

# How to Be a Peacemaker

by Michael Gleich

To get involved, you don't have to be Gandhi or Mother Teresa. Perfectly normal people with courage and persistence are working to rebuild war-torn regions, heal the trauma of conflict, and reconcile former enemies. As examples and biographies from over 20 countries will show, they are succeeding. A global network of peacemakers is coming into being.

Everybody knows how to start a war. The human race knew how to fight before it could talk – a fist or a club was weapon enough, along with the unscrupulousness needed to exercise raw violence against fellow humans. One on one, tribe against tribe. Later, with the progress of cultural evolution, the incidental and spontaneous use of violence mutated into organized warfare. With military campaigns led by five-star generals, with specially trained armies, with technically advanced weaponry, in pursuit of rationally defined goals – as paradoxical as it sounds, war is a cultural achievement.

Now the human race needs to find out how to start a peace – and how to preserve it. It seems substantially more complicated, but it is not impossible. If we did not already possess substantial experience in peacemaking, we wouldn't exist. Mankind would have rendered itself extinct in an endless cycle of skirmishes and all-out wars. Many societies have stores of ancient wisdom about nonviolent conflict resolution, about reconciliation and how to stop conflicts from escalating. In Papua New Guinea, tribes concluding hostilities negotiate a number of pigs to be paid in compensation for lives lost. Sometimes the reconciliation is followed by a shared feast. For West African peoples, it is frequently the village elders, *les chefs*, who arbitrate disagreements between clans and villages. Their decrees are respected by all sides. When they were at a loss for how to solve internal conflicts, native American tribes turned to wise men and women. Spiritual authorities were invoked to end earthly strife. No culture on earth is without forms of diplomacy and palaver, rituals of appeasement and reconciliation, means of compensation.

So far so good – all this is common knowledge. But whoever wants to know more about how one makes peace discovers an odd phenomenon: an immense blind spot. The two institutions that might be expected to stockpile peacemaking sophistication, the media and the research community, have little to say. Journalists are not terribly interested in peace. Their

business is war, the spectacles of death and forced migration, the dramas of victory and defeat, the highly marketable fates of hungry, desperate people. Bad news is good news, and war delivers the worst – the best – news there is. A war raises newspaper circulation and glues people to the TV. So far so bad, but it's understandable when one recalls that the press is run not by journalists, but for profit.

The blind spot in research is more difficult to explain. There are countless institutes, conferences, journals, think tanks, and commissions with "Peace" or "Security" in their titles. A closer look at the themes proposed and pursued is surprising: Most peace researchers are revealed to be war researchers. They know quite a bit about how violent conflicts break out, how long they last, how much they cost, and what roles are played by which parties to the conflict. Lasting peace is not an object of study. It may be that scientists are no different than the rest of us. They are fascinated by spectacle, not by uneventful societal processes.

A second reason might be that it is easier to attract attention and funding when one takes up the themes that dominate the media – war, for example. The Hamburg political scientist Volker Matthies rightfully complains: "Peace is seen as a given, neither in need of explanation nor worthy of reporting."

Meanwhile, it would be extremely valuable to collect, systematize, and prepare current knowledge on nonviolent conflict resolution and make it universally accessible. Conflicts are not the sole domain of diplomats, politicians, and the military. Conflicts are present in every sector of society. We find them in friendships, flirtations, partnerships, families, schools, at work, between companies and labor unions, between political parties. You might say: Conflict occurs whenever people come into contact with one another. Conflict is a necessary side-effect of societal existence. Only dedicated hermits can avoid it.

When two people meet who have differing needs and interests, as is almost always the case, they are faced with the task of negotiating an equilibrium. That is virtually a law of nature when it comes to human interaction. Conflict is not in itself negative. On the contrary, the negotiation of solutions has always been and will remain a significant driving force for

cultural development in our civilization. In its course we have made many social innovations. Codes of law and political instruments have been perfected. Universal human rights have been put into force. Our capacity to converse and dispute has been schooled. Conflicts are part of the societal dialectic that enables progress. But conflicts are also a challenge. To benefit from them, we must give our best. We need awareness, self-knowledge, empathy, and rhetorical talent to approach conflicts without fear, to see them as opportunities, to react constructively. Few people have these abilities at their command, so it's no wonder that most prefer superficial harmony. Differences of opinion are something to be avoided at any cost. The problem is that once differences have been swept under the rug, their destructive power unfolds all the more effectively.

Because we cannot avoid disagreements and should not repress them, there is a need for a new culture of conflict. It would be open to constructive solutions, creative modification, win-win situations, networking, and empathy. Culture is a very broad term, but it is meant here in its broadest sense: All areas, all levels of culture must be addressed, from intimate partnerships to global security policy. An interesting question is whether there are principles of conflict resolution that can function on all levels. Can a conflict internal to a family be resolved with the same methods as a trade dispute? Are schoolyard bullies susceptible to techniques that will also calm a guerrilla war? Is mediation between parties to a divorce really so unlike mediation between combatants in a civil war? To date, research has done little to shed light on these questions. One of the reasons the authors and photographers of Peace Counts united in a network was to ask the question themselves. How can an individual make peace? The journalists joined forces with educators and researchers to gather worldwide findings on "successful peace." Who better to learn from than experienced specialists? The idea arose of observing people who resolve conflicts and documenting their work with fascinating photographs and features – promoting peace as a newsworthy sensation. The first section of the book included eleven especially effective stories, a "best of." What are the conclusions that can be drawn from this worldwide expedition that led into more than 25 conflict zones and tapped the wisdom of highly diverse cultures?

The following ten hypotheses constitute an extract of these exploratory journeys into the heart of the issue of peace – an attempt to distil the essence from authentic experiences in the field. They are no substitute for scientific research. It would be better if the hordes of sociologists, political scientists, economists, and historians currently swarming through

peace studies institutes would start doing their homework. The hypotheses are formulated with deliberate simplicity and clarity, and academics may note a lack of nuances and differentiation. But when contrasted with scientific jargon, hypotheses like these have an invaluable advantage: They are comprehensible. They make the hard-earned knowledge of successful conflict solvers accessible to a broad public, as valuable inspiration for dealing with the small and large disagreements of everyday life.

**1. Peacemakers have visions.** They pattern their work on positive images of how people from different cultural, ethnic, or religious groups can live together. They develop concepts for power sharing, balancing interests, and intercultural communication. They formulate broadly applicable values for a more peaceful culture.

The situation in a region where a "hot" armed conflict is raging can be compared to a traffic jam that happens to be taking place in a dead end. The cars are jammed in and no one can move forward or backward. The drivers berate and threaten each other, even resorting to their fists. Everyone accuses everyone else of having caused the problem. Those willing to cooperate to end the gridlock can make no progress because too many others are unwilling to budge even an inch. There is no way out. We see portrayals of such traffic jams every day on the news – endless cycles of violence and retaliation.

