

ROTARY DISTRICT 5440 PEACEBUILDER
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JOURNALING

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Fort Collins Rotary Club
and
Lindsey Pointer, 2017 Rotary Global Grant Recipient

In these newsletters of the Rotary District Peacebuilders, we want to invite readers for contributions and ideas, suggestions and possibilities for our efforts to promote the foundational skills for promoting peace, i.e., nonviolent conflict resolution, improved communication and cooperation, successful negotiation and mediation as well as the critical and creative thinking that can help communities move through obstacles and difficulties.

When you dig below the surface, these are the same skills and ideas we can see in various Rotary activities, for example, in Community and Global Grants. By sharing what we learn, we hope to spark new thinking about what can be done locally, on college campuses, elementary and secondary schools, in churches, other organizations as well as in communities of all sizes, formally and informally—wherever people are looking for new and constructive ways through conflicts.

You can look through previous newsletters that have been archived on the District 5440 website: <https://www.rotary5440.org/SitePage/peace-building-newsletters>

What aspects of peacebuilding would you like to see addressed? Let us know what you think:

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Lloyd Thomas

NOTE: Lloyd Thomas, Ph.D. is a longstanding member of the Fort Collins Rotary Club, a licensed psychologist and a life coach. Contact him if you would like to receive his newsletters. He can be reached through email: DrLloyd@CreatingLeaders.com

BENEFITS OF JOURNALING

Over thirty years ago, psychologist Ira Progoff, suggested the therapeutic value to writing in a journal. Since that time, many other benefits to "journaling" have emerged. Now we know that keeping a journal may relieve stress, increase creativity, enhance your immune system, deepen your spiritual life, generate insights and even result in some marketable writing.

Most of us are aware of the traditional value in keeping a diary or writing out a "to-do list," or taking notes from lectures. Such activities help us remember things we want to recall. But few of us realize the value of journaling as a process. For instance, studies have demonstrated that the act of handwriting somehow stimulates your body to produce more T-cells, an invaluable

component of your immune system. So for people struggling with immune system difficulties, start writing daily entries into a journal.

Initially, your thoughts and feelings are internal experiences. They are ever changing, flowing like a river. When you write (or draw) them on paper, you are making them manifest in the world outside your skin. It is the first step in the process of creating. Transforming your thoughts and feelings to physical, external symbols strengthens your creativity. Creativity seminar leader, Julia Cameron suggests in her book, "The Artist's Way," that you fill at least 3 pages with writing every morning. She writes, "The morning pages are the primary tool of creative recovery."

Journaling not only strengthens your creativity, it also gives you a safe way of dealing with ideas and emotions that you may be afraid to express in any other manner. Objectifying your innermost experience catches that internal flow and like a photograph, stops and holds forever, a moment of consciousness. After all, you hold a piece of your life in your hands where you can look at it, meditate on it, and deepen your understanding of it. When you write a journal filled with your own, personal ideas, thoughts, images and emotions, "The noun of self becomes a verb. This flashpoint of creation in the present moment is where work and play merge." When you can see yourself described in your journal, you re-discover your authentic self.

Since there is no "right" or "wrong" way to do it, journaling is one of the most helpful vehicles we have for developing the great, time-honored tools for growth: reflection; self-observation; self-awareness; and self-questioning. Now, thirty years later, Ira Progoff writes, "...the use of a private journal is exceedingly common, not only in the religious life but wherever a person has a fixed goal toward which he is trying to direct himself. Journals are used especially in those situations where a person is having difficulty in attaining his goal." If you have set goals for yourself, journaling might be one of the best ways to catalyze their attainment.

In his book, "Adventure Inward," Morton Kelsey writes, "There is yet another and quite different reason for keeping a journal. The goal here is not simply that of achieving my own potential, but rather of deepening my relationship with that center of spiritual reality of which all the great religions of humankind speak. Here the goal of keeping the record of my life and struggle is not so much to forge the chain of growth as to bring my inner being to the blacksmith." When you manifest in the physical world your own unseen spirit, you allow your true nature to be responded to and refined. If you hold the palm of your hand against your nose, you would never see your fingernails. You would be too close to them. Journaling allows you to view your true nature as if you were outside yourself. It also allows others to reflect back what they see "in you." What a great tool for increasing self-understanding.

