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# CHAPTER 7

## CORNERSTONES OF PEACE: VALUING DIVERSITY AND PRACTICING TOLERANCE

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Valuing diversity and practicing tolerance are central to the goal of achieving peace and good will in our lives and the world. In this chapter students will learn about diversity through readings and discussions. Tolerance, the appropriate response to diversity in a peaceful world, will be illustrated through problem solving situations and through group discussions of these situations. Language skills are developed through new vocabulary from readings and discussions, reading critically and writing responsively, and practicing the skill of oral presentation. Teachers can use this unit by itself or design a series of connected lessons that explore the themes in more detail. Internet resources presented later in the chapter give ideas for extending the lesson. The ideas presented here are meant to serve as a starting point for teachers interested in exploring the themes of diversity, tolerance, and empathy in their classes.

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### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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In Peace Education, one goal is to develop students' awareness of the elements that promote peaceful living and harmonious relations among families and friends; neighborhoods and social groups, school, and professional communities; and states and nation-states at the national and global level (see [Chapter 1](#) of this volume). Two important elements that contribute to peaceful living in a **multicultural society** are valuing diversity among the cultures and the nations of the world and **tolerance** of differences between ourselves and others. Helping our students to understand these important concepts will enhance their understanding and develop their skills as our future peacemakers and peacekeepers.

**Diversity** is a positive aspect of human society. Diversity opens up possibilities, challenges us to consider alternatives, and keeps us from stagnating - getting in a rut. Within our diversity as humans there are differences in perceptions, needs, values, beliefs, desires, power, goals, opinions, and other components of human interaction. These differences often lead to conflict and disagreement between individuals, between groups, and between nations. However, we can make use of human and cultural differences. First, we can learn more about the differences and understand why the differences exist. This knowledge provides us with new ways of looking at things, and gives us new ideas and possibilities that we may never have considered. Perhaps we may change our feelings or our behaviors as a result of understanding more about those who are different from us, or we may respectfully disagree on the points of difference.

Examples of positive contributions of diversity exist around us in our daily lives. Different jobs in the workplace allow the overall effort of the business or organization to be more effective and efficient. Different ideas contribute to improving the workplace, the schools, and the government. Diversity of ideas and opinions about movies, books, dress, or politics makes our lives richer and more interesting. Families and friendships are strengthened when diverse perspectives and interests and new and different ideas are valued and encouraged within these relationships. Diversity is something to celebrate and to learn from, not something to change.

**Cultural diversity**, the differences between the behaviors, values, beliefs, and attitudes of different cultural groups, is becoming more apparent throughout the world because of the increased frequency of contact of people from different cultures. This contact occurs when refugee populations are forced into other countries or people immigrate to different countries in search of better lives and economic security. Today, with the support of technology for rapid communication and inexpensive and accessible travel for business and pleasure, we are seeing the appearance of multicultural societies at the community, the national, and the international levels. Cultural diversity is apparent in our lives, and cultural understanding has become a necessary part of our educational experience (see [Chapter 6](#) of this volume).

Sometimes, however, multicultural societies experience **intolerance** of the differences of others, and conflicts arise between individuals and groups. This occurs when people do not accept the differences of others, even though they may understand why people from other cultures exhibit certain behaviors that are different from those they know and approve of. Instances of intolerance happen in our communities, our schools, and the workplaces when cultural differences are not anticipated and dealt with in a tolerant and understanding manner.



## CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS

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This 50-minute lesson introduces the elements of diversity and tolerance in two situations: the school and the workplace. The activities are meant to raise students' awareness of individual and cultural diversity and to provide opportunities for students to identify instances of intolerance and to suggest responses of tolerance. Teachers are encouraged to expand on the lesson and to adapt the language and content to the learning needs of their students.



## PRELIMINARY LESSON PLANNING

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### *Materials:*

- For the Warm-up Activity, make a transparency or poster which describes a situation in which a cultural difference elicits a response of intolerance.
- For Activity 1, make handouts of the readings and worksheets in [Appendices B](#) and [C](#) for students in each of the groups.  
**Note to the teacher:** Possible answers for the discussion questions are given in [Appendix D](#)
- For Activity 2, provide opportunity to practice the oral presentation if the learners have limited oral production skills.



