



Pathways to Peace

Activity Book for Middle School



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Pathways to Peace is a celebration of students' potential to be peacemakers. The Pathways to Peace Activity Book features highlights from the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute's primary violence prevention curriculum. As the leading homicide response agency in Boston, we recognize the deep and broad impact violence can have on students at home and in the classroom.

Our approach to peace education is to acknowledge the pain of grief and loss while embracing our capacity to heal. We've created a series of discussion questions, drawing/writing exercises, and activities to engage students in social-emotional learning. These activities will help foster a culture of peace in the classroom by reinforcing positive behaviors, promoting social responsibility, and deepening relationships between students rooted in respect and compassion.

We've written Instructor Guides so that teachers feel more equipped to engage their students in material that covers murder, grief, and loss. We've also written example 45-60 minute lesson plans featuring these activities for those teachers who are able to dedicate an entire class period to peace education. You can download those materials from our website: www.ldbpeaceinstitute.org.

The Annual Mother's Day Walk for Peace is where we hope to see a large contingent of students and teachers walking to show their commitment to creating more peaceful classrooms and communities. You can find more information about the walk by visiting www.mothersdaywalk4peace.org.

The Peace Institute is available to provide educators who plan to utilize the lesson plans and activities with training and technical assistance. We're so grateful for those teachers who can make time to try on this important healing and learning opportunity. For support and additional resources, please contact Rachel@ldbpeaceinstitute.org.



Conversation Starters

Instructors can use these prompts in class to deepen their students understanding of peace.

- What is one place where you feel peaceful and calm?

- What does peace mean to you?

- What does being peaceful feel like?

- Who are peaceful people in your life?

- What goes on inside us that make it hard to be peaceful?

- What makes it hard for people to be peaceful with others?

- What barriers to peace do we see in our community? Across the country? In the media?

- What Principle of Peace means the most to you? (Principles of Peace can be found at the end of the activity book)

- What is one way you can commit to practicing the Principles of Peace in school?

- What is one way you can work toward peace?



Writing/Drawing Exercises

“I Am” Poem

This activity will allow students to express themselves.

The instructor will pass out the “I Am” poem template (please find the template at the end of this activity book) and give students time to fill in the prompt. Then the instructor can give students time to share as much or as little of their poems as they would like.

Note: *The “I Am” poem is a tool for students to explore how they are impacted by their emotions. It’s also an opportunity for students to practice the principle of courage by sharing their work and showing appreciation for other students’ poems.*

Self-Reflection

This activity asks students to think about their relationship with the Principles of Peace.

The instructor will pass out the Principles of Peace worksheet to each student, and ask volunteers to read the Principles and definitions. (Please find the Principles of Peace at the end of the activity book).

Then the instructor will give students a few minutes to choose **two** Principles: one Principle that represents a strength (a principle that is easier for them) and one principle that represents a struggle (a principle that is more difficult). Then students can write why they chose each principle.

Community Assets

This activity allows students to share the strengths, assets, and resilience of their community.

The instructor will ask students to take some time and write about or draw the neighborhood or community they live in/come from, and things that make them proud of that neighborhood/community or one thing that makes that community strong. Afterwards, the instructor should ask students to share their work.

Note: *Communities are often blamed and shamed for being violent, dangerous, and bad places to raise families. Often we overlook the root causes of violence or feed into myths and stereotypes about who perpetrates violence. This does a great disservice to young people who are and have the potential to be peacemakers. To stop violence and start peace, we must take an assets-based approach.*



Peaceful Resolutions

This activity calls on students to make a commitment to peacemaking beyond Peace Month.

The instructor will ask students to write about at least one concrete way they will work toward peace:

- In class
- At home
- In the community

The instructor may also ask students who they want to honor or dedicate their peacemaking efforts to. Students may use the Peace Month 2016 worksheet or their own paper.



Activities

Pair & Share

This activity allows students to discuss what they need to feel accepted, supported, and understood.

The instructor will ask students to form two lines facing each other so every student has a partner across from them. The instructor will read a question and give students 1-2 minutes to discuss their answers with their partner. Then the instructor will ask one line to move to the right so each student has a new partner and ask the next question. The instructor can also ask for volunteers to share something interesting or important they heard from their partner with the whole group.

- What is one time you felt encouraged or empowered by another student? What did they do to make you feel supported?
- What is one time you felt disrespected or shut down by another student and how did you handle it?
- What do you need to feel safe and respected in school?
- How can you show respect to your fellow classmates?

Small Group Discussion

This activity will help students come up with concrete strategies to make the classroom a safer space for healing, teaching, and learning.

The instructor will ask students to count off to form five groups. The instructor will assign each group a prompt to respond to. Students should discuss realistic ways they could see themselves practicing the Principles of Peace and supporting their peers. After the groups have had time to brainstorm, the instructor will ask them to report back to the whole class.

- When a fellow student is hurt and grieving, we can offer them hope and courage by...
- When a fellow students is struggling with their work, we can show faith in them by...
- When a fellow student has disrupted the classroom, we can seek justice and forgiveness by...
- When a fellow student is shining and succeeding, we can show love for them by....
- When my fellow students are in conflict with each other, we can show unity by...



Warm Up: My People Stand Up

This is a great activity will allow students to get their bodies and minds moving.

All chairs must be arranged in a circle, with one less chair than students. When the instructor gives the signal, all students must get up and get into a new chair—they cannot sit in the chair directly next to the one they are sitting in.