Avail yourself of this powerful method for taking charge of your life. Use it to discover who you are and who you want to be. Practice journaling so as to more effectively and efficiently become the person you were meant to be.

Robert N. Meroney

NOTE: Bob Meroney is an Emeritus Professor of Fluid Mechanics and Wind Engineering with a long career at Colorado State University. He has been an active member of the Fort Collins Rotary Club and regularly researches a range of topics on modern life, issues and politics that serve to spark deeper conversations among friends and colleagues. If you have questions or ideas, you can contact Bob: Robert.Meroney@ColoState.EDU.

MESSAGES BETTER NOT SENT...OR SPOKEN

Have you ever regretted speaking out on the spur of the moment? Have you wished that you had counted to 10, 20, 100 or maybe 10,000 before reacting? A journal, diary, or just writing something down to be reread later permits one to come back after a delay and reassess your original thoughts.

I can recall cases where the words spoken or written by others have seemed so offensive, that my first response was to react in anger and counterattack spontaneously. Sometimes, I did and almost always regretted it later, but several times I have used the written page to summarize my reactions, counter arguments, and bruised emotions. Then I delayed sending the material to anyone, sometimes for several days or longer. In every case I subsequently realized I needed to express myself differently so as to solve the problem rather than sooth my wounded ego. Generating a peaceful dialogue is not always easy nor is it as satisfying as an immediate counterattack, but in the long run it is always more profitable. Maybe we should all keep a file of **“letters or messages better not sent.”** I feel the messages not sent are an important part of diplomacy which allows dialogue to continue. Today, it seems all too common for people to say things about others that are "unforgivable".



Walt Kelly, 1971



Walt Kelly, 1961

Another advantage of a journal whether kept daily, monthly, or even yearly, is it provides the opportunity to summarize and evaluate one's own contributions, productivity and service over the intervening period. Frankly, I am often pleasantly pleased when I prepare my family Xmas newsletter to distribute among friends and relatives that by identifying the many accomplishments and contributions that had gotten lost in the clutter of daily living there is ample reason to be happy. Some of these seem small when considered individually, but when brought together suggest a life well lived. In a similar manner it can be satisfying to recall by writing them down all the small victories in interpersonal relationships, in services to the needy, in acknowledgement of service by and to others, and that all is not **“Full of Doom, Gloom and rumors of Boom”** as remarked by Deacon

Mushrat to Pogo Possum in the famous Walt Kelly comic strip. (See entire daily comic strip from 1961, below)

Deacon Mushrat's private Journal:



The cartoon above reflects about the fact that writing thoughts down does not necessarily make them righteous or true. Deacon Mushrat mimics the tendency for many to selectively choose only those "facts" or "truths" that validate their preconceptions.

Perhaps we need to submit any journals kept to fact checkers.

Lindsey Pointer

NOTE: Lindsey Pointer has been working on the use of restorative principles in the criminal justice system. She defines herself as a restorative practices facilitator, trainer and researcher and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Restorative Justice at Victoria University in New Zealand with support from a Rotary Global Grant Scholarship and the Fulbright Program from the U.S. State Department. If you have questions or ideas, contact Lindsey: lindseypointer@gmail.com

JOURNALING AND THE INNER PEACE, OUTER PUEACE JOURNEY

"Journaling provides a path to access your wisdom within, escorting you to a place of heightened self-awareness and deepened inner peace."

Lauri Pointer

My mom teaches journaling workshops, so I grew up understanding how journaling can help you to center yourself, to process emotions, and to open up to a world of wonderful possibilities. I remember my first journal was a sketchbook with magazine pictures of dogs, mountains, paints, fairies and books glued to the pages. My mom gave my brother and me these books before we could write along with a pile of magazines and the instructions to cut out any images that made us feel joyful, anything that attracted us. The result was a beautiful book of all the things that made us feel joyful, centered, at peace.

