

Rotary Club Program: Peace is Possible

*Written by Rotarian Dr. Paula Fellingham, a member of the
Rotarian Action Group for Peace Education Committee*

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Do you know that **one of Rotary International's six areas of focus is to "Promote Peace?"** So, the Rotary Action Group for Peace, directed this year by Garbis Der Yeghian, is providing this program in an effort to promote peace in the hearts, homes, and communities of Rotarians worldwide.

Our program today is titled **"Peace is Possible."**

Founder Paul Harris said, "Individuals and nations owe it to themselves to become informed because ignorance is a menace to peace." And **the Dalai Lama said, "The purpose of life is to be happy. The greatest degree of inner tranquility comes from the development of love and compassion."** And love and compassion always lead to peace.

The story I will share now is about inner tranquility...

There once was a king who offered a prize to the artist who would paint the best picture of peace. Many artists tried. The king studied all the pictures, but there were only two he really liked. He had to choose which one would win the prize.

One picture was of a beautiful, calm lake. The lake was a perfect mirror; peaceful towering mountains surrounded it. Overhead was a blue sky with fluffy white clouds. All who saw this picture thought that it was a perfect picture of peace.

The other picture had mountains too. The mountains were rugged and bare. Above was an angry sky from which rain fell and in which lightning struck.

(Note: Slide is two pictures of mountains on the same slide.)

Down the side of the rugged mountain tumbled a foaming waterfall. This did not look peaceful at all! But when the king looked closer he saw behind the waterfall a small green bush growing out of a crack in the rock. On the bush a mother bird had built her nest. There, in the midst of the torrent of water, sat the mother bird on her nest...calmly and peacefully.

Which picture do you think won the prize? *(Note: If you wish, you may pause and ask the audience for their thoughts.)*

The King chose the second picture. "Because," explained the King, "peace is not being in a place where there is no noise, no trouble or difficulties. Peace means to be in the midst of those things with a calm, peaceful heart. That is the real meaning of peace."

Fellow Rotarians, we all have challenges and turbulence in our lives. However, we also - all of us - enjoy the freedom to choose whether or not we will create our own, personal peace - even during troubling, turbulent times.

Have you noticed – like I have – that two people can be in the same place, doing the same thing at the same time, and one is upset and the other is happy? The difference is simple. The conflicted person usually chooses to look at life through mirrors as they worry about how everything will affect or benefit them personally. On the other hand, the happy person usually sees life through windows –seeing the needs of others and serving them. Unhappy people often blame others for their unhappiness. Happy people radiate light and love and see their challenges as opportunities to grow.

By the raise of hands, how many of you believe that having peace in your own heart is possible? *(Note to speaker: Raise your hand. ☺)*

So, if peace in our hearts is possible, then peace in our homes is possible, and peace in our Rotary Clubs is possible. Therefore, my friends, we can all hold the great hope that as we continue striving to be personally peaceful, we will be doing our part to lift the level of love and peace on Earth.

I would like to share 5 Powerful Action Steps to help us each be more peaceful:

1. Believe and Become

2. Shift and Shine
3. Eliminate Ego
4. Lighten Up and Love
5. Promote Peace

Action Step 1

Believe and Become

Marcus Aurelius, a Roman Emperor and philosopher said, “A man’s life is what his beliefs make of it.”

William James, said to be the American Father of Psychology wrote, “The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their beliefs.”

Friends, within each one of us is a power we scarcely tap. This power has fueled heroic deeds since time began and has energized great inventors, artists and musicians throughout the ages. It’s the exact same power available to each of us - every day of our lives. It is the power of belief.

Author Dale Carnegie said, “Believe you will succeed. Believe it firmly, and then you will do what is necessary to bring success about.”

Yes, as we develop the sense of certainty that positive beliefs provide, we will be able to accomplish virtually anything, including those things that others think are impossible. If we are to achieve the goal of increasing the level of love and peace on Earth we must first believe it is possible. We must believe that our world CAN be a better place and we CAN be the change we wish to see in the world, as Gandhi said.

And the wonderful news is – there are studies that prove that our future is better than you may think. We have substantial data that proves that there is great abundance in this world. Using almost any metric currently available, there are studies that show that the quality of life for billions of people in this world has improved more in the past century than ever before and it looks as if global living standards will continue to improve – regardless of the horrors that dominate the headlines.

We really do have cause to rejoice! Yes – there is a great and mighty work for peacemakers to do because there ARE serious problems – worldwide - that need fixing, and many improvements need to be made. However, if each one of us does our part, enjoying more peace is possible.

We must first believe it - and hold that belief firmly in our hearts as we work to become more loving and peaceful in our personal lives.

For, as you know, peace can only begin in each individual heart. And then, when wise parents teach peace in the home – by example and precept – our youth can help peace spread throughout humanity in ways never before witnessed in the history of the world. Let us be *peacemakers* who actively teach the next generation to make good choices that lead to peaceful conflict resolution.

Action Step 2 **Shift and Shine**

What does it mean to shift and shine?

