



Slí na Síochána

- Pilgrimage to Peace

by Nicola Winters



Afri



PART OF AFRI'S JUST A
SECOND PROJECT

First published by Afri, 8 Cabra Road, Dublin 7, 2024

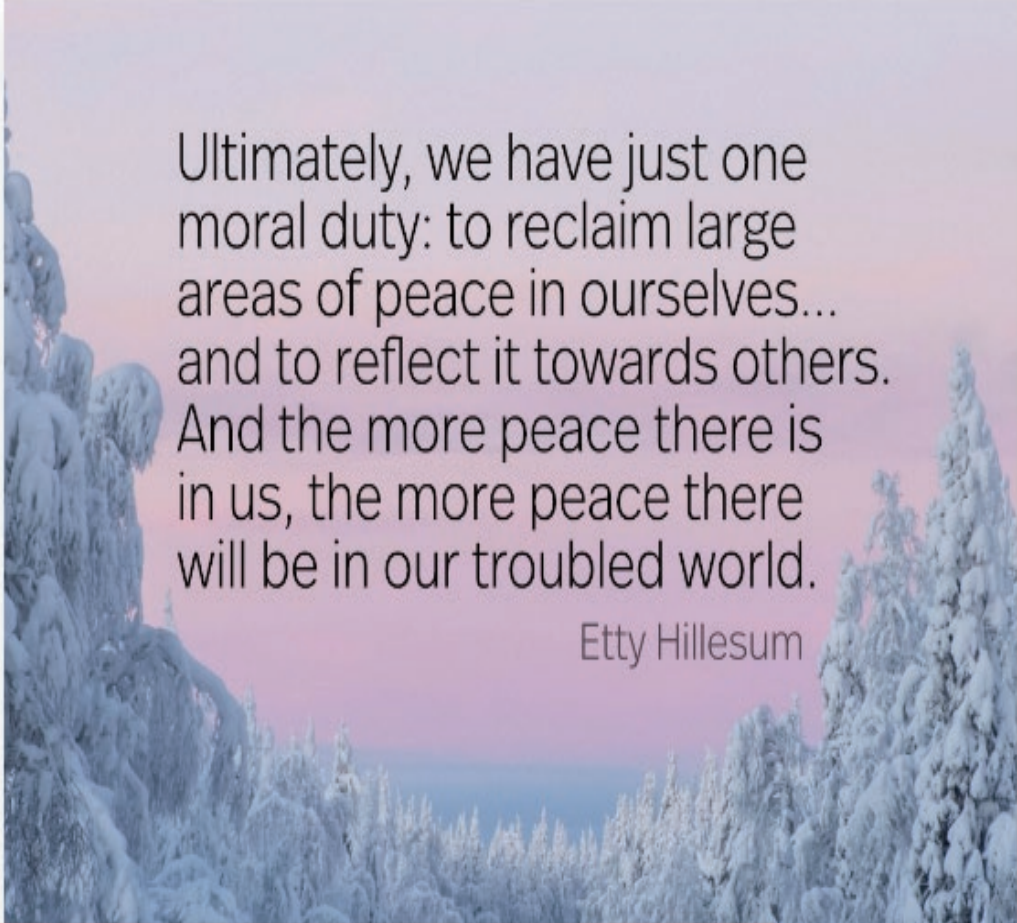
Copyright to all texts, Nicola Winters (2024)

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilised in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photography, filming, recording, video or by any information storage and retrieval system without prior permission from the publisher.

ISBN number 978-1-7384118-1-8

Afri acknowledges the support of the Brigidine Sisters. The ideas, opinions and comments therein are entirely the responsibility of its authors and do not necessarily represent or reflect the funders or their policies.

Design by Aisling Cunningham



Ultimately, we have just one
moral duty: to reclaim large
areas of peace in ourselves...
and to reflect it towards others.
And the more peace there is
in us, the more peace there
will be in our troubled world.

Etty Hillesum

Ár mbuíochas, (our thanks) to the Brigidine Sisters for keeping the message of peace, and of all that Brigid represents, alive. Ár mbuíochas to the sisters for reigniting the flame of Brigid in 1993 - A flame that had burned for centuries in Ireland until its suppression in the 16th century. The flame burns as a beacon of hope, justice and peace for Ireland and our world. It burns to remind us that our true nature is love, and that to live in harmony with ourselves is to live in harmony with the earth, one another, and all of life.



Nothing is more urgent or important than opposing war and promoting peace

Tragically, the lessons of history are being forgotten or, more accurately, being deliberately ignored by many of today's leaders.

The horror of two world wars and the multitude of other wars are discounted as leaders, urged on by weapons manufacturers engage in one more futile and destructive war after another.

Educating young people about war and peace is one way to counter this madness and this Resource, written and researched by Nicola Winters is a very important contribution to this goal. The Resource is based on a series of workshops facilitated by Nicola in Mount Temple Comprehensive School in Dublin. It is practical and tested in the classroom, so it should be of great benefit to teachers who want to explore these important themes with their students.

This work has been supported by the Brigidine Sisters with whom Afri has worked closely over many years. Brigid's message of peace remains an inspiring example which we hope to see grow as interest in Brigid has grown in recent years.

