

A World in need of a GLOBAL PEACE Strategy An Addition to Dispute Management

**A talk by Allan Parker, Peak Performance Development, at Australian
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A Strategy for every individual, family, community and government.

May I commence by setting a number of frames of reference for this talk. I'm going to put forward a number of provocative, radical and somewhat ambitious propositions. Some of these may sound to you, the recipient, harsh or even critical. Some will seem outrageous and others over ambitious. Some of them may even lead you to think that I am denigrating the efforts and contribution of various people, including you.

Allow me to state clearly from the outset that, whilst I will be asking many questions about what we are doing in our respective worlds, my intention is to explore **what** we can do, **in addition** to what we are currently doing, not instead of.

Given that I know almost none of you at a personal level, I certainly do not direct any comments to or at you personally. However, many of my questions and comments may hit home or resonate with you. I ask that you be the decision maker, in that instance, as to whether what I say is applicable to you.

I am seriously concerned about the current state of the world in which we live. I am seriously concerned at some of what we are doing and more so about what we are not doing.

This presentation is an attempt to **acknowledge, question, assess** and **explore** some of the untapped potential that may be available to us individually and collectively.

As one lone individual I can no longer sit back and simply accept what is happening in our world as the way the world needs to be.

Domestically, nationally and internationally war is a daily phenomenon in our lives; the Balkans, East Timor, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Colombia, Israel, Tibet, Taiwan; (the devastation in Africa - added since 2002) the war against (on) terrorism, Houses of Parliament in question time, corporate boardrooms and annual general meetings, hostile corporate acquisitions, industrial disputes, world economic summits and their protesters, family property and custody disputes, and we can't forget domestic violence.

Technologically and scientifically we have made some amazing progress. A list of examples could go on for pages. The very fact that we can now send an email from a hand-held computer via a mobile telephone from a taxi is just one instance of the extraordinary things we can do. (This was the case at the time of giving this

talk. Now of course it is one device). That we can perform microsurgery on an unborn child to reduce fluid in the lung cavity, weeks before birth, is yet another example.

However, have we advanced to the same extent in **how we think and behave**? Have we advanced to that same extent in **how we treat each other**? Have we advanced in **how we manage our relationships**?

I suspect that, when we consider the amount of war we have happening on our planet at this very instant, if we consider the human rights violations, the corporate corruption, the rate of family break down, the number of people who will die on our planet in this day alone from starvation, whilst more than 80% of the world's income is received by one fifth of the world's population, and that teenage suicide continues to escalate; we can hardly turn our heads away from those factors and say we are doing well in our development as a race.

Could we say that the above variables are all indicators that we have some extraordinary opportunities in front of us, as a nation, as a professional body, as individuals and as member of the human race?

It is so easy for those of us whose lives do not come into direct contact with such things, to consider that it is someone else's responsibility or someone else's fault or it is for someone other than me to do something about. So easy for us, the privileged, external observer who only gets exposed to such atrocities when we choose to because we can decide when we turn on the television. We also decide when we've had enough and want to turn it off. The people on the other side of that TV screen do not have the same opportunity to turn it off.

It all seems daunting doesn't it? Well it probably is, but pretending that it doesn't impact on me, or that there is nothing that I can do, is not going to change anything and I put it to you that **change** is required.

Today, at the risk of over simplification, I'd like to cite one **pattern** only (perhaps of many) that I observe, and ask how we might address it.

I'd also like your permission to offer some suggestions.

The **pattern** I put to you is that we as a society, a nation and as a profession put more attention on the undesired state than the desired state.

Over simplified? Perhaps.

Consider the following:

How often does our media report good news in the same proportion as bad?

How often do we focus on the negative, the problem, rather than the positive or the possibility?

Internationally, how much do we spend on war compared to peace?

How many countries have defence budgets? And how many have peace budgets?

