

Introduction

Imagine if what you have been taught about peace is mostly incorrect or seriously outdated. That is, if you were ever taught about peace at all. It continues to boggle my mind that the one thing the world wants is the one thing they don't know how to obtain.

We want our police officers to “keep the peace,” our soldiers to “fight for peace,” and even our dead to “rest in peace.” We read books and take courses on how to have “peace of mind.” Yet, when asked if peace is possible, most people today quickly reply, “Of course not!”

Our global holidays ring with hymns and jingles that resound “Peace on Earth.” Even parishioners leaving worship centers whisper, “Peace be with you” or “Go in peace.” But for most, they are just words. Don't get me wrong; we long for peace, but our minds have no idea how to move beyond words.

This book will change all of that.

So.

Why is peace so hard to come by?

And why is our culture so silent on teaching the tangible ways of peace?

In 2009, I embarked on a journey to teach a course on this subject at the university level. At the time, I was teaching introductory sociology courses at the historic College of Charleston in the heart of Charleston, South Carolina. One day after work, I stepped into a video store, and on the way out, right by the exit, I noticed a sale bin. Digging through the older tapes, I was mysteriously drawn to one titled *Peace One Day*—so I headed to the register and paid the bargain price. I only purchased the video because I love documentaries, and the image of the United Nations on its back cover captivated me (I had just toured the United Nations during a family vacation to New York the week before.)

Exhausted from a long day of preparation for a new teaching semester, I grabbed some dinner and popped the DVD into the player. The film's new message kept me engaged from the beginning. The story enthralled me so much that I grabbed a pen and began taking notes, and I

was surprised when the film was over quickly. I was spellbound. With the credits running, I sat back on my couch, dazed. Speechless. I couldn't stop thinking about what I had just watched. The film moved me in ways no other movie had before.

Peace One Day is a documentary about Jeremy Gilley, a documentary filmmaker from London, and his journey toward the quest for a viable day of peace when the world comes together to stop violence for just one day each year. The notion seemed impossible, but his tenacity and passion for the project were contagious—as if it almost made sense. My mind raced as I continued to ponder endless possibilities. “Why is this film grabbing me? What is it telling me to do? What part do I have to play regarding this film’s message?” I had never considered peace this way: as *a doable process instead of a vague concept*.

Have you ever had a moment where you knew your life would never be the same? Well, this was mine. The film *Peace One Day* changed the trajectory of my life’s work and thus the hearts and souls of thousands of students.

How It Happened

Days later, in the first week of a new semester, I integrated the film into my syllabus for all five of my Introductory Sociology courses. After watching the film, students were also immensely moved and wanted to know more. “Why haven’t we ever heard of Peace Day? Why isn’t this holiday widely celebrated?” Driven by my student’s enthusiasm and curiosity, we set up a table only weeks later to introduce our campus to the *International Day of Peace* and the inspirational message behind the documentary.

The next semester, my students and I decided to reach a broader audience. We knew we had a semester, three months, to get ready for the next Peace Day on September 21. We proposed the idea to our city’s Parks & Recreation Commission and asked for a table in Marion Square, our central park. We intended to pass out flyers and spread the message about Peace Day. Simple enough. Charleston is a beautiful and historic city, a top worldwide tourist destination, where most events are booked years in advance. We knew our chances were slim. But we tried anyway and submitted our proposal.

The Parks and Recreation Committee rejected our request, stating that the proposal needed clarity and formality. “Your request is weak at best,” one member stated. Disappointed, I shared this news with my classes, and we began dreaming bigger and better together. We resubmitted.

Our second request was unanimously approved, but this time for more than just a booth. Our proposal was for a full-blown citywide festival. We were talking about city permits, media campaigns, police officers, porta-potties, sound equipment, speakers, and hundreds of details. This endeavor would take thousands of dollars and lots of arduous, unfamiliar work for which my teaching skills were no match. Thankfully, I had the help of a senior student, Beth Wendt, an Events Planning major willing to lead logistics, leaving me with visionary pursuits.

The Global Peace Festival—Peace One Day came into being, with hundreds in attendance. It was a day of celebration during which we informed our city about the International Day of Peace and the importance of the practical implications of a viable peace. Speakers, booths for nonprofit organizations, music, and artist designs from local school-aged children and well-known city artists depicted what peace meant to them. And soccer, of course, because on Peace Day, soccer is played worldwide to denote the importance of international camaraderie through sport.

