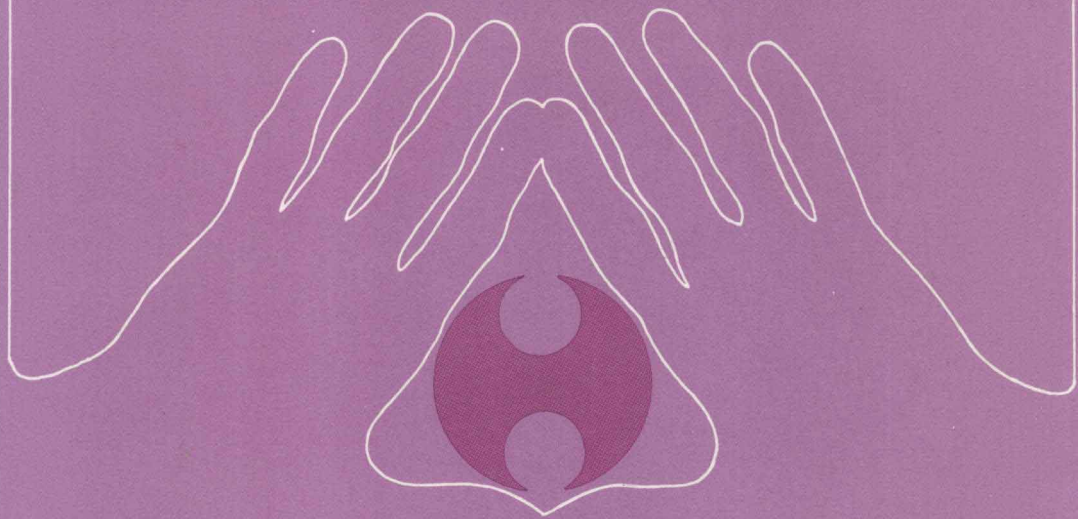


PEACE & POWER



a handbook of
FEMINIST
Process

Third Edition

Gene Eldridge Wheeler
Peggy L. Chinn

Peace and Power
A Handbook of Feminist Process
Third Edition

Charlene Eldridge Wheeler
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The cover design combines symbols of feminist concepts of Peace and Power. The hands held with the thumbs and first fingers touching are an international sign of women's unified commitment to peace within the universe. The labrys is a symbol of independent female power from ancient Crete now adopted by modern feminists. These two symbols combined reflect synergistic movement toward feminist activism. The cover was designed by Charlene Eldridge Wheeler.

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Acknowledgments

We enjoy a large circle of friends and companions as we continue on our journey toward a feminist future. Many individuals have made it possible for us to share the ideas of *Peace and Power*. We have not specifically named each individual here, but we appreciate each and every one and trust that our journey together will grow and develop in the years to come.

Wilma Scott Heide, a dear friend and courageous women's movement leader of the early 1970s, gave us the inspiration and determination to venture into publishing the first edition of *Peace and Power* at Margaretdaughters, Inc.¹ She told us that when she first read the book, she wept, both from the joy of seeing feminist ideas presented in this way, and from the anguish of not having had the benefit of some of these insights in her early years of activist work. As we conveyed to her many times before her death in 1984, it is because of her own courageous living, and that of women like her, that we have been able to do the work on which these ideas are built.

Patricia Moccia, a woman of vision in our own generation, believed in the possibilities of this process for a wider circle, and initiated and facilitated the publication of the second edition by the National League for Nursing. This occurred at a time of great crisis in the health care system and at a time of dramatic change for nurses and nursing. As incongruous as it may seem to many, this book is possible in part because of our backgrounds as nurses, and

the heritage we carry from many radical nurses, sometimes not-yet-feminists, who lived and worked over the last century.

Sally Barhydt, Managing Editor at the National League for Nursing, has worked with us closely during the preparation of both the second and the third editions. Her enthusiasm and support for having this book published by the League has been central to making this possible.

The groups in which we have worked have been fundamentally important in providing the opportunities to live our values, and to explore new ways of putting our values into action. These groups, and individuals in them who have contributed in particular ways to the emergence of our own thinking, include the following.