## WARM UP ACTIVITY

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**(approximately 10 minutes)**

### *Purpose:*

- To raise students' awareness of tolerance/intolerance

### *Materials:*

- a transparency or poster which describes a situation in which a cultural difference elicits a response of intolerance

### *Procedure:*

1. Give students an example of an incident in which someone was treated with intolerance because of a perceived difference from the expected norm.

Explain that intolerance can be demonstrated by such actions as bad treatment, indifference, or actual neglect of a need. Discuss the situations and ask for suggestions of a more tolerant response. Examples you might use are:

*In the early 1960s being a vegetarian in the USA was not a common lifestyle. A businessman was attending a luncheon sponsored by his company. The choices at the luncheon were seafood, chicken, and beef. When he pointed out that he did not eat any of these foods, he was told that he should have more of the salads and the desserts.*

**Example of a more tolerant response:** *In the 1990s it is the policy at most business luncheons to offer at least one main dish that is appropriate for a vegetarian.*

2. Ask students to think of an incident when they felt that they (or someone or some group that they know of) were treated with intolerance because they were not from the expected norm. Then ask the students to share a few of the incidents.
3. Note the incidents of intolerance on the chalkboard, along with suggestions for a more tolerant response. For example:

<i>Incident</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>More tolerant response</i>
Vegetarian at a luncheon	Only fish, beef, or chicken is served	Offer one main dish that is vegetarian.

4. Discuss with the class the consequences of acts of intolerance for the parties involved.



### Transition to Activity 1

Tell the students that they will examine some situations which illustrate differences between people from different cultures. Review briefly the cultural patterns that are given in the reading from [Chapter 6, Appendix B](#) (individualism/collectivism; power distance; and time-orientation). Tell the students to think about these cultural patterns and others that they will find as they read the situations. Explain that their task is to read the situations and identify the points of difference and the cultural orientations that may have influenced the different behaviors. Tell students that after they read and fill out a chart with the cultural differences, they will form small groups to discuss (1) What possible outcomes might result if there were intolerance to the differences in the situation, and (2) What behaviors of tolerance could be shown to produce a positive outcome for the situation.



## ACTIVITY #1

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**(Approximately 15 minutes)**

*Purpose:*

- To compare cultural differences and to examine possible reactions to these differences
- To read for information and to synthesize new information with what students know about cultural patterns
- To predict behaviors of intolerance and tolerance
- To practice new vocabulary in group discussions
- To practice writing by synthesizing the information in a personal written response

*Materials:*

- Handouts of the readings and worksheets in [Appendices B](#) and [C](#) for students in each of the groups

*Procedures:*

1. Ask students to form groups of three. (If possible, each group should include students from different ethnic backgrounds.) Assign each group one of the situations in Appendices B and C.
2. Ask students individually to read the situation assigned to their group. After they reading the situation, ask the groups to discuss the following questions and fill in the worksheet.
  - A. What are the elements of cultural diversity in the situation? Use the worksheet chart to keep track of the differences for each cultural group in the situation.
  - B. What are some possible negative outcomes if there is intolerance to the differences in this situation?
  - C. How can the differences be handled in a positive way? What gestures of tolerance can you suggest to respond to the differences in this situation?
3. As a homework assignment, ask the students to use their journals to individually write up their group discussions, which should include a discussion of each of the questions (A, B, and C). Invite them to hand this in to you for your comments.



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## ACTIVITY #2

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**(approximately 15 minutes)**

*Purpose:*

- To practice oral presentation skills related to the situations in [Activity 1](#)
- To further practice the vocabulary introduced in the situations in Activity 1

*Materials:*

Completed worksheets from Activity 1

*Procedures:*

1. Ask each group to present the information from their discussion to the class orally. Use the information in the completed worksheets to organize the information for the presentation. If several groups have completed a reading and worksheet, ask them to work together in a larger group to prepare the oral presentation. For example, students could divide the task so that some students would present information on the differences between the Asian and Anglo children and others would present the negative outcomes of intolerance and the positive outcomes of tolerance.
2. Follow each presentation with a class discussion of the issues raised.



