

# Y7

LESSON 7  
YOUTH  
V.1



political

## MODELS OF ENGAGING IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: DIALOGUE & CONSENSUS BUILDING YOUTH LESSON 7: POLITICAL PEACE 2

### TIME REQUIRED

1 1/2 hours

### TEACHER PREPARATION

To prepare for this lesson...

- Read the “[5 Spheres of Peace](#)” NPA Framework focusing on the political peace sphere
- Read the [Teacher’s Guide](#) for preparation and reflection questions

### MATERIALS

- Dialogue Roles handout

### LEARNING GOALS

- Students will reflect upon what knowledge and skills within the processes of dialogue and consensus building are useful for peacebuilding
- Students will think about the values and experiences that inform their own political opinions

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will practice active listening skills through the dialogue process
- Students will engage in a consensus building exercise around a political issue of their choice
- Students will compare the processes of debate, dialogue, and consensus building and reflect upon the social purposes of each
- Students will reflect upon which models of political discussion build peace and under what circumstances each would be used for peace building

### INTRODUCTION

The activities provided within the political sphere of peacebuilding introduce youth to different models of political discourse and facilitate inquiry into how political opinions are formed. As students engage in these vastly different models of political discourse of debate, dialogue and consensus building, they will reflect on the benefits and deficits of these models. Students will think about what purposes these models serve.

This activity is an introduction to two important political processes: dialogue and consensus building. Both are used to resolve political conflict. Dialogue is intentionally used to explore the motivations, values, and perspectives or political positions of individuals within a group. Consensus building is a process used to find solutions to a conflict that meets the basic needs of all group members. Each group member has control over the final outcome. This model stands in stark contrast to voting or debate where one side wins out over the other. Dialogue used before

consensus building can help facilitate the group consensus process as the group begins brainstorming solutions with a clear understanding of the needs and values of each group member. Providing youth with the opportunities to engage in political discourse and reflect on these processes will nurture a deeper understanding of how they can utilize these skills to build peace when engaged in political conflict.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What is peacebuilding in the political sphere?
- Are there ways of engaging others in political discussion that build peace?
- How can we understand and discover the underlying motivations or values behind others' political opinions?

## OPENING DISCUSSION

1. Begin by summarizing students' thoughts on using the debate model to discuss political opinions (refer to the previous lesson - Youth Lesson 6: Political Peace 1). Focus on the following questions:

- How do individuals form political opinions?
- Do you think the debate process is helpful in resolving conflicts of political opinion? Why or why not?
- Do you think the debate process helps build peace? Why or why not?

2. Explain to students that today they are going to try a different approach of engaging in political discussion. This model is the dialogue and consensus building approach. Using the dialogue model, each person shares their political opinions, motivations, and thoughts about the issue discussed. When not speaking, it is the role of the other group members to actively listen and try to understand the perspective, motivations and needs of the person speaking.

Through this process of sharing your thoughts and hearing the perspectives of others, you may come up with new ideas or solutions to the conflict. These new ideas can be shared during the second part of the process, during consensus building. Consensus building is a process where the group attempts to arrive at a mutually agreed upon solution to an issue or conflict. Although these processes do not have to occur together, what you learn about your group members during the dialogue process can bring a fresh outlook or new ideas as you attempt to resolve political conflicts through the consensus building process.

## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Dialogue resources:

- [A list of dialogue projects published by the Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, USA](#)
- [Article Summary of "A Public Peace Process" by Gennady I. Chufrin & Harold H. Saunders published by the Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, USA](#)

Consensus Building resources:

- ["Coming to Consensus: Tips for Cooperation and Collaboration in Decision Making, or How to Run Meetings So Everyone Wins," By Mark Shepard](#)

## ACTIVITY 1: DIALOGUE

1. Get started by having students pick a political issue to discuss. You may want to have students use the same topic they debated on in lesson 6. Using the same topic may be helpful when comparing the processes of debate and dialogue. The processes of dialogue and consensus building are very personal, so it is important for students to have a clear understanding of the issue and possibly personal experiences to share. You may want students to choose a topic that directly affects their lives. It is also important that students trust one another enough to openly dialogue about their thoughts.

2. Pass out the "Dialogue Roles" handout. Have a volunteer read over the tips for clarifying. Ask students if they think there are any other tips they should be mindful of when listening or speaking.

3. After reviewing the role responsibilities and tips, break the students into small groups of no more than 6 to 8, which they will remain with through the dialogue and consensus building processes. A volunteer speaker can begin the dialogue process in each small group once a political issue has been chosen by the whole class.

Teacher note: If students have a difficult time coming up with a dialogue topic, you can reference the suggestions and resources listed in the debate lesson.

4. Once the dialogue session is complete ask students to reflect on the following questions:
- Do you think it is important to understand the motivations or values of others while discussing political opinions? Why or why not?
  - Do you think respectfully asking questions about others motivations or values can help build peace in political discussions? If so, how?
  - Does understanding the motivations behind others opinions give you new ideas or solutions to the political conflict? If so, how?
  - Does understanding the motivations of others help you identify solutions that may not be viable for the group? If so, how?

