

Seeking Peace

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As a psychotherapist, communication and conflict resolution is my stock- in-trade. People seek therapy when they are experiencing internalized conflicts, and interpersonal conflicts, as well as conflicts meeting or adjusting to societal demands. How well we learn to relate to our physical and social-emotional needs will determine whether we experience inner peace and well-being or turmoil, as well as whether we experience harmonious relationships or ones fraught with conflict. The social systems in which we are born and develop will determine the outcome.

We are all born helpless and vulnerable, utterly dependent on caregivers for our security and well-being. Our very survival depends on appropriate and sufficient responses to our physical and emotional needs. Breakdowns or failures to meet the needs of the infant leads to infantile depression and or aggression. The infant's brain develops rapidly in response to the care he or she (they or them) receives, and lays down the foundation for how the infant will subsequently relate to him or her (they or them) self. and others. Insufficient and inconsistent care will lead to internal and external conflicts..

From early in life, we find solutions to our problems and conflicts which can be constructive or destructive.. Unresolved conflicts inevitably escalate and lead to self destructive behavior and or hostile behavior toward others. Uncontrolled hostile behavior ultimately becomes violent. The most destructive and depraved manifestation of unresolved conflict is War..

Conflict is part of the human condition and defies full understanding or explanation. There is evidence of hostile conflict going back to prehistoric times, and there have been wars throughout recorded history. Currently there are conflicts, a euphemism for wars, throughout the world. Media attention given to the war in Ukraine has made us aware, as never before, of the madness and depravity of war.

Humans have the potential to be loving and creative or destructive and depraved. Potential is like a seed; to develop and flourish it has to be nurtured. How we nurture, educate and socialize our children will determine the fate of our society and our world. Children need to experience empathy to develop empathy, and they need to be taught mutuality.

Constructive conflict resolution requires communication skills informed by psychological literacy and emotional and moral maturity. Societies have to redefine strength and courage, and value diplomacy over intimidation and violent conflict if there is ever to be an end to war.

We continue to live in a male dominated, militaristic social order that socializes males, particularly, to be warriors. Military might and war is still glorified and soldiers are

viewed as heroes. But there are signs of change and we have to believe that change is possible. In medicine and in psychotherapy a thorough and accurate diagnostic assessment is prerequisite to determining effective treatment plans. Likewise, we have to identify and address the determinants of war, if there is to be a correction. War is very much with us, and with advanced technology the weapons of war are more dangerous than ever and the survival of humanity and other forms of life on our planet are at stake.

The media coverage of the war in Ukraine has exposed us to images of war as we have never seen before. Furthermore we're seeing images of people who we readily identify with. The greater exposure and identification can serve humanity if it leads us to reflect on the utter immorality and madness of war. As followers of Jesus we are called to be peacemakers not warriors. Prophets before Him implored us to be productive, not destructive. Jesus redefined strength and courage, and taught us the power of love as opposed to the love of power.

".....they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war anymore"

Isaiah 2:4