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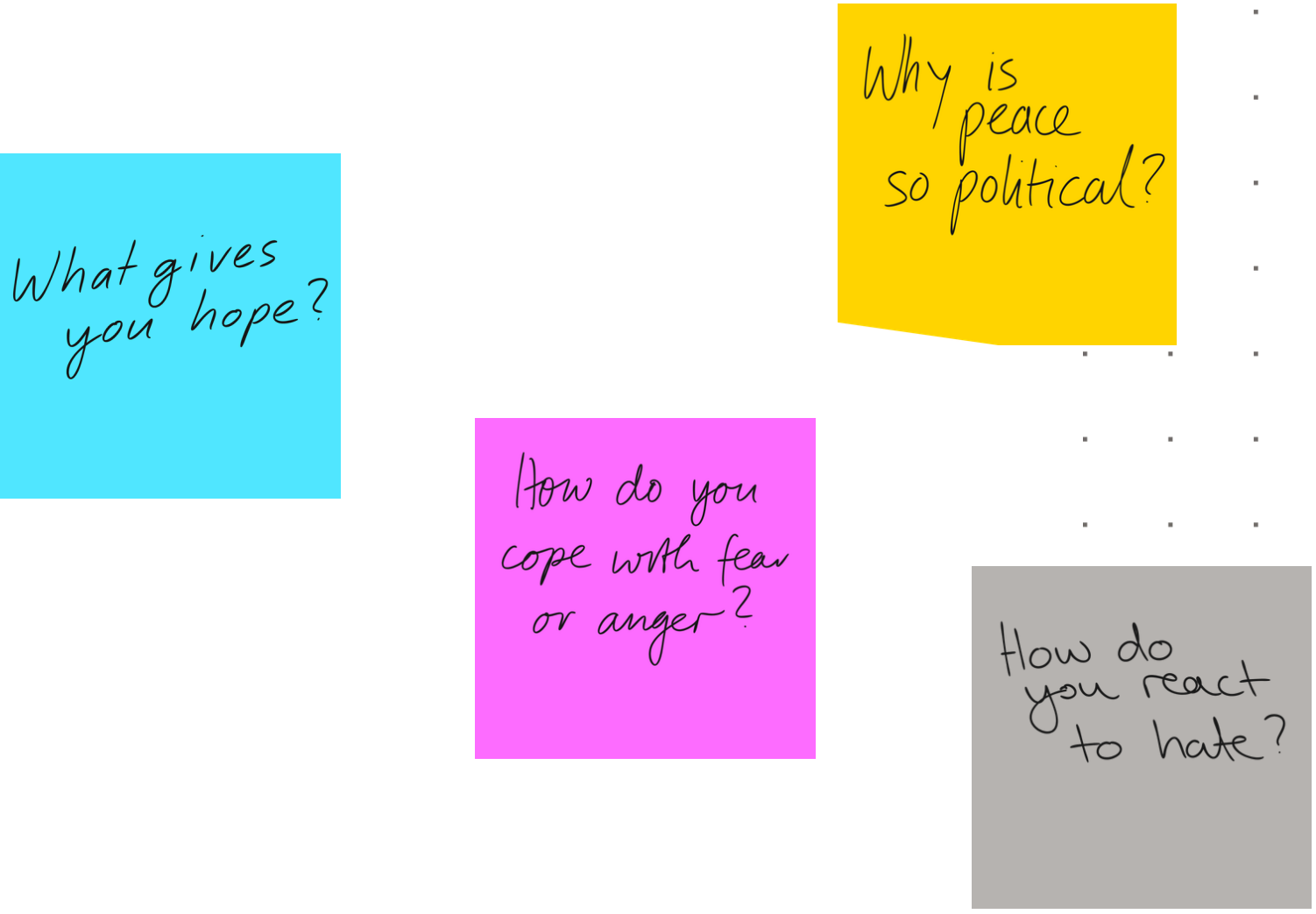
2026

PEACE Model Handbook



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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce this handbook for educators and practitioners working to strengthen our social unity and citizen empowerment. At a time when our society feels increasingly divided, the role of teachers, youth workers, and community leaders has never been more vital.

I know from my own experience of working in this field for over 15 years that building bridges across difference is not easy. It requires patience, resilience, and deep empathy. Yet I have also seen the extraordinary transformation that occurs when people are given the space to listen, to ask questions, and to see one another as human beings rather than stereotypes.

My thanks for the years of learning that have given rise to this PEACE Model go to the SNS team, the volunteer speakers and the many board, community members and partners who have travelled on this journey with me—particularly John Lyndon, Jess Brandler, Mohammed Ali Amla, and Josh Dubell.

This handbook is not a set of prescriptions, but a collection of resources and reflections to support those working in education. My hope is that it inspires confidence, strengthens practice, and above all affirms the belief that social unity is possible—and worth striving for.

Sharon Booth

Founder & Executive Director

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Introduction: Social Unity in the UK

Social unity in the UK is being tested as perhaps never before. Over recent years, global conflicts, political polarisation, and the spread of online misinformation have all left their mark on our towns, schools, and workplaces. Rising antisemitism and Islamophobia, alongside broader forms of prejudice and hostility, have deepened fault lines between groups, and in 2025 we saw a violent attack on a synagogue and an arson attack on a mosque in the same week. For many practitioners working at the coalface of education, youth work, and community development, these divisions present daily challenges that cannot be ignored.

And yet, we know that cohesion is not only possible but essential. Across the country we see countless examples of individuals and organisations finding creative and courageous ways to bring people together. From interfaith initiatives, to local campaigns against hate, to school programmes that foster critical thinking and dialogue—these efforts remind us that unity is built, not assured. It requires commitment, skill, and patience from those who lead and facilitate in their communities.

At SNS, our work in schools on the issue of Israel-Palestine has shown us that when people are given the opportunity to encounter perspectives different from their own, to engage in dialogue rather than just debate, and to feel both heard and respected, transformation is possible. Students who may initially feel defensive or hostile often leave with deeper empathy and a stronger sense of shared humanity. Teachers and practitioners play a vital role in making this space possible—balancing sensitivity with courage, and holding complexity while guiding others towards understanding.

This handbook is designed to support that work. It draws together practical tools, academic insights, and case studies from our work tackling one of the most contentious topics on the frontlines of interfaith and intercommunal harmony. Our aim is to equip you not with easy answers, but with approaches that strengthen your capacity to build bridges, reduce division, encourage active citizenship, and nurture resilient, inclusive communities.

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Peace as a Process, not as a Goal

When we talk about peace, it is tempting to imagine it as a destination—a final agreement, a treaty signed, or an end to violence. But in reality, peace is not a single moment of achievement; it is an ongoing process, woven into the fabric of our daily lives and relationships. It is less about reaching an endpoint and more about how we choose to live, think, and act, every single day.

History teaches us that moments of formal peace can quickly unravel if they are not sustained by the habits and attitudes of ordinary people. True peace requires us to continually nurture understanding, build trust, and develop resilience against the forces that pull us apart. It is not a static state but a living practice—one that demands participation, reflection, and renewal. If we cease in our commitment to this, we will fall back into polarisation and hate precisely because that will always be part of our human nature.

That's why at SNS, we see peace as a skill set as much as an aspiration. It requires emotional literacy, critical thinking, empathy, the courage to encounter perspectives that unsettle us, and agency to create change. It is about choosing dialogue over silence, curiosity over assumption, and cooperation over competition. These are the everyday steps that sustain peaceful societies. In this handbook, we have combined 15 years of practitioner experience with the evidence-based research of leading academics to develop the PEACE Model—a framework that views peace as a continuous practice of participation, equipping ourselves, applying dialogue, creating fair solutions, and enacting change through active citizenship. Each step represents a commitment not only to resolving conflicts but also to cultivating the human capacities that prevent them from re-emerging.

Social unity is not the absence of struggle, but the daily choice to engage with it differently. Through the PEACE Model, we invite practitioners, educators, and communities to see peace not as a distant goal, but as a way of being.

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About SNS

SNS is an education and youth empowerment organisation that has been operating for over 15 years, equipping young people in schools and community groups across the UK to navigate the Palestinian–Israeli conflict with empathy, critical thinking, and hope for peace and justice. We stand on the values of non-violence, equality for all, and the rejection of hate.

At the heart of our work is the Youth Education Programme, which brings Israeli and Palestinian peacebuilders into schools to share their real-life experiences, challenge stereotypes, and model respectful discussion on one of the world's most sensitive issues. These sessions reach thousands of students each year, helping them develop skills in listening and communication, and to think for themselves.

For schools that want to go further, our Olive Branch Community recognises and supports long-term commitment to open dialogue and peace education. Through this, schools embed a culture of understanding and conflict resolution throughout their community.

Beyond the classroom, our Youth Leadership Programmes develop the most engaged young participants into future leaders, bridge builders, and even diplomats. This "funnel effect" ensures that our work doesn't stop at education—it grows into long-term impact through youth leadership and action.

Together, these elements make SNS a proven and powerful vehicle for delivering Peace Education to British youth and empowering leaders to foster dialogue and tackle racism in schools, colleges and communities across the UK.

Our approach is grounded in the PEACE Model, our five-step methodology that guides everything we do:

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Five steps of the PEACE model:

Step 1: <u>Participate:</u>
Embracing a win-win approach as the best thing for humanity's progress and the preservation of our democratic societies

Step 2: <u>Equip:</u>
Engaging in social and emotional learning to equip us for dialogue

Step 3: <u>Apply:</u>
Engaging in dialogue to provide us with the understanding for critical thinking

Step 4: <u>Create:</u>
Using critical thinking to apply human needs theory for conflict resolution and equitable outcomes for all

Step 5: <u>Enact:</u>
Promoting active citizenship to effect the change we want to see

This handbook will unpack each of these steps, providing three things for each step:

1. An explanation of the step and its purpose
2. The academic theory behind the step
3. Some examples of how we have implemented the step in our work, in the hope that it may provide inspiration and ideas for implementing the step in other contexts, organisations and institutions

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Participate

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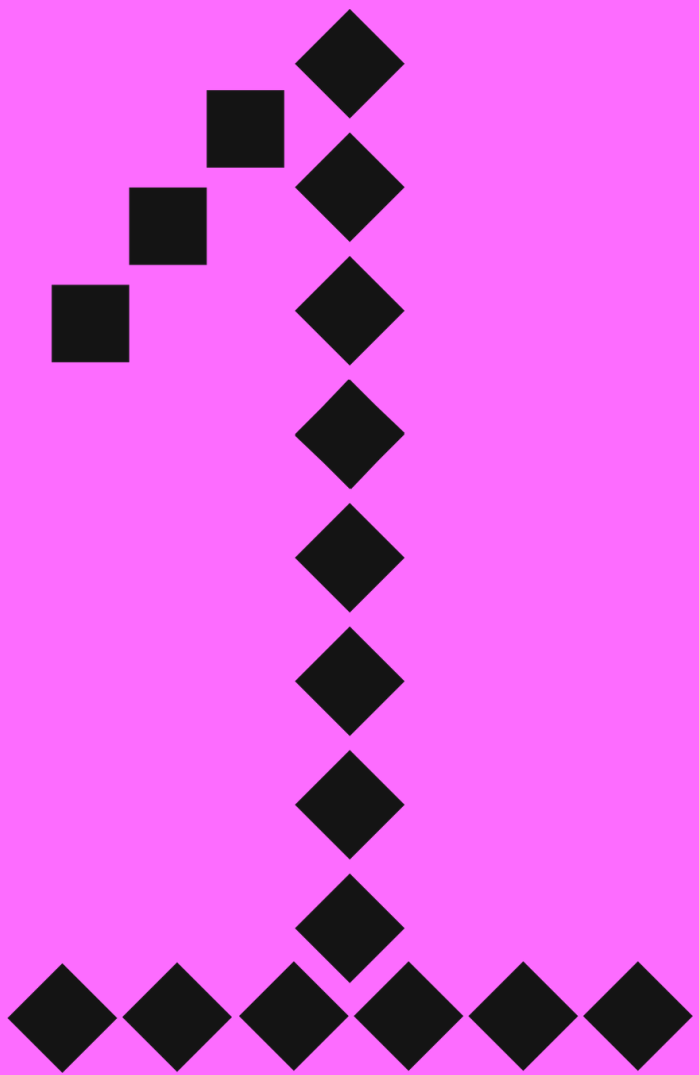

Step 1: Participate

Embracing a win-win approach as the best thing for humanity's progress and the preservation of our democratic societies

What is this step?