Joe Murray, Afri

Index

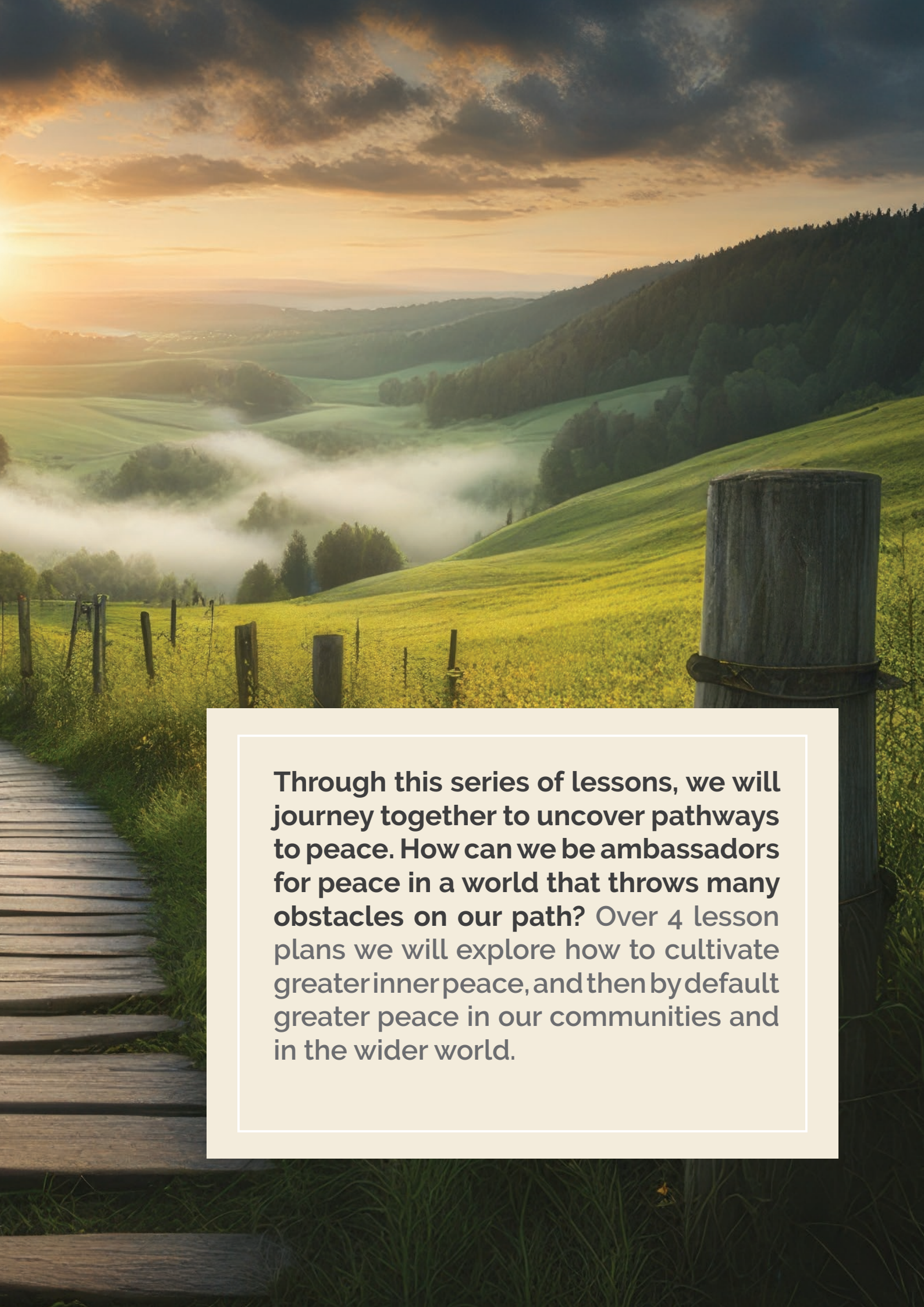
1 Lesson 1:
Inner Peace

2 Lesson 2:
Peace in our Relationships

3 Lesson 3:
Peace in our world

4 Lesson 4:
Roots of Peace





Through this series of lessons, we will journey together to uncover pathways to peace. How can we be ambassadors for peace in a world that throws many obstacles on our path? Over 4 lesson plans we will explore how to cultivate greater inner peace, and then by default greater peace in our communities and in the wider world.



Lesson 1- *Inner Peace:*

Question for Reflection: (2 mins)

What are you doing when you are at your happiest? What are you doing when you are in your element? Or think back to yourself as a child, if you can't think of something now.



Moving Activity/Icebreaker: (20 mins)

In the *game The Big Wind Blows*, let's explore, through movement, the ways we build greater peace within ourselves, and ways we contribute to creating a more peaceful world. Please see instructions below.

- » Everyone, minus one, sits on their chairs in a big circle, all facing each other. One person starts in the centre of the circle, with everyone else seated. They say the following: "*The Big Wind blows for anyone who _____*".

The blank must be filled with a statement, something they do towards a more peaceful existence. Eg. "The Big Wind blows for everyone who: listens to music to find peace; has listened to their friend who was feeling down and needed someone to talk to; has planted a tree; has taken part in a campaign for peace; meditates; etc".

- » At this point, any of the participants who the statement is true for (including the person who is currently in the centre of the circle) must stand up and quickly find a new seat. One person will be left without a seat. This person becomes the person in the centre for the next round.

Reflective listening activity: (15 mins)



Tá mé ar mo shuaimhneas - I am at peace



Write down the quote above and say it aloud or to yourself.

*note 'Síocháin' is another Irish word for peace.

1. Write down the word 'Síocháin'. Listen to how it is pronounced.
2. Listen to 'Oscail do Chroí'¹, (Open Your Heart), an Irish chant by Jenny Ní Ruiséil. *see the words as Gaeilge and in English below.
3. As you listen, you are invited to, on a blank page, draw images, and if you wish, any words on what Peace means to you.

Oscail do chroí

Open your heart

Éist leis an talamh

Listen to the earth

Éist leis an tine

Listen to the fire

Éist leis an abhainn

Listen to the river

Éist leis an aer seo

Listen to the air here.

O eist le do chroí

Listen to your heart.



Film: Brené Brown on Empathy (3 mins)²

¹ Oscail Do Chroí (Open Your Heart) www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTlvmKDxPZE

² Brené Brown on Empathy - YouTube www.youtube.com/watch?v=HznVuCVQd10



Listening Activity (20mins):

- » Ask students to get into pairs. Person A and person B. They will practice listening to one another.
- » Person A will talk for 3 minutes on the following statement: 1) 'What I love about the world'. Person B will simply listen. Person B will then share what they love about the world while person A listens for 3 minutes.
- » They will repeat this for the following themes: 2) What I hate about the world; and 3) What I really need is...





Story and reflection:

Read this story about Aikido (Japanese Martial art) Mastery.³

Discuss the following questions in pairs:

1. What would your gut reaction have been if you were on that train?
2. How is the martial art of Aikido devoted to peace?
3. What can we learn about conflict resolution from this story?

³ An Old Japanese Love Warrior, by Terry Dobson | DailyGood www.dailygood.org/story/133/an-old-japanese-love-warrior-terry-dobson/

CIRCLES OF CARE



Group activity: Circles of Care

This activity asks us to reflect on our self-care practices and the ways we practice care for others in our daily life. How do we or how might we intentionally cultivate peace? What do we do to tend to our circles of care? It is taken from a blog by Social Architect David Baum.⁴

Image by Bernice Wong and Andrew Schlesinger.⁵

- » Work in groups of x4. On a page map your circles of care.
- » In what order, on an average day, do you tend to these circles from the

⁴ <https://www.davidbaum.com/>

⁵ <https://www.soulfoodsalon.com/post/circles-of-care-by-david-baum-phd-dmin>

moment of waking up each morning? Discuss your actual practices or ideas of practices that would help you live with more inner and outer peace. See examples for inspiration on each circle below:

1) Self

- » Do something *that is just for you*. Put on your own oxygen mask first. Self-care is vital and we cannot give from an empty cup.
- » ***An example practice may be to do 10 minutes of meditative breathing lying in bed as soon as you wake up.*** Eg. Inhale to a count of four, hold for two counts and then exhale to a count of six. The longer exhale activates our parasympathetic nervous system—which calms us. Then end with one minute of either positive self-statements or some other form of positive intention setting. “All of humanity’s problems stem from man’s inability to sit quietly in a room alone.” Blaise Pascal (1623- 1662)



2) Relationships.

- » The relationships that matter the most to you define the second circle from the centre: Perhaps your family, Sort your list (keep it small)
- » Take a moment to connect with those people with love and appreciation perhaps by individually calling up their faces and sending love and positivity. These are your emotional lifeboats, so treat them accordingly.

3) Work and Purpose.

- » Then only reach for your phone or computer to enter the third ring: the ring of *work and purpose*. Now you can check your messages, and turn your attention to working outwardly on your tasks/ homework /school commitments/projects.



4) Community and/or the larger societal world which you inhabit.

» What News /media do you ingest? When and how often?

*Above steps taken from David Baum's blog. See footnote no.5.

Homework/Heartwork:

Your heart-work is to put into practice tending to your circles of care over the next week.



Close with Gratitude:

Share one thing you are grateful for in your life/ in this moment.

I am
thankful
for today

A large, colorful rainbow graphic with multiple bands of orange, yellow, and light blue. The text 'I am thankful for today' is written in a black, cursive font across the center of the rainbow. Small pink and yellow dots are scattered around the rainbow.



Lesson 2:

Peace in our relationships.

Warm-up Activity: (5 mins)

- » Move around the room weaving amongst one another without colliding!
- » When facilitator says freeze, participants stop, and with a friend they share something they are grateful for.
- » Repeat as many times as you wish and have participants freeze and share e.g. what makes them feel at peace/what they had for breakfast/what news they heard that morning/what's their favourite colour/any other question that feels relevant.
- » To make it more interesting you can change the speed from slow, medium to faster.



Reflect on how we closed the previous lesson and the power of gratitude:



Research the science of gratitude. Share about how it helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships. See more examples of the benefits below and further reading.

- » Boosts feel-good chemicals
 - » Regulates stress
 - » Trains our brain to be more attuned to positivity
 - » Enhances neural connectivity in the parts of the brain associated with social bonding
 - » Improves self-esteem
 - » Enhances empathy and reduces aggression
- ... Among other things.

