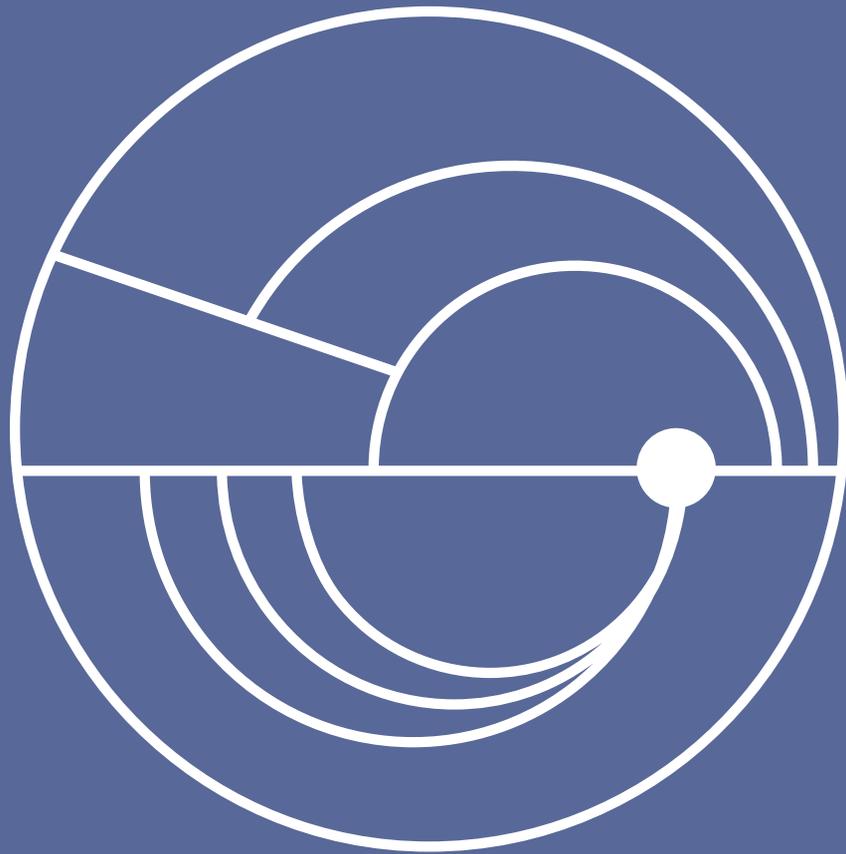


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peace
and relations

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What is it about:

- exploring connection among communication and peacebuilding
- empathy and reframing: skills to bridge gaps in divided communities
- peace, communication and building relationships

source: *“Reframing and empathy”* by Simon Fisher, Vesna Matović, Bridget Ann Walker, Dylan Mathews and *“Added values of peacebuilding”* by John Paul Lederach

domains: peacebuilding, relationships, conflict transformation, empathy, reframing

approach description:

“People are ashamed to be weak. They try to show they are strong. And that’s why they feel so lonely. Because they are left alone with their problems. They are ashamed to share them with anyone. All the films I make are about the need to open up. About the need to communicate”.

Krzysztof Kieślowski

This quote by film director Krzysztof Kieślowski was shared with us by our friend: Anna Bardaka. And it beautifully grasps the connection among communication and peacebuilding.

Let’s use one of the **definitions of communication**, which portrays it as the process of sharing information, especially when this increases understanding between people or groups (by Cambridge Dictionary). And also one of the **definitions of peacebuilding** (by J. P. Lederach, practitioner-scholar in conflict transformation and peacebuilding) who defines peacebuilding as representation of the intentional confluence - the flowing together - of improbable processes and people to sustain constructive change that reduces violence and increases the potential and practice of justice in human relationships. According to J.P. Lederach peacebuilding promotes recognition of people and relationships beyond enmity and hatred.



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We can connect the dots and note that sharing information and opening up, can lead to establishing relationships, which are crucial to recuperate our humanity and build peace.

Relationships are also at the heart of conflict transformation.

In conflict transformation we aim to find creative ways to influence those relationships in a way that makes them more equitable, just and fulfilling, so that peaceful change can happen. The authors of the book “Working with conflict 2. Skills and strategies for action” indicates that reframing and empathy are core skills and conflict transformation, thus also in relationship building.

“Reframing as ability to maintain hope”

Reframing is defined as the ability to see things in a more positive light and to find new possibilities for action. The facts are still the same, but we change the narrative, so that they can fit the situation just as well, or even better.