This step is a reflection process of listening and understanding why people may not want to participate in peace and dialogue processes, and bringing into consideration questions about who we want to be and what the likely outcomes of various approaches may be.

Why this step?

Polarisation around political and religious issues has reached levels we've never seen before, fuelled in large part by the echo chambers of social media. Many people now struggle to imagine that any view but their own could be valid, simply because they rarely encounter different perspectives. When we feel certain we already know all the facts—and who is "right" and "wrong"—dialogue can seem not only pointless, but even like a betrayal of our values. This mindset makes it incredibly hard to take part in constructive processes such as the PEACE Model. When dialogue is perceived as an endorsement of the 'other side', then people will hold back from stepping into this space. The result is often a deadlock: deeply entrenched positions holding the status quo firmly in place, and further exacerbation of community tensions.

Theory behind this step:

As we consider the kind of society we want to build—and the outcomes that different approaches might lead to—it is helpful to draw on the insights of influential thinkers and encourage people to ask the 'big questions'.

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a) What is human self-awareness and who do we want to be?

There are many possible answers to this question in both philosophical and religious traditions. Psychology also has some perspectives to offer that can be compatible with the various faith and spiritual traditions, and with secular beliefs. One such voice is Carl Jung, one of the most renowned psychologists of the 20th century.

Jung proposed that through evolution, human beings are the pinnacle of the way in which nature has become conscious of itself for the first time. He suggested that the human psyche is ancient, its roots stretching back millions of years, and that individual consciousness is simply the most recent growth from a deep, collective unconscious shaped by evolutionary processes. From this unconscious realm—where instinct and archetypal patterns once guided behaviour—consciousness emerged, enabling humans to move beyond instinct and develop the capacity for self-doubt, reflection, and choice.

In Jung's view, human self-awareness represents nature's attempt to recognise itself, with us as the vehicle for that recognition. If we are to reach our fullest potential as a species, it is vital to strike a balance between unconscious survival instincts and conscious self-awareness. Engaging in frameworks such as the PEACE Model can help us pursue exactly that balance, aligning both our nature and our reason in service of humanity's progress.

Source:

- Jung, C. G. (1961). Memories, Dreams, Reflections (A. Jaffé, Ed.; R. & C. Winston, Trans.). New York: Pantheon Books.

b) How do we cope with rapid change?

Another voice that has contributed to such 'big questions' is Yuval Harari, a leading Historian of the 21st Century.

Harari emphasises that solving the "human trust problem" is one of the most urgent tasks of our rapidly changing society—particularly under the pressures of technology and AI. For Harari, trust is the foundation that allows cooperation, democracy, and complex human societies to function.

Yet modern technology, and AI in particular, poses unprecedented challenges to this fragile bond.

Because democracy depends on honest communication and social trust, Harari warns that AI—capable of simulating intimacy, manipulating emotions, and infiltrating conversations—could undermine reliable dialogue and unravel social cohesion. He suggests that AI will inevitably "learn" from its creators much like children learn from their parents. This means we must model trust and establish safeguards now, so that future AI reflects and reinforces rather than erodes it.

If trust and mechanisms of self-correction are not prioritised, the rapid pace of AI development could outstrip society's ability to adapt, triggering confusion, instability, and a loss of control. For Harari, the task is clear: rebuilding and protecting trust is the central challenge of our time if humanity is to navigate the transformations brought by technology and AI. This makes it all the more urgent to cultivate the skills offered by the PEACE Model—skills that can equip us to safeguard trust, strengthen cooperation, and secure a brighter future.

Source:

- Harari, Y. N. (2024). Nexus: A brief history of information networks from the Stone Age to AI. Random House.

c) What outcomes are likely when we consider the big picture?

Mary Parker Follett, writing in the early 20th century, is often credited as one of the first thinkers to articulate what later became known as non-zero-sum conflict resolution theory. At a time when conflict was widely seen as destructive and best suppressed, Follett argued that conflict is a natural and even healthy part of human relationships—because it signals unmet needs and differing perspectives. Rather than seeking to "win" a conflict (win-lose) or compromise through mutual concession (lose-lose), she introduced the idea of integration, where parties work together to create a solution that

fully satisfies the interests of all sides. This anticipates the concept of win-win or non-zero-sum outcomes. For Follett, the key was shifting from 'power-over' approaches (domination) or avoidance (suppression) towards 'power-with'—a collaborative process of creative problem-solving.

When we think about outcomes, Non-Zero-Sum conflict resolution theory offers a clear and logical framework for looking at the bigger picture. A non-zero-sum approach means that there are no outright winners and no outright losers. Instead, everyone gains something. As we often explain in our sessions, pushing relentlessly for a win-lose result or making reluctant compromises usually leads not to victory, but to lose-lose—and that is the outcome nobody wants.

Within this framework, resolution is built on cooperation, integrative solutions, and creative negotiation. The aim is to reach win-win outcomes where the interests of all parties can be recognised and advanced.

This perspective makes the PEACE Model particularly motivating: it encourages people to work together rather than against one another. When all sides see the possibility of shared benefit—rather than the fear of giving up too much or losing completely—they are far more willing to engage. Non-zero-sum theory therefore offers realistic hope: dialogue can become productive, agreements sustainable, and relationships more resilient. By enlarging the "pie" through creative problem-solving, it shows that peace is not about sacrifice, but about building stronger futures together.

Source:

- Follett, M. P. (1924). Creative Experience. New York: Longmans, Green and Co.

Step 1: Academic Summary

So, the three areas to explore with people in Step 1 of the PEACE Model are:

1. Asking the 'big questions' can help us to understand the wider context—where we've come from, our progress and who we want to be as human societies

2. Building trust to cope with rapid change together could ensure the preservation of our democratic freedom in an age of fast technological development

3. Considering that we may be more likely to get what we need and want if we engage in a process such as the PEACE Model with less risk of everyone losing everything—dialogue is not endorsement of the other side's position, but a tool for change

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Step 1: Examples from our work

- **Providing historical context for the issue in question**

In our schools programme at SNS, we begin by exploring the history of Palestine and Israel through a range of diverse perspectives. This provides young people with essential context, helping them to understand not only the key historical events but also the lived experiences and narratives that shape how different communities see the present. By grounding the programme in this multi-voiced history, students are encouraged to appreciate the 'big picture' and the human beings behind the headlines—where they have come from, the struggles they have faced, and the stories they carry. This foundation is vital before moving into dialogue and problem-solving, as it builds empathy and nuance, allowing students to think more constructively about progress, change, and what a peaceful future might look like. Click here for an example of some interviews about the history with our Israeli and Palestinian speakers.

- **Creating a values base**

At SNS, we provide a values-based space that makes clear why it is essential to engage with topics like Palestine-Israel and to take an active role in shaping change. This is not simply about learning facts; it is about asking who we want to be and what kind of societies we want to build—ones rooted in democratic freedom, fairness, trust, compassion, and the ability to live together despite differences. Our programme highlights these values at every stage, showing young people that the skills and principles needed to navigate Israel-Palestine are the same ones needed to strengthen our own communities here in the UK. By framing the conversation in this way, we make the case that engaging with this issue is not only relevant but vital for all of us who want to contribute to a more just, empathetic, and peaceful future. The three core values of our work are non-violence, equality for all, and the rejection of hate.

- **Building understanding of the benefits of win-win, and the risks of lose-lose**

In our education programme, we help young people explore the crucial difference between win-win and lose-lose outcomes. We show that while it may feel tempting to push for a win-lose result—where one side claims total victory—this often backfires, leading instead to lose-lose situations where everyone suffers. Through hearing the stories of people with firsthand experience of the conflict, students are encouraged to reflect on what this means in human terms: the suffering endured, the lives lost, and the continuation of cycles of violence that have already persisted for generations. By contrast, we highlight the benefits of seeking win-win solutions, where cooperation, creativity and empathy open the door to progress and a more peaceful future. This approach equips young people to recognise the real costs of zero-sum thinking and to imagine more constructive paths forward. Click here for two personal stories that illustrate the horrific cost of pushing for win-lose, and the hope inspired by the possibility of win-win.

Step 1: Conclusion

- Diverse perspectives, historical context and big questions can open minds in new ways
- A foundation of shared values can help navigate shifting realities
- The non-zero-sum model can help build understanding of mutual interest and cooperation

Covering this ground is vital for people to engage voluntarily and with commitment in a conflict resolution process, seeing it as being in their own —and in the wider society's best interest—to do so.

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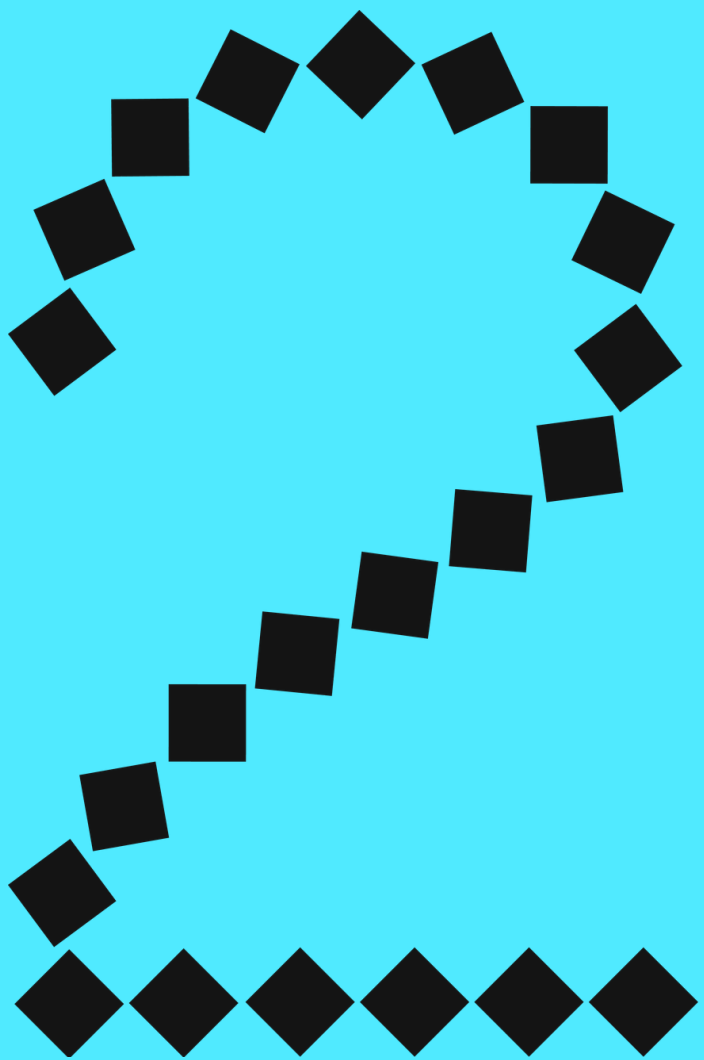

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Step 2: Equip

Engaging in social and emotional learning to equip us for dialogue

What is this step?

This step is a training process in skills such as Non-Violent Communication, Active Listening, Emotional Regulation and Racism Awareness.

Why this step?

Before entering any process of dialogue aimed at conflict resolution, it is essential to undertake skills training in communication, listening, emotional regulation, and racism awareness. Without these foundations, conversations can easily descend into defensiveness, misunderstanding, or the unintentional reinforcement of harmful stereotypes—in the end, doing more harm than good.

