

AS I START TO WRITE, MY MIND WANDERS TO THE LAST NIGHT OF THE 2008 SEEDS OF PEACE Camp in Maine. On this camp-wide “Bunk Night” the nine Seeds and two Counselors from Bunk 7 crowded on and around two beds and fixated on the M&M’s and other treats in front of them. As we joked around with one another and shared hugs and stories, we were suddenly stunned to realize that this was our last night.

In retrospect, I was equally amazed at how different this scene was compared to the one I witnessed three weeks earlier, on the first night, when we had all sat rigidly in a circle outside, eager to make friends, but unsure of how to proceed. The awkward and shy glances that had passed between individuals that first night were replaced by direct eye-contact during earnest conversations on that last night. As the M&M’s were devoured, we shared our camp highlights, our epiphanies, and our fears about returning home. The ties that now connected the previously hesitant Americans, Egyptians, Israelis, and Palestinians present were tangible, as everyone had something to say and the words fell on individuals listening with rapt attention.

The words spoken by every one of my campers were precious, but one Israeli girl said something that I think of every day. She said, “This place doesn’t change us—it allows us to become ourselves.”

These words resonated—albeit differently—with every member of the group. And, upon reading them, will mean something different to each of you. So I will qualify what follows by saying that this phrase has special meaning to me as a counselor, educator, and mentor at a place as unique as Seeds of Peace. There is something special about this safe-haven in the woods of Maine that allows one to exist in a time and place where much of the societal pressures that youth experience the world over are removed. Here, we are provided the somewhat rare opportunity to think our own thoughts, speak our own minds, and be ourselves.

Central to this article is the idea of our unique narratives. Fellow Counselor Carrie O’Neil and I offered a creative writing activity during the summer of 2008. The idea behind this program was to provide a group of Seeds the chance and the space to comprehend and express the intense experience that was life at Camp. The exercises ranged from “free writes,” to observation poems, to quotation prompts.

We also ran thematic exercises, where campers were provided with a single word—like “rain,” “garbage,” “friendship”—and asked to either take three minutes for ‘free association,’ jotting down every word that came to mind, or eight minutes to write a piece of prose using that word as a starting point. The campers took advantage of these opportunities, and the responses were, I believe, remarkable.

Keeping in mind the fact that the examples on the next page are “first” drafts, I invite you to enjoy some of the activity’s results. Below, you will find observation poems that are representative of the Seeds’ work. These poems were written on a gorgeous summer day while sitting on the girls’ dock. The Seeds were asked to write poems about the different senses.

Some time has passed since we sat on the dock and penned these words. As I read over what the campers and I wrote in response to the various exercises, I am amazed by the many different directions our thoughts took, as well as by our willingness to express emotion, to make a difference and to *find* ourselves.

Paramount in the lessons learned through this exercise is that young people (as amazing and unique individuals) all have the capability of expressing their thoughts in different mediums. While not everyone can speak what they feel, many have a unique gift—a gift that allows them to write. A gift to write their own narratives.

I will leave you with one thought and one task. Find a scrap of paper, a pen, and a quiet setting. Now, imagine a place that allows you to be yourself—if you are a Delegation Leader, this may be the dock on the Pines Side or your bunk at night.

If you are a teacher in Israel or Palestine, this may be your classroom after the students have left for the day.

Now, take eight minutes and share your thoughts—on paper, with yourself or with your students. Try ‘free association.’ Tell us what the phrase from the last night of Camp means to you. As was true in our small enclave in the woods of Maine, there is no single correct answer or experience.

Even if you find it hard to voice what you are thinking, it is often possible to write.

