

The Art of Living in Peace with Oneself, Others, and Nature: A Violence-Reduction Programme

Name of organization:
Public Association “Education Center “POST”

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4 Attachment to the social environment

*Though we are in different boats, you are in your boat, and we are in our canoe, we sail
down the same river of life.*

Leader Oren Lyons, a nationality онандага, the USA

Chief Oren Lyons, Onondaga Nation, USA

Lesson 11

6 shades of colour, or the World spiced with diversity

Purposes: to learn to see the world in its variety.

Schedule

Educational task	Activity content	Equipment	Time, min.
To realize the individual value of each person	Exercise «The potato friend»	A potato for each participant, a box or a package	20
To consider how cultural diversity is perceived, interpreted and estimated	Collage «My perception of diversity»	Magazines, newspapers, leaflets, etc, scissors, glue	50
To realize one's own individuality and the individuality of others; to reveal common and individual features of group participants	Exercise «Who am I?»	A4 sheets (one for each participant), colour pens and markers	20

«The potato friend»

The facilitator asks participants to think of a potato from an unusual point of view. He says: «Generally, we perceive a potato as something self-evident. Every potato «has the same face» to us, we just eat it. And even when we peel it, we hardly reflect that potatoes can look different».

Then the facilitator invites students to choose one potato and study it carefully for three minutes, noticing all its features (cavities, prominences and knobs). Then everyone is to introduce the potato to the group, telling a story about it (for example, where is it from, what are its features etc.). At the end of the introduction, the facilitator asks the participants if they feel that their relationship to the potato has changed.

Participants put the potatoes in a bag. The facilitator asks the group whether they still agree with the statement that «all potatoes are identical».

Then the facilitator invites each participant to find his potato in the pile and to introduce it to his group as his friend.

The analysis

1. Was it easy for you to find the potato after studying it and telling a story about it?
2. How did your relation to the potato change after you told a story about it? After finding it?
3. What parallels can you draw between this exercise and life?
4. How often do we treat a group of people as «having the same face»? Give examples.
5. Do you have any friends of other nationalities? What do you think of the nationality your friend belongs to?

During discussion, it is necessary to pay attention to participants who begin referring to people in a group as though they are identical. If you study a person more closely, it is possible to see his uniqueness, features and abilities.

Suggestions to the Presenter

Participants usually are very surprised that they can find "their" potato in a common bag. As a rule, all participants find their potatoes. There are clear parallels that can be drawn with belonging to any group of people. The facilitator should notice if we have acquaintances of other nationalities (other subcultures, groups), we, as a rule, relate differently to these nationalities, see more positive than negative features in them, we protect them before friends and we are interested in news connected with them.

The group's basic conclusion should be that it is impossible to speak about people of other nationalities as faceless multitudes. The representative of any nationality or group is unique, and it is necessary to spend time to understand it.

«My perception of diversity»*

A list of questions is distributed to students, who are asked to think about problems of diversity in the world and to understand their attitude:

- What does the concept of "diversity" mean to me? Who or what do I consider as "another", "unlike", "different"? Why?
- * What various groups of people can you name?
- What social and political debates are connected with cultural diversity?
- * Have you ever been considered a culturally "different" person? Why?

Questions can be discussed by the entire class and can be offered for independent reading and consideration (at the facilitator discretion).

* Adapted from [25¹].

Then participants in small groups (or the entire class) share their thoughts on the offered questions. The task of the facilitator is to "provoke" the thought process, to ask questions as much as possible and to stimulate discussion. The more information, thoughts, assumptions that are shared by students, the more material will be generated for further work.

¹ Here and further in this part of a practice references in square brackets' represent references the list of which is included in the end of the original practices.

Then a task: using various magazines, leaflets, newspaper cuttings, prepare a collage that reflects things the group discussed together, as well as questions and problems mentioned in the course of discussion.

Groups present their collages, spreading them in a circle on the floor. During presentation, participants mark what reflects the general point of view in the collage and what relates to problems and questions that arose during discussion. Thus, a closer and homely atmosphere is formed. Asking questions, interpreting collages, the facilitator should catch various understandings and the cultural diversity present in the group. The facilitator would then give feedback to the participants, about the diversity within the group and its correlation with diversity of the entire world.



«Who am I?» [11]

As the first step, participants are asked to represent themselves by means of a drawing in the form of a star, whose beams are various aspects of the person. Each beam corresponds to one aspect of the person (for example, gender, religion, education etc.).