To end the embargo on thought and action, those involved must first develop a strong vision. The vision must go far beyond the needs of the current day or even of the current year. Attractive mental images of how people of differing cultures, interests, ethnic identities, and religions might live side by side serve to motivate them. A vision differs from a dream or a utopia in that it does not entail the invention of a "new man" to dwell in a wish-fulfillment world lacking tangible connections to the here and now. Instead it is based on pragmatic knowledge of what people can achieve when they put their energy towards a common goal. It is based on experience with just how frequently unpredictable events influence the course of history, steering them in unexpected directions – on suspecting just how overwhelming the dimensions of change due to social upheavals, political revolutions, and technical innovations can be. A vision with the power to fascinate shakes off present entanglements and substitutes a coherent, plausible panorama of a better future.

History is the history of visionaries. The founders of the world religions were visionaries. They depicted to their followers a

world replete with meaning, consolation, and significance, a world under the rule of divine law. Political visionaries like Marx and Engels sketched the outlines of a classless society where exploitation and alienation would be left behind. Dictators like Julius Caesar, Genghis Khan, and Hitler offered visions of violent conquest, reminding us that the word is value-neutral. A vision can be immoral or inhuman. Businessmen became historical figures by nursing visions that were ahead of their time, like Henry Ford selling cars to the masses at a time when horses and pedestrians still ruled the streets, or Bill Gates with his certainty that every household could find a use for a PC at a time when the bosses of established companies believed only the most advanced computers were saleable. Great humanists like Florence Nightingale, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr. supported fundamental human rights at times when those rights and disadvantaged people were literally being trampled underfoot.

History is made by visionaries. They achieve more than others because their ideas have the power to move people. Returning to the image of a traffic jam in a dead end, visionaries are those who find the way out. They do so by letting go of goals their contemporaries had insisted were non-negotiable and of destinies they had accepted with fatalism. Such figures become epoch-making, of course, only when the spark is contagious, when their charisma incites enthusiasm, when they unleash a mass dynamic.

We can examine the hypothesis of the power of visionaries with the example of a hot spot that so far has resisted every attempt to escape the conflict trap: the Middle East. Israelis and Palestinians have been locked in recurring bloody struggles for more than 50 years. There is no shortage of visions of lasting peace. Almost every politician in the EU, USA and Russia who has chosen to address the conflict shares the vision of two sovereign states existing peacefully as neighbors. The "Roadmap to Peace" details this image of the future and the necessary steps to get there. The question remains: Why do the parties to the conflict refuse to budge? The spark has not crossed the gap. The vision may fascinate Americans and Europeans, but leading Israelis and Palestinians are unimpressed. One could go further and say that many Israelis find the vision threatening. The struggle against the Arabs serves to unify a society that is full of internal rifts and tensions – secular against observant, Russian immigrants against Ethiopians, a widening gap between rich and poor. Let us dream for a minute. What would happen if peace were suddenly to break out – if the neighbors became friendly, waving hello across open borders from a democratic Palestine? Israel would be forced for the first time in its history to

consider seriously what kind of country it wants to be, its identity as a nation. Its most urgent need would be to find ways to keep the hostile groups within its borders from tearing each other to bits. It would have to find uses for its soldiers, weapons, and arms factories. The military structures that dominate the country would be superseded by civilian ones. In the face of such gigantic tasks, the escalation of violence clearly appears to Israeli society to be the lesser of two evils, as bizarre as it sounds. The same is true of the other side. Palestinian national identity has its roots largely in enmity with Israel. What would happen were the enemy to leave them in peace? Both sides lack political and spiritual leaders whose personal example and powers of persuasion could lend charisma to a vision of fair coexistence in the Middle East.

Because government policy often fails in conflict regions, individuals and initiatives from the civil sector attain to new importance – the micro-peacemakers. They refuse to accept apparent dead ends, finding the strength to break out of the spiral of violence. They succeed in motivating themselves anew again and again, because they believe in their personal visions. When the Tamil P.N. Narasingham abandoned his former life, he always had a vision in mind: "A farm, an oasis of peace in the country, where it doesn't matter whether you're Tamil or Sinhalese, where people and animals live together." The former refugee returned to a homeland in northern Sri Lanka that had been ravaged by civil war. Part of his vision was that an individual can make a difference. He began to build houses for war widows and orphans – first ten, then 65, then entire villages for hundreds of families. In his spare time he founded a school for the deaf, a center for street children, and an organic farm and provided help to victims of the 2004 Christmas day tsunami. He called his organization SEED. The seed proved fertile.

The idea of the Japanese Yoshioko Tatsuya also seemed initially brash and naive. He was in his early 20s, still in school and flat broke, when he began to promote his idea of a "Peace Boat." The immediate cause was a new edition of Japanese history textbooks. Everyone had expected that Japanese atrocities during the second world war would finally receive some form of treatment – the kidnapping and mass rape of Korean "comfort women," for example. But nothing of the kind occurred. The books ignored the realities as they always had. Yoshioka resolved that young Japanese must travel to Korea and make clear to the people there that, though the country as a whole might deny its responsibility, young Japanese thought differently. With friends he chartered a ship and steamed to Korea to meet with local peace activists. Other missions followed. The ships became larger

and the cruises longer. Today the Peace Boat, a huge ocean liner, circles the globe three times a year. An ambassador of peace and floating university, it carries up to 1,000 passengers on humanitarian missions and to study conflict resolution. The project has been sailing on the verge of bankruptcy for 20 years. Its continued success and power to attract volunteers and donors, Yoshioka says, lie “in the fascination that our vision exerts. It attracts interesting personalities like a magnet.”

Another characteristic of successful peacemakers is that they plan their projects long-term. They know it takes more than a one-shot action to master a delicate situation. The visions they develop serve as beacons through the ups and downs of daily routine, lights at the end of the tunnel, keeping them on track. The Benedictine Abbot Benedikt Lindemann, who leads a German monastery in Jerusalem, counters the Holy Land’s hectic atmosphere of war with an inner peace buttressed by faith, meditation, and a strong community. “Politically, we’re neutral in this conflict. But as Christians we’re on the side of the weak, of the victims.” For more than 100 years, a handful of Benedictines has dug itself in on Mount Zion in the shadow of the old city wall that separates the Arab and Jewish quarters. The Abbot is entirely certain: “In a hundred years, we’ll still be here, working and praying for peace.”

**2. Successful peacemakers are entrepreneurs.** They possess a strong will to keep going even when problems mount up. They refusing to give in to resignation. They must be good managers, skilled in negotiation, patient and persistent.

