



An American interfaith community seeding the Middle East with quality early childhood development and education.

*Imagine the potential.*

## Ten Steps for Peace Education

### ***Ourselves***

#### ***1. Model empathy.***

Children are great imitators of our behavior. When they are surrounded by people who love them and respond to them with authentic empathy, they respond this way to others. Studies show that greater empathy contributes significantly to the reduction of violence. Learn more about empathic communication through studying Nonviolent Communication ([www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org)) See also Siegel and Hartzell's *Parenting from the Inside Out*, Marcy Axness' *Parenting for Peace*, Zimmerman's and Coyle's *The Way of Council*.

#### ***2. Model respect for all cultures and all people.***

Dispel stereotyping by viewing each person as unique, multifaceted, and worthy of respect. Treat others as we want to be treated. The universal basis of social respect and cooperation in diverse cultures is The Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (see [www.teachingvalues.com/goldenrule](http://www.teachingvalues.com/goldenrule)). In addition, share with children inspiring stories and teachings of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, Badshah Khan, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, Caesar Chavez, The Dalai Lama and other champions of peace, justice, and nonviolence. For a list of 12 peace prayers from different world religions see <http://www.religioustolerance.org/reciproc2.htm>

### ***Our Home***

#### ***3. Make room for peace at home.***

Children and adults need special places that give them a sense of privacy and peace, serving as a quiet refuge for times when hurt or angry feelings might lead to violent words or actions. It could be a room or just a corner, decorated simply and lovingly, where any family member can go for quiet reflection, meditation or prayer, or to work through turbulent feelings. Put art and writing materials there to help express what lies within. Read Kim John Payne's *Simplicity Parenting* for more ideas.

#### ***4. Find peace in nature.***

Go outside. Take children for a walk or let them explore nature in their own way. The beauty of nature is a great balm to the soul. Children often seek out their own secret outdoor spaces, even if it's only a corner of the backyard. Respect children's need for the private exploration and inner reflection that nature inspires. An excellent resource is the Children and Nature Network [www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org)

### **5. *Make time for creative free play.***

Young children need plenty of time for unstructured, self-directed play. Make-believe social play reduces aggression and increases empathy in children. Children use play to work through feelings of fear and sadness, to find comfort, and to explore the world and develop relationships. Choose children's toys carefully, avoiding those that encourage or glorify violence. Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment ([www.truceteachers.org](http://www.truceteachers.org)) prepares an annual guide to help parents make wise choices about toys.

### **6. *Engage children's hands and hearts through crafts and the arts.***

Violence occurs when we lack the imagination to develop peaceful solutions to problems. Engaging children in the arts helps to cultivate imaginative thinking. In addition craftwork teaches patience and persistence and can be used to teach generosity. Children need a direct experience of giving and they love to make things, small and large—their own cards, tree ornaments, cookies, or bread—for neighbors, family, friends, or those in need.

## ***Our Local Community and the World***

### **7. *Support peace education at school***

A school climate and students' attitudes and performance can be transformed with quality Social Emotional Learning programs that effectively teach empathy, impulse control and anger management. Urge your school to establish or strengthen quality Social Emotional Learning programs. Contact Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning ([www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org)) or Committee for Children ([www.cfchildren.org](http://www.cfchildren.org)) to learn about SEL programs for your child's school.

### **8. *Establish a "Family Foundation"***

Create a homemade bank for donations—a miniature family foundation. Family and friends can put money in the bank. Children can be introduced to tithing when they receive gifts, earnings, or allowance. Choose a charity together—one that has personal meaning for the children especially—to give to. When there is news of a flood, fire, or other disaster, the family can respond with a donation from the bank. As the children mature, talk to them more frankly about the needs of the world and ways to help.

### **9. *Face Local Needs***

Help children become comfortable with the people in your community who need help—the elderly, the disabled, and the poor. Starting in middle school, students benefit enormously from working in hospitals, soup kitchens, animal shelters, and the like. Make sure there is someone there to mentor the young person when such experiences become emotionally painful or confusing. Community service can be especially effective for young people who are growing up in socially and economically stressed neighborhoods where they feel undervalued.

### **10. *Make a difference in the world***

Supporting young people to become involved with charities reaching abroad to help children and promote social change around the globe helps educate youth about the world outside their own experience, and shows them how to make a positive impact on a global scale. Also, celebrate peace by linking children with others around the world through U.N. celebrations of International Peace Day, September 21. Encourage children to create their own peace prayers, poems, and works of art. Make every day a peace day.

*Adapted from Alliance for Childhood. Revised by Violence Prevention Expert Karen Sorensen Ed Psych and Shepha Schneirsohn Vainstein, LMFT.*