## COOL DOWN ACTIVITY -- JOURNAL WRITING

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**(Approximately 5 minutes)**

*Purpose:*

To give students the opportunity to reflect on the situations and discussions in relation to their cultural values and behaviors

*Materials:*

A Class Journal

*Procedure:*

1. Ask students to begin to write a journal entry in which they describe how they think the situation they read about and discussed with the small group would be handled in their own cultures. Journal entries can be completed out of class.
2. Invite students to share their entry with you or with a classmate.



## EXTENSIONS

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1. *Celebrating cultural diversity:* Ask students to think of an instance of cultural diversity within their own cultures that has been positively received into the mainstream of their national heritage. Ask them to collect pictures and photographs which illustrate this diversity and to prepare an oral presentation for the class. The presentation could identify the background of the diversity and give current examples of how this diversity is celebrated, for example, cultural festivals, holiday traditions, radio or TV shows that broadcast in another language or that highlight a cultural group, etc.
2. *Council for Tolerance and Understanding:* Using the incidents of intolerance that students mentioned in the Warm-up Activity, ask students to write up their incident. Review their written work and make the necessary revisions for vocabulary and sentence structure. Then ask students to write the incident on a 3 x 5 index card. Put students in small groups and distribute a card to each group. Ask students to discuss the incident. Ask them to try to determine what caused the negative response and to suggest responses that would show tolerance and understanding. At the end of the activity, ask each group to present the results of their discussion to the class.
3. *The Week in Review:* For one week ask students to keep a journal in which they list incidents which they have observed of intolerance to differences between individuals or groups. The incidents could come from their lives or from the news media. At the end of the week, set up a "council" (as described in Extension Activity # 2) which would review several of the observed incidents. The tasks of the council would be to determine why the responses of intolerance occurred and to suggest responses that would show tolerance and understanding. The "council" could be held as small group discussions or include the full class.



## APPENDIX A

### Terminology: Cornerstones of Peace

#### Diversity and Tolerance

**Diversity** is a state of being different or of unlikeness according to a dictionary definition.

In a society, diversity means differences in various factors that interact to define the society of a particular culture. For example, religions, music, art, dance, foods, educational levels, and economic wealth may be similar for the majority of the people in a homogeneous culture. In a heterogeneous culture, compiled of many ethnic groups, there will be a diversity of these and other cultural features.

**Cultural diversity** refers to the differences in cultural features (e.g., dress, food, and art forms; religious beliefs; and attitudes towards work, leisure time, marriage, birth, and death) between cultural groups.

**Multicultural societies** are those in which many cultural groups live together within the same nation.

**Tolerance** is the acceptance of differences in others, shown by attitudes and behaviors toward the person or group who is different.

**Intolerance** is the lack of tolerance, or acceptance, of differences in others. Intolerance to differences can lead to disagreements and conflicts between people, groups, and nations.

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## APPENDIX B

### Cultural Situation 1

#### The School Community

The setting is an elementary school in a city in the country Z. Recently, several families from a foreign country, X, have moved into the community. The children are ages six to eleven and speak some English. They are placed in the classrooms of a primary school that has students from a predominantly Z background.

The X children study English in a special class one hour each day. They are quiet, well disciplined, and they do their work, but they do not volunteer answers in the classroom situation where their Anglo classmates are very active and verbal. They act more like observers than participants in the classroom lessons.

Rather than eat in the school cafeteria, the X children bring their lunches and eat together in the classroom. The food is quite different from the usual sandwiches and fruit that the Z children bring in their lunches from home, and it has a very different aroma that pervades the classroom. The Z children do not like the smell of this food and sometimes make insulting comments about it.

The X children stay together on the playground at recess and have not made many other friends. They prefer to play their own games and do not play football, tag, or other competitive games. As a result, the Z children either just ignore them or sometimes make fun of their games.

The teachers notice that the X students are not being accepted into the school community. The teachers want to improve the situation for everyone.

**Discussion Questions:** Work with your group to discuss answers to the following questions about the situation you have read. Use the chart to keep track of the differences that you found between the two groups of children.

- A. Identify three elements of difference between the X children and the Z children in their school behaviors.
- B. What are possible negative outcomes if there is intolerance to the differences?
- C. What needs to happen if positive outcomes are to occur? What gestures of tolerance could be shown in this situation?

