piece to pass it around sequentially, so that everyone will have the opportunity to contribute to the conversation while the rest will listen with empathy, respect and full attention. The circle follows a ritual with an opening round or check-in in which everyone shares something personal, a connecting round where the main issue is explored considering the different views, and a final round to reach some agreements if possible. Usually the circle includes games, songs, storytelling, and poems just for enjoyment. The interesting thing is that in the circle all kind of issues can be explored, even conflicts.

Key 3. Strategies to Disagree in Peace

Sometimes, it seems not possible to reach to an agreement or to find a mutually satisfactory solution to a situation. Nevertheless, controversy or opposition should not lead to violence, on the contrary. In case of discrepancy, it is important not to lock oneself into one's own position and to avoid "either you or me" thinking that leads to polarization. Instead of that, an open dialogue in search of common ground must take place. In this way, collective wisdom will help better understanding each other and discovering the opportunities the conflict may bring along.

Disagreements bring into play social-emotional abilities such as emotional awareness, self-regulation, autonomy, active listening, positive conflict solving, and cooperation. Also, cognitive abilities, for instance, reflection, perspective, creativity, looking for alternatives, critical thinking, management of information, and providing arguments. Moreover, peace values are put into practice: respect, compassion, empathy, support, generosity, serenity, solidarity and many more. Therefore, learning how to disagree in peace at home enables the acquisition of a bunch of relevant life skills. Below are some examples of tools that can be useful at home.

Create a safe context

Protective rules help to create a scenario in which no one will be abused: use “I” messages (assertive language) and talk about yourself, avoid offences, openly reject violence, listen with full attention, talk one at a turn, introduce moments of silence, take time...

Clarify your role

There are different options to participate in a constructive dialogue: (1) observer and rule keeper, (2) moderator occupied in maintaining equilibrium, (3) neutral participant, (4) defendant of one position, (5) opposer to other position, (6) open-minded participant, (7) transformative participant looking into future. All these options can be productive in a safe context.

Stablish the goals

What’s the aim of the dialogue? Sometimes, the purpose will be to exchange views on a matter. But, in other occasions it will be to stop hostilities, to reconstruct damage done, to reconcile, or to reach an agreement. This de-escalation process needs practice and skills.

Separate the person from the problem

All human beings have dignity and rights. In a peaceful dialogue it’s essential to honor people and fight their negative or violent behavior. Unconditional positive regard implies that a person is loved, accepted, and valued, no matter what they think, do, or say. This is the key-rule for legitimization, respect and compassion.

Display respect

Not only once, but in every possible occasion it is necessary to constantly show consideration, deference and esteem. A climate of respect is paramount and must be created and sustained among all the participants.

Show empathy

Walk in another’s shoes is a way to seek mutual understanding. As explained above, empathy is nonjudgmental and is essential to connect people.

Acknowledge and regulate emotions

Difficult conversations arise intense emotions. So, before taking part in one, it is necessary to develop personal strategies to be conscious of own and others' emotions, as well as of the emotional climate in the group. Then, some strategies of self-control (expressing feelings appropriately, relaxing, breathing, letting off steam, praying...) will be most useful. Of course, there is no point in hiding or denying emotions, what really matters is to express them in a positive and adaptative way.

Demonstrate curiosity and desire to learn

Talking to someone who has a totally different view than ours over an issue is a great way to explore it. Single-minded positions in a globalized, plural and complex world are more and more difficult to defend. As said before, the key for an open conversation is active listening. There is no need to decide who has or has not the reason, what's important is to explore it and learn from each other. So, open-ended questions are valuable because they invite further discussion on the topic. Obviously, looking for more information and contrasting data are of utmost importance too.

Look for common interests

At a point, a difficult conversation must move from the past to the present and to the future. To reframe the issue in a positive way, one option is to discover common interests in the short, medium and long term. The ability to stablish a shared agenda implies setting inclusive goals that integrate different interests in a common one. The idea is to abandon extreme positions and move towards the center where mutual understanding and cooperation are possible. Consensus building is reached when everyone agrees to a point in major or minor degree.

Avoid stereotypes and oversimplification

Difficult and peaceful conversations are a good way of learning to think for oneself. Critical thinking opens up the possibility for questioning the status quo under the light of social and environmental justice. Firstly, it is necessary to accept plurality and to be able to question own's views. Secondly, it is important to realize that disagreeing is normal and healthy. Thirdly, to deconstruct stereotypes will need to analyze and question well stablished beliefs and defy oversimplification.

Fourthly, and most important, blaming others and looking for a scapegoat is but a self-deception and even worse, it usually fuels violence.

Practice nonviolent communication

Nonviolent communication is a tool that activates most of the effective and affective communicative skills in order to build peace. It is developed through four stages: (1) observing without evaluating, (2) becoming aware of one's feelings, (3) discovering one's needs, and (4) formulating a demand.

Don't close the doors

Self-analysis and introspection help to better know one-self, also in terms of prejudices, limits, flaws or fears. Peace is the path towards humanity and there is still a long way to reach the horizon, thus it is essential to be coherent and work consistently to be as best peacemaker one can be. This implies to keep the doors to dialogue always open and be ready to accept a little change.