What good is the most beautiful vision if it can’t be realized? To avoid getting stuck in pleasant thought experiments that lead nowhere, a strong will and faith in one’s own abilities are vital prerequisites. Most people live in the subjunctive: They would, should, could – they embody the satirical notion of a Goody Two-Shoes bleeding heart who means well and likes to think meaning well is enough. Successful peacemakers, in contrast, speak in the indicative: I help, I do, I will. They take action without taking time to bemoan the miserable state of the world. They possess sufficient optimism and the determination to see every problem that might arise as a sporting challenge. They are bold enough to take risks to reach their goals. In that they resemble entrepreneurs – strong personalities who go out and make their ideas reality. The Peace Counts reporters are amazed again and again: Amidst the rubble of war, refugees, minefields, and guerrilla attacks, they are greeted with beaming smiles. Despite having plenty of reasons to think dark thoughts, peacemakers radiate an

optimism that is contagious. Pater Giovanni Presiga is such a person. His parish lies near the Colombian metropolis of Medellín, ruled by drug mafia and daily violence. The villages he serves are repeatedly looted by paramilitaries or by government troops. His flock are campesinos, poor farmers, many of whom live from hand to mouth on what their fields can produce. But how does the priest respond when asked, on a visit in Germany, to describe his homeland? “Colombia is a wonderful country, with magnificent landscapes and warm-hearted people. Someday there will be peace, and then we’ll be able to show the whole world how beautiful it is.”

Padre Presiga does not want to confine himself to his official function as a pastor. “The people here certainly need my spiritual advice and comfort. But they also need something to eat. Most of all, they need protection from being constantly attacked.” For his parish, the priest became an entrepreneur. He organizes cooperatives that introduce improved farming methods to increase crop yields. Working with the farmers, he develops marketing concepts that funnel extra money into the community. “Only if the villages gain economic strength can they defend themselves against the guerrillas.” His virtually boundless optimism and his will to work constructively stem from his belief in God. Directing projects, on the other hand, is something he had to learn on his own. Finding donors, deciding on budgets, controlling, accounting – his experience is that the undertaking “peace” demands good managers.

**3. Peacemakers analyze a conflict’s main causes.** With them in mind, they develop methods and strategies to resolve the conflict. They know the economic, political, and historic motivations of the players. They are familiar with the codes, actions and symbols that others might perceive as provocative or threatening, and avoid them.

We have come to one of the most difficult tasks for someone who wants to assist in a peace process. Before going into action, you need to know: What’s really at stake? Finding out can be discouragingly hard, but it is indispensable if one hopes to avoid starting work at the wrong end. Conflicts often come to light as ostensibly inextricable tangles with perpetrators and victims on both sides – a long history of attack and defense, players of every stripe irretrievably mixed up in each other’s business, virtual clans bound together by mutual sympathy, and animosities set in stone. The knot can only be untangled if one first analyses the causes of tension. Only then do the plot strands become explicit.

Conflicts are often based on one or several of the following bundles of causes:

- **Political:** Where entire population groups are excluded from power, where democratic and human rights are violated, where policemen and judges are corrupt, there is a high risk of war.
- **Economic:** Struggles for resources like oil, coltan, uranium, gold, land and water rights, inflation and economic stagnation.
- **Social:** Poverty, hunger, unemployment, illiteracy, discrimination against women.
- **Ethnic:** Hutu against Tutsi, Hindus against Muslims, Protestants against Catholics. Many researchers believe that apparent hate between ethnic groups often masks a struggle over power or resources.
- **Historic:** An old conflict, left unresolved, leads to a new one. Countries that have already suffered a civil war, says an Oxford University study, are twice as likely to experience armed conflict as countries where peace has reigned consistently.

Whoever wants to get involved without making things even worse must be able to perform a sound and clear analysis of the factors listed above. Conflict can be compared to an illness that begins subtly, breaks out, builds to a feverish peak, and gradually fades. Careful diagnosis is a precondition for successful therapy.

One danger – with illnesses as well as conflicts – is that of confusing symptoms with deeper causes. In many regions affected by civil war, it is a time-honored ritual to accuse the other side of having thrown the first stone. A self-styled victim is acquitted of moral responsibility and need not scruple to practice violence. Like children in a playroom – “He started it!” “No, she did!” “He shoved me first!” “But before that she knocked down my tower,” and so on, and so forth. In conflict zones these games can be played for centuries, with the result that all involved see themselves as victims. Outsiders are forced to ask where, then, all the perpetrators came from. In other words: Someone who hopes to resolve the conflict has nothing to gain by following the chain of violence and revenge back into prehistoric times to clear up a question of blame. He must, instead, find out what is fueling the conflict now, in the present. Who are the players? Who is pulling strings in the background? What are the fears, what the goals? Against this background, he can develop resolution strategies for mediation work. In South Africa's Center for Conflict Resolution (CCR), this capacity for analysis is deliberately fostered. Based in Cape Town, the CCR is a think tank with an international reputation. It engages not only in

research, but also trains mediators and specialists in conflict resolution. The institute was founded in the 1960s and has experienced recent South African history firsthand: the brutal apartheid regime, the human rights violations, the black resistance movement, and finally the surprisingly nonviolent transition to a functioning democracy. Painful experiences were worked through and transformed into something positive. The CCR helps others by pooling the wisdom of all South Africans about group conflicts and their resolution. Their highly portable product is being exported successfully: CCR mediators have assisted in border conflicts throughout southern Africa, just as they have with turf battles between rival youth gangs in the townships of Johannesburg. They train employees for corporations and volunteers for the Red Cross. Their credo is that conflicts are everywhere. What's most important is to know how to analyze them and deal with them creatively.

**4. Peacemakers are networkers.** They work with motley casts of characters – ex-fighters, peace activists, development helpers, business, NGOs as well as members of government, local authorities as well as multinational organizations.

The young people in the white T-shirts go straight into the lions' den. The den is called Medellín and the lions are the bosses and underlings of the drug cartels. Whoever rubs them the wrong way may be punished by death. At first sight, nothing protects them from the lions' rage – nothing but their white T-shirts. The volunteers of Peace Brigades International (PBI) get involved in the Colombian civil war in a very unusual way. As human shields, they accompany environmentalists, unionists, and peace activists to protect them from assassination by mafia killers, paramilitaries, government soldiers, and guerrillas. Each commits himself for six months or a year to absolute nonviolence. They are guardian angels, somewhere between Gandhi and a bodyguard.

What protects them in reality is not the white shirt with the PBI logo, but a far-reaching network. The Peace Brigadiers document the routes of their protectees through Medellín every day. Every personal threat or verbal attack is entered in a logbook. The local volunteers are connected with the headquarters in London, and they in turn are connected with press agencies, newspapers, and radio stations all over the world. PBI makes sure to publicize its contacts with international media and organizations in Colombia. The white T-shirt signals, “Beware! We are the eyes and ears of the global community! Threats or attacks against us will not go unheeded!”