The Emma Collective was a group of women who owned a women's bookstore, now located at 168 Elmwood Avenue in Buffalo, New York. Lisa Albrecht, now at the University of Minnesota and a leader in the National Women's Studies Association, was a member of the Emma Collective at the time that we joined, and worked attentively with us as we first began to develop the insights that made this book possible. The Emma Collective used a form of rotating chair and as we worked to put language to the process, provided invaluable insights and learning experiences.

The Women's Studies Program at the State University of New York at Buffalo has a tradition since the late 1960s of using a rotating chair process in their meetings and class gatherings. We have learned from them and from many individual women who participated in the Women's Studies classes and gatherings over the years.

Various coalitions of women in the Buffalo community, including the Voices of Women Writers Coalition (1982) and International Women's Day (IWD) Coalitions (1982-1986), have provided experience and insights that have contributed to many of these ideas. In 1983, the IWD Coalition invited Wilma Scott Heide to speak at our celebration, making possible the important connection we formed with Wilma.

Cassandra: Radical Feminist Nurses Network (P.O. Box 181039, Cleveland, Ohio 44118-1039) is a network of nurses formed in 1982, committed to developing feminist analyses of

issues in nursing and women's health. Our gatherings, as well as our struggles to work together across long distances to carry out responsibilities for the *NewsJournal* and the Webstership list, have contributed immeasurably to shaping our ideals.

The Friendship Collective was a group of nurses who gathered to study the meaning and significance of women's friendships in nursing (1987–1989). Members of this group were: Elizabeth Berrey, Peggy Chinn, Cathy Kane, Christine Madsen, Adrienne Roy, Charlene Eldridge Wheeler, and Elizabeth Mathier Wheeler. Throughout this book, there are many references to the experiences of this group and the individuals in it.

Participants in the Feminism and Nursing class at the State University of New York at Buffalo, Spring, 1982 were particularly influential in our determination to see these ideas in print. Anne Montes (now owner and operator of Emma Bookstore), Adrienne Roy, and Penny Bresnick (whom we first met in that class) have remained close friends and have provided the many forms of love and support that have made this work possible.

The Faculty of Nursing at the University of Technology, Sydney, Kuring-Gai Campus in New South Wales, Australia, participated in an important (for us) workshop that gave us new insights about the use of the process in traditional institutions. The department chair, Judy Lumby, made this workshop possible. In a loving and respectful way, she explored with us some of the most difficult aspects of shifting values in a context where patriarchal ideals reign supreme.

During a visit to Deakin University in Geelong, Victoria, Australia, we were also able to explore more fully some of the philosophic ideas that have informed the approaches we describe here. We extend particular appreciation to Pat Hickson and Cheryl Moss for the insights that they have shared with us where feminist values and traditional philosophy intersect.

In the interim time period between the publication of the second and third editions, we relocated geographically to Denver, Colorado. The students and faculty of the School of Nursing at the University of Colorado have been a particularly important influence on the development of the ideas in this edition. The school's

educational, research, and service programs are built on a value of human caring. Unlike many such educational communities, there is explicit commitment to addressing issues openly. Like many such educational communities, there are many issues to address. We appreciate all of the faculty and the students who have worked with us to begin to create new realities within this context.

Prologue

Copper Woman warned Hai Nai Yu that the world would change and times might come when Knowing would not be the same as Doing. And she told her that Trying would always be very important.

Anne Cameron¹

A few women, old now, and no longer strong. A few elder women who kept alive what the invader tried to destroy. Grandmothers and aunts. Mothers and sisters. Who must be honoured and cherished and protected even at risk of your own life. Who must be respected. At all times respected. Women who know that which we must try to learn again. Women who provide a nucleus on which we must build again. Women who will share with us if we ask them. Women who love us. And seeming candidates, who have been tested and found worthy, and who are learning the old wisdom. Young women who do not always manage to Do that they Know, and so need our love and help.