In my adult life, I use my journal as a space to work through fears and anxieties and to manifest the highest good in my life. The pages are still filled with cut out pictures, and also words and quotes scrawled in multi-colored pens.

As a restorative justice facilitator, I am always excited when journaling makes its way into a contract for how the person who caused harm will put things right. So often, when we harm others, we also cause a great deal of harm to ourselves. Journaling is sometimes included in a restorative contract as a way for the person to repair harm to self, working through the feelings and experiences that led up to the crime as well as what has happened since.

Journaling is such a powerful tool for anyone, but particularly for people who are going through a tough time. It creates a way to ground and center yourself, finding a sense of inner peace and understanding that then ripples out into your life and the way you interact with others. When we cultivate inner peace, we influence outer peace too!

If you would like to learn more about the power of journaling, I recommend signing up for my mom's newsletter. Contact me at the email above and I will send you the link. It is real, insightful, and always includes a great journaling prompt at the end. Soon, she will be sending out information on her upcoming journaling book, which includes stories and journaling prompts tailored for all life's stages and challenges. The quote at the beginning of this piece is from her upcoming book.

William M. Timpson

NOTE: Bill Timpson has been on the faculty at Colorado State University in its School of Education for many years and a member of the Fort Collins Rotary Club where his focus on sustainable peacebuilding in Burundi, East Africa, has been supported by two Global Grants. What follows is adapted from his 2009 book, 147 Tips for Teaching Peace and Reconciliation, co-authored with an international group of peace scholars that included Ed Brantmeier, Nat Kees, Tom Cavanagh, Claire McGlynn and Elavie Ndura (Madison, WI: Atwood). If you have questions or ideas, contact Bill: william.timpson@colostate.edu

CREATE A CLEARNESS COMMITTEE

Have you struggled with a personal decision that impacts peace and reconciliation, e.g., your role as an activist on local issues or as a mediator in resolving a conflict at work? When people grapple with an intensely personal decision, finding their way to clarity often goes beyond speaking to friends, journaling or mulling over the issues as they see them. As committed pacifists, Quakers/Friends developed clearness committees to aid members of Quaker meetings in making personal decisions. Life coach, Maggie Graham, describes how these practices can be used.

“Within the Quaker community, the process for forming a clearness committee is triggered when a Friend with a personal concern approaches his or her Meeting (the equivalent of a church, synagogue or mosque in many other faiths) with a request for a clearness committee. A committee of three to five people is appointed, and logistical arrangements are made for the committee’s first (and sometimes only) meeting.

“The clearness committee begins with a statement from the requestor, either verbally at the start of the meeting or in writing prior to the meeting. Silence punctuates each person’s contributions to the meeting, with the substance of the speaking centered on open-ended questions addressed to the requestor. The tone of the clearness committee meeting is one of deeper reflection and support for the person at the center of the committee. The requestor drives the meeting either with responses to the questions or with spoken reflection. Generally, a clearness committee meets for two to three hours at one sitting, and it may reconvene over the course of several weeks or months as the requestor seeks further clarity.

“The purpose of the committee is to provide the requestor with the space and time to examine the issues facing him or her in a supportive environment. Questions are posed by committee members without an agenda, often following intuition and leadings. Giving advice is forbidden, and the contents of the sacred forum are generally not discussed beyond the structure of the committee meetings. The meeting is held solely in support of the person at its center.”

If you were to request a clearness committee, what you want to discuss about your contributions to peace and reconciliation? Whom would you invite? To structure it according to Quaker practice, consult Parker Palmer’s *The Courage to Teach* (1998).

Quaker practices offer many other structures that can be easily adapted for individual and group use. Information about the Quaker faith and practice can be found at <http://www.quaker.org/pacific-ym/fp/index.html>.