PHOTO CREDIT: SARAH NORTON



Lareen (Israeli Seed)

*I know what I want to say.
But I still haven't figured out a way
... I'm supposed to write a poem about
something ... but I still got some
doubt.
I'm giving it a try anyway,
Here at the dock, as I lay.*

*I can see so many things.
I can feel what this situation brings.
I can hear a lot of sounds,
like that boat making rounds.
I can even feel the drops of water
unite.
Something which is uncatchable by
sight.*

*I can see the trees standing still.
And I can see the clouds touching
that hill.*

*I can see stuff,
I can hear things,
But what is above all,
Is the feeling that it brings.*

§

Tamara (Palestinian Seed)

Poem No. 1

*A beach.
How many stories it has listened to.
How much support it has given.
How many tears have soaked
through its skin.
A beach.
Only noticed when needed.*

*A slow vibration of a drum
Glides along the glass.
Mirroring the damp clouds.
Awaiting the arrival of droplets.
Droplets that will create
Millions of little drums.
Beating to the sound of renewal.*

Poem No. 2

*Alone—but in company
Thinking of everyone who has let
the lake take them in.
Rinsing themselves of what weighs
them down.
The lake must be heavy.
Heavy with things we don't know.
Things we let go of.
Lingering.
Yet somehow we come out clean.*

§

Kayla (Maine Seed)

Poem No. 1

*I knew how I was brought here, but
not why
Everybody here presents me with a
new conflict
At first I didn't understand
Why me? Why now?
They say love is a battlefield, but
what about myself
My country is at war like many
others*

*In some ways we are all connected
But our experiences are differently
Although, we are all here and we
all have our flaws we're the same
Our common goal is peace
Everyone keeps saying 'trust the
process'—it works
At times I feel the pressure or get a
look
I can feel so alone in a crowded din-
ing hall
I knew what I had to do and now I
know why I have to get there
It's not easy to explain yourself
It's hard to make others hear your
story
But that's why I am here to find
myself
And to begin a new chapter in my
life*

*Not to start over, but to move for-
ward
And to believe in myself and that
I'm doing what I need to*

Poem No. 2

*You roll in without warning
There is no sound
You create a mask
Making things disappear*

*To the naked-eye you look like
smoke
However you form no smell
Your serenity is your beauty
The way you cover the hills*

*I love your covering
The way you can make someone lose
themselves
You make me think
You can look like you haven't moved
However, you're constant
But it's hard to see
I can feel your peace
And the comfort you create in your
surroundings*

Poem No. 3

*You surround the water
Creating a darkness within
You are firm and still
Yet you creek without a touch*

*You stand tall and slim
Your color looks lifeless
But you do live
The years you've survived
Through storms and rain
That's what makes you unique
Others use you to breathe
Or for a resource*

But I use you for your difference

IN THE FALL (2008) OLIVE BRANCH TEACHER'S GUIDE, WE SHARED SOME IDEAS ABOUT USING cooperative games to promote peaceful learning environments. Here are a few more resources that seemed useful to our Palestinian colleagues when we met in February and

June 2009. We hope they are helpful for you. Stay tuned for more in the next two issues of the Teacher's Guide.

De-briefing Cooperative Games: A Reminder

A game is successful when players make the connection between the game and their own life experience. Playing games is a fun way to laugh together and build community, but the larger connections are equally—if not more—important. Engaging participants in a discussion about the game itself invites a self-awareness that extends beyond the game and into everyday interactions.

How to process a game depends on the context; however, it is always a good idea to take a few minutes between games to

ask some questions. To debrief a game ask these three simple questions:

WHAT? Questions that help players think about what they learned.

Examples: What happened during the game? How did it make you feel? What was hard about this game? What was easy? What did you like or dislike about the game?

SO WHAT? Questions that help participants to think about why they played the game.

Examples: So what does this teach us? Why would we play this game? Why is it important to practice teambuilding, communication, or inclusion?

NOW WHAT? Questions that help players to think about how the game applies to the real world.

Examples: How can you use what you learned in real life? What did you learn about yourself and your fellow players? How can we use these skills in other situations?

Games to Strengthen Teams through Peaceful Communication

One important way to use cooperative games is to strengthen our ability to work as teams—whether those teams are made of students, teachers, parents or community leaders. Here are some games that we have found to be helpful in strengthening teams.