For 15 minutes, participants move throughout the room and compare their stars. When they find another participant with the same beam, they should write their own name near the beam.

When participants gather in a common group, the facilitator asks them to discuss their stars.

The analysis

1. How alike and how different are the members of the group? What prevailed: similarities or differences?
2. What specific features are common? What turned out to be unique?
3. Were you surprised by the results of comparing stars?
4. Does diversity make the group even more interesting or, in your opinion, does it complicate teamwork?
5. Why is the exercise entitled «Who are I?»

Why so?

In Japan, young school children are able to distinguish 16 shades of one colour and name each shade. To know colour means to be able to distinguish, to see variations, to be perceptive. But diversity and shades are present not only in colour, but also in other things: people, language, architecture, nationalities. The world is different in all its displays. The exercise «The potato friend» is designed to make us realize at the very beginning: «There is diversity in the most usual and simple things!» Even if the potato, which we usually consider as an absolutely faceless bulk, is actually so unique, what should we say about a person? The exercise allows us to see that it is not a simple, undifferentiated person we meet. The exercise leads us to study a person a bit more and see that I am attached to this person somehow, that this person is not just a representative of others but is special to me.

Then the conversation on diversity as a whole and national diversity in particular begins. By means of group discussion and collage creation, it is possible to find out what such diversity means for each student, what role it plays in his life and what problems it involves.

Diversity of the world means that each of its small parts tries to show its influence. The exercise «Who am We?» involves the study of how diverse the class is and how much students have in common, despite all their differences.

During the lesson, it is possible to use additional information. If time does not allow, students can be given additional reading that can be discussed at the beginning of the following lesson or between exercises.

Library

Paradoxes of the modern world [21]

It is possible to consider reality from different points. Each map reflects a different perception of the world that is never neutral, as maps always stimulate certain interests. If they show one truth, they hide another necessarily. Since 1989, the necessity of creating a new atlas of the modern world became obvious. With the fall of the Berlin wall, the geopolitical situation had changed and the new historical stage began. Many of the old reference points disappeared; the world started to change quickly and distances became shorter. The promise of a new world order, fair and peaceful, did not become a reality.

When the Twin Towers in New York City were destroyed, we again lost our sense of security and stability, and the necessity of creating a new atlas appeared.

What map can reflect paradoxes of a new time?

English is the native language only for 5 % of the world's population, but it is used in 70 % of websites. Maybe that is why one billion people aspire to learn it.

One-third of the world's population is Christian, one-fifth - Moslem, one-fifth do not belong to any religion. But half of world's population cannot freely express their religious preferences because of the fear of death and persecutions.

Fifty percent of the world's population is younger than 25 years, while 10 % are over 60 years of age. Very few of them live in Africa, where the average life span is 46 years.

The three richest people in the world own a wealth greater than the cumulative budget of the 49 poorest countries in the world. Actually, if you deposit money in a bank, hide it at home or have currency in a wallet or purse, you belong to 10 % of the richest population.

In Europe a cow receives a daily allowance of 2.30€. Yet half of mankind survives on less than 2€ per day.

One-fifth of the world's population suffers from malnutrition; one-fifth from over nutrition.

Women make up half of world's population, however occupy only 12 % of elected seats in national governments around the world.

Terrorism fills us with consternation. In 2001, 4793 Americans died as a result of acts of terrorism, 40 000 died in accidents, 32 000 from reaction to medicines and 150 000 from anorexia.

It is time to ask ourselves if we want such a world?

What maps will help us to present another one?

Unheard voices [21]

Article no. 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that all human beings are born free and are equal in rights and opportunities.

In all societies, there are people suffering from discrimination because of ethnic origin, gender, limited opportunities, sexual orientation, age, class, religion, race or illness. Many voices of the world are "silent" only because they are considered "different".

Women make up half of the world's population, but their opinions were not taken into consideration for many years. Even now women hold only 12 % of the seats in national governments and only 24 of the world's 203 countries have ever elected a female president or prime minister. In many countries, men and women have unequal rights. In Kuwait, women have no right to vote and travel by themselves. In a quarter of developing countries, women do not have the right to own land or to borrow. Even in those countries where equality is fixed by law, women suffer from cruel treatment and infringement of their fundamental rights. One in three women is a victim of violence. Annually, 20 000 women die as a result of illegal abortions, for the sake of preserving a family's honour, 5 000 women have been killed only because they spoke to a man in the street or had been raped.