#### A. Differences between the two groups of children

Z children	X children

#### B. Negative outcomes of intolerance

#### C. Gestures of tolerance

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## Cultural Situation 2

### The workplace

The setting is a large medical center in a city in country Y. A large group of workers who are immigrants from a foreign country, Q, have been hired as custodians at the medical center. They have taken basic English classes sponsored by the medical center, and they have adequate oral skills but cannot read or write in English. The Q employees come from different backgrounds in their home country. Some have a high school education while others have only a few years of schooling. They are happy to be working at the medical center because they need to have jobs to support themselves and their families.

Since the Q workers have been at the medical center, their work performance has been questioned because often they are late for work. In addition, they leave during the day if they are needed at home. They do not expect to be paid for the time that they are not at work, and if someone needs to leave early, a co-worker will often stay longer to complete the friend's shift. However, their Y supervisor is frustrated at their apparent lack of commitment to the job and the complication with the work schedules. On the other hand, the Y supervisor is very happy with their work in general, which he says is well done and often goes beyond the specified job requirements.

Some of the staff on the floor has noticed that the Q workers talk to the patients as they do their work and establish friendly relationships with them. Sometimes the Q workers bring something from their homes, like a handcraft or family photo that they think a patient will like. This is not against the rules, but it is not the case for the other custodial Y workers at the center, who rarely say anything to either the staff or the patients. The other custodial Y workers have commented that the Q workers must be wasting time socializing instead of working or that they are expecting tips from the patients. However, according to the Y supervisors, all work is completed before the Q workers leave, even if they have to stay late to complete it, and no compensation from the patients for the time spent with them seems to be expected.

At the beginning of each day, notices are put up on the bulletin boards for the custodial Y workers, giving them special assignments for the day, including equipment and cleaning materials to be used. The Q workers seem to disregard these notices. In addition, they often complete a task even if they do not know exactly what they should be doing or how to use the equipment. For example, a team of Q workers washed the carpeting by hand, using brushes and brooms, with buckets of water instead of the carpet-cleaning equipment. They are extremely polite to the Y supervisor, and address him as Mr. James, but they do not ask questions or seek instruction for their assigned jobs. When they are questioned about their misunderstanding, they are very apologetic and embarrassed, and try not to make the mistake again. Mr. James is hesitant to discipline any of them, but the Y workers are complaining about what seems to be the Q workers' disregard for working procedures.

The Y supervisors agree that the Q workers are polite, respectful, and hardworking. They want to resolve the problems that have come up and to keep the Q workers in their custodial jobs.

**Discussion Questions:** Work with your group to discuss answers to the following questions about the situation you have read about. Use the chart to keep track of the differences that you found between the Q workers' behavior and the Y supervisors' expectations for the regular Y workers.

- A. Identify three elements of difference between the Q workers' behavior and the Y supervisors' expectations for the regular Y workers.
- B. What are possible negative outcomes if there is intolerance to the differences?
- C. What needs to happen if positive outcomes are to occur? What gestures of tolerance could be shown in this situation?



**A. Differences between the workers and the supervisor's expectations**

Q workers	Y supervisor's expectations

**B. Negative outcomes of intolerance**

**C. Gestures of tolerance**

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## Situations of Cultural Diversity

### Notes to Teachers

#### Situation 1: The school community

The point of this activity is for students to learn more about the cultural differences that are identified by discussing them with students from that cultural group. If you have students from only one cultural group, you might consider inviting a "cultural guest" from the cultural group you choose to represent in the situation to the class to share cultural information.