Anne Cameron²

Women's wisdom is ageless and timeless, and passes from generation to generation primarily by oral tradition. Women's wisdom is all too often the hidden foundation of patriarchal scholarship throughout academic, religious, and philosophic literature—without credit to the origins of the ideas. These origins are

grounded in women's experiences, female symbolism, and the spiritual roots of the Triple Goddess.³ One of the most devastating results of this fragmentation and wrongful claiming of ownership of women's wisdom is the use of this wisdom in partial ways.

Women in the feminist tradition have been and are continuing to re-member⁴ the wisdom of Doing what we Know, and of Knowing what we Do, moving toward woman-affirming realities. While we may not always manage to Do what we Know, the wisdom survives and is being re-learned with every attempt, with every re-attempt. The Knowing is so deeply buried within us, under layers and layers of patriarchal learning and conditioning, that the Trying is extremely tedious. It is at the same time exciting, affirming, and encouraging. It becomes easier with every lived experience, especially within the context of a community of loving and protective women. As nurses, our communities have been primarily among nurses. We have found that the roots of women's communities emerge from a foundation of all women as healers.⁵

We believe that one of the reasons that the oral tradition has survived and is still practiced so extensively among women is that telling is indeed a simultaneous act of Knowing and Doing that springs comfortably from women's wisdom. Writing is also a form of communication that can be both Knowing and Doing (albeit a bit more of a challenge!).

The written word provides a form that can be more or less enduring in a concrete way, but at the same time becomes static and seemingly frozen in time and space. A major limitation of the written word is that it can be readily destroyed. For centuries, women scholars have recorded women's wisdom into written form, but much of that writing has not survived.⁶

The spoken word, while seeming to disappear once the words are spoken, endures within the heart and mind of the listener and the speaker. Once spoken, it cannot be destroyed unless every person who has heard those words is destroyed. Speaking can also be an interaction, as the speaker and the listener attend to the responses of one another. The act of speaking is an emergence, a creating and a form that gives rise to new acts, new thoughts, and new forms even as the speech occurs. The act of listening—hearing another's words into expression—facilitates a co-creation

and allows a fine-tuning of ideas that combines each person's perceptions as words are shared.

This book grew out of our desire to document in writing the women's wisdom that has been passed on to us in the oral tradition and through living examples. We have woven together a wide array of feminist thought that gives form and substance to what we Know and Do. The ideas emerge from depths of experience and knowing within our Selves and from feminist literature (see Notes at the end of the book). In the second edition, we began to draw on our more recent work with the Process, as well as on criticisms and feedback from other women. In this, the third edition, we have continued to incorporate our learning from others, including women in Canada and Australia. We hope the feedback shared by those women has enhanced this edition by providing more global relevance.

In our experience, Doing that which comes from women's Knowing is difficult within the hostile environment of patriarchal systems. We are too familiar with patriarchally structured meetings where we have been out-voted, out-shouted, and unheard. We have eventually dropped out, if not physically, in spirit. No doubt, you have had similar experiences.

Within feminist groups, we have experienced wonderfully different ways of relating, where no one is out-voted, out-shouted, or unheard. Sometimes we have physically dropped out of these groups as our interests or circumstances changed. However, we have always remained in spirit.

We believe that at this point in history, it is critical for women to come together and create woman-affirming interactions and realities. We see small group interactions among women as an ideal place to enact feminist values in a loving and supportive environment.

Language is crucial to creating this environment. For the most part, patriarchal words are what women must use to express our own meanings and wisdom. In the attempt to reflect our own experience, women are creating new meanings and new words. When the listener does not comprehend the meanings, women depend on both actions and speaking to make those meanings clear.

In this book, we use both old words with new (women's) meanings, and new words created to more fully express women's meanings. As a reader, you will not be able to observe our actions that enriched our comprehension, but you will, as you begin to create the process in your own time and space, begin to comprehend and create meanings that emerge from your own wisdom and experience.

To emphasize the importance of women working together to learn and create realities based on feminist values, we use female nouns and pronouns. One issue that we have struggled with is the use of "we," "us," and "our." Sometimes (as in this chapter) these words mean we, as authors, our ideas as authors, and so on. In other sections of the book, these pronouns refer to *all* who share a commitment to the values of Peace and Power. While we have tried to be mindful to be clear and consistent, we (as authors) are relying on you (as readers) to sort it out where we have not been particularly clear!