*More research on gratitude⁶

6 https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/GGSC-JTF_White_Paper-Gratitude-FINAL.pdf

Introduction to Nonviolent Communication (NVC):



Marshall Rosenberg, PhD effectively mediated conflicts throughout the world for more than 40 years. His method, Nonviolent Communication, has brought together warring factions as diverse as Irish Catholics and Protestants, Rwandan Hutus and Tutsis, Israelis and Palestinians as well as families and communities in conflict.

His method is simply to enable both parties in conflict to listen with empathy to the authentic feelings and needs of the “other” without the need to blame and judge.

Things can change when we feel heard as humans.

The 4 components of NVC are Observation; Feelings; Needs; Requests. By using all four components, we can create a safe and empathetic space for ourselves and others. Rosenberg says that we “dehumanize human beings by thinking of what they are rather than what they need”, and that “All moralistic judgments, whether positive or negative, are tragic expressions of unmet needs”.

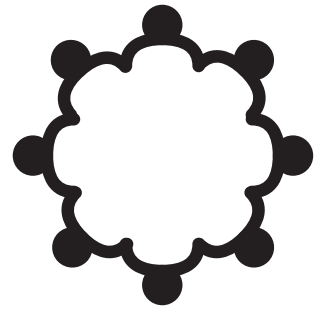
Read more on NVC here⁷.

7

The Centre for Nonviolent Communication <https://www.cnvc.org/>

Nonviolent Communication activity:

- » Have participants sit in circle and choose a feeling and need from the lists below. It might help to print on separate cards a number of these feelings/needs. The feelings and needs can also be found here.
- » Have participants share the need that jumped out at them with the circle. They can share why they feel it is important.
- » Then have participants choose the corresponding emotion that may arise if that need is met or not.



*This activity offers an insight into the language of NVC and space to gently reflect on the fact that we all have needs and that the feelings arise based on whether our universal needs are met or not. It promotes acceptance of ourselves and one another through acceptance of our needs and all of our feelings.

pleasant (expansion)		Feelings, Sensations, Emotions				unpleasant (contraction)	
<p>Calm</p> <p>relaxed serene tranquil peaceful quiet at ease comfortable</p> <p>trusting relieved centered content fulfilled satisfied mellow</p>	<p>Lively</p> <p>excited enthusiastic eager energetic passionate vibrant blissful</p> <p>radiant thrilled astonished amazed optimistic anticipation ecstatic</p>	<p>Vulnerable</p> <p>fragile insecure reserved sensitive</p>	<p>Bored</p> <p>disconnected alienated apathetic cold numb withdrawn impatient</p>	<p>Bodily sensations</p> <p>breathless pain tense shaky squeezed</p> <p>shrink sick weak empty choked</p>	<p>Sad</p> <p>depressed gloomy pity longing despair helpless hopeless nostalgic heavy hearted disappointed discouraged melancholy</p>	<p>Angry</p> <p>upset furious rage resentful</p>	
<p>Refreshed</p> <p>rested enlivened restored reactivated clearheaded</p>	<p>Curious</p> <p>fascinated interested involved engaged inspired</p>	<p>Compassion</p> <p>tender warm openhearted loving affection friendly sympathetic touched</p>	<p>Confused</p> <p>torn lost hesitant baffled perplexed puzzled</p>	<p>Uncomfortable</p> <p>troubled unsettled restless uncertain disquiet agitated</p> <p>disturbed cranky shocked surprised alert uneasy</p>	<p>Fear</p> <p>afraid scared suspicious panicked paralyzed terrified apprehensive</p>	<p>Pain</p> <p>hurt agony lonely miserable suffer grief guilt turmoil regretful remorseful heartbroken devastated</p>	
<p>Happy</p> <p>amused animated delighted glad joyful pleased</p>	<p>Confident</p> <p>empowered open proud safe hopeful</p>	<p>Grateful</p> <p>moved thankful appreciative encouraged</p>	<p>Worried</p> <p>concerned stressed nervous anxious edgy unquiet</p>	<p>Jealous</p> <p>envious</p>	<p>Hate</p> <p>dislike hostile aversion bitter disgusted scorn</p>	<p>Annoyed</p> <p>irritated frustrated unsatisfied impatient displeased</p>	<p>Embarrassed</p> <p>ashamed shy</p>



Universal basic needs

Play

liveliness / alive / vitality
flow
passion
spontaneity
fun
humor / laugh / lightness
discovery / adventure
variety / diversity

Honesty

self-expression
authenticity
integrity
transparency
realness / truth

Physical well-being

air
nourishment (food, water)
light
warmth
rest / sleep
movement / physical exercise
health
touch
sexual expression
shelter / security / protection / safety
protection from pain / emotional safety
preservation
comfort

Connection

love
belonging
closeness
intimacy
empathy / compassion
appreciation
acceptance
recognition
reassurance
affection
openness
trust
communication
sharing / exchange
attention
tenderness / softness
sensitivity / kindness
respect
seeing (see / be seen)
hearing (hearing / be heard)
inclusion / participation
support / help / nurturing
cooperation / collaboration
community / companionship
partnership / fellowship
mutuality / reciprocity
consistency / continuity
understanding
(understand / be understood)
consideration / care /
that my needs matter

Meaning

purpose
contribution / enrich life
presence
centeredness
hope / faith
clarity
to know (be in reality)
learning
awareness / consciousness
inspiration / creativity
challenge / stimulation
growth / evolution / progress
empowerment / power
having inner strength /
competence / capacity
self-value / self-confidence
self-esteem / dignity
efficacy / effectiveness
liberation / transformation
to matter / take part in
have my place in the world
spirituality
interdependence
simplicity
celebration / mourning

Harmony

peace
beauty
order
calm / relaxation / equanimity
/ tranquility
stability / balance
ease
communion / wholeness
completion / digestion /
integration
predictability / familiarity
equality / justice / fairness

Freedom

choice
acting out of my own spirituality
autonomy
independence
space / time



Film:

Watch this short film of Marshall Rosenberg to find out more about his experience sharing NVC around the world.⁸

Blindspots activity:

'Finished files are the result of years of scientific study combined with the experience of years'

- » Give a copy of this seemingly nonsensical sentence to every student. They cannot show their page to their peers. No one knows they all have the same sentence.

8 Nonviolent Communication with Marshall Rosenberg: A Brief Introduction (filmsforaction.org) www.filmsforaction.org/watch/nonviolent-communication-with-marshall-rosenberg-a-brief-introduction/

- » Ask them to count the letter f on the page. Ask who has the page with 1 f, who has the page with 2 f's, and carry on asking who has 3,4,5,6 f's.
- » The objective is to show students that we all have natural cognitive blind spots based on our own unique life experiences, perspectives and ways of seeing the world.
- » This activity encourages students to continue to expand their ways of seeing the world and explore different perspectives.

*You can read more about this activity here.⁹

Film:

- » Watch Charles Eisenstein's film what is it like to be you¹⁰.