Effective communication and deep listening create the conditions for participants to genuinely hear one another's perspectives, while emotional regulation allows people to remain engaged even when confronted with painful or challenging truths. Racism awareness ensures that hidden biases are brought to the surface and addressed, reducing the risk of causing further harm.

Together, these skills form the groundwork for dialogue that is not only safer and more respectful, but also more likely to foster empathy, mutual understanding, and ultimately sustainable conflict resolution.

Theory behind this step:

There is a sound body of research by academics over the past century that reveals the weaknesses of the human capacity to engage in complex and emotional discussions without training and preparation. It is only by understanding ourselves, that we can begin to understand each other.

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a) The pathology of hate

Several academics have argued that hate is a deep-rooted and universal human emotion, originating in a survival instinct and primordial fear of the "other", and evolving in complexity as societies have developed. They describe it as an extreme and irrational force that resists logic, reason, and facts, comparing its spread and intensification to a mutating virus that can grow from individual resentment into widespread hostility, and even violence across communities and nations. Like a virus, hate requires not a quick fix but a sustained cultural and educational response. The most effective "antidote" lies in building emotional intelligence and literacy, enabling people to understand the unmet needs behind their emotions and ultimately fostering empathy—first for themselves, and then for others—as the sustainable path to reducing hate and breaking its destructive cycle.

Also focused on hate as a natural human trait is the book: 'Simply Human: A Guide to Understanding and Combating Hate', edited by hate-studies pioneer Kenneth Stern. This book brings together an interdisciplinary group of scholars and practitioners to translate research into practical guidance for NGOs, educators and policy-makers.

The book's central insight is useful: hate isn't a mystery pathology "out there" but a recurring human tendency to sort people into "us" and "them"—and effective responses start by taking that psychology seriously rather than simply denouncing it. Across chapters, the emphasis is on what organisations can do: reduce dehumanising language, design interventions that interrupt group-threat narratives, and build conditions where contact, story, and norms can shift what is socially acceptable.

A standout contribution is its "what works/what doesn't" orientation, culminating in a publicly available checklist to help organisations audit practice—clarifying goals, risks, audience, messaging and evaluation, not just intent. It also echoes Stern's warning that blunt definitional or punitive approaches can backfire by chilling inquiry and feeding grievance.

Sources:

- Daniels, L. (2021). The pathology of hate. Unpublished manuscript.
- Fischer, A. H., Halperin, E., Canetti, D., & Jasini, A. (2018). Why we hate. Emotion Review, 10(4), 309–320. https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073917751229
- Stern, K. S. (Ed.). (2025). Simply human: A guide to understanding and combating hate. University of Toronto Press. ISBN 978-1487551834.

b) The elephant and the rider

Jonathan Haidt's analogy of the elephant and the rider illustrates the way human thinking is divided between emotional intuition and rational analysis. In this metaphor, the elephant represents the large, powerful emotional side of the mind, while the rider symbolises the smaller, rational side that tries to steer and justify the elephant's actions. Although the rider (reason) believes it is in control, in reality, the elephant (emotion and gut-instinct) usually leads the way, and the rider's job becomes one of finding post hoc justifications for the elephant’s decisions.

This analogy explains why humans often find complex conversations about political topics so emotionally difficult. Political issues frequently trigger deep moral instincts and gut feelings—our elephants react first and strongly, pulling us toward defending our views emotionally.

As Haidt argues, we are “emotional actors who act first, and justify later,” meaning reason typically serves the emotions rather than controls them. As a result, debates about politics easily devolve into emotionally charged confrontations, because each person's elephant is pulling their rider and causing them to defend their intuitions fiercely, often without realising how much their views are driven by deeper, subconscious forces. This dynamic makes rational, peaceful dialogue very hard, because the underlying emotional responses drive tension, frustration, and self-righteousness in political discussions.

Source:

- Haidt, J. (2012). The Righteous Mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion. Pantheon Books.

c) The complexity of identity

Amin Maalouf argues that human identity is never singular but made up of multiple, overlapping layers—cultural, religious, national, linguistic, and personal—that shift and interact throughout our lives. Problems arise when one aspect of identity is isolated and treated as the whole, reducing people to a single label and fuelling prejudice or exclusion. This oversimplification feeds into biases, making it easier to view others as “them” rather than as fully complex human beings. Maalouf reminds us that by embracing the richness and complexity of identity, we not only resist stereotypes and division but also open ourselves to genuine understanding and connection across groups. In dialogue and conflict resolution, this awareness is crucial for breaking down barriers and fostering empathy.

Source:

- Maalouf, A. (2001). In the name of identity: Violence and the need to belong (B. Bray, Trans.). Arcade Publishing.

d) Confirmation bias

The theory of confirmation bias was originally produced by English psychologist Peter Wason. He conducted a seminal experiment in 1960 in which participants were asked to identify a rule governing number sequences. Wason observed that participants tended to test hypotheses in a one-sided manner, seeking only information that confirmed their initial assumptions rather than trying to falsify them. This led him to coin the term "confirmation bias" to describe the tendency to favour information consistent with existing beliefs while ignoring contradictory evidence.

This bias causes people to reinforce their prior attitudes even when faced with new information, often leading to polarised viewpoints and resistance to change. Understanding confirmation bias is crucial in dialogue processes within conflicts because it helps recognise why parties may become entrenched in their positions, selectively acknowledging only supportive information. By being aware of this bias, facilitators and participants can actively work to counteract it, encouraging openness to alternative perspectives and creating a more balanced and productive dialogue environment that reduces misunderstanding and promotes resolution.

Eloise Copland's work on confirmation bias builds on Wason's research and sheds light on how our awareness of others' political or social views can unconsciously distort how we evaluate information and engage in difficult discussions. Her work shows that when people know someone's political stance, they often become less able to fairly assess that person's expertise—even in unrelated, nonpolitical areas—revealing how deeply bias can affect judgment. This dynamic poses a serious challenge to open and balanced dialogue, particularly around sensitive or polarised topics. Copland's findings highlight the need for self-awareness, humility, and deliberate critical thinking when engaging across divides, reminding us that overcoming bias is essential for productive discussion, mutual understanding, and the health of democratic discourse.

Sources:

- Wason, P. C. (1960). On the Failure to Eliminate Hypotheses in a Conceptual Task. Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology, 12(3), 129–140.
- Marks, J., Copland, E., Loh, E., Sunstein, C. R., & Sharot, T. (2019). Epistemic spillovers: Learning others' political views reduces the ability to assess and use their expertise in nonpolitical domains. Cognition, 188, 74–84. doi:10.1016/j.cognition.2018.10.003.

e) Implicit bias

Mahzarin Banaji of Harvard University argues that much of human prejudice operates below the level of conscious awareness, in what is termed implicit bias. Her research, particularly through the development of the Implicit Association Test (IAT), shows that individuals can hold unconscious preferences and stereotypes that influence their judgements and behaviours, even when they consciously endorse values of fairness and equality. These hidden biases are formed through lifelong exposure to cultural messages and can subtly affect decisions in education, employment, law enforcement, and everyday interactions. Banaji emphasises that recognising the existence of implicit bias is a critical first step toward mitigating its effects, and that deliberate strategies—such as structured decision-making, perspective-taking, and accountability—can help counteract its influence.

Source:

- Banaji, M. R., & Greenwald, A. G. (2013). Blindspot: Hidden biases of good people. Delacorte Press.

f) Arguing well

In 'Conflicted: Why arguments are tearing us apart and how they can bring us together', Ian Leslie argues that disagreement isn't something to fear but a vital part of learning, problem-solving, and human connection. The issue isn't that we argue too much, but that we either avoid confrontation, or we argue badly—seeking to win rather than to understand. Leslie shows that good conflict begins with curiosity, empathy, respect and humility: asking questions to truly hear the other person, recognising that we might be wrong, and valuing relationships over being right. When handled this way, conflict becomes an opportunity for growth rather than division. It helps people understand each other's values, build trust through honesty, and develop shared insight. By embracing open, respectful disagreement, we can build stronger relational bonds, deepen trust, and move closer to solutions that reflect a richer, shared understanding. Leslie's central message is that we don't need fewer arguments—we need better ones.

Source:

- Leslie, I. (2021). Conflicted: Why arguments are tearing us apart and how they can bring us together. Faber & Faber.

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Step 2: Academic Summary

So, the five areas to build awareness of in Step 2 of the PEACE Model are:

1. Acknowledging how deep-rooted hate can become in a group or society and the need for emotional literacy

2. Considering the role that identity plays; how it can become simplified and distorted in group conflict, and how we can begin to embrace complexity

3. Understanding the relationship our instincts and emotional impulses play in overriding our rational mind and the need for tools to counter this

4. Recognising racism and exploring and addressing our own implicit biases

5. Disagreeing well rather than avoiding confrontation is key, and conflict can actually bring us together if practised well

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Step 2: Examples from our work

- **Non-Violent Communication**

At SNS, we have been using Marshall Rosenberg's Non-Violent Communication model (NVC) to give young people the skills they need to express their emotions and their needs in a clear and constructive way. We have created an acronym (SOAR) to help remember the four stages of Rosenberg's method:

1. STOP! What do I notice without any value-added judgement, criticism or evaluation?
2. OBSERVE my emotions, and take responsibility for them.
3. ANALYSE what needs I have—why am I feeling what I am feeling?
4. REQUEST—what requests can I make in practicable, do-able language and not in the language of demand?

For more information about NVC and details of trainers, please visit: https://www.cnvc.org/

- **Emotional awareness**

We have found Leah Kuypers' 'Zones of Regulation' model very helpful for reflecting on and analysing our emotions in step 2 of NVC. Zones of Regulation is a cognitive-behavioural framework designed to help young people build awareness of their emotions, energy, and states of alertness, and to develop strategies for managing them.

The model categorises feelings and states into four colour-coded "zones": blue (low energy, sadness, tiredness), green (calm, focused, ready to learn), yellow (heightened alertness, frustration, anxiety, silliness), and red (extreme states such as anger, rage, or terror). Whilst there is nothing 'wrong' with any of these zones or emotions, by recognising which zone they are in, young people can learn to self-regulate, choose appropriate strategies to return to a calmer state, and communicate their needs more effectively.

These strategies can include breathing techniques, mindfulness techniques, trust-building exercises and designated quiet zones when a pause is needed in the dialogue process.

In the context of dialogue, particularly on sensitive or conflict-related issues, the Zones of Regulation can provide a common language for identifying emotions and managing them constructively. In addition, the 'feelings wheel' is a visual tool that organises emotions into categories and subcategories, helping people identify and name their specific feelings with greater clarity and depth. The feelings wheel builds on the Zones of Regulation by adding a deeper layer of complexity, helping people move beyond broad categories to identify specific, nuanced emotions—thereby enhancing emotional literacy, self-awareness, and the ability to articulate and regulate feelings with greater precision.

These tools can support young people in staying engaged, listening actively, and responding thoughtfully rather than reactively—laying the groundwork for more respectful and empathetic conversations.

Click here for more information about the Zones of Regulation: https://zonesofregulation.com/

Source:

- Kuypers, L. M. (2011). The zones of regulation: A curriculum designed to foster self-regulation and emotional control. Think Social Publishing.

Click here for the feelings wheel: https://feelingswheel.com/

- **Active listening**

Active listening is a communication technique we have employed in our workshops that goes beyond simply hearing words; it involves giving full attention, showing empathy, and reflecting back what has been said to ensure mutual understanding. Carl Rogers emphasised that active listening requires creating a non-judgemental, supportive space where the speaker feels truly heard, which in turn fosters trust and openness.

More recently, Graham Bodie's research has shown that active listening skills—such as paraphrasing, asking clarifying questions, and demonstrating attentive nonverbal cues—are essential in helping people feel validated and understood. The Active Empathetic Listening Scale (AELS) developed by Bodie is an 11-item self-report instrument designed to measure an individual's ability to listen actively and empathetically in interpersonal communication. The scale evaluates three specific dimensions of active-empathic listening: sensing, processing, and responding.