In situations involving confrontation, women become the basic providers of a family. They are often treated as military trophies and subjected to sexual violence, but that is why the role of women in the propagation of peace is so great.

Homosexuality is considered a serious crime in many countries. In Iran, Nigeria and Yemen, homosexuals can be sentenced to the death penalty. In India and Pakistan, they are subjected to persecution and can be confined; even in countries where homosexuality is legalized, both men and women are still subject to discrimination. Only in five countries homosexual couples are authorised to marry, and in three countries, to adopt children.

Children and youth make up half the population of Earth; 45 % of them live in developing countries. Even in 191 countries which signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child, many children are victims of violence, cruel treatment and exploitation. Two hundred forty-six million children are used as manpower; 300 000 children take an active part in confrontations; more than 10 million children are forced into prostitution.

Six hundred million persons in the world today are over 60 years old. This figure will double by 2025 and reach two billion by 2050. Such demographic revolution means that older persons occupy more and more space, but they are ignored in increasing frequency, subjected to cruel treatment, exploitation or abandonment. Older persons are rarely in contact with young men, and youth avoid the elderly. How can we unite generations? Construction of a society respecting differences, able to hear all voices and to guarantee individual human rights is a fundamental problem of the XXI century.

Cultural variety and mass media [21]

The press, radio, Internet and TV play a key role in communications between people. Information continuously circulates around the entire planet in the modern world. Now we know what unites us and what makes us different, but we lack a mode of contact to establish dialogue and respect. The world's community and modern communication have not created a world without barriers. Instead, we face problems of cultural differences. How can information be turned into knowledge, which in turn would become the basis of coexistence?

The termination of cold war and new technologies have led to the liberalization of mass-media. The printing press possesses a greater freedom than only ten years ago, however it raises a number of new questions. The press and censorship are based often on the British model of a tabloid; editions of such type are driven by sex scandals and criminal chronicles, thereby strengthening the influence of stereotypes that complicate communication between cultures. At the same time, a basic problem of printed text for much of the world is the illiteracy of the population.

Despite revolutionary technical inventions, radio still plays an important role in many countries. Only 1 % of Africans has access to the Internet, while the radio receiver is in each African family. Liberalization of radio-waves and the falling price of transmission have led to the emergence of radio station communities in many countries around the world. Such non-profit radio stations operated by women, students and other groups became significant platforms of civil participation. However, since many governmental authorities strictly supervise radio frequencies, the possibility of expressing one's point of view is excluded for much of the population.

Access to TV has also increased, but it is still difficult to access this resource in many parts of the world. Satellite TV transmits political and social events at global and local levels. CNN brings the American point of view to all corners of the world, broadcasting in 203 countries and having 150 million viewers. In Asia, STAR TV and ZTV make an impressive impact on local cultures. «Aldjazira» with more than 35 million viewers plays a key role in forming public opinion in Arab countries and proves that the right to information can be achieved in the Middle East.

However, the majority of large media sources are supervised by Western investors. This leads to homogeneity of contents, hence many voices remain unheard and survival of many cultures is at risk. The charge that mass-media give to all wishing a possibility to speak and listen is a problem of democracy in the XXI century.

Lesson 12

Insider among strangers, or stranger among insiders?

The purpose: to change the point of view as to stereotypes and prejudices.

Schedule

Educational task	Activity content	Equipment	Time, min.
To begin a conversation on stereotypes and their reasons; to reveal stereotypes and prejudices in class	Exercise "Compartment"	Sheets of exercise information for each student, board, chalk, pens	30
To generate understanding of effects caused by stereotypes; to give a chance to students to feel effect of a "label"	Exercise «Multiethnic society»	Photos of people of various nationalities, adhesive tape, stickers, A4 paper sheets, markers, pens	35
To reflect on stereotypes concerning the personality of each student and to challenge them	Exercise «Circles of my multicultural self»	A4 sheets for each student	25

"Compartment"

The facilitator divides the class into several mini-groups and addresses them with the following instruction: «You get on a train to make a long journey from Lisbon to Moscow. You are in a sleeper compartment; three more people will be joining you. Whom from the following passengers would you like to travel with?»

Each group receives one sheet with a list of possible fellow travellers (see the appendix 12).