⁹ https://www.youth.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Blind-Spots_0.pdf

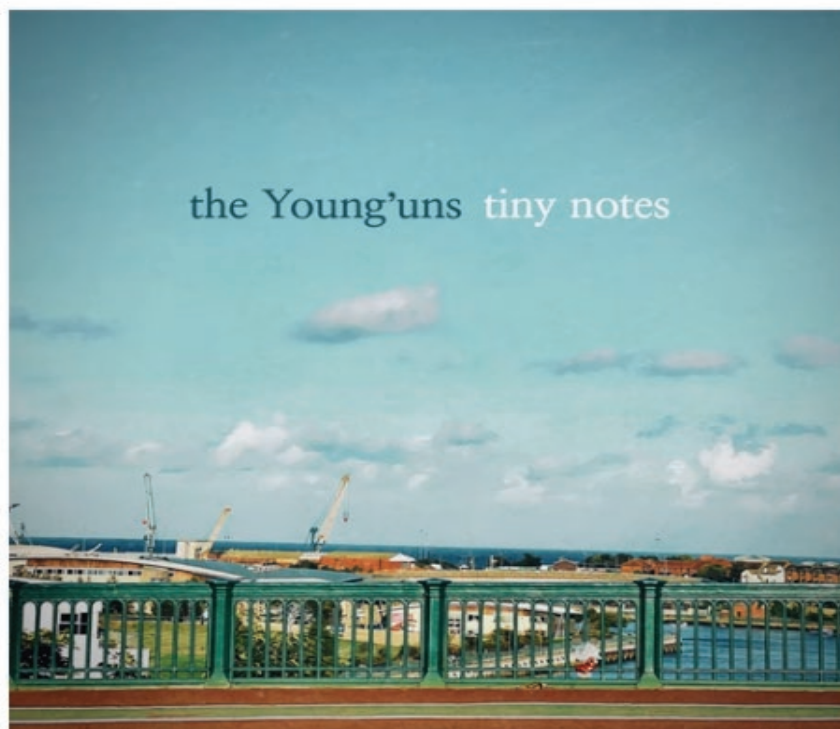
¹⁰ What Is It Like To Be You? | Charles Eisenstein (youtube.com) www.youtube.com/watch?v=uStmnodUpOo

Richard Moore's story:

*Photo of Richard Moore and His Holiness the Dalai Lama – good friends and fellow teachers of compassion.



- » Read Richard Moore's life story in Afri's educational resource 'Just a second', and/or listen to the young'uns sing his story here¹¹.
- » Ask Students to reflect on the uniqueness of Richard's story, and how his life is now dedicated to promoting peace and compassion.
- » Everyone's story is unique and many people dedicate their lives to peace and compassion in big and small ways. Can participants think of any other examples?
- » Ask participants to reflect on ways that they contribute to peace in their own lives. Ask them to reflect on their dreams or aspirations that relate to peace. This can just be beginning to plant a seed. They do not need to share their reflections.
- » "Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing". Arundhati Roy

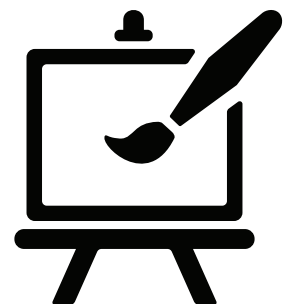


11 Richard Moore (youtube.com) www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDNggaE-_b4

The peaceful warrior activity:



- » Ask students to take out a pen and paper and to draw what comes to mind immediately when I say the word Warrior. (5mins) You can play music while they do this creative reflection practice. Perhaps play 'Oscail do Chroí' from lesson 1.
- » Share their pictures with friend. Is there much variety? Reflect on who is a warrior? What are the qualities of a warrior? Is being a 'warrior' a good thing or a bad thing? What is a peaceful warrior? Is a teenager a warrior? A single parent? An activist? Do the students agree that everyone can be a warrior? What do we think of that word. Is there a better word?
- » If you wish you could listen to Luka blooms song 'warrior'¹².





Lesson 3:

Peace in our world:

Gratitude Practice:

- » Remind participants about the importance of gratitude in our lives for our mental emotional and physical health.
- » Invite them to share with a partner 2 things they are grateful for in this moment and why.



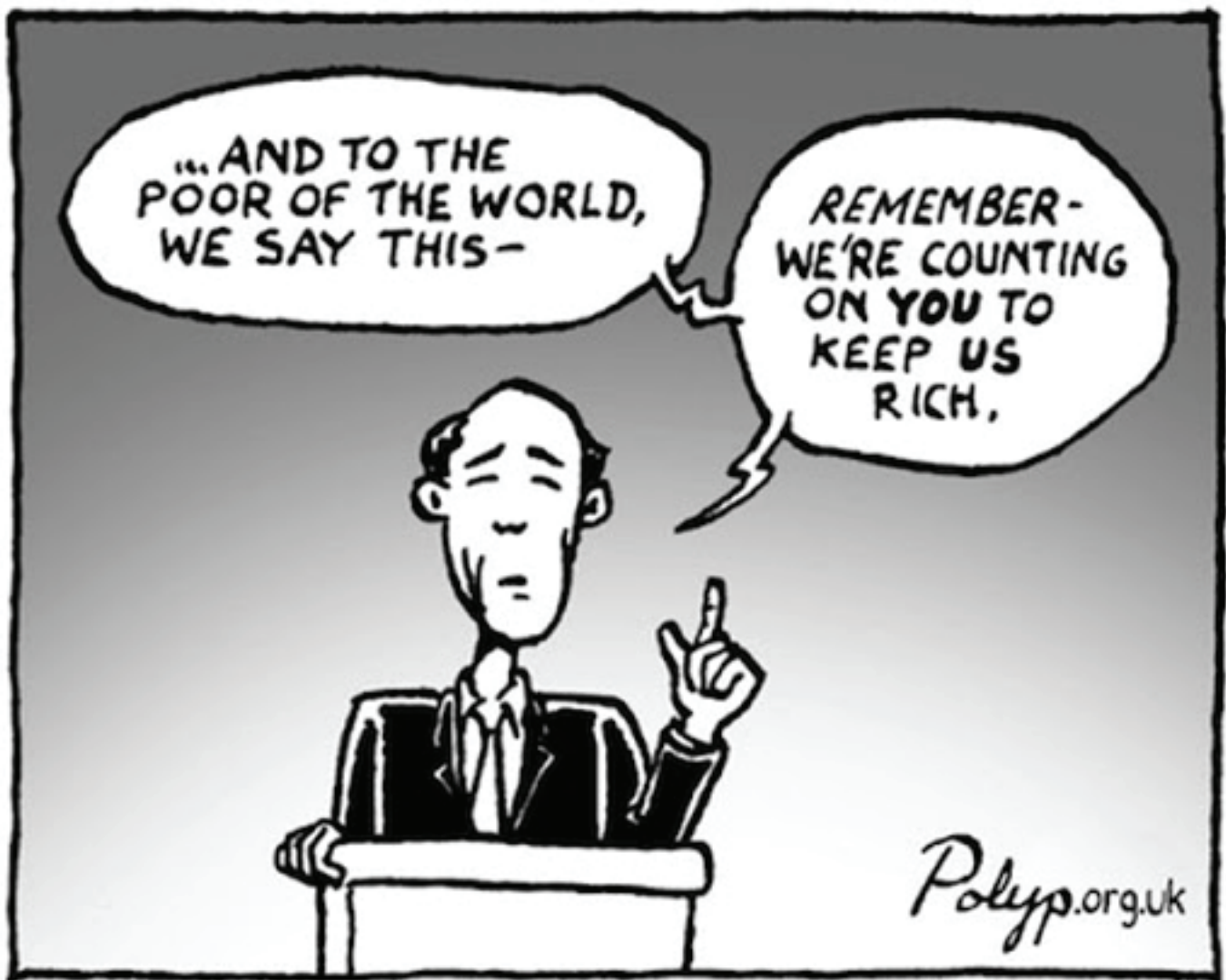
Film:

- » Share this short film on the UN Development goals *Leave no one behind*¹³.
- » Have participants share any reflections/reactions/likes/dislikes/discomforts/anything in pairs. Open up to wider sharing.

Discussion:

- » What is really happening in our world? People are being left behind every day.
- » Do you think this 'leaving people behind' is part and parcel of our socio-economic system?
- » Discuss cartoon image below. Who owns the vast majority of the wealth on the planet? Who are the 1%?