People to People

Purpose: to connect with different people	Group Size: 10-30 people
Skills: cooperation, listening, coordination, gross motor skills	Space: large open space so that players can interact with many different people
Ages: 6 & up	Supplies: none

DIRECTIONS This is a very simple game, but it can be fun, especially for younger children. Begin by putting players in pairs. Explain that the facilitator will call out different

HINT With younger children, it may help to review some of the key vocabulary before playing.

ways for the pairs to be joined to each other—finger to finger, shoulder to shoulder, ankle to ankle, head to head, hip to hip, and so on. But when the facilitator calls out, “People to People,” everyone needs to find a new partner. Players must partner with five different people before they can repeat a partner. A facilitator may also choose to mix things up by calling out things like finger to shoulder, knee to toe, wrist to head, shoulder to elbow, knee to hand, and so on.

Mirrors

Purpose: to practice careful observation	Group Size: 10-30 people, in pairs
Skills: non-verbal communication, creativity, coordination, empathy, concentration, leadership	Space: enough space for pairs to spread out
Ages: 6 & up	Supplies: none

DIRECTIONS Put people into pairs. Explain that they will play two rounds. In each round, one person will be the leader and one person will be the follower. Have pairs choose the leader for the first round. Explain that the

leader will have 60 seconds, during which they should move slowly and deliberately and during which their partner must mimic the movements, as if they are a mirror image. Players may make faces, wave their arms or legs, turn side to side, stand on one foot, re-tie a shoe, or anything they can imagine (within reason). It should be a silent activity, and leaders should move slowly and smoothly enough so that their “mirror images” can follow along in synch. After 60 seconds, have players switch roles.

VARIATIONS After each person has had a chance to be the leader and the follower, give groups a minute during which neither person is designated the leader.

Change 3 Things

Purpose: to practice careful observation; to give players a chance to be the center of attention	Group Size: 10-30 people
Skills: observation, concentration, creativity	Space: medium to large space for the whole group to sit or stand comfortably
Ages: 6 & up	Supplies: none

DIRECTIONS This is a game that can be played easily without moving chairs or desks. Explain that one volunteer will stand up in front of the group. They will slowly turn around once or twice, during which time the group should observe them carefully looking for obvious and seemingly insignificant details about the person's appearance. After a couple of turns, the volunteer should leave the room and take about a minute to change three things about their appearance.

Some suggestions include tucking or untucking a shirt, removing glasses or pieces of jewelry, untying a shoe, or

HINT If playing as a whole class or a group, this game can easily be broken up or continued over a long period of time.

anything else (within reason). After they have changed three things, they return to the group. Tell the group that if they think they see something that has changed to raise their hands. Have the volunteer call on anyone with their hand up.

After each change has been guessed—or after the volunteer has stumped the group—choose another volunteer.

VARIATION Play the game in pairs. Each person has thirty seconds to observe their partner, at which time they both must turn around and take a minute to change three things. After a minute, have pairs face each other again. Have them shout out changes as fast as they can, or have them alternate guesses.

HINT With younger children, begin by having them change one thing and work up to three.

Draw What I Draw

Purpose: to practice active listening and oral communication skills	Group Size: pairs or small groups
Skills: active listening, patience, giving directions, communication, respect, asking questions, cooperation, creativity	Space: enough space for groups to sit on the floor or around tables/desks
Ages: 8 & up	Supplies: pens/pencils, paper, "Draw What I Draw" worksheets, dividers

DIRECTIONS There are many ways to play this game. The easiest—and the one that requires the fewest materials—is to split the group into pairs. Have the pairs sit back-to-back (or have them sit at a table with a divider in between them). Explain that in this activity one person will be describing a picture to their partner, who will have to duplicate the picture based on their partner's description. Tell pairs to decide who will describe and who will draw during the first round. Give each person a blank piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Tell the describers to draw a simple pattern on their piece of paper. When they are finished, tell them that they must describe the drawing to their partner and help them duplicate it.