A network as alarm system – PBI has employed the method successfully in Indonesia, Guatemala, and Mexico. [[www.peace-counts.org](http://www.peace-counts.org): “best practice”] With the help of the new electronic media, local peacemakers reinterpret the old slogan “Think globally, act locally,” acting locally while networking with supporters and allies worldwide. E-mail, the web, and cell phones help them put out information over greater distances and to more recipients than ever before. A side-effect is that multiplying information nodes makes it more difficult for warmongers to whip up xenophobic frenzies through propaganda. How do you create hatred? Two peoples must first be isolated from each other. Keep them from obtaining independent news, flood them with lies and libel of every kind, and pretty soon they can’t tell the other side from Satan himself. The method works. No ground is more fertile to the seed of propaganda than an informational desert. That was the situation in the early 1990s in the former Yugoslavia when the conflict between the republics of Serbia and Croatia broke out. The Balkans were an information wasteland. There were no independent national newspapers or broadcasters. The ruling party controlled and censored all important media. As the conflict went on, the isolation became more extreme. In the early phase it was considered unpatriotic to read newspapers from competing republics. When the fighting broke out, the powers that were shut down communication completely. A telephone conversation between Belgrade and Zabreb became nearly impossible. Newspaper editors were ordered to portray the enemy “realistically” – that is, in the most negative light possible. The machinery of hatred ran at full capacity.

But the wars’ opponents saw through the destructive mechanism. In Zagreb, as in Belgrade, pacifist groups formed, deciding to undermine the propaganda barrage. They aspired to overcome conflict through communication. The first primitive information bridges were faxes to London which were forwarded to the other side – it was still possible to call third-party countries. But the process was slow and expensive. Then came Erich Bachmann, an American peace activist and computer wizard. He set up mailboxes in Germany and Austria so that activists on both sides could communicate with each other directly. Computers whose days were spent administering patient records spent their nights hosting subversive chat rooms. The network was baptized “ZaMir,” Serbo-Croatian for “For Peace.” The underground line was used by aid organizations in organizing humanitarian interventions. It helped refugees to find their families and allowed the Dutch activist Wim Kat, in his “War Diaries,” to document the struggle of the people of Zagreb to lead a normal life in the midst of desperation. Cyberspace played host to entire peace

conferences, with digital delegations from all over the world. Journalists muzzled by censorship published their work. The Kosovo Hospital in Sarajevo published a call for donations of antibiotics. The internet, invented by the military, went to war – but za mir, for peace.

Digital data networks make life a little harder for demagogues. The more information flows through them, the less room there is for censorship, propaganda, and attacks on the freedom of the press. That can be seen when young Israelis use the internet to exchange views with young Palestinians trapped in the occupied territories by border closings. [[www.peace-counts.org](http://www.peace-counts.org) “Different (Hi)stories”]

Networks are also a form of social organization. In contrast to those in a fixed hierarchy, connections within a network are voluntary. A network is especially flexible, open, and tolerant of mistakes. All its nodes are independent. A peacemaker with an accurate notion of his own strength knows that he needs allies. No one can do everything himself. The initiatives on which Peace Counts reports have local roots, but in most cases they work with international partners that include churches, aid organizations, and solidarity groups. In many cases, they achieve the seemingly impossible, uniting people who are supposed to be enemies in a network where they can cooperate in an atmosphere of trust.

The River Jordan, for example, makes its way through three countries that are not on especially good terms: Israel, Palestine, and Jordan. Any river is a bone of contention in a region where rain falls only in winter. Everyone wants a piece of the precious moisture for his own purposes. But while the media are filled with reports of global “water wars,” the Jordan shows that a river in a desert can also provoke cooperation. While their governments jockey for position, Israeli, Jordanian, and Palestinian environmentalists work together closely in an atmosphere of trust. They convince farmers to adopt water conservation methods, plan sewage treatment plants, and promote the Jordan valley as a UNESCO world cultural heritage site. One of their spokespeople, the Palestinian Nader Al-Khateeb, says, “The environment doesn’t recognize international borders. We can’t wait for a political solution.” The ecologists want to keep the Biblical river from becoming a drainage ditch and the Dead Sea, which the Jordan feeds, from drying out.

**5. Peace is a not an end state, but a process – often a slow, painful one.** Successful peacemakers know that a truce is only the beginning. You have to hang on through disruptions and outright setbacks. But any form of de-escalation can be counted as a success – every step towards reconciliation, every moment of suffering averted.

The media need events because it reports every day. War delivers events. Peace, on the other hand, has an image problem. It is too large and slow-moving for the TV screen. Exceptions are summit meetings and the solemn ceremonies when peace agreements are signed. Journalists show up in droves to see something like that. The problem is that a peace agreement is just a start, not the finish line. With a truce in effect, the struggle can really begin. This is seen all too well in Northern Ireland. For almost 35 years, it suffered under a bloody civil war between Protestants and Catholics, with the British Army as third party. Around 3,000 people died and the number of wounded is in the tens of thousands. On Good Friday, 1998, an agreement was signed that ended the violence for the time being. So is there now peace in Belfast and Londonderry?

For two former fighters, the Good Friday agreement also represented a personal turning point. Peter McGuire was once, by his own admission, a “career terrorist” for the Protestant UVF. Joe Doherty, a former IRA member, spent 20 years in prison for murder. Both were pushing 40 when they decided to abandon armed struggle. At an age when their peers are paying off houses and sending their children to college, they started over from scratch. They work with at-risk youth, trying to convince the younger generation to stay out of the paramilitary scene that still finds recruits among unemployed young people. The open war has been followed by a cold peace. The peace on paper still has a long way to go in the hearts and minds of Northern Ireland. Peter and Joe met through Peace Counts. During a podium discussion, they both said that if they’d met five years earlier, they would have tried to kill each other. They know it will be generations before the distrust and mutual accusations, some going back for centuries, yield to real cooperation.

Successful peacemakers are notable for their acceptance that the way will be long and that progress will come slowly. While destruction comes suddenly – it can take only minutes to reduce a neighborhood to rubble and ash – rebuilding takes time and effort. Science suggests why this is so. Whoever destroys anything has entropy on his side. A basic law of physics, the law of entropy, tells us that the entire world tends toward disorder. Whoever hopes to create more order –

a house, for example, where once was a pile of rubble – is swimming against the current. And that takes work. Again, the example of a children’s playroom: It takes hours for a child to build a tower of wooden blocks, but his little brother can destroy it in a fraction of a second. Order is easy prey.