For ten minutes, group members choose three people whom they would like to travel in a compartment with, and three people whom they would not like to travel with. The decision should be co-ordinated in each mini-group.

Then each group discloses its choices and the reasons for these choices. The facilitator writes them on the board. Most likely, it will turn out that groups have chosen similar options and there will be repeats. In this case, people named twice are underlined in the list on the board.

The analysis

It is necessary to begin with the list of people with whom students have preferred to travel together in the compartment. Most likely, they will be "neutral" persons, such as

a football fan, a DJ or a rapper. It is necessary for students to specify why they consider that the people selected will be interesting as fellow travellers.

When the list of "positive characters" is exhausted, it is necessary to discuss the list of "negative" persons and to specify why the prospect of a long stay in their company causes rejection. It is necessary to give special attention to those characters which are underlined in the list, i.e. were mentioned by several mini-groups. Most likely, they will be people bearing, in terms of students, a certain threat (HIV-infection, aggression towards national identity, etc.).

It is possible to ask questions as follows:

- 1 Which features do you attribute to the chosen negative characters? Why you are sure they possess such features?
- 2 If there is a young HIV-infected artist in the list, ask whether students know how the HIV-infection can be transmitted and why, in that case, they are afraid to travel near a HIV-infected person?
- 3 How is such perception of chosen characters formed? What influences it?
- 4 Can students recollect a case when someone or something has affected their opinion about a certain person, a nationality, which could be in direct conflict with reality?
- 5 What or who, in their opinion, forms our attitude to other people?

«A multiethnic society»

The facilitator attaches photos of people of various nationalities on the board so that there is an empty space under each picture and asks participants to define the nationalities represented.

On sticky notes, students write down features of the specified nationalities which come to mind. It can be one word or a whole sentence, in other words, what occurs to us when meeting a representative of any nationality should be written on the notes. Notes are then placed by students under a proper photo.

Then the facilitator removes some of descriptions (it is necessary to first remove negative ones) and attaches them on backs of 3-4 students. For five minutes, students move around the room in any order they choose, and those who have no label attached to them say loudly what is written on the backs of their classmates, looking them in the eye or being spaced.

Then the facilitator removes the labels from the backs of students and attaches them near the photo of a Byelorussian. He asks students to imagine that the opinions concerns Byelorussians.





The analysis

1. How did the people who had labels feel when they heard the words which were written on them?
2. What internal thoughts and desires did these words cause? Was there a desire to answer or proceed in any way? How? Why?
3. How did those who announced to schoolmates the contents of the labels feel? Why?
4. Was it difficult to say these words? Why?
5. What did students feel when the labels had been moved under the photo of a Byelorussian?
6. What is the difference between «labelling» and the experience of being labelled?
7. How much do the attached labels correspond to actual features of people of these nationalities?
8. Why do labels exist, if we know about their negative influence?
9. How can "learned" stereotypes be discredited?

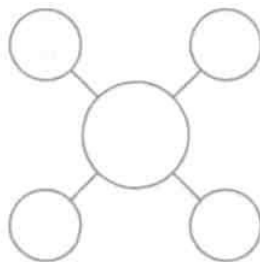


Suggestions to the facilitator

This exercise can cause many negative emotions for the students who had the labels attached on their backs, very quickly «warm to the role» and try to leave the crowd, to estrange themselves. In this case, the presenter is to return the student to the "crowd" and to discuss it during the analysis, asking for reasons. The negative emotions participants felt can lead to a positive outcome. "Experiencing" discrimination can result in a deep understanding of what a stereotype is.

«Circles of my multicultural self» *

The facilitator asks students to think of which of their schoolmates they know least, then join with this person to form a pair. Then the facilitator draws the following figure on the board:



In the central circle, students should write their name. In each of surrounding circles, they write aspects of their personality they consider to be the most important. For example, it can be female, sportswoman, the Byelorussian, schoolgirl, artist, inventor, talker etc.

For ten minutes, students should share with their partner stories or situations in which they were proud, especially involving an aspect they had noted. Then they should share situations in which they felt uncomfortable, offended, or humiliated.

The following step should make students recollect the stereotypes existing as to one of aspects chosen by them, which, in their opinion, is incorrect and cannot be referred to their personality or describes it incorrectly.

The facilitator asks students to fill the following statement:

I am _____, but I am not _____.