Before they begin, give the group some communication and listening strategies that may be helpful. For example:

- Give one direction at a time to your partner. By slowing down and communicating clearly, people have a better chance of understanding you.
- When listening, make sure not to interrupt your partner, so that you can hear the directions clearly and completely. If you have a question, wait until your partner has finished speaking.

HINT To save some time, give the describers one of the "Draw What I Draw" worksheets—or encourage describers to make similarly simple drawings using easily-described shapes.

Ask if there are any questions, then let the group begin. When pairs have finished working, tell them to compare drawings. How are they similar and different? What was easy or difficult about the process?

VARIATIONS Instead of pairs, have one person describe a picture to a large group. Seeing how many different people respond to the same set of directions can provide interesting material for discussion.

Instead of drawings, use blocks or building materials. Split into pairs or small groups. Further divide small groups, so that one half will build and describe a structure and the second half will try to duplicate the structure. Set up pieces of posterboard or cardboard as dividers and give an identical set of building materials to each group. Using building materials helps participants who feel inhibited by a lack of perceived "artistic skill." It is also more concrete—and tactile—than drawing, which is better for some kinds of learners.

For any of the several variations, create a rule that the person or team trying to duplicate may not ask questions. This requires the describing partner or team to be extremely specific with their directions. (And no matter how specific they are, it is rarely specific enough, which means that the debrief can focus closely on how easy miscommunication can happen.)

HINT Building materials can be most anything: plastic cups, pencils, crumpled scrap paper. Be creative and do not fear recycling!

Building Bridges

HINT Have materials prepared and waiting on tables for each group.

Purpose: to work together to complete a task	Group Size: small groups of 5-7
Skills: cooperation, non-verbal communication, leadership, problem solving, encouragement	Space: space for groups to spread out; a hard work surface (table or floor) Ages: 12 & up
Supplies: a ball (or rolled-up tape); For each group, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 pieces of newsprint or posterboard (2' x 3') • 4 paper plates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 paper or plastic cups • ruler • scissors • roll of tape • 4 toothpicks (optional)

DIRECTIONS Put participants into groups, seat them around their “building materials,” and tell them that they may not touch the materials. The goal is for each group to use only the materials in front of them to build a bridge. The bridge must be able to support the weight of a small ball rolling from one side to the other, and it must also meet certain specifications:

- It must be at least two feet tall
- It must be at least three feet wide.
- It cannot be anchored to the table or floor.

Randomly assign leaders in each group, but do not give

them any specific responsibilities. (Without specific parameters, leadership can emerge in different ways and people can choose to use or not use the “power” they have been given.)

Explain that for the next 10 minutes, groups must talk about how to build the bridge; however, they may not touch the materials. After the 10 minutes have elapsed, they will have another 10 minutes to build the bridge; however, they may not talk.

When they have finished building their bridges, the facilitator will measure the bridge to make sure it meets the requirements, and then each group will test their bridge with the ball. Ask if there are any questions, then begin the clock. Walk around and monitor groups and their progress.

There are a hundred different ways to succeed (and struggle) with this activity. During the debrief, explore issues of problem solving, communication, leadership, decision-making, and consensus-building.

HINT Instead of a ball, crumple up a piece of scrap paper and cover it with masking tape. It works just as well and makes the supply list just a bit shorter.

Peaceful Communication: Some Basics

1. **Start with yourself.** Ground yourself in these questions: How do I want someone to speak to and with me? What helps me understand and stay in relationship? What skills do I bring to this relationship? What help do I need?

2. **Respect yourself and the other(s).** Peaceful communication requires respect for self and other(s). Be neither a bully nor a victim. Respect the other person as a person ... especially if communication gets difficult or heated.

Conflict is part of communication; whether it is peaceful or destructive depends in part on how you approach the conflict.

3. **Listen actively.** Concentrate on what is being said, reflect back what you hear and try to summarize at key

points. This means clearing your head of the other agendas that run through our minds every day. Be present.