How much of our time in dispute resolving do we, as professionals, give to the point of disagreement and/or conflict compared to how much time we give to the **points of agreement, the mutual needs, the options?**

How often does someone yell obscenities at you from their car, compared with how often they express gratitude?

And in the work place how often do you hear what you did wrong compared to how well you did?

How often do you criticise your children, husband, wife or partner compared to how often you acknowledge what they do well?

How often do we yell at them?

How often can you watch politicians yelling abuse and ridiculing each other across the Houses of Parliament?

How often do we see leading sporting identities demonstrating that violence is an acceptable mode of behaviour?

How often do those same identities, political and sporting heroes, realise that they are the role models for the next generation? And do those same people realise, whether they like it or not, that others are likely to replicate their behaviours?

How often do CNN and others report war, graphically and repeatedly, compared to events supporting peace?

I put it to you that our society gives more time and attention to the undesired state than the desired state.

I put it to you that **war is an undesired state**. Be it in the Houses of Parliament, be it in the corporate boardroom, be it in your home, be it in your car, be it your hero on the football field, it's undesired.

War in its international sense is not only undesired, **it's unacceptable**.

The fact that a government declares war does not change the fact that people will die. And they do.

The fact that these same decision makers sit safely, often thousands of miles from where a missile or bomb will land, where blood will spill or where someone's child is dying, removes them from the reality of the decision. That distance may remove them from the reality, but it does not make the decision humane.

How long are we, as a race, the human race, going to continue to condone, endorse and consider acceptable the **taking of any human life?**

I put it to government officials and politicians, that as of today, WAR be labelled PETOL - “politically endorsed taking of life” and we start the process required to abolish the practise NOW.

Human life is precious and we need to treat it as such, no matter what nationality, what religion, what gender, age, intellect, what socio-economic background.

Peace is the desired state and it's time we gave it serious attention.

Perhaps it's time for a change?

The evidence, I think, is compelling.

Perhaps it's time for a **Global (for all) Peace Strategy**. (Not international, global; for all. And not the war or anti-war or anti-terrorist strategies that currently pervade).

Does it not amaze you that there isn't a **global peace strategy**!? One strategy for all of us, for the human race. Doesn't that strike you as odd?

Yes, there are many very important contributions happening that I don't wish to diminish, such as the work of thousands of people through the United Nations, the work of many organizations such as the Red Cross, World Vision and the Salvation Army; their huge efforts address many of the troubled bits, but there is not one organization, nor one strategy to address the *whole*.

Much of this work is to do with ceasefire, maintaining ceasefire and community reconstruction. It's important work and, whilst the UN will refer to it as peace keeping or peace making, I put to you that it is not to do with peace; it's to do with ceasefire. That is the unwinding of war. And it is very much the *war* end of the continuum, not the *peace* end.

What can you and I, the ordinary individual citizen, do at the peaceful end of the equation?

Maybe it's time to address the *desired state* of PEACE rather than the *undesired state* of WAR?

Maybe it's time for us, the ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) community, to question where our focus is. Are we, with the best of intentions, taking people's attention to the conflict or dispute more than to agreement?

Look at many of the models we are teaching at Professional, Association and University levels; most, if not all, start with either *issues, problems, points of disagreement* or the *individual party's perspective*. How many models start with the establishment of a mutually beneficial outcome? How many start with the collective needs?

If we consider the impact of the **reticular activating system** in the limbic system in the reptilian brain we might put more of our focus on the agreement. The

reticular activating system acts as a filter, sorting for relevance and importance. And makes us conscious of those things of importance based on where we put our attention i.e. if we focus our attention on the point of conflicts we are more likely to see the conflict. If we put our attention on points of agreement we are more likely to see possible points of agreement. It does not have a rational or logical capacity, it simply makes us aware of that which we attend to. So are we inadvertently programming our minds to what we don't want rather than that which we do want?

If we, as ADR practitioners, are inadvertently focusing our clients' attention on points of conflict more frequently than we are focusing their attention on the outcome, the needs, the options or the possibilities, then we may well be manifesting conflict unnecessarily.

