

PEACE IN THE WORLD:
Envisioning Peace with Collective Imagery

*If we can imagine it, we can achieve it,
If we can dream it, we can become it.*

---William Arthur Ward

Susan Ezra, RN, HNC

These are the times that try men's souls said Thomas Paine, in 1776, in a pamphlet entitled *Common Sense*. The time was the American Revolution. These words ring true as much today, maybe even more so. It is now time for a different kind of revolution; a revolution of the mind. We are living in times, which seem so much worse than the American Revolution. However, there is a critical difference; never before in history has there been such potential for mass destruction. While hatred, violence, and injustice escalate, and the disparity between the haves and the have-nots reaching astronomical proportions, we must face the trajectory we are on and realize war is NOT the answer.

You may say I am a dreamer, but I truly believe that we can manifest peace in the world NOW, if only the collective consciousness of the majority of like-minded and like-hearted people form a unified force. In our hearts, we all want peace. This is not a new notion. Group prayer and meditation have existed for thousands of years. Throughout history and across cultures, people have joined together to pray for peace. All families, in every country want their children to grow up in a safe and healthy environment. Who knows what has turned the tides of change in the past. Perhaps it has been persistent collective prayer. Maybe group intention has done much more than we know. Buddhists, Christians and groups in all religions pray for peace at this very moment.

Worldwide, the peace movement is reaching critical mass. Multitudes of people on the planet presently feel the need to do SOMETHING to halt the ongoing death and destruction from the archaic futility of war. In March of 2003 there were unprecedented anti-war demonstrations in Europe and the United States. As more and more of us awaken, we can join forces through the power of collective thought. The key may be in the simple capacity of the imagination. Einstein told us that "war is the ultimate failure of the imagination." From the scientific and the spiritual fronts, we are realizing that everyone and everything is interconnected. The information is readily available in films like the dynamic new film, *What the Bleep Do We Know*. They teach us that our reality is made real by what we believe; what we think about our world and feel about our world. We literally create our reality. The earth cannot sustain the power-over, separatist, destructive behavior of a few imperialists much longer. I believe it is possible to create a healing, compassionate, sustainable world using the power of our imagination. If we can imagine peace in the world, we can manifest it. It starts in our minds; in our consciousness.

As a holistic nurse and imagery practitioner, I propose one way of turning the universal tides towards peace is by harnessing this phenomenal imaginative power. I have witnessed amazing benefits of the mind/body connection to maximize the innate healing potential that lies within each of us. Integrative Imagery is about using the natural ability of the imagination to access personal powerful images, symbols, resources and strengths within ourselves. Accessed through the mind and body, there exists a spiritual collective consciousness replete with a vast wisdom waiting to be mined and used for healing the planet.

At the 2004 Bioneers conference, Terry Tempest Williams voiced “despair shows us the limit of our imagination. Imagination shared creates collaboration, and collaboration creates community, and community inspires social change.” It is a simple prescription. We must first believe, individually, then collectively that we can accomplish peace and healing. We must then imagine in our minds and hearts, peace happening in the world. We must do this now. Not the potential for peace or the prayer for peace in the future, rather the reality of peace here, now. Gandhi gave us the directions to follow, “be the change you want to see in the world.”

In order for anything, a painting, building or idea, to be created, it is first imagined in the mind. Carl Jung’s work with the archetypes in the collective unconscious reveals that “the psychological mechanism to transform energy is the symbol.” An image is encoded with the energy and meaning of what it represents. For instance, images, like religious icons or logos, hold energy and meaning and action moves from there. What we feed grows. If we continue to feed greed or hatred, they continue to spread. If we plant the seeds of peace within ourselves and connect with others, that is what will flourish. How we act externally derives its energy from what we think and feel internally. Let us transform reality by imaging a peaceful world.

In the film, *What the Bleep Do We Know*, a study was referenced: a Washington DC group of meditators focused on peace. For a short time following the meditation, there was a 25% reduction in the crime rate within that city. This shows us that the imagination is a pretty powerful weapon. From this we have to seriously consider what would happen if masses meditated on peace in the world at the same time and on a regular basis. Let’s say for 15 minutes every Sunday morning at 8:00 AM each of us sits and imagines, in our own way, the world at peace.