Peacemakers are tower-builders. They know it takes patience and persistence to effect change and make their own involvement sustainable. Like any capable businessperson or competent manager, they think in terms of processes, accepting that events have their own internal dynamic. They expect the unexpected, preferring flexible reactions to stubborn adherence to pre-formulated plans. They keep an eye on their visions as a sea captain might keep an eye on a lighthouse, but they are open to every worthwhile opportunity that might arise in the course of the journey.

The question is how to define the ship’s port of destination. When exactly do you break out the champagne? How do you tell when peacemakers are succeeding? How do you measure their progress?

If the goal is world peace, then all peacemakers to date have failed. From time immemorial the world has maintained its average of three dozen armed conflicts a year, from regional struggles to full-scale international wars. No one thinks it likely that violence as a means of conflict resolution will perish from the earth. Instead of frustrating themselves with unattainable, utopian goals, the peacemakers portrayed in this book orient themselves to the “small peace.” They measure their success through small, concrete improvements in their regions: when rebels disarm, even partly; when an army takes down its road blocks, as in times of reduced tension in Israel; when, as in Belfast, Catholic children can walk to school through a Protestant neighborhood; when opponents have seats on the same committees as in northern Sri Lanka, where government representatives and Tamil Tigers sat down together to decide how to spend international aid money; when UN peacekeepers are allowed in; when mines are cleared and farmers reenter their fields; when fighters learn another trade. In extreme cases it can be regarded as a success merely when people live next door to each other again, as in the strictly ethnically divided city of Mostar in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The point, says the renowned conflict researcher Johan Galtung, is to make a culture a little more peaceful with every tiny step. Whoever thinks in terms of processes knows that each step solves a problem that came before it but also creates new ones. Any form of evolution follows that law.

Dialectical developments never reach a conclusion. Every new compromise between two positions becomes the jumping-off point for a new discussion, for a process that leads farther. There can never come a time when all earth's problems will be solved and all development stops. As the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk puts it, "The dream of a world-wide-weekend will remain unfulfilled." What does that mean for the low points of everyday life? Peacemakers can be successful if they set realistic goals and accept that although they might know where their path begins, they cannot know its end. When, for example, German policemen are deployed to Afghanistan to help the nascent government there foster order and the rule of law in a country that is underdeveloped, ethnically divided, and terrorized by warlords, they encounter aged technology, files full of 30-year-old fingerprints, copiers without toner, and labs without microscopes. The 16 German advisers must look on as corruption and nepotism spread like wildfire through every government agency. Again and again, they play the neutral third party, smoothing over turf battles between agencies and ministries. The worst, says a senior police officer from Berlin, is when Afghan colleagues refuse to investigate a kidnapping out of fear of the bandits' revenge. The way in Afghanistan from totalitarianism to a constitutional democracy is long and rocky. Success is measured by modest, unpretentious benchmarks. "Any day there's some semblance of peace and security is a day that's worthwhile." [www.peace-counts.org "Crime Scene Kabul"]

**6. Peacemakers are creative and unconventional.** They leave beaten paths that serve only to reify conflict. They break through entrenched front lines. They formulate positive goals, create win-win-situations, and shift conflict to a new level where novel and surprising possibilities of resolution can arise.

On a table lies an orange. Before it sit a boy and a girl, and both have their eye on the citrus fruit. Each wants to have it, and to have all of it. It can't end well. It ought to be easy to resolve this one, the outsider thinks – just split it down the middle. But the girl refuses: "He ate two yesterday. This one is mine." And he doesn't think half an orange is enough: "I'm older and bigger. I should get more to eat." Their positions are irreconcilable. The fronts dig in. No compromise is in sight.

The conflict researcher Johan Galtung tells the orange story to alert his hearers to how, even in intractable situations, a surprising number of escape routes can be found. One simple solution is to have a neutral third party mediate. Maybe the

girl wants juice and the boy wants the peel to make icing, and there is no problem in the first place. Or the mediator can persuade them to accept a creative solution: Press the orange and split the juice, plant the seeds, raise new orange trees together. Or just buy another orange! Raffle off the orange, auction it – brainstorming sessions have come up with nearly 100 ways to defuse the fateful fruit.

Galtung advances the hypothesis that the more alternatives there are, the less probable an escalation becomes. The idea is confirmed by experience in the field. "I always try to convince the parties to conflict that in the end, they'll both gain more if they cooperate," says the Tajik Elena Gulmadova. She was sent by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSZE) to Macedonia where Christians and Muslim Albanians have locked horns in a perpetual standoff. When it comes to power within the state, the ground rule seems to be: Anything the other side gains is a loss for us. "As long as everybody thinks it's a zero-sum game," says Elena, "they don't give an inch." Her task is first to reduce the distrust among the parties so that, in a second phase, they can learn that win-win-situations are possible. As with the economic rebuilding: If the villages in the mountainous north manage to recover from the consequences of the civil war, it will benefit Albanians as much as the Macedonians who used to live next door. The Tajik former gynecologist is suited for the job like no other. Her father is a Muslim, her mother Christian, "and in the delivery room, I learned to stay cool in unnerving situations."

One creative possibility of dispelling distrust between groups is to arrange meetings between them in playful contexts. Sporting competitions have proved their value worldwide for such encounters, especially among youth. In Rwanda, volleyball is being underwritten because it is dominated neither by Hutus nor by Tutsis. Both ethnic groups can identify with it. In Medellín, acts of violence use to reach their peak on Friday nights, so a German initiative tried the idea of organizing Friday-night street soccer tournaments. Young people face each other in a refereed contest, instead of in gang warfare. The success was resounding. The crime rate went down, thanks to "Fútbol para la paz." A third example: On Cyprus, the divided island, two teachers, the Turk Ulus and the Greek Nicos, bring students from both sides of the barrier together. Over the years Ulus and Nicos have come to know and like each other, despite a political climate that destined them to be enemies. They display their mutual trust to their students, encouraging the next generation to be open to one another. Both teachers put their faith in soccer as a focal point for cultural exchange with an endless power to fascinate. Soccer

is a universal language: It needs referees, but no translators. [www.peace-counts.org "Deadly Enemies – With Braces"]

**7. Peacemakers get involved postwar in rebuilding and economic development.** When one or both sides feel that the promised peace dividend has not materialized, renewed violence can be the response.

The German Benedictine monks of the Hagia Maria Sion Abbey in Jerusalem understand that it's not enough to pray for peace – you have to work for it. They transfer the order's motto, "ora et labora," to the bloody Middle East conflict and work actively on behalf of economically disadvantaged Palestinians in neighboring Bethlehem. "A young person who has grown up in a refugee camp, with no hope of post-secondary education or a job, has no choice but to despair," says Abbot Benedikt Lindemann. He knows that radical organizations like Hamas and Hisbollah draw their recruits from the legions of the desperate – including suicide bombers. So the monks become development workers. They assisted with the construction of a large educational center offering training in trades from commercial art to journalism, taking over much of the overhead.