Could we have a model that starts with the *desired state*?

Could we start the process with the **collective needs** or the **mutually beneficial outcomes**, before we hear the positions, issues or problems?

Just out of interest ask yourself "when did I last start a conflict, dispute or negotiation by establishing what the collective needs were?"

What international dispute do you know of that established the collective needs of all of the parties? Or that established a mutually beneficial outcome for all of the stakeholders?

As a mediator do you:

- 1) Invent/generate options to solve problems, to resolve issues?
- 2) Or do you invent/generate options to fulfil desired outcomes?
- 3) Or do you invent/generate options to fulfil needs?

If it's 1) then you may well be focusing the parties' attention on the conflict (undesired state), as many do, and manifesting conflict rather than agreement.

Is our very name, Alternative Dispute Resolution, (through the reticular activating system), not programming the minds of our clients on the *undesired state* of conflict?

You're probably asking, "well what can I do?"

I can't answer that for you.

However I hope in my heart that **you** do.

I don't believe we can afford to leave the question unanswered for much longer.

What can be done?

We can watch how often we are directing people's attention to the conflict areas rather than the points of agreement, common needs, desired state or outcome.

We could focus on needs as much or more than problems or issues.

We could direct our attention to the relationship as often as we direct it to the content.

We could start our next mediation by establishing the collective needs first.

These are small things that you could address day by day in your work, that would have a positive impact.

On a larger scale, there are over 5000 organizations on the web bearing the word PEACE in their name and we have not been able to find one that has a **global peace strategy**.

If real global change is to occur there needs to be a calculated change process in place.

If this is to happen, surely we can start with the assumption that some of the basic principles of **change management** need to be applied.

If we can explore the writings of many authorities in the area, Senge being one of the better known, for his perspective on the importance of a shared vision, and consideration for the whole system through what he refers to as Systems Thinking (*Fifth Discipline*).

Peter Block, in his book *Stewardship*, refers to the need to break the parent child pattern and create a process of empowering the stakeholders, and Dana Zohar refers to the importance of dialogue (i.e. discovery, exploration and understanding, **not** debate, not even consensus).

Porras, in *Built to Last – Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* (pub Century), discusses the importance of the preservation of core ideology and values that remain constant over time, whilst the strategy can be altered;

“This brings us to a crucial point: a visionary company carefully preserves and protects its core ideology, yet all the specific *manifestations* of its core ideology must be open for change and evaluation. For example: HP’s “Respect and concern for individual employees” is a permanent, unchanging part of its core ideology; serving fruit and doughnuts to all employees at ten a.m. each day is a non-core practice that can change.”

It appears to me that some of these fundamentals may be missing in the international arena.

Of particular importance is the aspect of seeking people’s ideas and encouraging them to initiate opportunities as stated by Rosabeth Moss Kanter, author of *The Enduring Skills of Change*;

“It is a myth that people resist change. People resist what other people make them do, not what they themselves choose to do...That’s why companies that innovate successfully year after year seek their people’s ideas, let them initiate new projects and encourage more experiments”.

The one principle that we started with, was that for effective and lasting **change** to take place it needs to start with a **vision**, a **strategy** and an **enduring conversation**, involving as many of the stakeholders as possible. A **conversation** that has 3 elements:

1. Acknowledgement of the current perceptions
2. A comment on the desired or preferred state (a positive image or description of how it could be i.e. a vision)
3. A statement of what positive actions, steps or options are available to each individual that they can and are willing to contribute.

Hence, maybe it’s time for a global **PEACE conversation, a PEACE Strategy**.

What would it take to start one?

