

## A Peacemaking Process

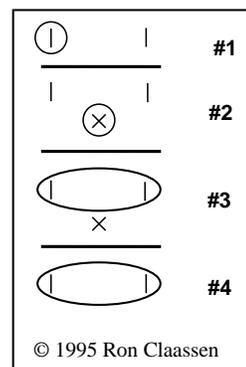
by Ron Claassen

*This document provides a copy of the Peacemaking Process from DTR Chapter 7 for teachers and administrators who are learning to use the process. We think that while leading a meeting as a participant or as a mediator, the leader should have this copy in front of them and follow it step by step in order to gain mastery of the process. Please indicate that your copy is used by permission and do not remove the copyright.*

### Step 1: Preparation, Invitation/Safety

We are assuming that the teacher will be the leader of the process in a #4 student/teacher meeting. (If doing this as a #3, the mediator will lead the process.) Preparation is essential. When teachers and students agree to be constructive and search for agreements, the process will be successful. If they don't agree to these, it is likely one or the other will find ways to block agreements. Agreed upon structure provides safety and increases hope for a fair process. Some tension and awkwardness is normal in the early stages of the process. The introduction and ground rules take no more than two to five minutes to cover in most cases.

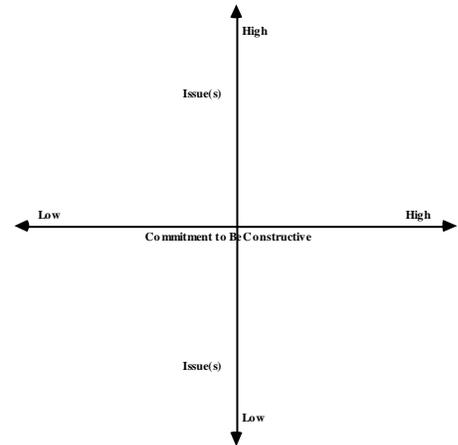
- A. Introductions (if needed).** In most student/teacher meetings, this step is not needed. But if the student is a new student or you are a substitute teacher, one-minute introductions may be helpful and/or needed.
- B. Briefly state conflict that needs to be resolved.** This should be a short sentence or two at the most. It should be stated in a way that both the student and teacher can agree to it. "We have been having problems when I start a lesson," or "We seem to have some confusion about how we are going to implement the respect agreement." This is not the place to say, "You have been disruptive when..." This is not the time for a full discussion of the situation. That will come later.
- C. Look at, describe, and discuss the Four Options Model, and decide or confirm if all parties want to use #4 (or #3).** Even if a misbehaving student agreed to #4 at the time of the offense, this is still an important step. The purpose of doing this is to eliminate confusion regarding who will make the decision and to increase commitment to seeking mutual understanding and agreement. Emphasize that while many ideas and possibilities may be discussed, there is no "agreement" until everyone inside the circle (teacher and student) agrees. The teacher might say the following while pointing to each option, "In #1, one person has all of the power and the other is expected to go along, like a police officer making an arrest. In #2, an outside authority makes the decision, like a principal making a decision for two students in conflict. In #3 and #4, there is no decision until all parties agree. I am willing to do a #4, are you?"



**D. Describe and discuss the Issues/Commitment to be Constructive Model and decide or confirm if all parties agree to work in the upper right quadrant.** The model illustrates that it is possible to have strong and even mutually exclusive positions on issues and still be committed to being constructive in the process of seeking agreements that address the issues. The teacher might say, "Can we both agree to address the issues and be constructive? I can, can you?" (It is helpful to point to the upper right-hand quadrant while asking this question.) If a student or teacher cannot agree to do both, they are not ready. Ask "Why not?" and use your Active Listening and I-Message skills (Chapter 5). Or, make a referral to the Thinkery (Chapter 9).

### Step 2: Ground Rules

The invitation/preparation stage and now the ground rules are not intended to stifle discussion, disagreement or expression of strong feelings, but to create a safe and respectful environment in which problems, disagreements, violations, injustices, etc. can be openly expressed, discussed and transformed into new understandings and constructive agreements. It is important that both teacher and student agree to follow each ground rule. The teacher might say, "In order to have a fair and constructive process, it is helpful if we each agree to the following ground rules." (Read the four bold print ground rules below.) "I can agree. Do they seem like good and constructive ground rules? Can you also agree to each of them?"