4. **Withhold judgment.** Judgment gets in the way of peaceful communication. Work first to understand before trying to judge, blame or correct. This is what we want others to do for us.

5. **Use non-verbal communication skills.** Your posture, position, eye contact, gestures and facial expression all communicate—peacefully or destructively! Sit up, find a position that is “equal” (sitting, standing, on the floor) to the other person. Be present in your body as well as your mind.

6. **Speak carefully and clearly.** Take your time. Let the other person finish her/his sentence or thought. Interrupt

only when absolutely necessary. Fewer words often have more power and effectiveness, so choose words carefully.

7. **Communicate without being adversarial.** Express concerns without judgment. Focus on the problem, not the person. Look for (and articulate) common ground, and win-win solutions. Use “I” messages. Try not to blame—even (especially) when you feel the urge to do so!

8. **Keep communication lines open.** When issues are complicated, or with relationships that really matter, no single interaction is enough to solve a problem, clarify an issue, support a colleague, or complete a task. Give things time. Return to the relationship, especially if it is difficult in the moment.

Trust the process. And yourself.

Creating Effective Meetings

1. **Be clear about the need and purpose.** There are lots of reasons to get together. Being clear about the need, purposes and goals of this meeting can help participants focus and feel that they are not wasting their time.

a. Discussion meetings offer an opportunity to share ideas and perspectives, brainstorm strategies or build community. These meetings generally require the least structure.

b. Decision meetings need more structure because the group needs to come to some kind of decision about a specific problem or action. These meet-

ings first need a clear agreement on how the decision will be made, then some structure to ensure equitable voices, and finally enough time to make the decision (vote, consensus, etc.)

c. Problem-solving or emergency meetings come up when something difficult has happened, or an immediate problem needs to be solved: a teacher is seriously ill, a parent has launched a complaint against the school, a child has been hurt, an incidence of violence requires some immediate response. These meetings require a high level of supportive structure. They can often be helped

by outside folks who have experience in working on emergency situations. They also require patience—with leadership as well as participants—as the community works its way through often uncharted territory.

2. **Prepare for the meeting.** Successful meetings don’t happen by chance. Like other successful projects, they require preparation—materials, agendas, and the mental preparation that all good leaders use before they actually lead an

SEE “MEETINGS” ON PAGE 19 >>>

◀◀ “TIBERIUS” CONTINUED

that the world of here and now was too imperfect and confusing for that kind of application. I would have to choose between the ivory tower of ideas and the dirty trenches of real life, as I saw it.

Bahia, a middle school teacher from East Jerusalem, proved me wrong. When she was asked how she defined her better future, Bahia echoed so closely the dry and accurate words of Thomas Hobbes that my mouth dropped. Hobbes wrote about how peace is possible because each individual desires above all else to be safe from the dangers of conflict. As long as we recognize this common motive, we can come together and cooperate to end the strife. In Bahia's words, “if you want to live, you want to be safe.” In Hobbes' words, “seek peace.”

Whether in New York, Tel-Aviv, or Ramallah, this is the value of education: to see words on the page given life by somebody encountering the everyday difficulties of the here and now. At this intersection between the world of ideas and the world of real people is where hope emerges. For if Bahia's words can begin to mirror the utopian constructs of philosophy, why cannot the whole world move closer to fulfilling the perfect peace that Hobbes prescribes?

The fruits of Open Space Technology

By *Jessica Marx*

I HAVE BEEN FORTUNATE TO work with Seeds of Peace since March. Most of my work has been with the Seeds, but this seminar gave me the unique opportunity to work with the educators connected to this incredible organization. It provided a window into the world of those committed to shaping the future of Israeli and Palestinian youth.

My experience during the seminar revolved around the Open Space Technology itself. I found it to be an incredibly creative process to tackle issues concerning the future of Israeli and Palestinian children. Rather than taking a passive role by listening to a speaker, this seminar enabled the “audience” to become the “lecturers” themselves, taking part in mini-dialogue sessions led by their peers. Open Space Technology proved to be a fruitful means of dialogue for educators.