For example, «I am blonde, but I am not silly».

The facilitator asks whether someone has heard from the partner a story which surprised or interested him, and he would like to share with the group. If there are such stories, it is necessary to ask permissions of their authors to tell them to their group.

Then students stand and read the statement they had filled in. The facilitator watches that the group is attentive and treats the statements with respect because this step makes students vulnerable. It is better for the facilitator to model the exercise by first reading his own statement so that participants feel more confident. This part of the exercise can be very significant and emotionally strong, if the presenter begins it vigorously, it is necessary to introduce pauses between the readings of statements.

*Adapted from [23].

The analysis

- 1 How do the aspects of your personality that you wrote down differ from aspects used by other people to make conclusions about you?
- 2 Did you hear someone contest a stereotype that you once felt as correct?
- 3 How did you feel, when it was necessary to rise and contest a stereotype concerning yourself?

- 4 Laughter can sometimes arise if someone mentions a well-known stereotype such as «I am an Arab, but I am not a terrorist». Then the facilitator should specify: «I heard you laugh. At what?»
- 5 What do stereotypes result from?
- 6 How can we resist them?

Suggestions to the presenter

The content of this exercise is the process of researching one's identity and any stereotypes associated with it, as well as the re-evaluation and contesting of stereotypes by means of stories from other people. It is necessary for the presenter to push students to deliberate attempts of considering stereotypes more deeply and evaluating them.

The exercise can appear most effective when the facilitator himself participates. If he wishes to share an experience, students are more likely to feel confident with the exercise.

In the final part of exercise, when students share stereotypes concerning their personality, it is very important to give time for silence. Students will hesitate to start speaking, but if the process has begun, the exercise provokes its own subtle energy. It is necessary for the presenter to allow enough time for students to discuss any stereotype they wish.

Stereotypes and prejudices

Our identity is defined not only by how we perceive ourselves, but also by how others perceive us. For ease of understanding, we use the mechanism of categorization, which allows us to distribute an experience across various groups according to certain features. Thus, simplified images of experiences are generated. Categorization is a functional and adaptive mechanism, which allows us to process huge volumes of information and makes dealing with reality simpler.

Our experience of interaction with other people is subjected to a process of categorization. We group people who differ from each other according to various features.

We name these simplified pictures *stereotypes*. Being simplified, they are quite erroneous, but as a whole they help us to have a stable and predictable picture of the world and to "replicate" reality easier.

We should note that stereotypes are simplified always in the same manner: they show "us" better than "them". A psychological necessity for self-esteem becomes the reason we perceive our group better than others.

Stereotypes can be defined as simplified visions and intellectual generalization of some groups of people when we assume that all individuals who are part of a group possess similar features (stereotypes can be both positive and negative).

Prejudices are stereotypes + emotions. They can be positive and negative as well, but we often use this word to describe strong negative emotions in relation to any group of people.

Stereotypes and prejudices are part of socialization and are formed during very early periods of our life under the influence of family, friends and mass media, etc. Frequently, we adapt them subconsciously, and they continue developing unconsciously, creating difficulties when we attempt to change them.

Discrimination is a prejudice in action. If we have a negative stereotype in relation to any group accompanied by negative emotions, we will most likely discriminate against this group of people in different ways.

Model of culture "Iceberg"

The model "Iceberg" is one of the most well-known models of culture. Its meaning consists in the fact that elements forming cultures are divided in two parts similar to an iceberg: some are visible and obvious to everyone, and some (so-called latent elements) are very difficult to distinguish. The latter, as in a real iceberg, are the powerful and dangerous parts.

According to the model, elements of architecture, art, language and cookery etc. are referred to as a visible part. The cultural basis complicates things further: the history of the people who have brought - the main contribution to culture, their norms, values, basic views on time, space and nature etc. Visible parts of culture are a reflection of its latent basis only.

The analysis

- 1 Name five basic feelings experienced during the game.
- 2 How did you feel when you played the role of a simple resident?
- 3 Are you satisfied with result of the game?
- 4 How would you describe the process of involving the building by representatives of members of your community?
- 5 Did your initial assumptions of construction of roads prove to be true after your representatives had returned from negotiations with other teams?
- 6 How did you choose representatives for your community?
- 7 Can you describe the connection between what occurred in this game and real life?
- 8 From your point of view, what are the strengths and weaknesses of this exercise?