Here's a short story to illustrate this, written by a young mother...

“One day my young daughter was late coming home from school. I was both annoyed and worried. When she came through the door I demanded in my upset tone that she explain why she was late.

She said, ‘Mommy, I was walking home with Julie, and halfway home Julie dropped her doll and it broke into lots of little pieces.’

‘Oh, honey,’ I replied, ‘you were late because you helped Julie pick up the pieces of her doll to put them back together.’

In her young and innocent voice my daughter said, ‘No Mommy, I didn't know how to fix the doll. I just stayed to help Julie cry.’”

What is the SHIFT we need to make to have soft, loving hearts?

I believe it begins with knowing that we don't need to go looking for love – or joy. We already have those qualities inherently within us and we can access them at any time.

At times we might feel overwhelmed if we think we're supposed to promote peace by solving the water problems in Africa or eliminating the strife in Syria. What we're talking about now is beginning the promotion of peace by making a shift in our own hearts.

Shifting our perspective is like re-arranging our DNA. It's like an awakening. And when we are living wide awake our understanding and consciousness is at a higher level and we can peel off the crust that may have gathered around our hearts. And then we can

see the beauty – the abundance and the love all around us that’s begging to be seen – yearning to be acknowledged – and longing to be shared.

This shift is like a transformation of our hearts and souls. When we experience this shift we are more tolerant and forgiving, more patient and kind..... more peaceful.

People who have experienced this can be recognized easily because they SHINE. We know many people who shine, and some of them are here today, right here in our Club.

Others live in the slums of Kibera in Nairobi where one million people live in one square mile. And yet, despite their circumstances, many in Kibera are happily SHINING.

Others who “shine” are working on farms in Mexico or Malaysia – some are government leaders in Ethiopia and England – or they’re in offices in Singapore and Spain – or they’re home tending their children in the Netherlands and Nepal.

Yes – people who shine are everywhere! These are those with strong spirits and indomitable wills who are all firmly rooted in 5 things. People who shine stand on a foundation of...

- Powerful, positive beliefs
- Moral values
- Optimistic attitudes
- Never-give-up work ethics
- Deep hope for a better future

People who shine refuse to be victims of their circumstances and they choose to have joyful hearts – no matter what is happening around them or who is trying to bring them down. Misery is not an option for them.

So many men and women who exemplify this – all over the world – are Rotarians who are committed to our motto “Service Above Self.”

Most Rotarians shine because they’ve made the shift we all need to make if we’re to lead out as *peace-makers*.

Yes, Rotarians everywhere understand that we can only contribute to a peaceful world to the extent that we are personally peaceful.

Action Step 3

Eliminate Ego

“Eliminate Ego” means that we need to sluff off the pride and the fear of many things... of not having enough – of not knowing enough or not being good enough. We need to release the negativity and let go of that part of us that covets, resents, blames - that refuses to forgive and holds onto anger or jealousy – that focuses on self.

Eliminating ego means to let go of that part of us that seeks out the faults in ourselves and in others.

Ego is all negativity that originates from selfishness, false beliefs and fearful perceptions.

Eliminating ego is the most difficult of the five Action Steps for many people. However, it’s also the most powerful. Why? Because when ego is eliminated the result is a change of heart. Yes, a profound awakening and enlightenment always follows when egos are released.

We could talk about this for hours, but simply stated, eliminating ego is about getting yourself out of the way and learning how to truly love and serve others, with no thought of reward.

Action Step 4

Lighten Up and Love

Fellow Rotarians, a reminder to us all is that we can “lighten up” by simply not sweating the small stuff and living in gratitude - paying attention to the many things we DO have, and focusing on the good things in our lives.

Dale Carnegie said, “Happiness doesn’t depend on outer conditions. It depends on inner conditions. It isn’t what we have, or where we are, or what we’re doing that makes us happy or unhappy. It’s what we think about it.”

There was a study on happiness completed in 1984. Two thousand people’s lives were studied. The conclusion was this: “Happy people and unhappy people tend to have had very similar life experiences. The difference is that the average unhappy person spends more than twice as much time thinking about unpleasant events in their lives, and

happy people tend to SEEK and rely upon information that brightens their personal outlook.”

I would like to share a saying that hung in Mother Teresa’s office, written by Kent Keith. Mother Teresa said that she read it often. It goes like this....

People are often unreasonable and self-centered.
Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of ulterior motives.
Be kind anyway.

If you are honest, people may cheat you.
Be honest anyway.

If you find happiness, people may be jealous.
Be happy anyway.

The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow.
Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough.
Give your best anyway.

For you see, in the end, it is between you and God.
It never was between you and them anyway.

Action Step 5 Promote Peace

Let’s look now at the **7 BE’s to Promote Peace** – these 7 things will help us be Rotarians of **Action**. The first BE is...

1. Be grateful.

- We discussed gratitude; it’s a critically important piece of peace. Let’s focus on what we have, not on what we don’t have.
- Also, we should remember that what we focus on expands. If we focus on lack and limitation, we will receive more lack and limitation. If we focus on sharing our love and light, more love and light will come our way.