Read more about the 1% here¹⁴.



'MUTUAL AID'

¹⁴ <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/richest-1-bag-nearly-twice-much-wealth-rest-world-put-together-over-past-two-years>

» Discuss JFK's quote below.

"Too much and for too long, we seemed to have surrendered personal excellence and community values in the mere accumulation of material things.

Our Gross National Product, now, is over \$800 billion dollars a year, but that Gross National Product ... counts air pollution and cigarette advertising, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts

special locks for our doors and the jails for the people who break them. It counts the destruction of the redwood and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic sprawl. It counts napalm and counts nuclear warheads and armored cars for the police to fight the riots in our cities. It counts Whitman's rifle and Speck's knife, and the television programs which glorify violence in order to sell toys to our children.

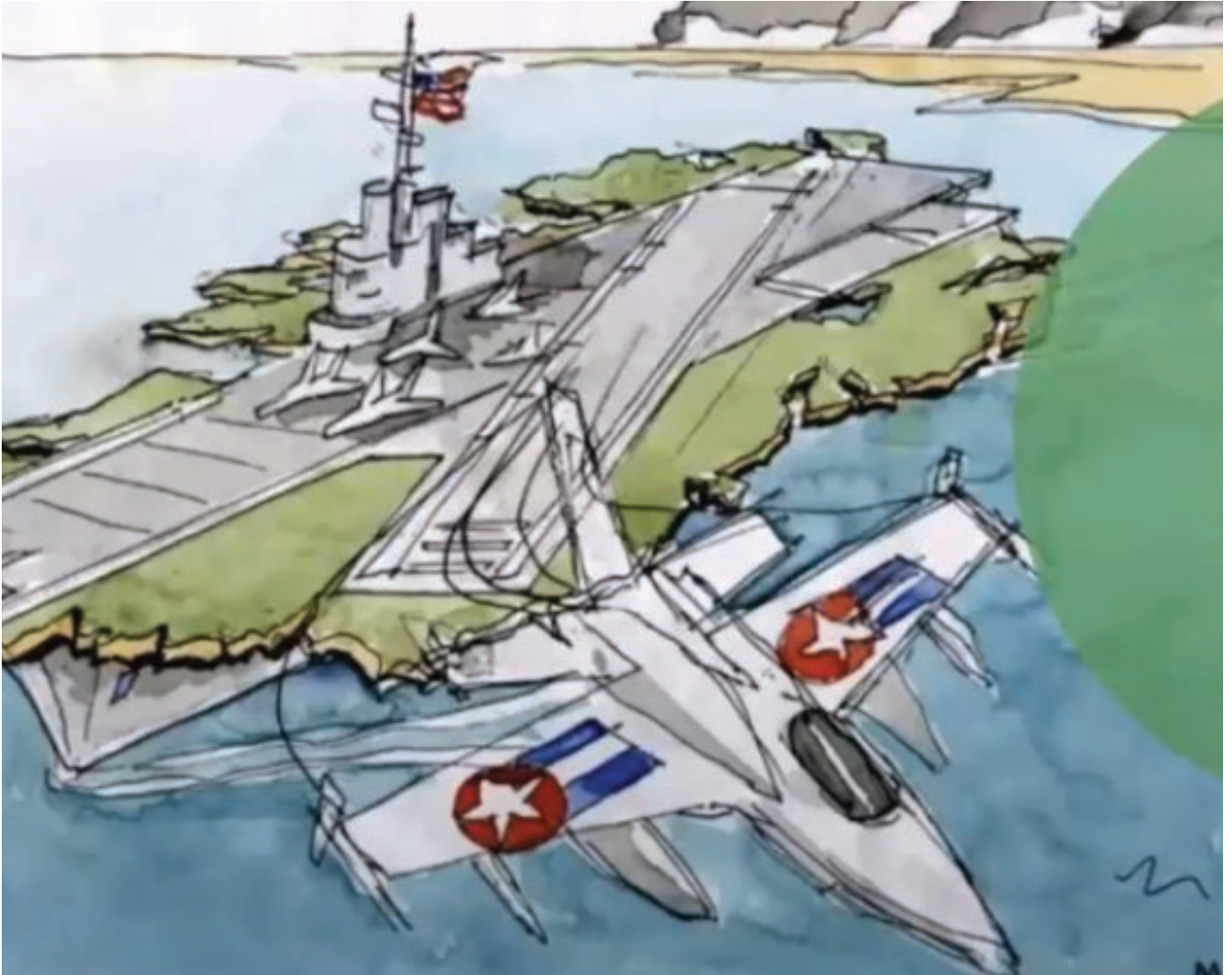
Yet the gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country, it measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile."

JFK University speech 1968¹⁵



15 <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/the-kennedy-family/robert-f-kennedy/robert-f-kennedy-speeches/remarks-at-the-university-of-kansas-march-18-1968>

Irish Neutrality:



Question for Reflection:

- » Ask participants what are their perceptions of Ireland and neutrality? Do they know if Ireland contributes to the global war machine in any way?

Film:

- » Again watch Richard Moore, in this short film¹⁶, speak about the rubber bullet that took his sight at the height of the troubles in Northern Ireland.

¹⁶ The Richard Moore Story (youtube.com) www.youtube.com/watch?v=Li3aFO-roH0

- » Watch the news headlines in the film and listen to what Richard says about the Irish government's participation in making components for weapons for the Military Industrial Complex.

More information on Ireland and Neutrality:

Ireland was not always involved in the war industry to the extent that we are today.

Ireland's tradition of neutrality began when our Government decided to stay out of the Second World War. This proved to be a difficult and contested decision but it set Ireland on a positive path in terms of our foreign policy.

Ireland became a member of the League of Nations in 1923 which later became the United Nations, the first line of whose charter is 'to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war'¹⁷. Ireland played a very positive role within the United Nations, especially under Frank Aikens's stewardship as Minister for External Affairs. Aiken was heavily involved in bringing about the non-proliferation Treaty, an agreement to limit the spread and development of nuclear weapons. Ireland also played a very important role as a neutral nation in peacekeeping with the UN, sending peacekeeping troops to many conflict zones around the world. Our neutrality and our non-participation in wars ensured the legacy of a non-aggressive foreign policy in the world, as peacemakers rather than war-makers, something that is sorely needed in our war torn world.

In 2020 The Economist magazine wrote 'Ireland has a good claim to be the most diplomatically powerful country'¹⁸. Because of these diplomatic skills – soft power – we could place ourselves as the neutral advocate for peace and disarmament. What a powerful role to play. Today our neutrality is growing ever more elusive.

Historically we were not involved in making weapons for the war industry as a neutral nation. But all this is changing. The Irish Government is shredding our neutrality by moving away from peacekeeping with the UN and towards

17 <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/preamble>

18 How Ireland gets its way (economist.com) www.economist.com/europe/2020/07/18/how-ireland-gets-its-way

war-making alongside the nuclear armed NATO. As we write the Government is preparing legislation to unpick the 'Triple Lock' – a further step away from the United Nations and into the 'arms' of NATO.¹⁹ And they have handed over Shannon Airport to be used as a US military outpost.²⁰

Our growing involvement in the war industry, in the midst of a housing, education and climate crisis, is further demonstrated by our government's commitment to increase military spending to 2% of our GDP. Simon Coveney agreed to a figure of 1.5 billion which is the biggest figure since the foundation of the Irish state.²¹

This increased involvement in the military and the weapons industry has come about following various EU referenda in which there are heavy military implications involving Nato and other EU 'security' organisations.