*Possible responses to the discussion questions for Situation 1*

- A. Identify three elements of difference between the X children and the Z children in their school behaviors. What cultural patterns may be influencing the behavior of the X and the Z children?
  1. Food; volunteering answers to questions in class; games to play at recess.
  2. Cultural preferences for one's native food are strong/lack of tolerance to difference in such a basic element of daily life. Values of assertiveness and activity orientation are demonstrated by X children being more reserved and quiet and by Z children answering questions and actively participating in class. Unfamiliarity with new games means the X children may not perform well, so they do not take risks/competitive versus cooperative orientation of Z children.
- B. What are possible negative outcomes if there is intolerance to the differences?
  1. The X children may
    - a. Feel isolated and left out of the school activities;
    - b. Feel stupid and dumb for not answering questions;
    - c. Begin to feel that their culture is inferior (e.g., the food is different, their games are different);
    - d. Begin to resent the other children, the school, their new home.
  2. The Z children may
    - a. Begin to physically or verbally abuse the X children;
    - b. Judge the X children to be dumb and inferior;
    - c. Choose to ignore or shun the X children.
  3. The teachers may
    - a. Perceive the X children as unable to learn and socially unable to adjust
    - b. Choose to ignore the needs of the X children.
- C. What needs to happen if positive outcomes are to occur? What gestures of tolerance could be shown in this situation?
  1. The teacher could/should
    - a. Develop social studies units about other cultures, and introduce different foods, views and behaviors about education, new and different games, etc., as part of the class content;
    - b. Encourage the X students to share their cultural traditions;
    - c. Be more directive on the playground by teaching cooperative games to all of the students, and eventually inviting the X students share their favorite game;
    - d. Introduce more group work in class so that the X children are included in learning tasks and activities;
    - e. Take time to ask the X students to answer questions about the lesson privately.
  2. The Z children should/could:
    - a. Offer to share part of their lunch with an X classmate, and vice-versa;
    - b. Volunteer to work together with a new classmate on class assignments and activities;
    - c. Volunteer to teach the X classmates the favorite recess games, and ask to learn the games that the X children play.
    - d. **Situation 2: The workplace**

As in Situation 1, the point of this activity is for students to learn more about the cultural differences that are identified by discussing them with students from that cultural group. If you have students from one cultural group, you might invite a "cultural guest" from the cultural group you choose to represent in the situation to the class to share cultural information.

*Possible responses to the discussion questions for Situation 2:*

- A. Identify three elements of difference between the Q workers and the supervisor and regular workers. What cultural patterns may be influencing the behavior of the Q workers and that of the Y supervisor and regular Y workers
  - 1. Work schedules: arriving on time and not leaving early; friendliness to the patients; following the prescribed work procedures
  - 2. Time orientation; personal interaction patterns; power distance
- B. What are possible negative outcomes if there is intolerance to the differences?
  - 1. The Q workers may
    - a. Be fired from their jobs for not meeting the expectations;
    - b. Feel unappreciated and confused because they are doing their best;
    - c. Have conflicts with the other Y workers because they are not doing their jobs as the regular Y workers do theirs.
  - 2. The regular Y workers may
    - a. Begin to physically or verbally abuse the Q workers;
    - b. Judge the Q workers to be dumb and inferior;
    - c. Choose to ignore Q workers.
  - 3. The Y supervisor may
    - a. Fire the Q workers;
    - b. Perceive the Q workers to be unable to learn and socially unable to adjust;
    - c. Choose to ignore the needs of the Q workers for training and cultural orientation.
- C. What needs to happen if positive outcomes are to occur? What gestures of tolerance could be shown in this situation?
  - 1. The Y supervisor could/should
    - a. Develop an orientation program for the Q workers in which the social and work procedures are explained;
    - b. Be as flexible as possible with work schedules;
    - c. Begin a literacy program for the Q workers;
    - d. Form work teams in which the regular Y workers are teamed with the Q workers;
    - e. Organize some social activities for all the workers;
    - f. Take the time to meet with the Q workers and to ask about their jobs and their personal lives;
    - g. Be more directive in supervising their work, especially when there is a new assignment.
  - 2. The regular Y workers should/could
    - a. offer to work with the Q workers to show them how to do a job;
    - b. eat lunch or take breaks with the Q workers to learn more about them.
  - 3. The CA workers should/could
    - a. be sensitive to how the regular Y workers do their jobs and interact with the patients and staff, and try to imitate this behavior to some degree;
    - b. try to notify the Y supervisor in advance if there is a reason to leave work early;
    - c. be on time for work on a daily basis;
    - d. be sure that they understand how to do their jobs, use the equipment, etc.;
    - e. ask questions when there is uncertainty.

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