Some suggestions we might consider follows below:

- A) The Internet, with a global conversation asking three questions:** (with equal time given to each)
- 1) **What do you think of the state of the world?** (Acknowledging current perspective – consider the system/whole).
 - 2) **How would you like it to be?** (Desired state or vision).
 - 3) **What are you willing to do to contribute to having it be that way?** (Options and willingness to contribute, empower).
- B) A national and then an international simultaneous talk-back radio program, same day, same time, on every radio station in the country and then every radio station on the planet, asking the same three questions:**
- 1) **What do you think of the state of the world?** (Acknowledging current perspective – consider the system/whole).
 - 2) **How would you like it to be?** (Desired state or vision).
 - 3) **What are you willing to do to contribute to having it be that way?** (Options and willingness to contribute, empower).

Crazy?.....Maybe?.....Possible?.....**Absolutely!!!**

Could it have an impact?.....What do you think?.

What would be the impact of a national (or international), simultaneous *State of the World* conversation on talk-back radio and continued on the internet?

Change driven by the community on the ground, not just by the power of the executive suite and the political process, is change that **will** endure.

C) A Global World Leaders' Congress (i.e. leaders from every walk of life), where the same three questions are asked:

- 1) **What do you think of the state of the world?** (Acknowledging current perspective – consider the system/whole).
- 2) **How would you like it to be?** (Desired state or vision).
- 3) **What are you willing to do to contribute to having it be that way?** (Options and willingness to contribute, empowering all to contribute to a positive movement towards peace)

D) The 4th “R” in education projects (R for RELATIONSHIP):

At this point in time the single most needed skill in the whole of the human experience is not taught in our education systems; **RELATIONSHIP**.

What skill do we human beings use every day of our lives more than that of **“R”elating skills, communicating, “R”elationship building?**

And yet we do not have **RELATIONSHIP** as part of our standard educational curriculum.

Clearly we need to teach **relationship skills** to children, as a compulsory subject in the same way that we teach **reading, writing and arithmetic**.

This will involve doing whatever is necessary to have the 4th “R” become part of the standard school curriculum for all students from 5 year olds to 12. Changing the way the current adult generation communicates is not so likely, however if we start now and educate the next generation, they will lead the social change towards a peaceful world.

If war is the manifestation of dysfunctional relationship, and it surely is, then perhaps it's time we start teaching it as a compulsory subject in our education systems.

Ladies and gentlemen, if you do not do anything as a result of attending this conference, please go away from here and talk to as many people as you can about the need for the 4th “R” in education.

E) “Participate In Our Peaceful Planet” campaign:

This will mean approaching every producer of every product of any description, anywhere in the world, that is distributed to or for use by CHILDREN, and have them put this theme (“Participate In Our Peaceful Planet”) on every product they produce. Even if that only means the term “Participate In Our Peaceful Planet” appears on their labels.

F) Start a “Life Preservation Program”:

Starting with a “Life Preservation Day”, then a week, then a month.

This would be a long running program designed to increase our value of **human life** and the acknowledgement that the taking of life is not acceptable, even if politically endorsed.

Part of this strategy would be to encourage the use of the term PETOL (i.e. Politically Endorsed Taking Of Life) instead of the term war.

These are six of the elements of the **global peace strategy** that we could participate in. There could be many more. If we were to make a PEACE conversation a regular event in our individual lives it would produce a focus on peace and ideas would start to flow and overtake the conversations of war and violence that have prevailed up to now.

It is time for a change and it is time for each one of us to contribute and take an active part in it.

If we start to talk about global peace (not International, GLOBAL; not war, PEACE), make the conversation happen, raise the awareness in ourselves and in those around us, then strategy is already happening.

My questions to you, my professional counter-parts, are:

- How many times and places in each day can we start a conversation about global peace?
- What can we do to improve what we already do?
- How can we do more than we now do?
- How can we contribute through our every action, day by day, minute by minute, to moving our focus more and more towards the DESIRED STATE, a peaceful world, peaceful country, peaceful organization, peaceful family and more peaceful self?

Every action, every minute and every person's contribution matters, no matter how big or small.

It is time for action from us all.