The Irish government hosted two seminars in 2021 and 2022 and the guest speaker in 2021 was the CEO of Thales, the biggest arms company on the island. Thales makes fully fledged missiles for export around the world. At a press conference in Belfast, Former English Prime Minister Boris Johnson stood with Thales missiles in the background and said 'this is the future for Northern Ireland'. The 2nd conference in October 2022 was called '*Building the ecosystem*'. Small businesses and 3rd level institutions attended and networked with companies promoting an increased involvement in military research and development. *Here we also see the co-opting of a word, eco-system, which is associated with the natural world. This cautions us to be discerning of what is being presented and sold to us by our global and national institutions.*²²

At present there are 550 firms in Ireland active in the military industry. This industry is worth 2.4 billion to the Irish economy, more than Irelands beef exports.

Shannon airport has been a stopover for US military on its way to wars all over the Middle East and beyond for decades. We can take action on these issues. Whatever the world needs it is not more weapons or more war.

The Irish people have constantly stated that they support our position as a

19 <https://www.rte.ie/news/2023/1122/1417969-triple-lock/>

20 <https://www.shannonwatch.org/Military>

21 <https://www.military.ie/en/news-and-events/news/defence-forces-chief-of-staff-welcomes-historic-increase-in-defence-budget.html>

22 https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/fanning_the_flames_report-tni-web_new.pdf; <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/405d3-research-technology-and-innovation/>; <https://www.afri.ie/category/peace-groups-to-protest-at-government-arms-fair-at-aviva-stadium/>

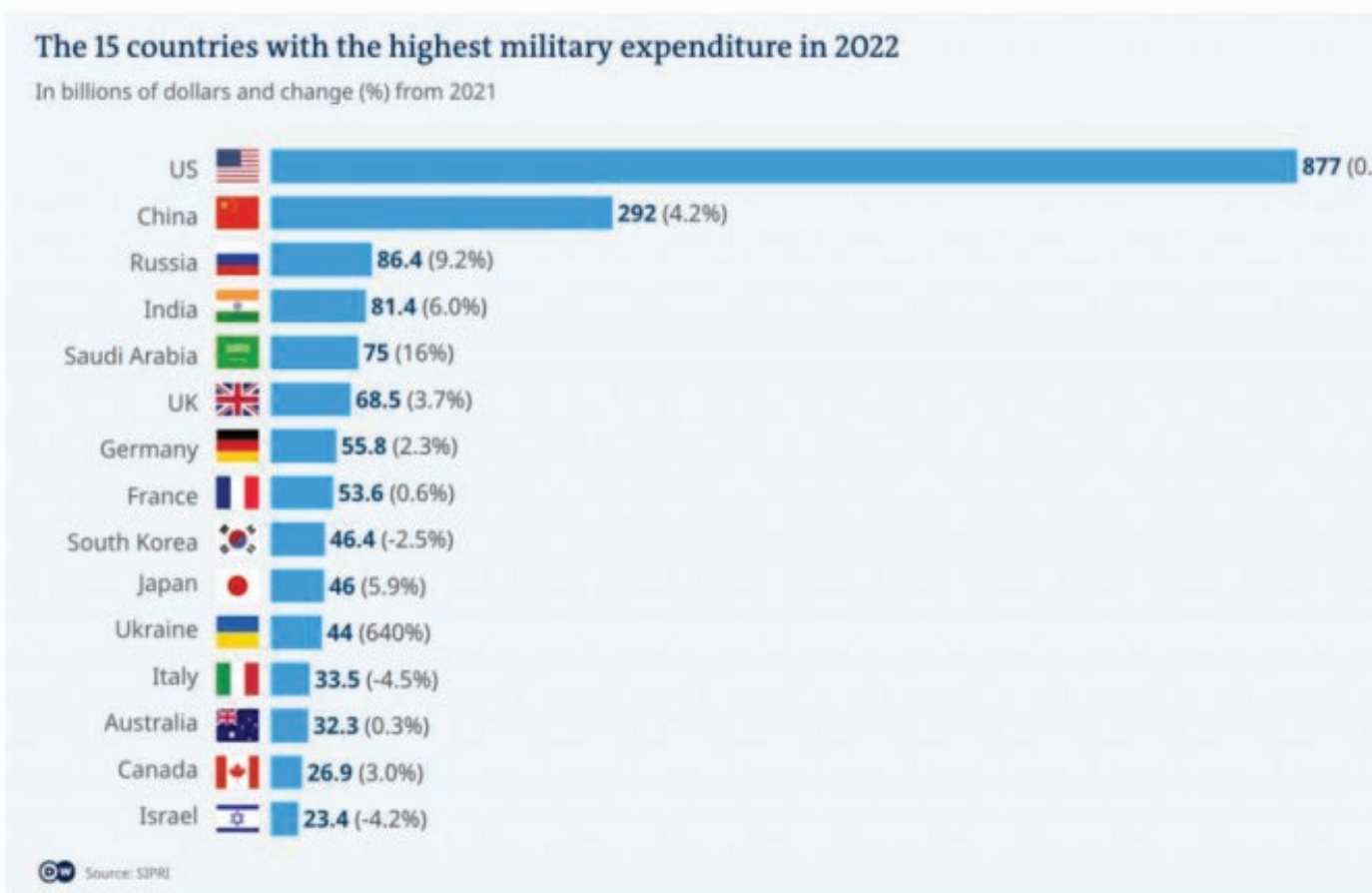
neutral country but the government is ignoring our wishes and listening instead to militarists, especially in NATO and the EU. As citizens, we must challenge this 'drift' towards war and demand that our wishes to be a peace promoting country be respected.

Discussion:

- » What do you think of Ireland's neutrality?
- » Do you think we should continue to work within the United Nations as peacekeepers or that we should work alongside NATO instead?

Information on global military expenditure:

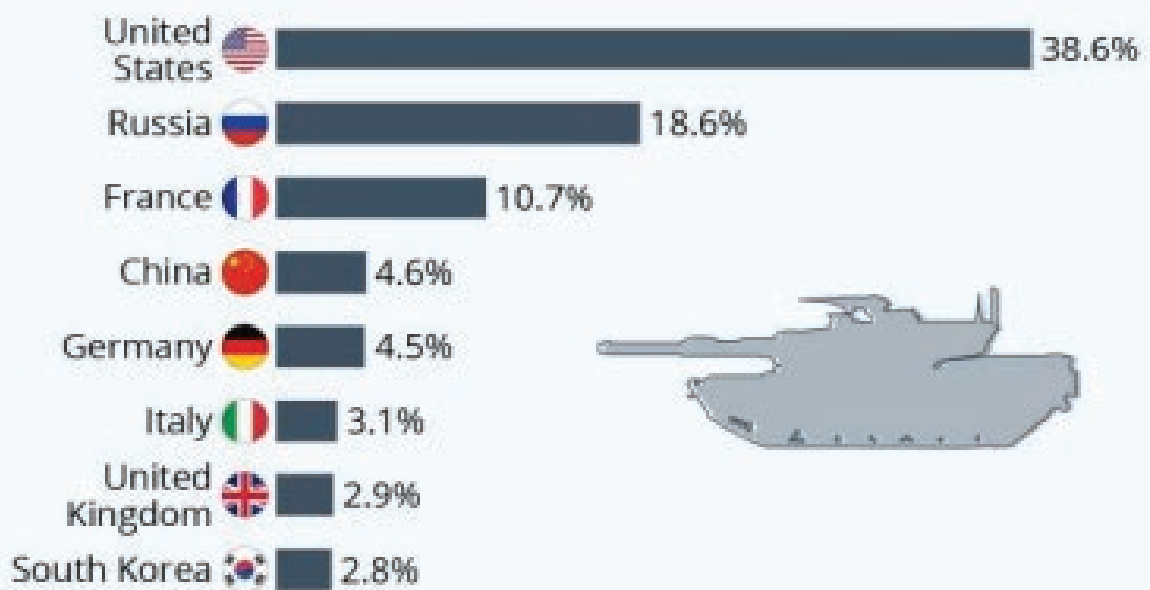
In April 2024, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)²³, the global arms budget surpassed \$2 trillion – that's over \$20 hundred billion. This is despite all UN member states adopting the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in 2014. The treaty prohibits the global transfer of weapons, munitions



and related items when it is known they would be used to commit or facilitate genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes. Trade with governments known to commit human rights abuses continues regardless.