During this peace meditation, keep in mind that an image is most powerful if it is personal and holds meaning for you. The image that you imagine can be realistic or metaphoric. One type of image is not more effective than the other. It is most important that the image resonates strongly for you. For example, one may choose to visualize, in the war-torn countries like Iraq and Israel-Palestine, soldiers, guerrilla fighters, insurgents and suicide bombers laying down their weapons, abandoning their killing machines, refusing to fight or destroy anymore. For another, the image may be symbolic such as seeing the world wrapped in a blanket of peace, soothing the broken hearts of all people, beings and even the earth (Gaia) herself.

Imagery is enhanced and most potent when experienced with all of the senses; sight, sound, touch, smell and possibly taste. Although for the majority of our Western culture, people picture and see images in their imaginations. Others, like the majority of indigenous people, feel or sense their ideal of a peaceful world. Just as health is not the absence of disease, peace is not the absence of war. Peace may be an individual, a country or the world in a state of harmony. Peace may also be the compassionate acceptance of oneself and others. As we practice our own peaceful imagery, we also cultivate these qualities in ourselves.

Do not underestimate the force of our imaginary potential. The critical mass IS mounting. This is not just daydreaming. It is the power of intention and imagination harnessed together. The energy of the collective imagination is an absolutely free and immediate instrument we all have available to us. Gandhi wielded this weapon all of his life and was

instrumental in bringing peace to India. Albert Einstein's genius came not just from his scientific, or mathematical mind, but also from his imagination. We have many who have gone before us, leading the way. All of us hold the power to manifest peace NOW. The health of all beings, including the planet, depends on it.

Please share these ideas and your thoughts with others. It is time to re-imagine a world of peace, health and a sustainable planet for ourselves and generations to come. Who knows, maybe we can create a worldwide web of imagination.

PEACE MEDITATION

Based on Metta or Loving Kindness

For use individually or in groups

Begin with a centering process such as becoming aware of your breath, inviting each breath to relax the body and focus the mind. Just notice the breath coming and going, and appreciate the gift of life each breath brings.

Now with the in breath, send well wishes for inner peace to your self. Fill the body, organs, heart, lungs, nervous system, and mind. Bring a deep sense of peace into every cell of the body. Silently say to yourself, "May I be at peace."

Now begin to ripple out that offering of peace to your neighborhood, town and state. Extend wishes for peace to all the people in your immediate area. "May all of you be at peace."

Send a message of peace to all of your family, friends and loved ones, wherever they are. "May you also be at peace." Spread love and peace to all you know and all you want to be at peace.

Keep going and visualize peace to everyone in this country, to the ones who you agree with and to the ones who believe differently than you. This may be more challenging. Extend wishes for peace to the leaders of our country and to those who still see war as the solution.

Especially wish peace to those in places in the world, who are struggling or in need. Expand deep and lasting peace to the endangered areas such as Palestine, Israel, Africa and especially Iraq. "May all peoples be at peace, ending conflict and hatred." Hatred will never end by hatred, but by love alone will hatred be healed.

Finally, imagine the entire global community enveloped in the light of peace, a light that enlightens us to find other peaceful solutions. A light of consciousness and love surrounds the world now. "May all sentient beings be held in compassion. May all beings be at PEACE."

Keeping the light within your heart, slowly return your attention to yourself, to the current place and time. When ready, open your eyes.

Susan Ezra, RN, HNC is co-founder and co-director of *Beyond Ordinary Nursing*, which provides training for healthcare professionals in *Integrative Imagery*. She and co-director **Terry Reed, RN** have a passion to bring the power of imagery and the healing arts into healthcare. Together their mission is to provide registered nurses and licensed health care professionals with a comprehensive, high quality training in relaxation and imagery skills. The purpose of this work is to offer the opportunity to incorporate the power and magic of imagery into personal and professional practice, with the potential to increase career options.

Their vision is part of a broader paradigm shift, in which we are reclaiming the true art of healing. They are committed to sharing their passion of imagery and creating a learning environment that gives the tools to potentiate holistic healing in practitioners, our patients/clients, and health care as a whole.

For more information about how Susan and Terry use imagery, you may visit their web site at www.integrativeimagery.com.