## **ACTIVITY 2: CONSENSUS BUILDING**

1. Explain to students that consensus building is a process, and unlike a debate that is timed it can take many sessions to complete. Consensus building is not like voting or debating where two sides are competing with one another to win their preferred solution. Instead, the purpose of consensus building is for the group to come to a mutually agreed upon solution to implement in response to a conflict. It is not a case of majority rules, rather each person in the group is given the power to veto the groups' decision at any time (even if they are the only one with an opposing opinion). With that in mind, all members come together to look for a solution that will work to meet the needs of the whole group. This can mean putting aside what you originally wanted to happen as long as you feel your basic needs are being met. Since we have spent time dialoguing, we have an understanding of the opinions and needs of one another. Ask students if during the dialogue session they had any new ideas that might help meet the needs of the group. Ask a volunteer from each group to record ideas of the group members on the board or on chart paper. Having a visual representation of the groups' conversation can help clarify ideas and keep the discussion moving.

2. Give students time to share their thoughts and reflections and begin brainstorming a solution to their political issue that all are willing to implement. If students struggle to come up with new ideas, give them the task of creating a needs list. For example, if students are debating whether or not school uniforms should be mandatory, their needs lists may include the following:

### **Person 1**

I need to express my individuality  
I need to make choices, and have control over my life

### **Person 2**

I need to feel safe, that I or other students will not be teased  
I need to feel cared about

### **Person 3**

I need to focus on my learning  
I need to have access to clothes I can afford

Notice that none of the basic needs actually mentioned uniforms. This is often the case, many political conflicts occur over the basic needs the issue represents. With the students lists of needs on the board, ask students if they can think of a solution that meets these needs. As the facilitator, continue to reference this list of needs by asking students questions about whether or not their proposed solutions meet the needs of the group members.

3. If students are still struggling to brainstorm solutions, have them draw pictures of how they want the issue resolved. By putting the pictures up on the wall students can sometimes see the similarities in their drawings and spark new ideas for the group.

Remind students that their purpose here is not to see their solution win, but to find a solution all would be willing to implement.

If a student vetoes another person's idea, ask them what part of the idea they see value in and why they are uncomfortable with the decision. This can lead to a reiteration of their values and needs to the group.

4. It may take a long time for the group to reach a consensus. You may need to give your students a second session of discussion. You can let them know that consensus or not, you only have an allotted time for the activity. Encourage students not to compromise their basic needs, but be open to having those needs met through a completely new solution. Also, not everyone has to agree completely with a solution; they need only be willing to implement it.

## CLOSING

Once the group has reached a consensus, ask students to reflect individually or as a group on the following questions:

- Are there winners and losers in the dialogue model? Are there winners and losers when using consensus building?
- What is the purpose of presenting your argument in a debate versus the dialogue and consensus building process? What are you trying to accomplish with each?
- How do the benefits and deficits of the debate model compare with the dialogue and consensus building processes?
- Which model, the debate or dialogue approach would you use to discuss political opinions/ conflicts interpersonally, in a community setting, or nationally? Why?
- What approaches are used in these models that you find helpful in building peace in political conflicts?

## FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

**1.** Ask students to think about what would happen if the presidential debates were restructured to use a dialogue/consensus building model. What would it look like? What kind of outcomes might come from the candidates engaging with one another and the voters engaging with the candidates in this fashion? To take the activity further, students can watch a presidential debate online, and act out the debate from a dialogue/ consensus building process. Pick one issue that was discussed in the debate to focus on. Have volunteers select a candidate they want to represent and start by creating a list of what they think the candidate’s needs, values, and experiences are surrounding the chosen political issue. The rest of the class will prepare their thoughts as prospective voters. Engage in dialogue and or consensus building then compare the process to the debate students watched online.

**2.** Give students the opportunity to research other methods of engaging in democratic deliberation. Have students research blogs, social media sites, theater and art surrounding a political topic. Challenge them to think about whether or not they feel this method of engaging is effective? What is the purpose of engaging in the discussion in this way? Can these methods help build peace? How?

**3.** World Café is a way for students to share their thoughts on any issue. This can be an excellent way to open dialogue and respond to the ideas of others. Large pieces of butcher paper are placed on a variety of tables. A topic or question is written on the butcher paper. Students find a seat at one of the tables (it doesn’t matter which table). Students are then given a limited amount of time, around five minutes, to draw or write any of their thoughts about the topic or question on the butcher paper. They can also add comments or questions about others drawings/writing. After the five minutes, students switch to another table. Again it doesn’t matter which table, as long as it is a new table. After students have visited all of the tables you can have them do another round, in order to read the comments of others and respond with new ideas or you can post the papers up on the wall and give students time to examine their creative discussions. [Click here to learn more about World Café.](#)

## REGISTRATION, FEEDBACK & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Use of this curriculum is free – no registration is required. However, we encourage you to take 3-5 minutes to complete our [registration/feedback form](#) so we may know how and where the curriculum is being used, what is most effective, and how we can continue to improve it.

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## DIALOGUE ROLES

### **Role A - Speaker**

- State my perspective including my opinion, feelings about the issue, values informing my opinions, and my needs
- State my thoughts about the relationships of those involved in the conflict/debate
- State what I would like to see as an outcome of a resolution to the issue . . . envision the future

### **Role B - Listener**

- Listen openly
- Clarify by asking questions
- Seek to understand the speaker's point of view
- If I still do not understand the speaker's perspective and motivations, I will think of more clarifying questions to ask. Without fully understanding the other person, it will be difficult to think of their needs when coming up with solutions.

### **Some important tips on clarifying:**

- Monitor your tone of voice - demonstrate respect for the other person's opinion
- Rephrase what you think the other person said
- Ask the speaker: Why is this issue important to them?
- Ask the speaker: Do they have any experiences they would be willing to share that might influence their opinion?
- Ask the speaker: What are the underlying values and principles they think might be informing their position on this issue?
- Think about what underlying needs the speaker might have that could be met with the solution.