The one student who is left without a chair will be in the middle and has to share one way to practice one of the seven Principles of Peace and then complete the prompt “My people stand up for...” with something they support or believe in. *Examples: My people stand up for equity; my people stand up for better jobs. My People stand up for peace.* If students agree with the statement, they should stand up and move to another chair as quickly as possible. If they disagree with the statement they can remain seated. The person left without a chair will start the process over again.

The instructor should allow the game to continue at least until all students have been in the middle.

Power of Energy

This activity will help students think about how our attitude and energy impacts other students.

This activity works best when the instructor does not share the name of the activity or give much context until the discussion afterward. The instructor should follow these steps:

- A. Ask one student to show courage and volunteer to step outside the class.
- B. Once the volunteer steps out, the instructor will ask the rest of the class to think negative and critical thoughts—**not about the student**, but rather in general about the school, the city, or the world.
- C. The instructor will invite the student back into the class and ask them observe what it feels like in the room.
- D. The instructor will ask the student to raise their arm and hold it steady while the teacher tries to push their arm down. The instructor is usually able to push the student’s arm down rather easily due to the negative energy in the room.
- E. Without explaining the activity, the instructor will ask the student to step out of the room one more time.
- F. Then the instructor will ask students to shake off the negative thoughts and shift to thinking happy, supportive, encouraging positive thoughts.
- G. The instructor will invite the student back into the room and ask them again to observe how the room feels.
- H. The instructor and student will repeat the arm exercise and note the differences. Typically the student feels stronger and is able to hold their arm up for longer.
- I. The instructor will ask a student to explain the activity in his or her own words to the volunteer.



After the exercise, the instructor will give students some context about the power of energy and engage students in discussion. First the group should hear from the volunteer—what was the experience like? How did the class’ energy impact them? Then the instructor can ask for volunteers to respond to some thinking questions:

- What did it feel like to be surrounded by negative energy? What did it feel like to be surrounded by positive energy?
- How does our energy impact others? How have you been impacted by others’ energy and attitude?
- What strategies can we use in class to be aware of our energy? What are some ways to take responsibility for our own energy and attitude?
- When you are going through a lot or struggling and not able to have positive energy, what support do you need?

Note: *To introduce the activity, the instructor can explain, “We are going to try an activity together so keep an open mind and let’s see what happens.” It is essential to stress to students that their negative thoughts should **not** be about the student—that would be hurtful and counterproductive to peacemaking. The point is to see how thinking negative thoughts affects our body language and the vibe in the room. Give students a few moments to sit with their positive or negative thoughts before bringing the volunteer back in the classroom—students don’t need to “perform” but they should remain silent and concentrated on their thoughts.*

Appreciations

This activity will encourage students to appreciate each other.

The instructor will write every student’s name down on a piece of paper, and ask each student to choose a name. In a circle, students will read the classmate’s name they chose and share one thing they appreciate about them.



Mother's Day Walk for Peace

This activity gives students the opportunity to be active participants in the Annual Mother's Day Walk for Peace.

The instructor should give students an overview of the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute and the Mother's Day Walk for Peace, pass out walk information, and explain how to get involved. The Mother's Day Walk for Peace was started 20 years ago by Clementina Chery to honor the memory of her son Louis who was killed. She wanted to start a walk where all families who lost someone could come together to remember their loved ones, support each other, and show the city that peace is possible. The Mother's Day Walk is now a very important tradition in the city that expresses unity and hope.

The class can choose to set a fundraising goal, and students may brainstorm ways they can raise money for the Mother's Day Walk for Peace. Students should leave with a timeline and a concrete process to collect money. Students can also make signs, banners, and posters using the 7 Principles of Peace to decorate the walk route. The classroom may also decide to form a walk team and use this time to make a plan for walking together on May 8.

If the classroom is not going to engage in the Mother's Day Walk for Peace,

- What ways can middle school students work for peace at school? At home?
- Besides the Walk for Peace, what other positive community events do you know about?



The Principles of Peace



FAITH	Complete trust in someone or something
HOPE	Believing in yourself, someone, or something
JUSTICE	Treating everyone fairly and equitably
LOVE	Showing care for yourself and others
FORGIVENESS	Moving past something that was done wrong to you
COURAGE	Having strength to do something you are afraid of
UNITY	Staying connected with each other



I am _____

I wonder _____

I hear _____

I see _____

I want _____

I am _____

I pretend _____

I feel _____

I touch _____

I worry _____

I cry _____

I am _____

I understand _____

I say _____

I dream _____

I try _____

I hope _____

I am _____

BY _____ **Date:** _____



I AM POEM

- I am _____ (Two special characteristics)
- I wonder _____ (Something you are curious about)
- I hear _____ (An imaginary sound)
- I see _____ (An imaginary sight)
- I want _____ (A desire you have)
- I am _____ (The first line of the poem repeated)
- I pretend _____ (Something you pretend to do)
- I feel _____ (A feeling about something imaginary)
- I touch _____ (An imaginary touch)
- I worry _____ (Something that bothers you)
- I cry _____ (Something that makes you sad)
- I am _____ (The first line of the poem repeated)
- I understand _____ (Something you know is true)
- I say _____ (Something you believe in)
- I dream _____ (Something you dream about)
- I try _____ (Something you make an effort to do)
- I hope _____ (Something you hope for)
- I am _____ (The first line of the poem repeated)

By: _____

Date: _____



Peace Month 2016

