

## Winning Together for Peace

- Felipe N. Garcia

### Peace is possible

People win together when we work together towards a mutually agreed upon goal; whether the mutual goal is cooking a meal, raising a family, or maintaining peace. Conflicts can be solved more effectively when the mutual goal remains in focus for everyone.

I envision the United States government and its people, starting with me, in cooperation with other Americans and working with the United Nations creating and maintaining world peace. This vision results from everyone believing that peace is possible and from individuals and governments agreeing on a goal of practicing and encouraging cooperative and collaborative interactions and conflict resolutions; and condemning and refraining from destructive competitive and aggressive behaviors.

Beliefs create realities. Together, we will create peace when we believe that peace is possible

.Our present reality of arms buildup both personally and as a country is a manifestation of what we collectively presently believe i.e.. “the world is an unsafe place,” “there are enemies out to get us,” “scarcity exists.” These beliefs are re-enforced culturally by the news media, educational systems, politicians, religious radicals, television dramas, and movies that glorify violence and war.

Believing that peaceful outcome to conflicts through negotiations and collaboration is possible is fundamental in creating peace.

Believing that people who attack us are threatened in some way by us and understanding how we threaten others, will reduce and could eliminate the need for violence and war.

Achieving this vision is challenging in our current culture for a variety of reasons. Some of the obstacles to achieving this vision follow.

Each of us has our own survival instinct which drives us to use our personal power to win over others.

We can learn to manage this instinctual drive by using our intellect and our moral values to harness our survival energy and power and use it in cooperation with others. Together we can identify and practice ways to win together; finding solutions to conflicts that make room for everyone's needs and to advance the mutual goal.

As a culture, we manage our sexual drive which guarantees procreation and the survival of the species. We institute rituals and traditions for sexual expression and laws against immoral and abusive sexual practices. As a culture, we re-examine our laws and morals governing sexuality and love on an ongoing bases to make room for differences and present reality.

As a culture, however, we lack understanding, support and encouragement for managing our competitive drive in relationships.

A cultural confusion and misunderstanding exists between healthy competition in games, sports, and business and for personal achievement and dysfunctional relational competition by which we try to win over others in important relationships such as family and business colleagues.

Learning to differentiate between the two types of competition and refraining from relational competition is vital to creating peace.

Believing that peace is possible and working together for mutual goals is what helps me personally to win together with others.

I practice this belief both personally and professionally.

Personally, I notice and redirect my inclinations to compete in my relationships with family members, friends and colleagues. I notice when I redirect the conversation to myself instead of listening and celebrating or empathizing with the other. I am aware when I say "yes, but" to a comment or suggestion made by someone else, and instead I shift and make room for both points of view. I listen to the other's perspective taking in what is useful to me and agreeing to disagree on what is not. I also work at helping others get their way (their needs and wants) while also making room for my own needs and wants.

When I find myself arguing, I ask myself, “am I debating, understanding that by discussion and debate we can both learn and broaden our perspective, or am I fighting to win, to make my point, and make the other’s needs, wants, or point of view wrong?”

In all relationships, I practice collaboration and cooperation. When I find that I have hurt another unintentionally, I apologize with the understanding that I am human and make mistakes. I listen and learn about others vulnerabilities and respect them in order to avoid hurting them again. I learn how others’ vulnerabilities are similar and different to my own because of my and their life experiences.

Like all other humans, I have to keep my competitive and aggressive drive in check.

Professionally, I am a human relations consultant. I work with individuals, couples, families and also with teams and organizations to set mutual goals to improve relationships and effectiveness. I facilitate processes to help clients identify competitive attitudes and behaviors that get in the way of reaching their goals and maintaining collaboration and intimacy.

I am committed to dedicating all of my work both professionally and personally to practicing and continuing to learn tools and techniques that enhance cooperation, collaboration and peace. I find that the same tools that work personally and interpersonally, work for groups and for governments. As peacemakers, we can continue to work at creating and maintaining peace, whether others are cooperating with us or not.

The military complex is large and constitutes a significant segment of our economy. Persons in power are often supporters of a competitive frame of reference. There are many businesses relying on building equipment and technology to fight wars. This constitutes another significant obstacle to shifting to and creating a culture of peacemakers. Individuals and groups who operate from a win-lose mentality are strong supporters of militarism and arms buildup. Arms buildup and strong defense systems threaten others both personally and institutionally and are not necessarily conducive to maintaining peace. Disarming this competitive cultural mind set and shifting to one of collaboration and negotiation is a complex yet necessary process.

We would benefit from education, business and government developing, teaching and modeling collaborative interactive processes. We would benefit from identifying and labeling aggressive and competitive interactions such as “either/or” and “better than” beliefs as inappropriate and dysfunctional. It is useful to understand the link between culturally supported interpersonal dysfunctional competitive interactions and street violence and international wars.

Laws against violence and laws governing international conflicts and wars already exist, however, there are loopholes in the laws that some use to rationalize aggression and invasion. Aggressive behaviors by governments are too often ignored by individuals and cultures that believe and promote winning at any cost.

It is important for us as individuals, to become aware of our own dysfunctional competitive interactions. Because of the subtle nature of competitive interactions in relationships, we are often not aware of how they contribute to the problem instead of solving the problem. This has also been true in recent national and international policies and relations.

Tools I have found useful in maintaining peace include:

- Believe that a peaceful outcome is possible even when the conflicts have reached what seems to be an impasse.
- Identify mutual goals with others
- Think about feelings to identify and verbalize needs and wants.
- Remember that everyone likes to win; negotiate and collaborate with others for all to win.
- Identify small steps to work together towards accomplishing mutual goals.
- Stay focused on the goals particularly when conflicts and differences arise.
- Stay positive and optimistic.
- Dance, play and have fun together.
- Notice top- heavy hierarchical structures and relationships; shift to collaboration and empowering others whenever possible.
- Practice inclusion; avoid exclusion and disenfranchisement.
- Be aware of feelings of fear and replace them with love.

- Identify the fear behind anger.
- Grieve losses.
- Apologize when I injure or threaten others even if not intended.
- Recognize, understand and appreciate differences.
- Communicate, collaborate and cooperate and maintain community.
- Be patient, changing from a competitive win-lose, best-worst, either-or, to a both-and paradigm will take time and commitment.

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