After the festival’s success, my department chair asked, “Reba, why don’t you teach a class on the subject?” Excited about the possibilities and up to the task, I created the course “Sociology of Peace,” which began in the fall semester of 2009.

Within months, a nonprofit organization was born, providing a legitimate platform for fundraising and social approval. A year later, Charleston Peace One Day Festival (its new name) tripled in size. Our initiative was helping to draw awareness around an applicable peace right in the heart of our city, exemplifying tangible ways of spreading the message through students and the community. Now an alum, Beth became the codirector of Charleston Peace One Day. Three months later, a board of directors was born, bringing together the perfect team of community leaders (including my two teenage children) and expanding the vision.

Over time, we found other creative opportunities to teach peace uniquely across Charleston in schools, religious centers, businesses, sporting events, and even nursing homes. Our success was so broad that we planted 25 peace poles all over Charleston. (A peace pole is an 8x4 pole with “May Peace Prevail on Earth” etched on all four sides in multiple languages.) The momentum spread, and so did the message. It was a beautiful process.

Why I Am Writing This Book

After teaching the Sociology of Peace course more than one hundred times (as of this writing) at public and military universities, I knew it was time to release the heart of the course to a broader audience. My students' end-of-the-semester questions spurred my enthusiasm: "Why didn't we learn this at a younger age? Why isn't this course required?"

I hear them say their perception of peace has completely changed. Many students believe peace is possible and now have practical tools and strategies to move it forward, impacting others.

I have also unlocked *why so many people have outdated versions of peace*. Once explored and enacted, this fresh approach to peace will also be highly impactful for you.

Where I Am Coming From

My mastery lies in the classroom. I am a teacher, first and foremost, with over thirty years of experience. I embrace the philosophy that knowledge is simply facts unless applied. Students need to experience and emotionally connect to their subject(s), and this ardently charged knowledge brings a compelling desire to use these informed insights, producing failures or victories. These outcomes provide genuine understanding, and this is where authentic learning lies. It's stepping out into your circles, and community. And, searching within yourself. It means trying feats, stretching yourself and your relationships to see what sticks—and discovering vast and creative possibilities.

My extensive background in peace studies, restorative justice, sociology, personal development, and spirituality is my framework, along with research, the sciences, and valuable insights from my students and our personal experiences. This book is for dreamers, doers, agnostics, doubters, the curious, and all who believe (or are open to the possibility) that better ways of living are possible. It is with this openness that new mindsets are paramount. This book will make the case that an updated, transformative peace fit for the century in which we live (and beyond) is key to this change.

Why This Book Is for You

As you may have gathered, peace is stuck in the past and needs a leveling up, a refreshing optimization for our world. This book explains the need for this shift and provides doable steps and tools to make this new peaceability framework a reality. The book offers invaluable processes *to enact and embody* a peace that has been elusive for too long.

This book is for you if you seek a contemporary perspective on seeing the world and your inner life through a rejuvenated lens.

Its down-to-earth practicality makes *The Peaceability Factor* different from so many other books. This book's seven peaceability factors will set you on course. Whether doubting or envisioning, you will walk away with a new paradigm, a fresh way to answer one of life's most prevailing questions: Is peace possible? You will find ways to use viable, active, and practical peace every day in ordinary ways on a small scale and even grander ones.

Your thinking will shift from a world in chaos to a more hopeful future, based on a deeper understanding of new systems and structures of peace—relevant and modern ones for the world in which we live. A peace bursting into its own instead of dwelling on flawed and dated perceptions.

How do we live in peaceful spaces with technology moving at the speed of light and where change moves just as fast? With technology leading every step, we are updating, up-leveling, and up-versioning our phones, computers, cars, medical tools, exercise routines, health, and even our pets' health. Artificial intelligence (AI) and the Metaverse speed by, claiming to take us on quantum leaps beyond our imaginations. Why is peace left out of this expansive change?

I understand that you, the reader, will approach this content from your context, worldview, and cultural framework. This book will carve a path to show how peace applies to you. With numerous ways to process information and find unique approaches to make it your own, these insights will guide you through a creative, constructive, and unlimited process where peaceable practicalities bring calm, order, safety, interconnectedness, and wellbeing. This change will honor the people, the planet, and the purposes for which we live. This change will help us outthink frozen paradigms of the past. Are you ready to stretch yourself, to think outside the box? Get ready. Peace is possible!