Looking back on the past four months I've spent interning with Seeds of Peace, two words come to mind: inspiring and hopeful. Every person I have encountered who is connected to Seeds of Peace is inspiring in some form

—through their ideas, their actions, their role in this organization. Seeing Palestinian and Israeli educators work together revealed a committed path toward peace and understanding.

I ask then, what is my role as a Jewish American in promoting peace? As an outsider, I feel like I have only breached the surface of the insider's perspective. Just by listening to the voices of educators during this seminar, I still remain hopeful. Through seminars, monthly Seeds meetings, and working with staff, Seeds of Peace continues to show me a network of committed people. It is this hope, and endless dedication, that are driving forces behind this organization.

My final thought as I was looking around the seminar circle was that these people honestly believe in peace and will do anything they can to promote, create, and spread it. It made me think of the following quote:

“I like to believe that people in the long run are going to do more to promote peace than our governments. Indeed, I think that people want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of the way and let them have it.” —US President Eisenhower

Perhaps, and hopefully, one day this will be true for this place and all of its people.

Reactions to the Tiberius Seminar

During the last year, I have had the honor, but mostly the pleasure, to take part in several events organized by Seeds of Peace. This one was a bit more open than the other ones, using the Open Space technique.

I see that my own educational project, “Tales of Hope,” has come a long way recently, and I can definitely attribute it to my involvement in Seeds of Peace in general, and to the Tiberius workshop in particular.

First of all, after presenting my project at an educator forum organized by Seeds of Peace, I felt some responsibility to report on my project's progress. Secondly, I made some very good connections with people during the Tiberius workshop.

Thanks to some of those wonderful people, my project is really “happening” right now, which makes me very happy.

So out of my own experience I can definitely say I got a lot out of this weekend. I'm really looking forward to the next cross-border workshop!

—*Tali, Haifa*

After a very disheartening period in the conflict, the Tiberius cross-border seminar refreshed my spirit and renewed my commitment toward improving cross-border understanding and communication.

To finally experience a face to face meeting with people whom I share similar thoughts, concerns and interests

with gave me the fortitude to carry on with my work. Moreover, these similarities made me feel welcomed, appreciated and empowered in this gathering.

Another definite plus was being able to share the Sabbath with my Jewish counterparts. It gave me a great insight into this culture that will undoubtedly help me engage them in open and respectful communication in the future.

Finally, this gathering gave me the opportunity to use my networking skills, to bring cross-border programs to my own community.

I only wish every willing Palestinian and Israeli could have the same opportunity we were afforded.

—*Karen, Tulkarem*

◀◀ “MEETINGS” CONTINUED

event. Visualize, prioritize, walk through the meeting, talk with your allies and anticipate challenges that may arise. Then be open to the group with whom you are about to work.

3. **Create a clear agenda and try to follow it.** The agenda should be clear, so that all participants understand and have an opportunity to suggest changes if those are necessary. Different needs and purposes require different structures, and they generate different agendas.

4. **Choose a good meeting space.**

Cafeteria chairs are really uncomfortable after about 15 minutes, so try to choose a place that is comfortable, welcoming, professional and attractive. You can help improve the space with a few plants or cut flowers; you can increase comfort (and decrease snoozing) by moving around a bit during the meeting.

5. **Respect the participants.** Start and end on time. Welcome participants into the meeting and space, even if that takes a few minutes. Connect as people, as well as professionals. Be aware that every meeting is an opportunity to build community—or to damage it.

6. **Encourage broad participation.**

There are often individuals who like to talk (take the air time) and those who hold back. Listening can be a form of participation, so don't force an individual to speak up—but do manage time and air space in ways that encourage broad participation. In most instances, the more voices the better!

7. **Summarize outcomes and next steps.** You may want to develop minutes or notes that are distributed to participants. If so, you need to identify a note taker who is responsible and has time to follow up.