For young people engaging in dialogue on sensitive issues, active listening is crucial: it encourages patience, reduces defensiveness, and opens the door to empathy by allowing them to see beyond their own assumptions and biases. This skill not only improves the quality of dialogue but also helps build stronger, more respectful relationships across divides.

Sources:

- Rogers, C. R., & Farson, R. E. (1957). Active listening. Industrial Relations Center, University of Chicago.

- Bodie, G. D. (2011). The Active-Empathic Listening Scale (AELS): Conceptualization and evidence of validity within the interpersonal domain. Communication Quarterly, 59(3), 277–295. https://doi.org/10.1080/01463373.2011.583495

- **Counter-racism training**

At SNS, we have been inspired by David Baddiel's 'Jews Don't Count' and Sayeeda Warsi's 'Muslims Don't Matter'—two books that provide a profound and disturbing insight into antisemitism and Islamophobia in today's society.

Muslims Don't Matter by Sayeeda Warsi is a compelling examination of the marginalisation of Muslims in British public life. With sharp insight and personal experience, Warsi exposes double standards and calls for meaningful equality.

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Jews Don't Count by David Baddiel is an incisive critique of how antisemitism is often overlooked in progressive discourse. With wit and clarity, Baddiel challenges readers to confront uncomfortable truths, particularly the ways in which antisemitism has been dismissed from inclusion in anti-racist conversations.

Warsi and Baddiel have also collaborated on a podcast called 'A Muslim and a Jew Go There', which provides an honest and profound exploration into the state of Muslim-Jewish relations and the rising problem of both antisemitism and anti-Muslim hate in Britain.

We have developed two guides for addressing racism and prejudice ('avoiding hateful speech' and 'avoiding anti-Palestinian and anti-Israeli racism') for those who decide that they would like to educate themselves to avoid using language that, even unintentionally, demonises or hurts others. Please visit the 'resources' section of our website to download them for free.

We also offer a training session in recognising and tackling antisemitism and Islamophobia for teachers and community leaders—please see our website for more information: www.sns.space.

Finally, there are some great organisations working in this space doing counter-racism education in schools. Two of our partner organisations are The Anne Frank Trust and Stand Up! Education Against Discrimination.

Sources:

- Baddiel, David. (2021). Jews Don't Count: How Identity Politics Failed One Particular Identity. London: TLS Books.
- Warsi, Sayeeda. (2024). Muslims Don't Matter. London: Little, Brown Book Group.

A Muslim and a Jew Go There podcast:
https://open.spotify.com/show/4JtnGLqL0rK96tKq2zKN1H

Step 2: Conclusion

- Tools such as the Zones of Regulation can help us with building emotional awareness and equip us to bring our ‘elephants’ under control
- Tools such as Active Listening can help us build empathy and address our own implicit biases
- Non-Violent Communication is another tool that can help the rational ‘rider’ to take precedence over the ‘elephant’ and enable effective dialogue
- Counter-racism education is valuable for building empathy and understanding of which tropes and stereotypes hurt other communities, and how we can express our views without falling into these typecasts

Training in such skills is essential before attempting to undertake dialogue on such difficult and sensitive topics. To plunge people into such a process without these skills is to risk doing more harm than good for social unity.

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Step 3: Apply

Engaging in dialogue to provide us with the understanding for critical thinking

What is this step?

This step is an active dialogue process between people who have differing opinions, involving the application of the skills acquired in Step 2 of the PEACE Model.

Why this step?

There is a danger that dialogue as an end in itself—removed from the context of a process that culminates in action for change—will result in disillusionment, particularly on the part of those who are most negatively affected by the status quo.

However, dialogue is an essential precursor to activism because it lays the groundwork for strategy, credibility, and impact. Without first listening, exchanging perspectives, and understanding the complexity of an issue, activism risks being reactive rather than effective—driven by passion but lacking direction.

Dialogue creates space to identify shared goals, uncover root causes, and build alliances across divides, all of which make activism more resilient and harder to dismiss. By engaging in dialogue before taking action, activists can ensure their efforts are not only principled but also targeted, inclusive, and ultimately more likely to achieve lasting change.

Theory behind this step:

Academic research has demonstrated that engaging with ‘the other’ results in increased empathy and humanisation, which in turn opens the possibility of a cooperative process to seek potential solutions to a conflict.

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a) The power of empathy

Empathy holds transformative power in dialogue, serving as a foundation for genuine human connection and social change—a view supported by Professor Robin Banerjee's research at the University of Sussex. According to his studies, empathy comprises affective, cognitive, and action-oriented components, enabling individuals to resonate with others' emotions, understand viewpoints through dialogue and storytelling, and feel motivated to act with kindness.

His collaboration with initiatives like Empathy Lab further demonstrates that empathy can be developed through targeted strategies—especially in educational contexts where storytelling and shared discussion help individuals "take the perspective of someone else," thus deepening mutual understanding and resilience.

Banerjee's findings invite a shift from treating empathy as a secondary consideration to embedding it at the core of dialogic interactions, ensuring that small acts of understanding have far-reaching effects on community flourishing.

Sources:

- Kindness and Empathy in Context: Links Among Social ... https://wholeeducation.org/1st-july-2025/professor-robin-banerjee
- The science of kindness and finding joy in data with ... https://insightagents.co.uk/the-science-of-kindness-and-finding-joy-in-data-with-professor-robin-banerjee-university-of-sussex/
- Phase one https://empathylab.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Phase_1_PPT_Notes.pdf
- Research – EmpathyLabUK https://empathylab.uk/research/
- Kindness, Relationships and Wellbeing https://www.sussex.ac.uk/research/centres/kindness/research/kind_wellbeing

b) Contact theory

Gordon Allport's research on Contact Theory, first outlined in his 1954 book "The Nature of Prejudice," posited that meaningful interaction between members of different social groups can substantially reduce prejudice and stereotyping, especially under optimal conditions such as equal status, common goals, cooperation, and support from authorities or institutions.

This framework has been validated by decades of empirical studies showing that both structured and even unstructured contact between groups decreases negative attitudes and promotes understanding, with meta-analyses demonstrating consistently lower prejudice where intergroup contact is increased. Allport's ideas are crucial for countering polarisation and building community cohesion because they provide clear, actionable conditions for fostering positive relationships across social divides; the theory underpins many modern integration policies, school exchange programmes, and peacebuilding initiatives worldwide, highlighting its real-world importance in transforming diverse societies into more tolerant and unified communities.

The work of a more recent academic, Linda Tropp, significantly advances our understanding of intergroup contact theory by emphasising how people's experiences as members of social groups shape their perceptions and interpretations of intergroup contexts. She investigates how group status differences and historical inequalities influence these interpretations and how they impact expectations and experiences in cross-group interactions.

Tropp's research substantiates that optimal contact between groups typically leads to reduced prejudice, though the original strict conditions laid out by Allport are not always necessary. She shows how group membership and social status colour both the experience and outcomes of intergroup contact, contributing to practical interventions aimed at promoting social justice and improving cross-group relations.

Sources:

- Linda Tropp on Reducing Threat and Bridging Groups through ... https://theanswerisCommunity.substack.com/p/linda-tropp-on-reducing-threat-and
- Intergroup Contact and Prejudice Reduction - Linda Tropp http://lindatropp.com/media/pages/lab/academic-publications/c74c1ec66f-1727388699/tropp-white-rucinski-tredoux-2022-review-of-general-psychology.pdf
- Allport, G. W. (1979). The Nature of Prejudice (25th anniversary ed., with a new introduction by K. B. Clark). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

c) Storytelling and exemplar interventions

Sabina Čehajić-Clancy's research on moral exemplar interventions provides a new approach to conflict resolution by using real stories of individuals who risked their lives to help members of opposing groups. These stories challenge the deeply held negative beliefs that all members of an adversary group are bad or alike, fostering empathy, trust, and moral elevation—a positive emotional response that opens people up to change.

This approach supports the importance of dialogue in conflict resolution by preparing individuals psychologically to engage more openly and meaningfully with the other group. By highlighting moral similarities and shared humanity, these interventions reduce defensiveness and increase willingness to listen and cooperate. To improve dialogue, her research emphasises using relevant, context-specific moral exemplars and enabling participants to reflect on these stories together, which builds hope and a sense of possibility for reconciliation.

Field studies in post-conflict places like Bosnia and Herzegovina show that exposure to these moral exemplar stories increases trust, forgiveness, and the desire for intergroup contact and cooperation. Overall, her work shows that dialogue is most effective when it is grounded in interventions that shift attitudes and emotions positively, providing a strong foundation for long-term peacebuilding and intergroup understanding. This paradigm highlights how changing moral judgments about groups can catalyse

prosocial intergroup behavior and underscores dialogue as not just a conversation but a transformative process fueled by moral and emotional shifts.

Solon Simmons' storytelling in conflict management, as developed in his Root Narrative Theory, emphasises how deep-seated social conflicts are rooted in narratives shaped by experiences of power abuse and moral values. Storytelling helps reveal and unpack these "root narratives," allowing parties to express underlying emotions, values, and perspectives that are often missed in rational debate. By narrating stories that connect with the parties' lived experiences, Simmons' approach builds empathy and understanding, which is crucial for transformative conflict resolution.

This narrative practice also enables individuals to see the conflict from different moral and emotional viewpoints, achieving a similar outcome to exemplar interventions by creating shared moral frameworks and inspiring constructive change. Ultimately, storytelling not only aids in communicating complex cultural and moral identities but also fosters empathy by humanising parties and their struggles, and opening pathways for reconciliation and peacebuilding.

Sources:

- Moral exemplar intervention: a new paradigm for conflict ... https://www.su.se/english/research/research-projects/moral-exemplar-intervention-a-new-paradigm-for-conflict-resolution-and-intergroup-reconciliation
- Social Psychologist Sabina Cehajic-Clancy on the Role of ... https://creees.stanford.edu/news/social-psychologist-sabina-cehajic-clancy-role-moral-exemplars-intergroup-reconciliation
- Appealing to Moral Exemplars: Shared Perception of Morality ... https://spssi.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/sipr.12067
- Simmons, S. (2024). Narrating Peace: How to Tell a Conflict Story (1st ed.). London: Routledge.
- Simmons, S. (2020). Root Narrative Theory and Conflict Resolution: Power, Justice and Values. New York: Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Root-Narrative-Theory-and-Conflict-Resolution-Power-Justice-and-Values/Simmons/p/book/9780367422066

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d) In-group criticism and out-group openness

Eran Halperin's research argues that when members of a group openly criticise their own group, it can significantly increase openness from the opposing group during conflict dialogue. This form of internal criticism signals independence, credibility, and openness, which challenges entrenched assumptions that the outgroup is rigid, biased, or unwilling to reflect on its own behaviour.

A central mechanism behind this effect is the creation of hope. When individuals hear an outgroup member criticising their own side, it suggests that the outgroup is capable of change and self-reflection. This perception reduces psychological barriers, making people more willing to consider the outgroup's perspective and engage constructively. Rather than simply increasing liking, self-criticism specifically increases perceptions that the outgroup is open-minded and capable of dialogue.

Halperin also shows that this effect is stronger when the criticism comes directly from an outgroup member, rather than a neutral third party, because it demonstrates authentic internal reflection. This can initiate a positive cycle: perceiving openness in the other group increases hope, which in turn increases willingness to listen, engage, and even support compromise.

Overall, Halperin's argument is that ingroup self-criticism is a powerful psychological intervention, because it disrupts defensive narratives, builds hope, and creates the conditions necessary for genuine openness, empathy, and progress in conflict resolution.