Many armed disputes, like that between Israelis and Palestinians, arise between population groups. But to call them all "ethnic" conflicts is too superficial. The term suggests that ethnic hatred lies at the root of the conflict. But the true reasons lie deeper. Generally they revolve around the distribution of power and money, access to resources like oil, diamonds, and gold, or control of important traffic hubs such as ports. When one group is denied access by force and over a long period of time, it may easily conclude that rebellion is the only way to achieve distributive justice. A weak economy and social problems such as poverty and unemployment further fan the flames.

Let us assume that in a given country such a situation has brought about a civil war. At some point, after negotiations, the war was ended by mutual agreement. But the situation remains explosive as long as the economic framework remains unaltered. The calculations of the parties to the conflict generally follow a quite simple scheme: We suffered so much in the war, invested so much in weapons, and sacrificed the lives of our soldiers, and now we want a share of the profits! Their deliberations are, if one strips away the emotions, perfectly rational at heart. Peace should pay out better than war. If that doesn't happen, or if the peace dividend is too

minimal, they take up arms again. That prediction has been borne out time and again in numerous crisis regions. Sri Lanka, for example – the Tamil north feels neglected and oppressed by the Sinhalese majority-ruled central government. A civil war began in 1983, eventually costing 70,000 lives and driving half a million people from their homes. A ceasefire, achieved with substantial international pressure and help, has been in effect since February, 2002. The warring factions were promised comprehensive help with rebuilding, and the World Bank earmarked billions for its assistance program. When the situation reached a boiling point again in the course of 2004, it was clear to external observers that its main cause was sheer frustration. The rebels of the "Tamil Tigers" felt they had been tricked out of the profits of victory. The funds they had hoped would rebuild the ravaged north were nowhere to be seen. Singham, a Tamil, founded his initiative on the border between government and rebel controlled zones in response to the problem. The maxim of his organization, Social, Economic, and Ecological Developers (SEED) is: "Lasting stability can only come to a region when there is economic development in the surrounding villages."

Like Singham, most of the peacemakers profiled by Peace Counts see themselves as engines of economic development – even the initiatives you wouldn't think had anything to do with industry, like the environmentalists of the Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZG). To the organization's projects in Tanzania belongs the Serengeti National Park. The savanna north of Mt. Kilimanjaro is counted as one of the most important large nature reserves on earth. It is still home to the spectacle of the great migration, an annual movement of more than a million wildebeest, zebra, and cape buffalo. But in a poor country like Tanzania, a nature preserve is under threat from every side. The growing population does not understand why an area larger than Connecticut should be closed to hunting and grazing. Everything useful or desirable is taboo, from honey to firewood and water. But hunting, above all, is forbidden. Since the days when Bernhard Grzimek, Germany's Marlin Perkins or David Attenborough, brought the Serengeti to TV screens and declared its preservation to be his life's ambition, poaching has remained a problem. Only the emphasis has shifted. Before, it was elephants and rhinoceroses dying for hunting trophies. Today's poachers are in the market for bush meat. To the poor population living on its fringes, the National Park looks like little more than a big, overflowing bowl of stew. Two diametrically opposed interests collide. The Serengeti is either a nature reserve or a source of protein. You can't have both.

This line of conflict is visible in many developing countries

where large nature reserves are under growing population pressure. “The most important reserves,” says Dr. Markus Borner, the FZG’s representative in East Africa, “are identical with the regions that have the most potential for agriculture.” In the case of the Serengeti, the conflict became violent. Both the heavily armed poachers and the rangers who patrol the park’s borders were among the dead. But for several years now the environmentalists have been trying a gentler anti-poaching strategy. “Nature protection has to pay much more attention to the people around the park than to the animals in the park,” says Borner of the new concept. On the edges of the reserve, and even beyond it, wildlife management areas have been instituted. Neighboring villages are given the task of managing wildlife populations. They are assigned quotas for “harvested” animals. The decisions as to whether to shoot them themselves or sell licenses or to eat the animals or sell them are left in their hands. The quotas are determined by ecologists with an eye to sustainability. In exchange, the environmentalists expect the villagers to take steps against illicit hunting on their territory. In this way a unique peace agreement could be reached on behalf of nature. “We won’t know for another 20 years whether we did the right thing,” says Borner. “But we have no choice. All we’re doing now is aiming at win-win situations, and that’s the right direction to be going.” [www.peace-counts.org “Gentle Strategies Against Poaching”]

**8. Peacemakers have the capacity for empathy.** They can imagine themselves subject to another person’s compulsions, interests, or ways of thinking and acting. They react attentively to the needs of others, addressing what seems strange or threatening directly. Conversation can take the place of war – so peacemakers talk to people on all sides.

You might think that listening is simple. Just be quiet for a while! But, for one, that’s not easy for most people. And there are decisive differences between passive and active listening. The latter is an important ability of successful mediators. They listen closely to their conversational partners, not discounting nonverbal cues such as facial expression and gesture. Through careful questioning, they obtain an exact picture of someone else’s position. What opinions are they expressing? What are they afraid of, what do they long for? How much maneuvering room do they have? Smart, goal-oriented interviewing techniques helps achieve the goal of deeper insight. A partner’s true goals are sometimes hidden behind a facade of extravagant demands. If someone says, “I can’t do that,” an active listener asks, “What would happen if

you did?” If someone says, “The other side is always doing X,” the active listener replies, “Were there situations when they did something else?” When someone declares categorically, “They’ve gone too far,” the active listener asks: “Compared to what?” Every answer that is less rigid and dogmatic than the one before shows the mediator new starting points for further negotiation. In the first stages, it is important to avoid judging or condemning any position or emotion that might arise.

Empathy, the capacity to feel what others are feeling, is a natural talent for many people. But other skills must be learned: active listening, for example, and a communication style that fosters transparency and clarity for all involved. Peacemakers go into action to splice the broken threads of dialogue. Their art form is making discussion partners out of soldiers.

The methods required can be learned. A four-week course in the Austrian Study Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution in Schlaining teaches participants, under the rubric “Peace Building,” techniques for helping restore peace and order to crisis regions. The central question: How can an individual make peace? What instruments are there to overcome hatred between opponents accustomed to mutual brutality, so that they can again share villages, cities, and regions? The Study Center, partially financed by the German and Austrian governments, was at its founding in 1993 the first institute worldwide to offer such training.

The trainees are people who work in crisis regions or are preparing for deployment. Because they come from all over the world and have widely differing cultural backgrounds, the center offers plenty of opportunities for practice. A 33-year-old Pakistani woman working for a local aid organization in a tribal area on the border to Afghanistan, the only woman in her ethnic group ever to go beyond high school, confesses that she is a loyal fan of the Taliban. “Those are still true Muslims.”