- **Follow the process. Allow teacher (or mediator) to lead the process.**
- **If process is not fair, say so.**

While these two ground rules are important on their own, it is important to recognize that they are connected to each other, since both address the issue of power. The two need to be addressed together to achieve a fair power arrangement. The first is an acknowledgement that someone is needed to lead the process, and the second is inviting everyone to be judges of fairness to prevent the leader from having an unfair power advantage. The second provides the student or all parties a way to also take the lead by raising the fairness issue. If there is a problem with fairness during the process, it takes priority, needs to be stated, and adjustments need to be made to reestablish fairness.

- **Listen without interrupting**
- **Be willing to summarize**

The purpose of these two ground rules is to ensure that all people will be able to express their thoughts and know that they have been listened to and understood. The first ensures that the speaker can tell about his or her experience without interruption. (An exception to this would be if one wanted to raise the fairness issue.) The second ensures that the speaker is heard.

A summary is not a statement of agreement. Rather, it is an attempt by the listener to convey to the speaker that the listener has heard and understood what the other was saying and as the speaker intended it to be heard (for more information on Active Listening and I-Messages, see Chapter 5).

### **Step 3: Describe, Summarize, Recognize the Problem/Hurt/Violation/Injustice**

*Recognition (giving voice to each person)* is the focus of this part of the process. Although additional recognition will happen throughout the process, when hurts or violations are part of the conflict, it is unlikely that repair can be done or that the future can be discussed meaningfully until each person's experience is recognized *by the person(s) that the speaker wants to be sure has heard*. The steps below are written as if there are just two parties. If there are more than two parties, ask the speaker, before they start speaking, who she or he would like to do the summarizing. The speaker needs to have the opportunity to choose who will listen and summarize. This is very important because the criteria for moving on to the next step is for the parties to agree that their experiences of the conflict or violation have been recognized.

#### **Decide who will be Person A and Person B.**

If one is more powerful (such as the teacher who is leading the meeting), offer some options to the other. A teacher might say to the student, "Do you want to start? Do you want me to start? Or do you want to flip a coin to decide who starts?"

#### **A. Person A describes how he or she experienced the problem/hurt/violation/injustice (both thoughts and feelings).**

If the student chooses to speak first, the teacher might say, "Please describe how you experienced our conflict/problem. When you are finished, I will summarize what you said." The language (describe your experience) for the instruction has been chosen very deliberately since what is most helpful at this point in the process is a clear I-message, one that states the experience of the speaker. If the instruction to the speaker is, "So what is the problem?" the speaker will most likely make a You-message, "The problem is that you..." If it is not possible to provide training for each party on how to construct an I-message, inviting the speaker to "describe your experience" will usually elicit one.

Some will start with thoughts and others with feelings. The process encourages all parties (teachers and students) to describe both thoughts and feelings. If a student is having a difficult time starting, the teacher might add, "Describe what happened, along with where, when and how you felt when this was happening." A "feelings chart" might be helpful.

#### **B. Person B restates/summarizes until Person A says, "Yes, that is what I said."**

The listener has been told before the speaker started that she would be summarizing. When the experience is of significant length, the speaker may prefer to stop occasionally for a summary, or the speaker may prefer to have the listener take notes so that the speaker can speak without interruption. The instruction to the listener is, "Summarize, using your own words as much as possible, what the speaker said. Be careful to just summarize the speaker's thoughts and feelings. Do not add your own thoughts or feelings at this point. Start by saying, 'You said...?'" It may be helpful to remind the listener that summarizing does not mean agreement, just that one has heard and understood. This time belongs to the speaker and is not completed until the speaker says, "Yes, that is what I said."

#### **C. Person B describes how she or he experienced the problem/hurt/violation/injustice (both thoughts and feelings).**

This is to give the listener a chance to be the speaker. The process is the same as above. The focus throughout this step should be on the speaker's experiences, thoughts and feelings. If there are more than two parties or "sides," then each should be given a turn, and each should designate someone to do the summarizing.

#### **D. Person A restates until Person B says, "Yes, that is what I said."**

Throughout the restating/summarizing process, the speaker is invited to make corrections, clarifications and additions as needed to be sure that her or his perspective is heard and understood.

