PEACE POWER TOOLS

(www.peacepower.info)

Organization-wide Pledge Campaigns Supporting Universal Respect

Summary:
Organization-wide pledge campaigns supporting universal respect are oral or written public pledges made in conjunction with an agreement or promise to contribute in some manner for collective benefit. For instance, churches, schools, and families can provide the interlocking social support needed to create and sustain a culture of non-violence by implementing a PEACE POWER Pledge, or Respect Pledge campaign. In conjunction with this effort, various sectors of the community can unite to help provide social support for the actions associated with PEACE POWER.

Resources Needed:
• Pledge sheets.

Implementation Steps:
• Develop or adopt an oral or written pledge that will be publicly announced (e.g., the PEACE POWER Pledge).
• Have pledge sheets prepared.
• Identify possible respected members of the community to serve as models.
• Have highly respected community models publicly express support for the pledge.
• Have participants pledge commitment (or non-commitment) to the actions associated with the oral or written pledge (e.g. "I will act to make peace among my peers." or "I will not carry weapons.")
• Regularly follow up to ensure that the pledge is not a one-shot behavior (e.g., follow-up may include media interviews or discussion groups to examine how well the campaign is going, and periodic recommitment.)

Variations:
• See the *Student Pledge Against Gun Violence* located at http://www.pledge.org.
• Many organizations write their own pledge as an activity to deepen interest and involvement in the project.

Rationale and Evidence Base:
There is evidence that open communication or public commitment among group members increases the probability that individuals will sacrifice self-interest. Public commitments are proclamations or announcements about decisions made in connection with individual or group ideals and goals.

Research shows that pledges, by themselves, are useful for increasing the likelihood of individual or group cooperation. A pledge effectively results in cooperation when the following two conditions are met: 1) the pledge must have a communication and commitment function; and 2) the pledge creates an opportunity to adjust or change in conformity with the larger group's decision. This is in keeping with research, which shows that public commitments help individuals reframe ideals and behavior contexts by means of actively searching their belief systems. This reframing can be reinforced through role-playing. Research also indicates that commitment can function as an aversive contingency associated with fears of social disapproval if the public pledge is not met. Further evidence on commitment shows that individuals have greater success maintaining behavior after an initial binding pledge has been fulfilled as compared to individuals involved in incentive only situations.

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