A German counters with some consternation, “But they hid Osama bin Laden, who has the blood of 3,000 people in New York on his hands.”

“Who says so? Is there any proof?”

“The Taliban chopped off thieves’ hands.”

“But at least there was no crime. Not like now.”

Zero to 60 in ten seconds – and the course shifts its focus to conflict management. Learning to deal with alternative subjective truths is a prerequisite for successfully understanding any conflict. The participants are ready for this dispute. What alienates them is not coming from the mouth of a bearded mullah on TV, but from a person they have come to think of, after a pleasant evening spent together, as pleasant and likeable. [www.peace-counts.org “The School of the Peacemakers”]

Concepts based on conversation and empathy are gaining increasing influence. They can change entire sectors of society – sometimes where you would least expect it, as with police forces in the U.S. American cops are known more for ruthless effectiveness than for sensitive debates. But as the success story of the police department in New Haven, Connecticut shows, thought patterns can change even there. Since 1990, the NHPD has been following a policy of “Community Policing.” Its central notion is that policemen on the beat and citizens can work closely together. They pool their knowledge of the needs and problems of the community and develop solutions together. The offenses they face range from illegal dumping to public drug dealing. To make the transformation from distrusted cop to true partner, the NHPD changed the way police cadets are trained. Customary requirements from weightlifting to criminal investigation were supplemented with courses like “The Capacity to Listen,” seminars on the social problems of youth, and visits to schools. The police were asked to train not only their muscles, but their minds – their social antennae. The policemen liaison with as many clubs and organizations in the city as possible, regularly exchanging information. Since the police and citizenry started working more closely, the NHPD doesn’t just have a nicer image. Crime rates, still the main concern, have dropped dramatically: in one decade from 21,000 to 9,300 reported crimes.

[www.peace-counts.org “Never Too Soon to be Friendly”]

**9. As neutral third parties, peacemakers can bring in new perspectives, placate opponents, and draw attention to shared interests.** Their credibility comes from maximizing transparency with regard to their own abilities and motives.

When Elena Gulmadova enters a village in northern Macedonia for the first time, she is first subject to an unobtrusive cross-examination. The population greets outsiders with suspicion. Friend or foe? They put her under the microscope to see whether she might be nursing secret sympathies. The young

woman surprises them by leading with the statement that her father is Muslim and her mother Christian: She is congenitally neutral. But they won’t take it on faith. She has to prove her point again and again. Every stranger is assumed to prefer one side to the other. “Transparency is important,” Elena describes her way of working. “I inform as many organizations, government offices and people as I can of who I’m currently talking to and what we’re doing.” She and her colleagues log their conversations and projects punctiliously. In team meetings and sessions with consultants, the same question arises over and over – the question with which the good reputation and local acceptance of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSZE) rise and fall: Are we certain we are not favoring or disadvantaging either side? The mediators must be constantly prepared to justify their actions. “Openness creates trust,” says Elena Gulmadova. “It’s your most important capital, if you want to avoid being left isolated.”

Staying neutral is more complicated than it sounds. When there’s 100 Euros to distribute, is justice always served by giving each side 50 Euros? What happens when one sector of the post-civil-war population is faced with greater social problems than the other, more ruined homes, more refugees, more hungry children? Must every conversation with one side be balanced by a conversation with the other? What happens when personal sympathies throw the equilibrium out of balance? The answers to these questions cannot be reduced to a few rules in a handbook for mediators. They lie in soft skills that everyone in the role of “neutral third party” should possess: conscientiousness, openness to criticism, clear communication, and transparency to all onlookers.

The aim is to be a one-man Switzerland. The republic allies itself with no one, allows no foreign troops on its soil, acts unilaterally if at all, and has spent over 50 years so far pondering the question of whether it might want to join the UN someday. To play the role of Switzerland in a conflict region takes more than just claiming neutrality. You have to defend your neutrality on an ongoing basis, as the “Peace Zones” in the Philippines have shown. Villages aspiring to neutrality in the midst of a heavily militarized society are threatened from all sides – by government soldiers as well as by rebels of the Islamic Moro Liberation Front (MILF). Both sides invade villages repeatedly, commandeering food and gasoline at will. Villagers are then accused of collaboration with both sides.

An increasing number of villages are resisting armed infiltration. To date 40 have opted out by declaring themselves

“Peace Zones.” But how does one defend such a status against military force? “Our only weapon is the word,” says Father Bert Layson, who has linked the villages into a network. He negotiates again and again with rebels and the army. He has the cell phone numbers of both rebel comandantes and army officers. Christians and Muslims work together harmoniously in his organization, reinforcing its neutral image. Next to his office in the Convent of the Immaculate Conception, he has designated a carpeted space for Muslim prayer. His ceasefire watch patrols have proven especially effective: Father Bert issued cell phones to 60 rice farmers. They report every violation of the truce on Mindanao by SMS to headquarters, an effective alarm system. When they report an assault on a village, teams take off to investigate, documenting the events with photographs and video. In more serious cases, the media are informed, an additional way of shedding light on acts of war intended for secrecy.

**10. Peacemakers know themselves.** They assess their abilities realistically and have their emotions under control. They are capable of honest self-criticism. They strive for inner peace. On the basis of a firm sense of personal identity and their own life experience, they can deal with others constructively.

“I know myself!” That grandiloquent statement is easy to make. But who can really say with a good conscience that he knows who he is? With people it’s like the ocean: We move around on the surface, but life itself takes place under the surface, in the depths. There, where we seldom direct our attention, secret wishes accumulate along with ulterior motives, disavowed desires, and repressed fears. Knowledge of these depths is one of the most important conditions for empathy. A rule of thumb: The better one knows oneself, the better one can put oneself in others’ shoes.

The converse is also true. Psychologists have observed that conflicts between people always escalate when the participants know little about their own personalities. That is because the issues on the table cannot be addressed constructively when there is a “hidden agenda” – when the parties have goals and wishes they don’t themselves suspect. An example from everyday life: An employee comes to his boss and demands a raise. The boss refuses, pointing to the poor business climate, how we are all tightening our belts, the firm’s inadequate profits. The employee insists, citing the increased cost of living, the needs of his family, and his excellent work record in recent years. The contradiction admits of no compromise.

Matthias Schraner, a chief negotiator with police forces in hostage situations for almost 20 years, has learned that a conflict seldom centers on what the parties are ostensibly debating. “If rational arguments counted, why would people keep taking hostages in the first place? It has never once been successful.” In reality, the criminals are seeking attention – social recognition. The same motivation, Schraner says, is often behind a demand for a higher salary. Quite possibly, it expresses that the employee feels that he and his work are underappreciated. He is angry at an arrogant colleague who earns more, or he merely wants more respect and recognition from his boss. A faster computer or a larger office might make him happier than a raise. And instantly the irreconcilable standoff becomes manageable. “Never negotiate a demand,” Schraner advises. “Always deal directly with motivations.”