The World's Biggest Arms Exporters

Countries responsible for the biggest shares of global arms exports from 2017 to 2021



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute



statista

Information on Swords to Ploughshares (StoP):

Swords to Ploughshares is a network of peace groups and peace activists throughout the island of Ireland who campaign to oppose the abandonment of Irish Neutrality, the developing arms industry in the Republic as well as the

growing and sizeable arms industry in Northern Ireland and the increasing militarisation of the EU.

*For more information you may wish to watch a public meeting they held, titled "*Human and Ecological Security: an Alternative to War & Militarism*"²⁴.

Documentary:

- » Watch the documentary '*The After School Arms Club*'²⁵, an after school club like no other! This was a project Afri²⁶ collaborated on with well-known campaigning comedian Mark Thomas, highlighting loopholes in the global arms trade by showing how easily a group of students could broker weapons (the buying and/or selling of goods) into Ireland. (taken from page 73 of *sowing seeds of peace*²⁷).



24 HUMAN AND ECOLOGICAL SECURITY: AN ALTERNATIVE TO WAR & MILITARISM - YouTube www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpcK1QYLk6M

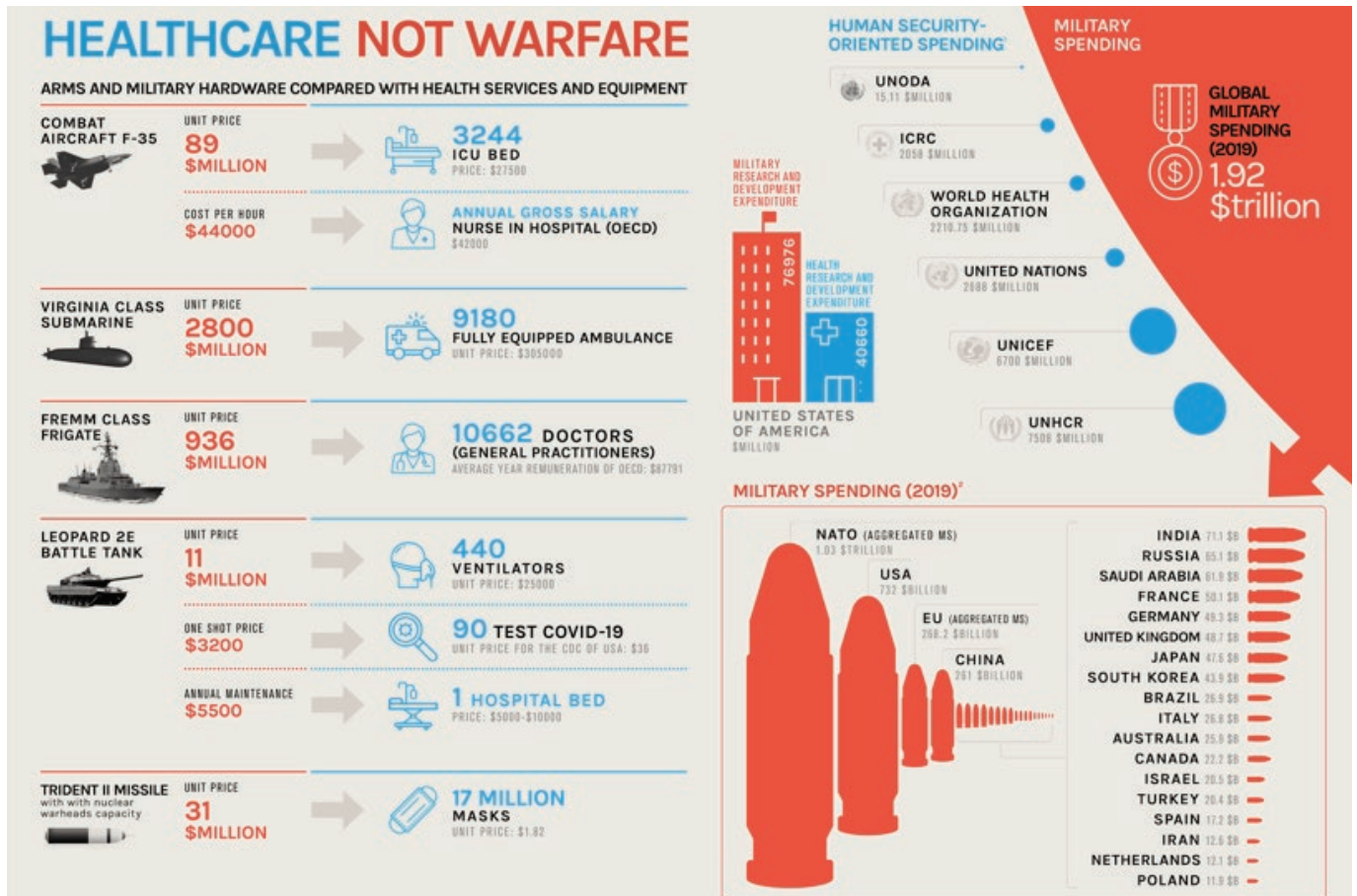
25 <https://developmenteducation.ie/feature/the-after-school-arms-club/>

26 www.afri.ie

27 Resource (developmenteducation.ie) www.developmenteducation.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Sowing-Seeds-of-Peace.pdf

Study the infographic below:

- » Which comparison is the most striking for you?
- » Where else would you spend the money that is being spent on warfare to build a more peaceful world?



28

Song:

- » Listen to Peace train²⁹ playing for change – featuring Cat Stevens - Song around the world.
- » Enjoy!

28 https://demilitarize.org/media_news/gdams-healthcare-not-warfare-infographic/

29 "Peace Train" featuring Yusuf / Cat Stevens | Playing For Change | Song Around The World (youtube.com) www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QpjR6-Uuks



»

- » What do you understand 'the web of life' to mean? What does this quote mean for you?
- » Discuss in groups ideas for possible actions that could be taken to promote peace or to actively oppose war.

Heartwork:

- » Research the story of the Iroquois and the 7 generations principle³⁰.



LESSON 4:

Roots of peace – culture and mythology:

There are many who say that the Indigenous Irish traditions and language, indeed like Indigenous teachings across the planet, offers us a way back to a more eco-centred way of living together. A worldview that celebrates and protects the natural world and so, a worldview that may be part of the remedy to creating a more peaceful way of living together.³¹

Myth and History:

Eirene is the Goddess for Peace in Greek mythology. Her name is very similar to the name of Ireland as Gaeilge - Éire. The sovereign goddess of Ireland, along with her two sisters, is Éiru, after whom this land Éire is named.

Another great Woman also considered Ireland's matron saint is Brigid. Read on to learn more about Éiru and Brigid, and a celtic civilisation where powerful women were revered as leaders.

Eirene:



Éiru:



Brigid:



Ériu was one of the Tuatha De Dannan, the mythical tribe said to be the first settlers in Ireland, arriving on the west coast through a mystical fog. They were recognised as powerful gods and goddesses whose origins were of an otherworldly realm ("Dé" is the Irish word for god). While they honoured the differences between men and women, there was great equality in their society and they had powerful male and female leaders, rulers, gods and goddesses.

It is said that Ériu and her sisters were asked to represent the Tuatha Dé Danann when meeting the Milesians, a rival race who arrived in Ireland long after the Tuatha Dé Danann, intent on dominating the country. A patriarchal society, the Milesians were led by their druid, Amergin.