It is time to move on to Step 4 when each person agrees that he or she has been heard. When everyone has been given a chance to speak and be heard, the teacher might say, "I feel like you heard and understood my experience, and I am wondering if you think that I have heard and understood your experience?" If something has not been heard, ask the speaker to repeat it, then ask the listener to summarize, and then ask the same question again. There may or may not be agreement on what happened. If there is not agreement at this point, don't worry—this is not unusual, and it is not a deterrent to moving forward with the process. What is important is that each has been able to express his or her perspective and be heard. It is very unlikely that more speaking and listening will cause one to change her/his perspective.

Step 3 is often the most emotional time in the process. When it is completed, the parties often feel much better because they have been heard but they may feel worse that the other still has a different perspective. In either case, it is time to move forward in the process. It is important to not stop here. Remember, trust grows when agreements are made and kept. The preparation and speaking/listening have created an opportunity to make agreements.

Step 4 is designed to help the parties search for agreements that will repair the recognized problems/hurts/violations/injustices as much as possible, prevent them from happening again, and create a better future. But if the parties have not agreed on what happened, they might be thinking, "If we can't even agree on what happened, how can we possibly trust each other enough to make agreements about Restoring Equity and Future Intentions?" It is not necessary or expected at this point that trust should be or must be high. If trust were high, the parties would not need this process. If agreements are made and kept, trust will grow.

#### **Step 4: Search for Agreements that Will**

##### **Restore Equity and Clarify Future Intentions**

A teacher might say, "Now that we have listened to each other's experiences, we need to do two things: restore equity (deciding on specifics that will make things as right as possible between us) and clarify future intentions (deciding on specifics that will prevent the problem from happening again and create a good future for both of us). The most effective way to work at this is for each of us to first write our ideas privately." **Writing privately first is essential.** *The reason for this is to balance power and to ensure that the student is given a voice. This is an especially important part of the process that should not be left out because it is when the student has helped to create the agreement, the likelihood that it will be kept is almost certain. This can all be done verbally in very minor conflicts and/or with students who cannot write.*

“When we have completed our private writing, we will use a large sheet (divide a paper in half; label the left side *Restore Equity* and the right side *Clarify Future*—see figure) to record all of our ideas. Then, we will decide on which items we agree. When we have chosen the items on which we agree, we will transfer these to our agreement form and then each of us will sign it.”

“Are you clear about what we are going to do? If so, let's start by each of us thinking about and writing privately what specific things will help us restore equity (make things as right as possible now) and clarify our future intentions (things we can do to make things better and to prevent it from happening again).”

Restore Equity	Clarify Future

After a time of private writing, the leader writes one idea from one and one from the other until all are recorded on the large sheet. After they are all recorded, the teacher might say, "Now, let's put a check mark by those on which we both agree. After we have this list, we will record our agreement on the Teacher/Student Agreement Form." Once it is recorded, read the agreement back and then say, "Does this sound like our agreement? Are there any changes you would suggest? Are we ready to sign?" This moment, right after completing the signing, is a good time for a minor celebration and a reminder of the follow-up meeting. Note together that trust grows when agreements are made and kept.

### A. Restore Equity

In some teacher/student conflict situations, one is the offender, the other the victim, and everyone agrees. In these cases, restoring equity is a one-way process. However, in most conflicts, each feels like the victim and sees the other as the offender. So, in these cases, each will need to consider how to restore equity.

"Restoring Equity" is a term that will most likely need some explanation in a student/teacher meeting. It is what makes things as right as possible between parties now. Often it includes apology, but not always. It is a combination of specific things that can be done (like paying for damages, often referred to as *restitution*) and letting go of what is left (often referred to as *grace* but also referred to as *forgiveness* by some.) The grace portion is at the total discretion of the victim both on whether to let go and when to let go. This part is not negotiated. So, restore equity, for the purposes of this process, refers to the tangible part of the repair that can be done and includes the grace portion if the victim requests that it be included. Many victims report that when the offender recognizes the injustice, restores equity as much as possible, clarifies constructive future intentions, and then keeps these agreements, the grace part happens quite naturally.