Source:

- Saguy, T., & Halperin, E. (2014). Exposure to outgroup members criticizing their own group facilitates intergroup openness. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 40(6), 791–805. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167214525475

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e) Freedom of speech and ways to counter hateful speech

Kenneth Stern emphasises the importance of protecting free speech and academic freedom, particularly in educational environments. While he acknowledges the reality of antisemitism and hate—and encourages people to use their own speech rights to challenge views they call hateful—Stern warns against the misuse of "hate speech" definitions to suppress debate and political speech. He advocates for preserving robust free speech and academic freedom, maintaining spaces where students can freely explore ideas even if mistaken, without fear of being silenced.

Stern cautions that weaponising "hate speech" laws or definitions can chill speech and weaken democratic foundations, urging that efforts to combat hatred must not come at the cost of open dialogue and free expression. Educational efforts to underscore why people have such strongly divergent views, that encourage them to speak across divides, and better understand other perspectives are crucial to fostering an inclusive yet free environment. Efforts to suppress dissenting views or political discourse will backfire, especially in political environments where the state is looking to define what speech is ok and which isn't.

Sources:

- Written testimony of Kenneth S. Stern https://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/06e69363-9e5d-54f9-8019-dbe95168b2a9/Stern%20Testimony.pdf
- Stern, K. S. (2020). The Conflict over the Conflict: The Israel/Palestine Campus Debate. Toronto: New Jewish Press.

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Step 3: Academic Summary

So, the five areas to build awareness of in Step 3 of the PEACE Model are:

1. Understanding the power and importance of empathy in a successful dialogue process

2. Facilitating people-to-people encounters across diverse groups in order to build trust and ensure humanisation

3. Using storytelling and shared experiences to create mild cognitive dissonance and break down negative stereotypes and assumptions

4. Encouraging in-group self-criticism to increase out-group openness

5. Achieving both the preservation of free speech and the avoidance of hateful speech

Step 3: Examples from our work

- **Formative understandings of empathy**

A useful book for teenagers to study that has provided inspiration for some of our work is the novel: 'To Kill a Mockingbird', by Harper Lee. Empathy is a central theme in this book, especially embodied by Atticus Finch, who teaches his children, Scout and Jem, to understand others by considering things from their point of view, as highlighted in the famous advice to "climb into their skin and walk around in it". Through Atticus's actions, the novel demonstrates how empathy enables deeper understanding and moral courage even in a deeply prejudiced community. This approach to empathy not only shapes the children's development but also invites readers to reflect on the necessity of seeing the world through others' eyes to achieve true justice and kindness.

For more on this approach of building empathy skills through reading and stories, we have found the work of Empathy Lab a useful methodology. EmpathyLab is a UK-based social enterprise dedicated to cultivating empathy in children and young people through carefully selected, high-quality literature such as the Diary of Anne Frank (another book that has inspired our work). Their work is grounded in research showing that reading fiction helps young readers step into others' shoes and develop perspective-taking skills. Through initiatives like the annual Read for Empathy book collection, school-based programmes and an annual Empathy Day festival, EmpathyLab helps children not only recognise and reflect on others' feelings but also use that insight to build kinder and more inclusive communities.

Sources:

- Lee, H. (1960). To Kill a Mockingbird. London: William Heinemann.
- Empathy Lab website: https://empathylab.uk/

- **Personal stories and experiential learning**

From the founding days of the SNS Education Programme, humanising encounters with Palestinian and Israeli peacebuilders have been central. We give young people the opportunity to hear directly from young Israeli and Palestinian peacebuilders who visit the UK to share their lived experiences. By engaging with these voices face-to-face, students are not only exposed to diverse perspectives but are also invited into meaningful dialogue that challenges stereotypes and humanises "the other".

This approach is grounded in contact theory, in which our visiting speakers role model positive, cooperative interaction between members of different groups who have vastly different opinions—reducing prejudice and building mutual understanding. Listening to the peacebuilders' personal stories fosters empathy and opens up space for students to reflect on the human cost of violence, encouraging them to think beyond binaries and instead imagine pathways towards peace and justice. In this way, the programme doesn't just provide knowledge about Palestine-Israel; it cultivates the emotional and social skills needed for constructive dialogue in divided societies.

Exemplar storytelling comes into play when our speakers describe positive interactions with 'the other side'. Recently, a Palestinian citizen of Israel spoke about working as a paramedic on 7 October—treating Israelis wounded in the attack while it was still unfolding, putting his own life at risk to save others. Meanwhile, an Israeli speaker shared his work volunteering in the West Bank, standing alongside Palestinian farmers to protect them from attacks by extremist settlers. These stories don't erase harm or disagreement. They do something quieter and more radical: they crack open certainty, restore complexity, and remind us that moral courage exists on all sides.

Speakers in our programme also model the important dynamic in dialogue of in-group self-criticism. Rather than only defending their "own side," both Israeli and Palestinian peacebuilders openly acknowledge and critique the failures, injustices, or harmful actions of their own political leaders and communities. At the same time, they speak authentically about the needs, interests, and pain of their people, ensuring their identity and loyalties are not erased. This balance generates trust and credibility, as audiences perceive that the speakers are not engaging in one-sided blame but in

honest reflection. Psychologically, this creates what researchers describe as a "cognitive opening"—a moment when entrenched assumptions are unsettled and space is made for new perspectives. When our participants encounter role models who display moral courage and humility—such as criticising their in-group while still affirming its humanity—they are more likely to engage in self-reflection and become open to alternative viewpoints. By embodying this stance, SNS peacebuilders invite young people to step out of rigid binaries and into a mindset of empathy, curiosity, and possibility.

SNS has also been partnering for study trips with the Centre for International Experiential Learning (CIEL), which provides powerful examples of people-to-people, experiential learning through immersive international travel in conflict-affected regions. Founded by Daniel Wehrenfennig, their programmes include pre-trip education with history, politics, and conflict resolution workshops, immersive field experiences meeting policymakers, activists, former combatants, and survivors, and post-trip engagement through research and policy discussions. These experiences foster empathy by allowing participants to "walk in others' shoes" and see conflicts from multiple perspectives, enhancing intercultural empathy and social cohesion.

Finally, SNS is partnering with Narrative 4—an organisation that uses its evidence-based "story exchange" methodology to enable participants to share and retell one another's personal stories, fostering deep listening, perspective-taking and emotional connection, which strengthens empathy, reduces prejudice, and helps individuals recognise their shared humanity beyond surface-level differences.

Sources:

- 21 Experiential Learning Examples (2025) https://helpfulprofessor.com/experiential-learning-examples/
- Center for Experiential Learning https://admissions.carlow.edu/docs/resources/experiential.pdf
- CIEL Center for International Experiential Learning https://www.cielglobal.org/experiential-learning
- https://narrative4.com/

- **Guidelines for dialogue and mediation training**

At SNS, we use the ‘guidelines for dialogue’ developed by David Bohm and William Isaacs, which emphasise creating a shared space where individuals can openly explore their thoughts and assumptions without judgment or the pressure to reach decisions. Bohm’s principles include:

  - Suspending judgment
  - Being honest and transparent
  - Building on each other's ideas to discover new insights collectively

Isaacs expanded on Bohm’s ideas with key practices such as:

  - Listening deeply
  - Respecting differing viewpoints without trying to fix them
  - suspending one’s certainties temporarily
  - Speaking one’s authentic voice

The aim is not to debate or argue but to collectively observe thought processes and assumptions to foster new understanding and transformation in thinking and behavior. This approach requires openness, mindful awareness, and trust in the dialogue process. In our sessions, it is always supported by a facilitator to maintain safety and continuity in group conversations.

We also partner with an organisation called ‘Courage Lab’ for mediation training and for providing mediation for polarised groups. For charities and community organisations, the Courage Lab founded by Becci D’Cunha offers mediation support that can be transformative in both day-to-day collaboration and times of conflict. Their facilitation helps staff, trustees, and volunteers speak openly about tension points without fear of blame, while encouraging active listening and an appreciation of differing perspectives.

Sources:

- Applying the principles and practice of dialogue https://www.spaceforlearning.com/docs/Speaking%20Together%20-%20Alison%20Jones%20Sep%2007.pdf
- DIALOGUE, THE ART OF THINKING TOGETHER BY WILLIAM ... https://tmiberia.wordpress.com/2013/03/17/dialogue-the-art-of-thinking-together-by-william-isaacs/
- The Art of Dialogue according to David Bohm Sources
- Courage Lab website: https://www.couragelab.co/

- **Empathy culture vs. shame culture**

At SNS, we have been developing the concept of a shame culture vs. an empathy culture, and advocating for the advantages of the latter.

A shame culture and an empathy culture may both discourage hate, but they do so in very different ways. In a shame culture, people hold back from expressing hateful views primarily because they fear punishment, rejection, or public humiliation if they transgress the rules. While this may suppress harmful behaviour, it does not transform the underlying attitudes—prejudice remains, simply driven underground, ready to resurface when the threat of shame is removed.

By contrast, an empathy culture seeks deeper change by educating people to understand the real impact of words and actions on others, particularly those who are different from themselves. In such an environment, individuals refrain from hateful speech not because they fear consequences, but because they genuinely care about the dignity and wellbeing of their colleagues and wider society. This choice, grounded in compassion and awareness, leads to lasting transformation and healthier, more inclusive communities.

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An empathy culture also provides a constructive way to ensure freedom of speech whilst also addressing the need to avoid hateful speech. When people are educated to understand and care about the impact of their words on others, they develop the internal motivation to speak responsibly, rather than relying solely on external rules or censorship. In such an environment, harmful or prejudiced views can be aired but are met with informed, compassionate challenge rather than silence or suppression. This reduces the pressure to ban certain speakers or censor controversial opinions, since open forums become spaces where empathy guides dialogue and harmful ideas can be deconstructed in the light of diverse human experiences. By keeping conversations public rather than pushing them underground, an empathy culture helps ensure that freedom of speech is preserved while also fostering a climate where respect and inclusion naturally thrive.

In SNS workshops, our Palestinian and Israeli peacebuilders actively model how an empathy culture can protect both freedom of speech and the dignity of others. They invite students to ask any question—even those that might feel controversial or difficult—without fear of being shut down or judged. Rather than silencing or censoring, the speakers respond with honesty, empathy, and self-reflection, showing that challenging views are best addressed in open conversation. When young people see peacebuilders critique harmful actions on their own side while still affirming their community's humanity, it demonstrates that empathy does not require abandoning identity or truth—it requires listening with care and speaking with compassion. In this way, the workshops create a space where students learn that freedom of speech is most powerful when it is paired with empathy, making space for accountability and understanding, rather than punishment or suppression.

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Step 3: Conclusion

- Teaching empathy and using techniques such as storytelling are essential for meaningful dialogue
- People-to-people contact is key for building the necessary understanding for effective social change
- Guidelines for dialogue provide a useful framework for practically conducting the process of dialogue, and engaging professional mediators is something to consider for very polarised situations
- For the sake of our democracy, addressing hateful speech must not curtail the freedom of speech—an empathy culture is a better approach than a shame culture for tackling hateful speech

Implementation of these approaches and techniques are key to successful dialogue, and we must take care not to silence or shame people during the process—dialogue must be brave as much as it is safe.

