

WHY CAN'T THERE JUST BE PEACE?

PREP FOR THE SESSION

Session Objective

Through exploring the value of **peace**, particularly how the process toward lasting peace often includes navigating conflict, learners will consider how interpersonal conflict may be an opportunity rather than a threat to our relationships.

At-a-Glance:

This resource aims to help learners consider the role of peace and conflict in their interpersonal relationships. When, if ever, is conflict necessary in order to reach peace? What are the risks of having interpersonal conflict? What are the risks of avoiding conflict in order to “keep the peace?” Finally, learners will do a hands-on activity inspired by the ancient Japanese art form of kintsugi to explore how conflict can serve as a catalyst toward peace and connection in our relationships - and even on the global stage.



Time Estimate:

- 60 minutes



Best Uses:

- Teens and Young Adults
- Ideally a group that has built up trust with one another

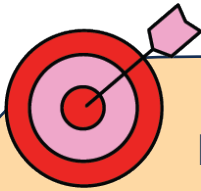


Materials & Set-Up:

- Ceramic cups or bowls, or invite learners to bring their own ceramic objects that are already broken or that they want to break and repair
- Super glue (non-toxic, one applicator per person)
- Gold colored paint or dust
- Napkin or cloth (1 per learner)
- Hammer (1 hammer for every three learners)
- Choose 7 images to hang around the room
- Familiarize yourself with the history of Kintsugi, the Japanese art of repairing broken objects, as well as how to lead a kintsugi-inspired art activity.

LET'S GET STARTED

10-15
min



FRAME THE ISSUE

These days when it can feel like there are such large gulfs between us and the people we disagree with, the word, "peace" gets thrown around a lot. Peace in the Middle East, *shalom bayit* (peace at home), world peace, inner peace. But what does peace really mean? And is it really possible?



Facilitator prompts the group:

- What comes to mind when you think of "peace?" - what words, images, memories, ideas?
- Consider, what does peace look like? Smell like? Taste like? Feel like? Sound like?

Around the room are 7 images. I invite you to walk around and consider, which image do you most associate with peace? Least associate with peace? After you have looked at all of the images, I would love to hear your answers!



EXPLORE THE VALUE: PEACE

45 min



Peace (shalom) is a central value in Judaism. However, in Jewish tradition, peace is not simply the absence of violence or conflict as it often is defined in Western culture. Rather, peace refers to a sense of wholeness (*shleimut*). In fact, in the Bible, *shalom* means “well-being” or “prosperity.” Peace is often an aspirational condition which will arise with the arrival of the messiah.



Facilitator prompts the group:

- How, if at all, does this affect or change your understanding of peace?



JEWISH WISDOM

Rav Nachman of Breslov, the great grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidic Judaism, had some thoughts about peace. Rav Nachman’s teachings combined elements of mysticism with Torah teachings to shed light on how to live a life of joy, happiness, and meaning. He wrote:

The entire world is full of disputes, whether between the nations of the world or likewise between city and city, or likewise between each household and household between the neighbors, between each man with his wife or his children or his servants and their children...The disputes between people is the same exact dispute as exists between nations..... And even if someone doesn’t want to fight and wishes to sit in peace and tranquility even so, he is forced to be a part of *mahlaket* (conflict) and wars.



Facilitator prompts the group:

- When, if ever, have you tried to stay out of a conflict or tried to “keep the peace,” but found yourself in the conflict anyway? What happened?
- What is your personal relationship with conflict? Do you avoid it? Run toward it? Participate in it when necessary?

Rav Nachman also believed that dispute was part of creation - if there were no disagreement between Torah scholars or others, there would be no place for the creation of the world.



- What do you think it means that conflict and dispute is necessary for creation. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- When, if ever, might conflict be necessary to achieve peace? When, if ever, might conflict take us further away from peace?



ACTIVITY

If you frequently avoid conflict because it is uncomfortable or because you worry it will damage your relationships, you are in good company! However, when we sweep our feelings or needs aside in favor of superficial peace or “keeping the peace,” we are also harming our relationships with others and most importantly ourselves. Conflict can be an opportunity to make our relationships stronger in the long-term even if in the short term it does not feel good.

Kintsugi, the ancient Japanese art of repairing broken, ceramic objects with gold, recognizes how breakage and repair can be highlighted as part of the history of an object rather than something to hide. Similarly, when we lean into conflict it can become a beautiful part of the history of our interpersonal relationships. Conflict requires breaking - breaking unspoken norms within a relationship, breaking unhelpful dynamics, or even severing the relationship itself - in order to move toward interpersonal and personal wholeness. As Rav Nachman teaches, when we lean into dispute and conflict, the most powerful creation can occur.

Note to facilitator: *lead learners through the activity using [this how-to video as your guide](#). If they are breaking objects as part of the gathering, advise them to tap rather than smash the object with the hammer. Fewer pieces are easier, unless they want a big challenge!*

Facilitator prompts group to reflect:

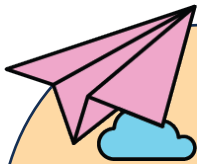
Recall that situation where you tried to “keep the peace” or prioritize lack of conflict over all else. Maybe it was within a friend group or within your family, or between you and one other person. What would happen if you broke that relationship open? What would you gain, what might you lose?

As you do this activity, consider what would need to “break” in order to repair the relationship you have in mind? In what ways are you breaking parts of yourself (breaking your own boundaries, expectations, trust, etc) in order to “keep the peace?” What would striving for wholeness look like in the context of this relationship? What role, if any, might conflict play in it?



Facilitator prompts the group:

- Rav Nachman wrote that our interpersonal conflicts are the same as conflicts between nations. What do you think about this?
- How, if at all, can what we have been talking about related to interpersonal conflict and peace be applied to larger conflicts like the one happening in the Middle East?



REFLECT AND PROMPT ACTION

I would love to invite everyone to share their repaired object and tell us about the relationship that you were thinking about when you created it.

Note to Facilitator: *if you have a small enough group invite everyone to share, or invite them to share in pairs. Encourage learners to share as much as they feel comfortable sharing.*

After learners share about their object, facilitator prompts group:

- What is something new you would like to try in this relationship as a result of our conversation today?
- Let us return to our first question, what is peace? Let us do a quick lightning round of words that come to mind when you think of peace now.

In the coming weeks, may we each take some small steps to pursue peace in the ways that we can, and consider what might need to break or be repaired in order to move toward a lasting peace characterized by wholeness.