Examples of reframing on an individual level would be:

- a conflict as “a problem to solve between us”
- a conflict as “entry point for expanding capacity to transformation”
- a problem as an opportunity
- a weakness as a strength
- an impossibility as a distant possibility
- a distant possibility as a near possibility
- unkindness as lack of understanding.

The reframing method can be particularly useful when people are stuck in opposing and seemingly intractable positions. It can also be a way to encourage people to see that the outcome of win-win in a conflict can be possible. It is also worth noting that reframing is harder to apply when it touches people’s culture, worldview or deepest values. In such a situation it can create resistance to explore alternatives. People may become insecure when being asked to think unthinkable. But this is not a reason not to try!

Empathy

Empathy is seen as a core skill in conflict transformation. It requires more attention and practice. It focuses on real search for understanding. It offers being listened to closely, without judgement and criticism. It is a new, confidence-building experience for many.

[Check more about empathy and its practice in canvas: “*Empathy blocks*” and “*NVC circle*”.]

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aim of use:

This activity can serve to explore the connections among peacebuilding, conflict transformation and relationships. It offers space to get familiar with the tool of reframing, as part of conflict transformation.

educational method:

- **Step 1: Definitions exploration**

Present to learners the aim of the activity. Divide participants in 4-5 small groups and invite them to read the definitions of “communication” and “peacebuilding” and discuss how peacebuilding and communication relate. Open up a short discussion and ensure space for a few voices to share. You can also ask how far they see relationships as key to any peaceful change they would like to bring.

- **Step 2: Practicing reframing**

Explain to participants they will practice reframing tool in the context of interpersonal conflict. Ask everyone to form pairs and assign who is person A and who is person B in the pair. Distribute to each of the participants a picture. Participants A would get a picture which shows a broader perspective, and participants B would receive the same visual, but with a way more detailed perspective. You can use the book “Zoom” by Istvan Banyai or the meme picture with 6 or 9, as the source of inspiration for visuals with the same image, but different perspective. Invite participants to work in pairs and follow the instructions:

- Ask each party in the pair to describe their frame (their own story or perspective) about the visual. After both rounds of sharing, allow participants to show visuals to each other.
- Invite each party to accept they have different perspectives which are valid for them.
- Invite each party to accept that no one party has the “right” frame, but also that each needs to be tested by evidence.
- Ask parties to explore similarities and differences in the frames, and the evidence for each. Remind them of the active listening practice.
- After exploration of similarities and differences, check if there is a greater acceptance of the perspective of the other, and less tendency to demonise.



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● Step 3: Debriefing

Invite participants for a reflection over their learning with the following questions:

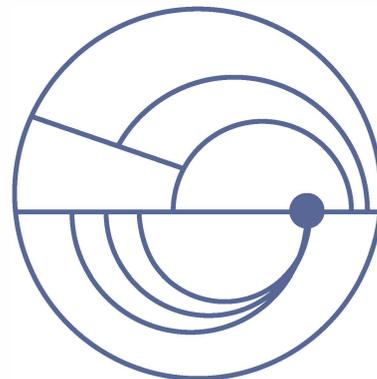
- How do you feel?
- Was there anything difficult for you in the process of practicing reframing?
- How did the others respond to your story?
- How did you deal with the challenges?
- Can you think of a situation when you used reframing or empathy to resolve a conflict?
- What did you find most helpful in this activity?
- How can reframing and relationship building be used to bring peaceful change?

● Step 4: Reframing examples

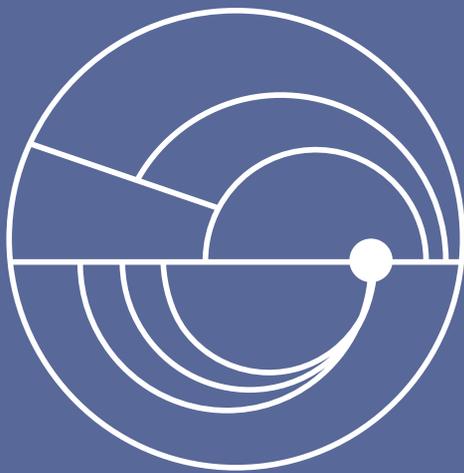
Ask participants to propose examples on reframing various concepts in line with the proposal in Approach description.

read more:

- **Book:** S. Fisher, V. Matović, B.A. Walker, D.Mathews, "Working with conflict 2. Skills and strategies for action" (2020)
- **Article:** John Paul Lederach, "Added values of peacebuilding"
- **Website:** official website of John Paul Lederach
- **Book:** Istvan Banyai, "Zoom" (1998)
- **Other canvas:** Empathy blocks and NVC circle



communication canvas



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