Ériu and her sisters, with their intuitive powers, sensed that the age of the Milesians was coming upon Ireland, and it was time for them to return through the spiritual veil. Amergin met the three sisters atop Uisneach, the sacred hill in the heart of Ireland, where they requested that Amergin name Ireland after them.

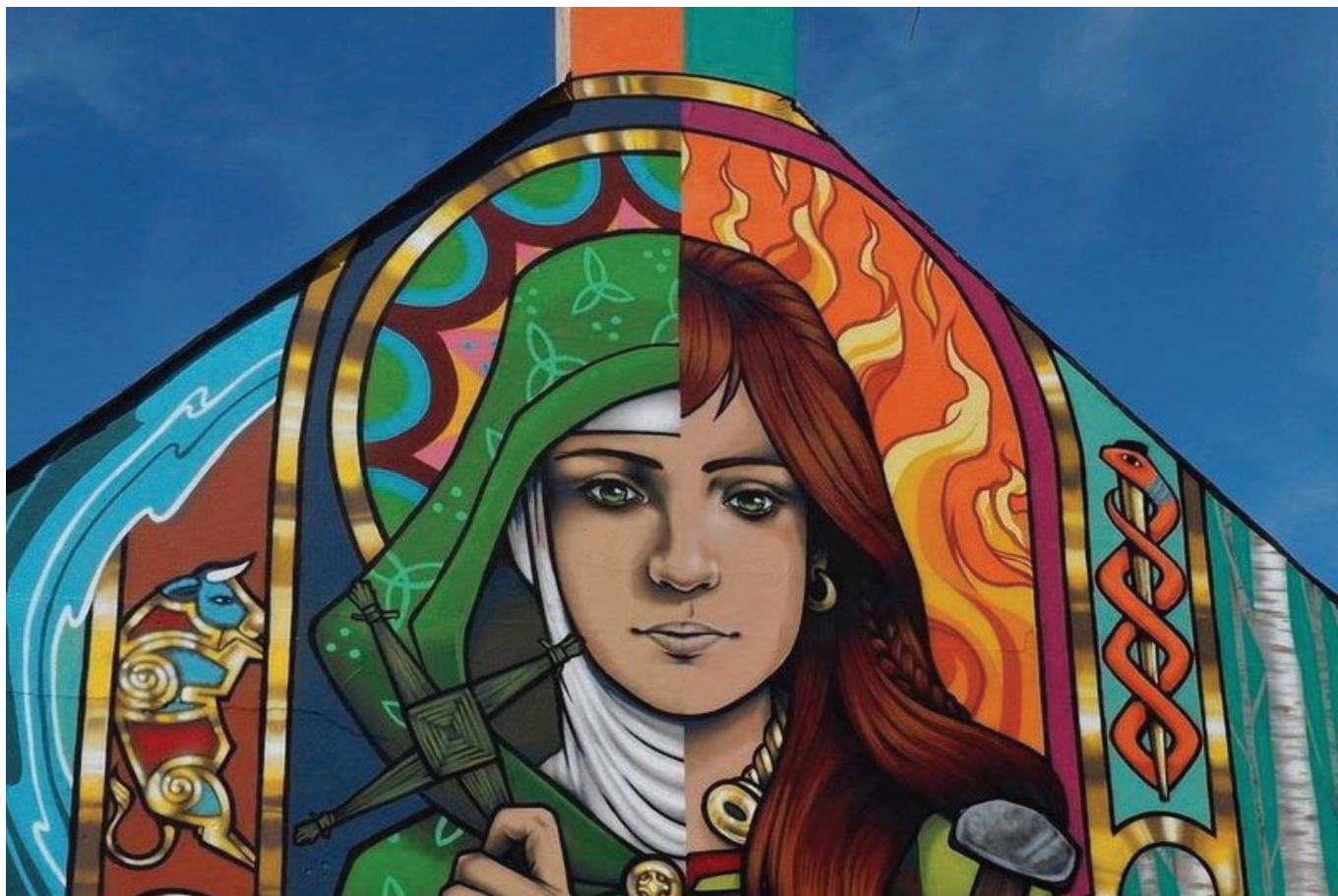
Ériu's sovereign presence and connection to the land greatly impacted Amergin. So he named the land after her, leaving their powerful feminine legacy embedded in the land for future generations to come.³²

Another important and perhaps even more well-known woman in Irish culture is Brigid, worshiped by the Irish people since ancient times and also said to be a descendent and goddess of the Tuatha Dé Danann. We celebrate Saint Brigid's day around February 1st also the day that marks the fire festival of Imbolc on the Celtic wheel of the year. Imbolc is associated with rebirth, fertility, new beginnings, and the promise of spring, when light and life is returning to the earth after winter. In mythology Brigid is personified as the embodiment of the dawn coming with the light of each new morning. She is associated with rebirth and optimism.

Brigid is renowned for her generosity, peace weaving, and love of nature. She is protector of healers, poets, smiths, childbirth and inspiration she represents the creative spark of life, and the symbolic flame which makes things new. The

32 <https://www.wildernessireland.com/blog/goddess-ireland-eriui/>

poet who brings form to words, the healer who restores life to those in need and the smith who refines metal into something greater.



* Dundalk's colourful mural of Brigid – Goddess and Saint, by artist Friz

Story:

- » Read here some of the stories of Brigid. Especially under the section titled 'Woman of Peace', read about Brigid giving away her father's precious sword to a poor man looking for food. Her values shine through these stories and we celebrate Brigid's promotion of peace, opposition to war and her care for the planet.
- » Reflect as a group how can we promote peace, oppose war and ensure there's more compassion in our world.

Today we worship Saint Brigid of Kildare, using symbols made to worship the goddess Brigid over 1000 years ago. The famous Saint Brigid's cross is said to have roots in the pagan sun wheel, used to bless the earth with fertility and life at Imbolc (Feb 1st).

On the site of a monastery founded by Brigid in Kildare, her perpetual flame was tended for centuries by priestess fire-keepers, and later by sisters from the Christian faith. In the 18th Century when the monarchy under Henry the VIII of England, set about supressing monasteries, Saint Brigid's monastery was closed down, and the eternal flame extinguished.³³ The Brigidine sisters returned to the site of the monastery in Kildare in 1993 and rekindled the eternal flame. They tend to the flame daily in honour of Brigid and all that she represents.³⁴

The way that pagan and Christian traditions and stories of Brigid are be woven together so harmoniously is testament to the strength of a culture that accepts and celebrates diverse worldviews that promote peace, love and compassion.

In this era where Crises like war, greed and increasing polarisation are never far from our news stories we need the message of Brigid and all those who champion peace to prevail.

May Brigid, keeper of prophecies and dreams, watcher of greater destinies and guardian of the future, guide us along pathways to peace, both within ourselves, and in our world.

Reflective creative Imbolc activity:

- » Find out how to make a St. Brigid's cross and collect rushes or other materials to do so.
- » Research some stories about Brigid
- » What is the season of Imbolc and what does it have to do with St. Brigit?
- » Craft a saint Brigit's cross from rushes while discussing some of the stories that inspired you.
- » Research the St. Brigid's Peace Cross Campaign.³⁵

33 <https://mythicalireland.com/blogs/myths-legends/bridget-bright-goddess-of-the-gael>

34 <https://solasbhríde.ie/the-story-of-brigid/#:~:text=Brigid%20was%20born%20at%20a,women%20in%20Kildare%20around%20470AD.>

35 <https://donmullan.org/about-don/work-experience/1983-st-brigids-peace-cross-campaign/>



Website: www.afri.ie **Email:** admin@afri.ie **Address:** 8 Cabra Road, Dublin 7