One must be willing and able to empathize with the motivations of others, which brings us back to the psychological expertise that every successful mediator requires. His capacity for self-reflection must include an accurate estimate of his own role in group situations. Am I the alpha wolf who likes to take over? A wallflower, cooperating and assimilating? A diplomat who likes to smooth things over? A control freak who trusts no one, preferring to monitor their every move? Am I out to please everyone, addicted to concord? When I know my own behavior patterns, others lose the power to manipulate me.

Illusions about oneself do not exist only on the personal level. They can haunt entire societies. No matter where Peace Counts reporters travel, no matter whom they interview, they meet only innocent victims – many of them armed to the teeth. In Northern Ireland they meet Catholics who have suffered under Protestant oppression and Protestants terrorized by the IRA. Israelis identify with the civilian victims of suicide bombings. Palestinians are helpless pawns of Israeli martial law. The longer a conflict has been going on, the more crass the distortion of reality becomes. Victims, victims everywhere – and not a perpetrator to be found!

The spiritual teacher OM C. Parkin says, “People with the awareness of being victims are not capable of knowledge. They lack insight into the true nature of things.” Among other things, they fail to see how sooner or later their victim status becomes an excuse to strike back – sometimes in the name of self-defense, often openly as revenge. “The weaker party become a perpetrator as soon as he feels stronger. Then he uses his strength to become violent. Cruel moments don’t happen suddenly, nor do they happen coincidentally.”

[[www.peace-counts.org](http://www.peace-counts.org) "Searching for Inner Peace"]

The status of victim is a hot commodity. Whoever lays claim to it successfully has the moral high ground: He is one of the good guys. He bears no responsibility for what has happened. The payoff can be international, when it comes to the distribution of political support and aid money. Sympathy is reserved for victims.

Where parties to war are deluded about their actual roles, it becomes especially important that peacemakers who wish to intervene as third parties have accurate notions of their own abilities, motivations, and needs, of their strengths and weaknesses. And they should learn to convey this capacity for self-scrutiny to others.

In a school of a very special kind, such a capacity is part of the curriculum. A half hour west of Jerusalem by car lies Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam. Thirty years ago, 20 Arab and 20 Jewish families resolved to show the world that the two peoples can live together in peace. They demonstrate how power can be shared fairly and how integration is possible without one side having to deny or sacrifice its identity. An entire village has become an "oasis of peace." The model works – regarded by some neighbors with distrust, but a functioning community. One project that enjoys worldwide regard is the village's School for Peace. It brings young Israelis and Palestinians together in "encounter groups." These meeting and discussion groups differ markedly from the common run of peace-folklore camps with their telegenic rituals: youth from both sides cooking, making crafts, playing soccer, and singing. Sponsors are easily sold on visually attractive moments of harmony, Achmed and Ariel arm in arm. But when the camp is over, Ariel might return to the Tel Aviv beach scene and Achmed to a dusty village in the West Bank. Peace folklore may conceal the conflict briefly, but it doesn't help to solve it.

The methods of the School for Peace are quite different. The first aim of the courses is to make clear to the young participants where the social and cultural differences between them lie. What separates them is made explicit through discussion and occasional provocation, sometimes painfully and with tears. "But only people conscious of their own identity can approach those who are essentially different with open minds," says Nava Sonnenschein, the school's principal. Step two is for the students to realize that it doesn't matter whether Ariel and Achmed like each other personally. That message is difficult to get across, since it contradicts an everyday experience. "Our feelings tell us that

to dispense with hatred and prejudice, people just have to get to know each other," Sonnenschein explains. "But understanding and sympathy alone don't solve conflicts between groups."

Instead, the School for Peace teaches that violence has structural causes – economic, political, cultural, and historical – that go far beyond the personal level. Only in the third step, "critical dialogue," do the Israelis and Palestinians try to find common ground and practicable visions for peace.

It's a grind, Nava Sonnenschein admits, "but these encounters foster lasting change in young people, as long-term scientific studies have shown." Delegations from other conflict regions visit Neve Shalom/Wahat el-Salam – Northern Irish Catholics and Protestants, white and black South Africans, Greek and Turkish Cypriots. More than 35,000 students have already attended the School for Peace. Four hundred have been trained as mediators and now work in peace projects in Israel and abroad. In this way, the peace school becomes something akin to Erich Kästner's "Flying Classroom," exporting its methods worldwide.

[[www.peace-counts.org](http://www.peace-counts.org) "School for Peace: Learning Plain Talk"]

### **Peace is Possible**

Every human being longs for peace. Everyone wants to live in a stable, secure environment. We all wish for inner peace, for calm in our souls. This longing is what drives all the quiet heroes who struggle, as members of civil society, for stable and democratic conditions in their home countries. But why, comes the understandable objection, is it not possible, in the face of this universal longing, to do away with war completely?

Peacemakers see themselves confronted with contrary motivations that frustrate their aspirations and can be summarized in the formula "P6":

**Profit:** The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.

**Panic:** Deep-seated xenophobia.

**Power:** War creates careers and new elites.

**Propaganda:** One-sided reporting distorts the interests actually at stake.

**Politics:** Party functionaries foster conflict for reasons of strategy.

**Pride:** People will act against their own interests out of spite, resisting all attempts at rational persuasion.

For these reasons, among others, mankind has not yet succeeded in creating world peace. But if the maintenance of a local peace is regarded as a criterion of success, the situation doesn't look quite so bad. The number of armed conflicts has fallen slightly over the past few years. In the past 15 years, conflicts in 35 countries were resolved, says the Canadian organization Ploughshares. Their list includes East Timor, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Peru, Ecuador, El Salvador, Turkey, Northern Ireland, Tajikistan, and Vietnam. Every one of these countries regularly made headlines during their wars. When peace came, the caravan of war reporters moved on.

Peace is possible! This motto summarizes the results of the worldwide expeditions of Peace Counts. In all the regions that the evening news reduces to hotbeds of violence, they found people and initiatives that represented the other side of the coin: active, optimistic involvement, constructive solutions, courage, creativity, and intelligence. It used to be that models for peace had to be historic figures like Mahatma

Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., or Mother Teresa. But the effect was ambivalent. Admiration was always mixed with doubt: Those are absolute giants, inimitable. I could never be their equal. The success stories in this book are different. They describe approachable people with addresses and telephone numbers, and their message is: You don't have to be a saint or a hero to make a difference. Peace can be created! And its creators are human beings.