The grace portion is totally at the discretion of the victim. I prefer to reserve the word *forgiveness* for the discovery that is made when the entire process is completed—injustices are recognized and the agreements to restore equity and clarify the future are made, kept, and acknowledged as having been kept. The mutual recognition of the transformation that is experienced or discovered is forgiveness. Teachers who have been happy when a particular

student was absent (because she or he made the teacher's life so difficult) and students who dreaded coming to class (because the teacher made their lives so difficult) have reported feeling pleased to be together in class after completing this entire process. That discovery is real forgiveness as I understand it.

## **B. Clarify Future Intentions**

Agreements that clarify future intentions address what will create a better future for each individual as well as clarifying the future relationship of the parties. The agreement generally includes a statement regarding intentions related to non-repetition of the offense(s), specific behaviors or actions that will make life better for each of them and their relationship, as well as what accountability might be helpful to encourage and support each party in keeping the agreement(s). It should include expectations regarding how they will relate to each other in the future. If they rarely see each other, what are their expectations if they do meet? If they see each other frequently, the first agreement might clarify expectations between the time of the agreement and the first follow-up meeting. At the follow-up meeting, the expectations might be discussed again and perhaps modified until the next follow-up meeting. If agreements are made and kept, trust will grow, and the time will come when the relationship is like any good relationship.

### **Step 5. Evaluate, Write, Summarize, and Celebrate the Agreement**

#### **A. Evaluate the chosen options: are they reasonable, respectful, and restorative for all parties? Modify the agreement if necessary.**

This step provides additional criteria for evaluating which options are appropriate. Some people might be willing to accept agreements that do not meet these higher standards. The importance of these criteria becomes clearer when placing each on a continuum. If an agreement is on the opposite side of the continuum, i.e., unreasonable, disrespectful, and intended to stigmatize or ostracize, most observers would consider that abusive. A teacher might say, "Now that we have agreed on some specific items that we think will restore equity and clarify our future constructive intentions, another evaluation criteria is to ask ourselves: 'Is our agreement reasonable, respectful, restorative, and reintegrative for both of us?'" Roxanne says that children both understand and value these additional criteria. They also enjoy learning and using these technical terms, "big words."

#### **B. Craft/write the final agreement**

When in doubt about whether or not to write the agreement, write it. The purpose of writing the agreement is to reduce the likelihood that each will have a different memory of the agreement. If the agreement is not written and each has a different memory of what has been agreed, it is highly likely that each will think the other is not keeping the agreement. When this happens, trust is diminished because each thinks the other is not keeping the agreement.

The purpose of writing is to clarify and memorialize the agreement, not an attempt to force people to keep it. People will keep an agreement that they helped construct and that they think is reasonable, respectful, restorative, and reintegrative. Many do report that the symbolic act of signing an agreement does add to their commitment.

#### **C. Sign and Celebrate. Congratulate each other for hard work and cooperative spirit.**

When the agreement is written but before it is signed, it is important that the leader ask the question for everyone to consider: "Where could this agreement be misunderstood or in some

way fail?" If concerns are raised, they should be discussed and the agreement should be modified accordingly. It is important to thank the person who raised the concerns since this is the best time to address and remedy potential problems.

Finally, it is important to decide on a date and time for a follow-up meeting. At least one follow-up meeting should be scheduled. Roxanne finds that when working with a student who is trying to modify a long-term habit, several follow-up meetings may be required. When identifying a date for the meeting, think of both the time needed to carry out the agreements and the difficulty of keeping the agreements. It is better to have a meeting too soon rather than too late. If the parties disagree about how long to wait, we suggest using the shortest date for the first meeting. Students welcome and look forward to a follow-up meeting because they want to be recognized for keeping the agreement. Until adults experience their value, they often resist follow-up meetings or see them as unnecessary especially if agreements are being kept, often because of time pressures. That is why we introduce the follow-up meeting as part of the process, not an optional add-on.

### **Step 6: Follow-up Meeting(s)**

Follow-up is an essential part of the Peacemaking Process. Since it is so important and happens later, not at the meeting, it is a separate stop on the Flowchart (see Chapter 8). A follow-up meeting provides the occasion for acknowledging whether agreements have been kept. I sometimes say that one-third of the work of the Peacemaking Process is preparation, one-third is the listening, summarizing, and agreement making, and one-third is the follow-up. Having a follow-up meeting increases the likelihood of long-term value emerging from the efforts. If you meet and all agreements are being kept, celebration is in order and trust will grow. If part or all of the agreement is not being kept, the follow-up meeting provides a forum to address the problem.