2. Be loving.

- Be 'others-centered' instead of 'self-centered' by giving service gladly.
- Mother Teresa said, "Spread love wherever you go. First of all in your own home. Give love to your husband, your wife, your children, your next-door neighbor. Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier."

3. Be flexible and cheerful.

- Our ability to be flexible and cheerful is an indication of our strength of character. Let's do all we can to bring joy into our own lives and into the lives of others. And let's laugh more often!
- And don't sweat the small stuff. Have you noticed that what we worry about is almost all small stuff? Let's release our negative thoughts and allow only positive thoughts to flourish in our minds.

4. Be forgiving.

- Forgive yourself, and others, *quickly*. Perhaps you've heard that not forgiving is like taking poison and expecting the other person to die. You are hurting yourself far more than you are hurting them.
- And we need to get past the past. Let us take the best and discard the rest from our past experiences.

5. Be kind to yourself and others when you speak.

- Use positive self-talk like, "Every day I'm becoming more patient and loving."
- Only speak to others (and about others) as you would want them to speak to (and about) you.

6. Be worry-free.

- Worry is like a rocking chair. It keeps you busy, but it doesn't get you anywhere.
- A worried heart is not a peaceful heart. Awaken the ability to release yourself from worry by thinking, "Worrying won't solve the problem." Then, either take constructive action to solve the problem, or simply let it go. Worry is a habit we can break; it simply takes effort and time.

7. Be the inspiration. This is Rotary President Barry Rassin's theme.

- Let us show the next generation, and everyone whose life touches ours, how to be loving and peaceful by being loving and peaceful.
- Let's inspire others to promote peace by our inspirational examples.

My friends, as fellow Rotarians we invite you to take two more important action steps. First, we invite you to join the Rotarian Action Group for Peace at www.RotarianActionGroupforPeace.org. And second, we invite you to teach Peace

Lessons to your family and share them with the youth in your local schools. The Peace Lessons are free and written in several languages. They are on www.ProspertyandPeace.org/Rotary

When we do these things we're participating in Rotary's priority to "Promote Peace."

Here's a closing story written by a young woman years ago.

"My grandfather took me to the fishing pond when I was about seven, and he told me to throw a stone into the water. He told me to watch the circles created by the stone. Then he asked me to think of myself as that stone. "You may create lots of splashes in your life but the waves that come from those splashes may disturb the peace of your fellow creatures," he said.

"Remember that you are responsible for what you put in your circle, for that circle will touch many other circles. You should live in a way that allows the good from your circle to strengthen and add goodness to other circles. The splash that comes from anger or jealousy will ripple out and send those negative feelings to other circles. You are responsible for both types of ripples; good and bad."

Again, my friends, let me remind you that we each create the inner peace - or discord - that flows out into the world. We cannot help create world peace if we are riddled with inner conflict, hatred, doubt, or anger. We radiate the feelings and thoughts that we hold inside, whether we speak them or not. **Whatever is splashing around inside of us is spilling out into the world, creating beauty or discord with all other circles of life.**

If we cannot find peace within ourselves, we will never find it anywhere else.

Now is the best time in the history of the world to increase the love and peace on Earth because there is a rising and awakening of humanity – like never before – as more and more people are realizing that increased peace is possible. Why? Because, although there will always be hatred and strife on our planet, more and more people are making peace a priority. They are realizing that together we CAN join hands and link arms – connecting, collaborating, and refusing to believe that war is the answer.

The answer is to have peace in our hearts and in our homes, which will increase the peace in our communities and nations.

Perhaps we can begin by believing in the goodness of mankind. We all see that there is much, much more good than bad in our world. People are inherently kind and loving, and we all want the same thing. Yes, people in every home in every nation want the same exact thing. We all want to be safe and happy. We all want to be loved and appreciated. And we all want to know that our lives matter.

Oh, and each life does matter! Each life is precious. Every splash and every ripple in the waters of humanity matters. Remember, “Each person creates the inner peace or discord that flows out into the world. We cannot create peace on Earth if we are riddled with inner conflict or anger. We radiate the feelings and thoughts that we hold inside. Whatever is splashing around inside of us is spilling out into the world, creating beauty or discord with all other circles of life.”

Let us splash joyfully and spill out love, kindness, forgiveness, happiness – and peace.

As Rotarians who are committed to the Four Way Test, let us be actively engaged, each day, in the great cause of peacemaking – in our hearts, in our homes, in our workplaces, in our communities, and in our nations.

Inner peace, when multiplied, can change the world.

Yes...

Peace IS possible.

Thank you very much.

Questions or comments: Email Alison Sutherland: ypalison@yahoo.co.uk, or Paula Fellingham: Paula@ProsperityandPeace.org, members of the Rotary Action Plan for Peace Education Committee.

For more information on the Rotarian Action Group for Peace, or if you wish to join, visit www.rotarianactiongroupforpeace.org