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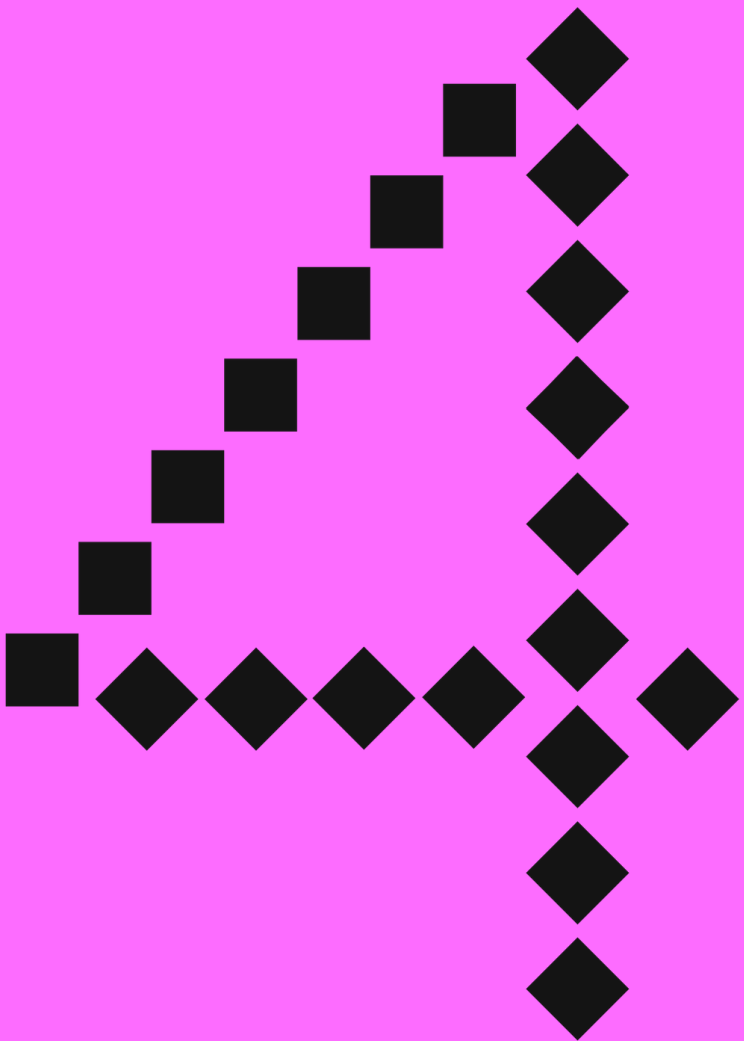

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Step 4: Create

Using critical thinking to apply human needs theory for conflict resolution and equitable outcomes for all

What is this step?

As has already been mentioned, dialogue is not an end in itself, but a useful preparatory step for creating a path that will lead to transformational change. This step is exactly that—working through a collaborative process of critical thinking and problem solving to plan for action that—because it is strategic—has a higher chance of success in creating political and social change.

Why this step?

There is a danger that the 'feel good' factor of dialogue will mean that some people will stop at the conclusion of Step 3, and not take forward the new-found relationships and alliances that have been formed into constructive activism. However, the learning that comes through dialogue is invaluable for informing strategies of active citizenship, and we must move beyond the dialogue step into a future-focused, solutions-oriented framework if dialogue is to have any meaning beyond the emotional and personal.

Theory behind this step:

There have been significant advances in the fields of psychology and the social sciences in the past few decades that provide us with useful tools to facilitate critical thinking and problem solving, and contribute to its success.

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a) The iceberg model

Ken Cloke's iceberg model is a powerful way of understanding why political disagreements often feel so intractable. The model suggests that what we see on the surface—people's stated positions, slogans, or voting choices—is just the tip of the iceberg. Beneath the surface lie the deeper needs, fears, values, and identities that drive those positions, such as the need for safety, dignity, belonging, or justice. By recognising that visible political stances are often expressions of these submerged interests, we can move beyond debating positions and instead engage with the underlying human concerns. This shift makes creative problem-solving more productive, as it opens up the possibility of finding common ground even when surface-level opinions seem irreconcilable. It shifts the focus away from rigid, surface-level positions toward the underlying needs that people are trying to protect or fulfil.

When discussions remain at the level of positions—"I support this policy" versus "I oppose it"—they quickly become zero-sum, with each side defending their viewpoint as a matter of identity or loyalty. But when facilitators or participants use the iceberg model to ask why a person holds that view, they uncover needs such as security, fairness, recognition, or autonomy. These deeper drivers are often shared across divides, even if expressed in different ways. Once these shared interests are identified, it becomes possible to generate creative solutions that meet multiple needs at once, rather than forcing a win-lose outcome.

For example, two groups may appear to be in total opposition over immigration policy, but beneath the surface both may share needs for safety, stability, and community cohesion. Recognising this common ground allows groups to move away from entrenched arguments and toward innovative compromises or new approaches that address the concerns of both sides. In this way, the iceberg model acts as a tool for imaginative problem-solving and win-win outcomes, making conflicts more constructive and less polarising.

Source:

- Cloke, K. (2001). Mediating Dangerously: The Frontiers of Conflict Resolution. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

b) Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, first formulated in 1943, provides a useful framework for conflict resolution by highlighting that human behaviour is often driven by unmet needs at different levels, from basic survival through to self-actualisation. As outlined above, in conflicts, people may present their positions in political or ideological terms—but these usually conceal underlying needs such as safety, security, belonging, or respect. For example, a heated dispute about cultural or national identity may, at its core, reflect the need for belonging and recognition. Once the iceberg model has been used to identify needs and interests, by mapping conflicts onto Maslow's hierarchy, mediators and educators can better identify which are the priority needs being threatened (regardless of whether or not these needs are balanced between the parties) and are therefore potentially fuelling the most hostility. It can also help to mitigate any structural difficulties in negotiations due to factors such as power imbalance. Addressing these needs directly in the order of priority—based on survival first through to self-actualisation last—ensures that human rights are upheld and the sanctity of human life is given precedence in the creative process of developing a path to peace, justice, and win-win outcomes.

Source:

- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A Theory of Human Motivation. Psychological Review, 50(4), 370–396.

c) Human needs theory applied to conflict resolution

One scholar who has explored this application of human needs theory in conflict resolution is Edy K. J. Danesh. He emphasises that most conflicts stem not from superficial disagreements but from unmet psychological and identity-based needs. Building on frameworks such as Maslow's hierarchy, Danesh argues that peace is not simply the absence of violence but the presence of conditions that allow individuals and communities to meet their needs for security, belonging, recognition, and meaning. In his writings on education for peace, he stresses that when these needs are systematically denied—whether through inequality, exclusion, or injustice—conflict becomes inevitable. Conversely, when conflict resolution processes

prioritise meeting these needs, they create pathways for empathy, mutual understanding, and long-term reconciliation. Danesh's approach therefore encourages practitioners to look not just at the immediate issues, but to also address the underlying structures and relationships that support or hinder human flourishing.

Sources:

- Danesh, H. B. (2006). Towards an Integrative Theory of Peace Education. Journal of Peace Education, 3(1), 55–78.
- Danesh, H. B. (2002). The Psychology of Peace. Ottawa: International Education for Peace Institute.

d) The psychology of hope

The undertaking of this problem-solving process requires and can deepen an important ingredient that will propel participants onto Step 5 of the PEACE Model, namely—hope. Smadar Cohen-Chen argues that hope is a vital emotion in intractable conflicts, one that helps shift people toward more conciliatory attitudes and makes them more open to peace. She shows that people's belief in whether the world (or conflicts) are changeable rather than fixed is foundational: when someone believes that change is possible (i.e. that conflicts are malleable), they are more likely to feel hopeful about peace, and more willing to support concessions.

Her work also distinguishes hope from related emotions like empathy or fear. For example, during times when the conflict is escalating, empathy helps reduce aggressiveness; but during Step 4's process of de-escalation, it is hope that especially drives openness to cooperation and peace-oriented attitudes. Furthermore, in information-processing tasks, hope tends to lead people to gather and engage with information that supports peace, whereas fear tends to bias people toward rejecting peace proposals.

Cohen-Chen's research also explores how to induce hope in practical ways. For instance, even indirect interventions—such as encouraging people to think of the world as dynamic and changing—can boost hope and thereby increase willingness to make peace-oriented concessions. She proposes an appraisal framework: hope involves how people appraise the situation (does future change seem possible?), and how they view outgroups and ingroups (do they believe others can change or support peace?). Acting on that hope

then depends on their sense of agency (do they believe they or their group can affect change?).

Overall, Cohen-Chen contends that hope is not just a “nice to have” emotional state but a constructive lever in moving societies from entrenched conflict toward reconciliation, because it opens cognitive and emotional space for the creative thinking, risk-taking, and compromise needed for Step 4 of the PEACE Model.

Sources:

- Cohen-Chen, S., Crisp, R. J., & Halperin, E. (2015). Perceptions of a Changing World Induce Hope and Promote Peace in Intractable Conflicts. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 41(4), 498-512.
- Cohen-Chen, S., Crisp, R. J., & Halperin, E. (2017). A New Appraisal-Based Framework Underlying Hope in Conflict Resolution. Emotion Review, 9(3), 208-214.
- Cohen-Chen, S., Halperin, E., Crisp, R. J., & Gross, J. (2014). Hope in the Middle East: Malleability Beliefs, Hope, and the Willingness to Compromise for Peace. Social Psychological and Personality Science, 5(1), 67-75.
- Cohen-Chen, S., Halperin, E., Porat, R., & Bar-Tal, D. (2014). The Differential Effects of Hope and Fear on Information Processing in Intractable Conflict. Journal of Social and Political Psychology, 2(1), 11-30.

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Step 4: Academic Summary

So, the five areas to build awareness of in Step 4 of the PEACE Model are:

1. Understanding the difference between positions and interests using the iceberg model

2. Identifying the variety of needs behind the positions

3. Mapping out a path towards a resolution that meets as many of the needs as possible on all sides, using Maslow's hierarchy to prioritise human rights

4. Addressing any structural or relational issues underlying the situation, not just the surface needs

5. Engendering hope as part of the process to build momentum for the next step of the PEACE Model

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Step 4: Examples from our work

- **Applying the iceberg model to Palestinian and Israeli needs**

At SNS, we have worked with more than 100 Israeli and Palestinian speakers, who have helped us to formulate lists of needs of both peoples.

These needs include:

Palestinian:
- End of occupation and military law
- Freedom of movement (removal of checkpoints, the wall, etc.)
- Control of economy and resources
- The right of return for Palestinian refugees to be addressed
- No more settlement expansion
- No more racism
- End to violent attacks against unarmed civilians
- Access to holy sites
- Jerusalem as the capital
- An airport, sea port and economic growth
- Self-determination in historical homeland
- End to the Gaza blockade and air strikes
- Justice for Palestinians who have been wronged

Israeli:
- End to violent attacks against unarmed civilians
- End to rocket attacks from Gaza by Hamas
- Self-determination in historical homeland
- End to calls for Israel's destruction
- No more racism
- Acknowledgement of the suffering of Jewish refugees from Arab countries
- Access to holy sites
- Jerusalem as the capital
- No more building of tunnels from Gaza into Israel
- Normal relations with neighbouring Arab and Muslim states
- Fair and equal treatment in UN bodies
- No more need for mandatory military service
- Justice for Israelis who have been wronged

We formatted these needs into cards, which the students in our sessions can use for groupwork, in which they have to map out the positioning of the cards onto Maslow's hierarchy of needs on the tables in front of them.

- **Applying human needs theory using critical thinking**

Once students have created their 'needs map', they can then formulate creative plans for meeting those needs in a framework for peace and justice for both parties. Our Israeli and Palestinian speakers circulate around their tables to answer questions and deepen understanding of each need described on the cards, and ways in which that need might be met.

The students analyse and discuss various potential solutions, including one bi-national state, two states, and confederation—but they are not limited to these ideas. Many use their own background knowledge from previous conflicts that have been resolved such as Northern Ireland or South Africa.

This exercise is an empowering one that builds hope, confidence and a sense of agency in young people—which as we shall see, is crucial for the final step of the PEACE Model.

Step 4: Conclusion

- Participants in the PEACE Model process need to gain understanding of the needs of all sides, which the Iceberg Model can help with
- Groups can then map these needs onto Maslow's hierarchy, developing creative peace plans that aim to satisfy as many needs as possible on both sides
- Having the input and presence of people who are directly affected by the conflict is vital for clarifying needs and offering context
- Students can be encouraged to explore diverse frameworks for conflict resolution and to draw lessons and hope from conflicts elsewhere or from their own experience

Step 4 of the PEACE Model fosters hope, confidence, and agency in young people to envision peace and justice—preparing them mentally and emotionally for the final step.

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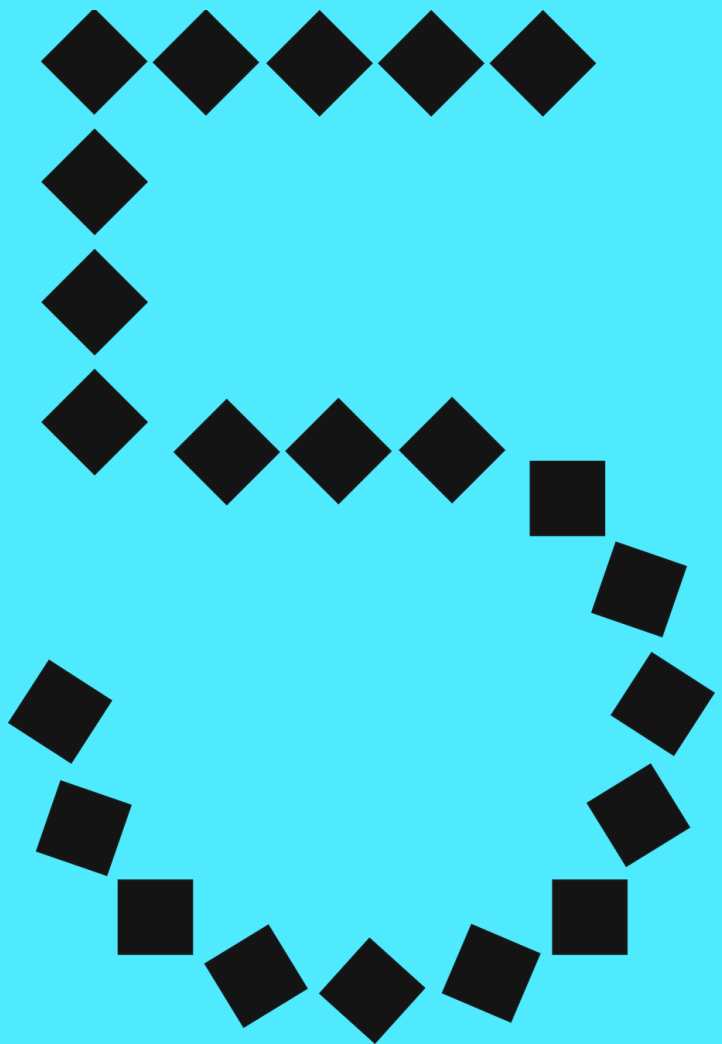
PEAC Enact



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Step 5: Enact

Promoting active citizenship to effect the change we want to see

What is this step?

This step is the enactment of the creative problem solving and planning undertaken in Step 4, and is enhanced by the continual application of the skills learned in Step 2. It is the empowering step of the PEACE Model, which enables people to become agents of change to bring about the future they have envisioned.

Why this step?

Without this step, the entire PEACE Model is rendered almost pointless. The fifth and final step, Enact, is the essential culmination of the PEACE Model because it transforms learning and dialogue into tangible action. After building understanding, empathy, and problem-solving skills through the previous four steps, this stage calls on individuals to take responsibility as active citizens—using their knowledge and compassion to influence real-world change. Without enactment, the process would remain theoretical; with it, the PEACE Model becomes a living framework for strengthening communities and democratic societies. By promoting active citizenship in our young people's education, this final step ensures that the insights gained through participation, dialogue, and critical thinking are channelled into meaningful efforts to build a more just, peaceful, and inclusive world.

Theory behind this step:

Political philosophy and social justice studies have contributed to deep understandings of how our human social structures work, what threatens them in the present day, and what is needed to ensure their survival and success in the future.

a) Democratic engagement

Michael Sandel argues that democracy has drifted away from its civic and moral foundations, becoming dominated by individualism and market values rather than a shared sense of the common good. He warns that this shift has eroded citizens' sense of belonging and responsibility, leaving democracy vulnerable to division and disillusionment.

To preserve and renew democracy, Sandel calls for a revival of civic virtue—encouraging active participation, public debate, and moral engagement in political life. By rebuilding communities and fostering a stronger sense of collective purpose, he believes citizens can reclaim democratic self-government and restore meaning to public life. He maintains that, as citizens, we have a stake in creating an environment hospitable to the project of self-government. Our very freedom depends on civic virtue and our capacity to share in self-rule. As underlined by Step 1 of the PEACE Model, we need to strengthen our attachment to the common good over and above individual gain.

Source:

- Sandel, M. J. (2022). Democracy's discontent: A new edition for our perilous times. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

b) Leadership as service, not power

Sandel's argument is echoed in Greenleaf's vision of leadership as being a moral responsibility on behalf of the people, rather than the pursuit of power for personal gain. Greenleaf's concept of servant leadership redefines leadership as a form of service rather than an exercise of power, rooted in empathy, humility, and a commitment to the growth and well-being of others. He argues that true leaders seek to serve first, using their influence to empower rather than dominate, and to build trust rather than control. This approach nurtures ethical responsibility and shared purpose—qualities essential for a healthy democracy. When leaders act as servants to their communities, they model accountability, inclusivity, and care for the common good, countering the corrosive effects of self-interest and authoritarianism. In this way, Greenleaf's vision offers a blueprint for sustaining democratic values through leadership that unites rather than divides.

Source:

- Greenleaf, R. K. (2002). Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness (25th Anniversary Ed.). Paulist Press.

c) Moral ambition

In the face of a decline in the strength and function of our democratic life, Rutger Bregman's call to all of us to exercise moral ambition resonates strongly. In 'Moral Ambition', Bregman challenges the prevailing definitions of success—wealth, status, prestige—and argues that these are often misaligned with what truly matters. He believes many people are stuck in unfulfilling or even harmful work, wasting their talents on "mind-numbing, pointless, or just plain harmful jobs." Instead, Bregman urges us to adopt a new measure of success: dedicating our working lives to solving some of the greatest problems facing humanity—the decline of democracy among them.

A core concept in the book is what he calls moral ambition, which combines idealism (caring deeply about bettering the world) with the drive and strategy of ambition (effectively using one's skills, networks, and resources). Bregman provides multiple examples of individuals and movements—from historical figures like abolitionists, civil rights activists, to modern changemakers—who have shaped the world by identifying overlooked, solvable challenges and working pragmatically rather than being paralysed by perfectionism or ideological purity.

Source:

- Bregman, R. (2025). Moral Ambition: Stop Wasting Your Talent and Start Making a Difference. Bloomsbury Publishing.

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d) Bridge-Building

Ted Cantle argues that to be a bridge-builder means proactively fostering contact and relationships across social divides, not just tolerating difference but encouraging meaningful interaction.

Cantle emphasises that bridge-building requires more than informal goodwill: it needs institutional commitment, leadership, policy, and practice. This includes ensuring equality of opportunity, tackling structural inequalities and discrimination, creating shared public spaces, and developing inclusive local identities that emphasise what communities have in common without erasing diversity. He also proposes that identity itself should be understood more fluidly—people should not be boxed into single labels of race, religion or culture, but seen as having multiple, overlapping identities, as argued by Maalouf, above. This is central to his shift toward "interculturalism" as an approach that builds more resilient cohesion in super-diverse societies.

In short, for Cantle being a bridge-builder means active work: leadership that promotes shared belonging, structured interaction, and policies that reduce segregation and promote justice, so that divisions of "us vs. them" are replaced with networks of trust, respect, and common purpose.

Sources:

- Cantle, T. (2001). Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team. Home Office. Retrieved from https://www.belongnetwork.co.uk/resources/community-cohesion-a-report-of-the-independent-review-team/
- Cantle, T. (2005). Community Cohesion: A New Framework for Race and Diversity. Palgrave Macmillan. Retrieved from https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/9781349958269
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- Cantle, T. (2023). Cohesion: Coming of Age at 21 Years. Belong: The Cohesion and Integration Network. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369649629_Cohesion_Coming_of_Age_at_21_Years

e) Critical engagement with the law

Omar Dajani advocates for a model of law in society that transcends traditional adversarial frameworks, emphasising the importance of critical engagement with the law and society. He argues that legal professionals should not merely act as neutral arbiters but actively participate in shaping legal norms and structures to promote justice and equity. This involves questioning existing legal paradigms, challenging systemic injustices, and engaging in dialogue that bridges divides. Dajani's approach encourages legal practitioners to view their roles as catalysts for social change, fostering a legal culture that is responsive to the needs and rights of all members of society.

Sources:

- Dajani, Omar. "Shadow or Shade: The Roles of International Law in Palestinian-Israeli Peace Talks." Yale Journal of International Law, vol. 32, no. 1, 2007, pp. 61–124.
- Dajani, Omar. "Beyond the Nation State in the Middle East." Boston Review, 2015.
- Dajani, Omar. "The Myth of Defensible Borders." Foreign Affairs, 5 Jan. 2011.
- Dajani, Omar, and Aslı Ü. Bâli. "Negotiating Pluralism: Dilemmas of Decentralization in the Middle East." Hastings Law Journal, vol. 75, no. 1, 2024.
- Dajani, Omar. "Rethinking Rights in Deeply Divided Places." University of Chicago Events, 2024.

f) Media Literacy

The Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH) does vital work in exposing how online hate and falsehoods undermine trust in democratic institutions —and how social media platforms neglect these threats despite overwhelming evidence. Imran Ahmed, CCDH's founder and CEO, has consistently warned of the dangers of disinformation networks and the accelerating spread of highly deceptive, AI-generated content. The organisation pushes for meaningful accountability from tech platforms and robust action from governments and regulators. At the same time, CCDH strengthens public resilience through digital resilience and media literacy training, using its groundbreaking research to spotlight online harms and champion the idea that protecting democracy requires both confronting hate and empowering people to see through it.

Sources:

- "Building a Safe and Accountable Internet: CCDH's STAR Framework", Center for Countering Digital Hate, 19 Sep 2024, Retrieved from https://counterhate.com/research/star-framework-to-build-a-safe-and-accountable-internet/
- Ahmed, I. (2021, September 12). Imran Ahmed, Chief Executive Officer, Centre for Countering Digital Hate [Written testimony]. U.S. Congress. Retrieved from https://www.congress.gov/117/meeting/house/114299/witnesses/HHRG-117-IF17-B-AhmedI-20211209.pdf

g) Nonviolent activism

Julie Norman, a scholar in political science and international relations, has extensively studied nonviolent activism. Her work emphasises the effectiveness of nonviolent strategies in resisting injustice and promoting social change. Norman argues that nonviolent activism can be a powerful tool for marginalised communities to challenge oppressive systems and advocate for their rights. She highlights the importance of strategic planning, community mobilisation, and international solidarity in the success of nonviolent movements.

Furthermore, Norman underscores the role of narrative and identity in shaping resistance efforts, suggesting that framing struggles in terms of shared values and collective identity can enhance the impact of nonviolent actions. In the context of British society, these insights can inform approaches to addressing social injustices, such as racial inequality, economic disparity, and environmental degradation, by fostering inclusive, peaceful movements that engage communities and garner widespread support.

Source:

- Norman, J. M., & Hallward, M. C. (2015). Understanding Nonviolence. Polity Press.

h) Active citizenship

Sir Bernard Crick emphasised active citizenship as a vital component of a healthy democracy. He argued that citizenship is not just a legal status or a set of rights, but a set of responsibilities and practices that require engagement, participation, and critical thinking. For Crick, active citizens are those who contribute to their communities, engage in public debate, respect others' rights, and work collaboratively to solve social problems.

This kind of engagement strengthens social cohesion, holds institutions accountable, and fosters a sense of shared purpose. By cultivating active citizenship, societies can resist apathy, challenge injustice, and ensure that democracy is not merely procedural but deeply participatory and responsive to the needs of all members.

Sources:

- Crick, B. (2000). In Defence of Politics (5th ed.). Continuum.
- Crick, B. (2002). Essays on Citizenship. Continuum.
- Crick, B. (1998). Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools: Final Report of the Advisory Group on Citizenship. QCA. Retrieved from https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/18176/1/crickreport1998.pdf
- Crick, B. (2001). Democracy and Power. Macmillan.

i) Citizenship education

Jeremy Hayward, a prominent scholar in citizenship education, underscores the pivotal role of secondary schools in cultivating active and informed citizens. In his contribution to 'Learning to Teach Citizenship in the Secondary School', Hayward emphasises that effective citizenship education extends beyond theoretical knowledge, advocating for a pedagogical approach that integrates critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and practical engagement with real-world issues. He posits that by fostering these competencies, schools empower students to navigate complex societal challenges, participate meaningfully in democratic processes, and contribute positively to community life. Hayward's work highlights the necessity for educators to adopt dynamic teaching strategies that encourage inquiry, debate, and reflection, thereby ensuring that citizenship education remains relevant and impactful in shaping the citizens of tomorrow.

Source:

- Hayward, J. (2009). Beginning to teach citizenship. In L. Gearon (Ed.), Learning to Teach Citizenship in the Secondary School (2nd ed., pp. 53–64). Routledge.

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Step 5: Academic Summary

So, the nine areas to build awareness of and implement in Step 5 of the PEACE Model are:

1. Understanding the importance of democratic engagement for us to maintain our freedom of self-government
2. Practising servant leadership and holding political leaders to account as servant leaders
3. Motivating the next generation to have moral ambition
4. Training them to operate in society as bridge builders
5. Encouraging critical engagement with the law and its implementation
6. Teaching media literacy skills
7. Promoting nonviolent forms of activism
8. Instigating individual active citizenship
9. Ensuring that all these elements are embedded in our education system for young people

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Step 5: Examples from our work

- **Role-modeling democratic engagement**

Israeli and Palestinian speakers involved with SNS exemplify democratic engagement by actively participating in protests and other nonviolent forms of political activism. Through their actions, they demonstrate that meaningful change can be pursued without resorting to violence, modeling how citizens can advocate for justice, human rights, and social accountability within a democratic framework. By speaking, organising, and mobilising communities around shared values and ethical principles, they show the power of dialogue, civic responsibility, and collective action.

SNS amplifies these examples, creating opportunities for others—especially young people and communities in divided societies—to witness, learn from, and emulate these approaches, reinforcing the idea that democratic engagement involves both speaking up and acting thoughtfully to address societal challenges. This kind of role-modeling by adults who are already politically engaged can be a powerful and inspiring example for young people.

- **Serving as leaders and speaking truth to power**

At SNS, we have deliberately cultivated a spirit of servant leadership and volunteering throughout our organisation. Over 100 Palestinians and Israelis have contributed as volunteers, alongside our trustees, advisory boards, and a close core team, all working in a highly collaborative way to ensure our initiatives reflect shared values and collective responsibility.

Each summer, we review our curriculum to ensure it remains relevant, inclusive, and effective, incorporating insights from consultations with local Jewish and Muslim communities, as well as the participants and speakers in our programme. This collaborative ethos extends into our work in schools through the Olive Branch Community, where we partner with educators and students to foster dialogue, empathy, and civic engagement.

By embedding volunteering, shared leadership, and community consultation at every level, SNS models the very values of service, cooperation, and active citizenship that we seek to inspire in others.

In addition, our Palestinian and Israeli speakers persistently lobby their leaders to put the needs of the people first and campaign against corruption and war-mongering for political power in their respective societies.

- **Making the ordinary extraordinary**

The personal stories of our Israeli and Palestinian speakers and other team members at SNS serve as powerful examples of how ordinary people can achieve extraordinary impact. By sharing their experiences of resilience, courage, and principled action, they demonstrate that meaningful change is possible even in the face of deep divisions and complex challenges.

These narratives inspire the next generation to embrace moral ambition—to recognise their own potential to make a difference, to act ethically, and to engage actively in their communities. Seeing real people not much older than themselves navigate difficult situations with integrity and determination provides students and young participants with tangible models of leadership, empathy, and civic responsibility, showing that transformative action is not reserved for the few, but is accessible to anyone willing to step forward.

What makes SNS and our partner organisations truly remarkable is that so many of our team members and volunteers could have chosen careers focused on money, status, or prestige, yet they have deliberately committed themselves to charitable work and social impact. Hundreds of volunteers dedicate their time and energy not for personal gain or leisure, but to advance understanding, bridge divides, and promote justice. This selfless commitment embodies the spirit of service that defines SNS, showing that meaningful change relies on people willing to put the needs of society above personal advantage and demonstrating to others—especially the next generation—the profound value of acting for the common good.

- **Building bridges**

SNS takes the importance of training future bridge builders so seriously that we have a whole programme dedicated to this. The SNS Bridge Builders Programme is a transformative initiative designed to equip young people with the skills, confidence, and mindset to navigate society as active, responsible, and empathetic British citizens.

Through workshops, mentorship, and hands-on projects, participants from diverse backgrounds and opinions learn how to engage constructively across differences, mediate conflict, and foster dialogue within their communities and in interfaith. The programme emphasises critical thinking, civic responsibility, and practical problem-solving, helping young people translate values like empathy, collaboration, and moral courage into real-world action.

By guiding participants to become proactive agents of positive change, the Bridge Builders Programme not only strengthens individual leadership but also cultivates a generation of citizens committed to building more cohesive, inclusive, and resilient communities across Britain.

- **International law**

At SNS, international law serves as a starting point for our discussions, providing a shared framework for understanding complex political and social issues. We encourage participants to engage critically with the law, examining how various parties act in relation to legal norms and where gaps or inconsistencies exist.

At the same time, we emphasise the importance of respect for legal systems and democratic institutions, recognising their role in maintaining justice and social order. Beyond critique, we foster a sense of proactive citizenship, encouraging participants to contribute thoughtfully to the reform and improvement of democratic institutions, ensuring that laws and governance structures serve the common good and reflect the values of fairness, accountability, and inclusivity.

- **Dealing with fake news**

SNS has developed a range of educational resources to strengthen media literacy around the topic of Israel-Palestine, helping young people and educators navigate one of the most polarising and misinformation-prone issues of our time. We equip participants with the tools to recognise bias, question narratives, verify sources, and understand the human impact behind headlines. Our work often sits in the crossfire of competing narratives, so we bring practical expertise in managing polarisation and countering disinformation—focusing always on empathy, critical thinking, and dialogue over division.

Through our workshops, digital guides, our weekly media literacy tool and our classroom materials, we empower learners to become informed, responsible consumers and sharers of information, building resilience against manipulation and fostering the kind of nuanced understanding essential for peacebuilding. Please visit our website www.sns.space for our resources for schools on this.

- **Peaceful political change**

Our Palestinian and Israeli speakers are powerful champions of nonviolent activism, demonstrating how principled, peaceful action can challenge injustice and inequality effectively.

Through their personal experiences and stories, they show that systemic change can be pursued without resorting to violence, using dialogue, advocacy, and organised civic action to make a difference—for example, the Jumpstarting Hope in Gaza initiative that was set up by some of our speakers through one of our partner organisations—The Arava Institute for Environmental Studies.

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At SNS, we carry this ethos into the UK context, encouraging participants to engage in nonviolent activism to counter racism and social division. Our annual Future Diplomats Programme in partnership with the FCDO empowers young people with advanced skills in dialogue, leadership, and conflict resolution. Participants explore complex global issues, engage with diverse perspectives, and develop empathy, critical thinking, and communication skills—equipping them to become responsible leaders and pursue careers in the field of peacemaking and diplomacy.

Finally, almost all of the Middle East peace organisations from which SNS's speakers come can be found under the umbrella organisation: Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP). Their website can be found here and support for these organisations' peacebuilding work is one way that young people in the UK can make a difference.

- **Active citizenship**

Alumni of SNS's Youth Leadership Programmes consistently go on to translate their learning into real-world impact, pursuing careers across a wide range of fields that promote social cohesion and positive change. Now numbering hundreds of people, many have entered the civil service, shaping policy, public life, and international relations with an emphasis on inclusion and fairness, while others work in interfaith dialogue and conflict resolution, applying the skills of empathy and mediation they honed with SNS.

Our alumni also make their mark in the media, amplifying stories that foster understanding, in the law, advocating for justice and human rights, and in education, inspiring the next generation to think critically and act ethically.

Across these diverse careers, SNS alumni embody the principles of active citizenship, moral ambition, and servant leadership, demonstrating how early engagement in dialogue and civic learning can translate into transformative societal impact.

- **Our call to action**

At SNS, we are delighted that Citizenship Education is to become mandatory from Key Stage 1–4. We believe it is vital that the Department for Education includes the skills and knowledge embodied in the PEACE Model as a key part of the citizenship curriculum in schools across the UK, and invest in training teachers with the approaches that Hayward advocates. The future of our democratic society depends on cultivating young people who can engage critically, think ethically, and act collaboratively in the service of the common good. Peace Education is as essential as English, Maths, and Science if our young people are to navigate the deepening complexity and diversity of society, contribute meaningfully to civic life, and safeguard the values that underpin our democracy.

Here at SNS, we have tackled head-on one of the most controversial and sensitive topics that divide our communities today, and we have shown that it is not only possible, but positive that we have done so. We are proud that SNS now has over 50 'Olive Branch' schools across the UK, and this number continues to grow each year. These schools serve as beacons of success, embedding the values and learning practices of SNS to give students the opportunity to explore and discuss complex issues such as Palestine-Israel, openly, thoughtfully, and without fear or judgment. This approach of the PEACE Model equips young people with the skills to engage respectfully with diverse perspectives, fostering critical thinking, empathy, and moral reasoning. Importantly, the model is transferable to other polarised topics, providing a framework for democratic revival in the next generation and nurturing the broader values SNS promotes, including active citizenship, dialogue, freedom of speech, and the capacity to navigate difference constructively in society.

Step 5: Conclusion

- Students who participate in the PEACE Model need to be motivated and given the skills to take up an active role in political advocacy to bring their ideas to fruition
- They need to understand the importance of servant leadership and holding those in power to account
- They need to be invited to consider placing their ambition in the sphere of contributing to the common good rather than personal gain, and they need role models to inspire and embody this
- They need training in bridge-building, legal rights, media literacy, nonviolent activism and influencing the systems and institutions of our democracy
- They need support to become active citizens in their communities, careers and families, advocating for the causes that matter to them and using their voice and their vote to bring about the changes that they worked collaboratively to envision in Step 4

Step 5 of the PEACE Model prepares young people to go out into the world as active changemakers to reform and bring progress in our systems, policies, laws and institutions—and to hold any political leaders who exploit positions of power for personal gain to account.

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Afterword

This handbook began as a practical response to the urgent fractures harming communities today and ends as an invitation to sustained practice rather than a one-off idea.

The PEACE Model offers five interlocking steps—participate, equip, apply, create, enact—that together move learners from reflection to responsibility, and from conversation to concrete action. What this work makes plain is that peace is neither naive nor passive; it requires skill, moral courage, and an ethic of service that must be taught, practised, and modelled across generations.

We hope that practitioners who use these pages will find tools grounded in evidence and enlivened by lived experience: social and emotional learning to steady the "elephant" of emotion, structured contact and storytelling to humanise 'the other', needs-based problem solving to move beyond positions, and civic training to turn hope into organised, nonviolent action. The classroom exercises, speaker engagements, and youth leadership initiatives described here show how empathy and critical thinking combine to produce agency rather than complacency.

If a single theme threads the handbook, it is this: democracy and social unity depend not merely on rules or institutions but on citizens who are willing to listen, to learn, and to labour for the common good. Readers are encouraged to adapt the model to local contexts, to evaluate honestly what works, and to pass on both the methods and the spirit of the PEACE Model to others.

May these pages serve as a practical companion for educators, community leaders, and young people who are determined to turn empathy into action and division into durable connection—so that the everyday practice of peace becomes, collectively, our most resilient public good.

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Thank you

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