Just as we learned this process, we have passed this knowledge to other women in words and action—defining, clarifying, and describing as we all participated in the process together. It feels awkward to us to define the process by its parts, but we do not know a better way—in writing—to give a total picture.

This third edition of the *Handbook* includes refinements of language and expression that evolved from our ever-expanding consciousness. It also expands on the ideas in the second edition, and includes several new sections. The first two chapters of the *Handbook* provide the Ideas upon which the Process is built. Chapter 3 describes what it means to make the commitment to feminist values and process. Chapter 4 gives guidelines for forming a group's Principles of Unity. Chapters 5 through 8 provide a description of each component of the Process in action. Chapter 9 provides suggestions for transforming conflict through the process of honoring diversity within the group and developing unity. Chapter 10 gives brief guidelines for periodic transitions, such as changes in group membership. Chapter 11 explores the power of this Process to change existing patriarchal systems, particularly in classrooms, committees, and other groups within existing

institutions. There are many adaptations that are needed. Usually, the ideals of *Peace and Power* are realized only partially within these settings. But our experience, and that of many others who have talked or written to us about their use of the process in these settings, confirms that even the slightest inclusion of feminist values in such situations creates an enormous shift toward a different way of interacting.

We have had numerous conversations where women have breastified⁷ about their experiences with the Process and the power that comes from trusting in the Process. These groups include administrative team meetings, book discussion groups, hospital ethics committees, child and adult church groups, peace groups, doctoral student study groups, faculty work groups, community service groups, support groups, nursing research groups, and groups writing for publication. We were surprised at times at the wide range of groups that have boldly endorsed the principles and ideals of Peace and Power and have had such wonderful success stories to share.

Finally, the Notes at the end of the book provide the traditional “references” to literature and individual women who we quote, cite, or have influenced our thinking. These notes also provide anecdotal commentary about the text itself, parenthetical ideas related to the text, experiences that inform the text, and literature that provides additional in-depth information about topics in the text. Like the traditions that have emerged in the work of other feminist authors, the notes are a valuable resource of information and, we think, quite readable in their own right.

Throughout, we provide examples from our own experience with the Process. The examples are composites of different experiences and illustrate critical insights. These examples are intended to clarify a simple—but certainly not easy—process.

The re-writing of the third edition occurred during a time when the United States entered into another war. When the war “ended,” peace did not exist. This is yet another grim reminder that peace is not merely the absence of war. In our own way, wanting to make a contribution to peace, we talked with many women who were also eager to explore how we can each contribute to creating

peace on earth, by beginning within, where we live and work, everyday, in a way that builds on the values of Peace and Power.⁸ As we began to more fully act on the ideas that came from these discussions, we came to new realizations about what it means to “Know what I Do, and Do what I Know.” We share here some ideas that emerged during this time:

**A DOZEN AND ONE IMPORTANT THINGS
YOU CAN DO TO CREATE PEACE ON EARTH**

1. Plant and nurture something that grows.
2. Practice the fine art of yielding—in your car, in conversation, and so on.
3. Become active in a group that works on principles of cooperation.
4. Fill your home, work, and commuting environments with visual and auditory images of peace and tranquility.
5. Do at least one thing to simplify your life *and* reduce your consumption of disposable products.
6. Do at least one thing to reduce your consumption of natural resources.
7. Move toward a vegetarian diet.
8. Learn and practice some form of meditation.
9. Learn and practice ways to reduce hostile interactions with others.
10. Exchange gentle forms of touch regularly.
11. Express appreciation to at least one individual or group every day.
12. Help three children learn three things on this list.
13. Pass this list along to someone else.

While writing and revising this book, we have been keenly aware that we cannot directly address the questions or thoughts that might arise as you read, something we would be able to do in a

group where we could interact. Since the first edition, we have received many comments, suggestions, insights, and criticisms from women who have used the book. We have integrated these ideas that many have contributed to this work-in-process. We encourage and welcome your criticisms and responses to this new edition.

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1

What It's All About: PEACE

If I believe so much must change, I must be willing to change myself.

Frances Moore Lappé, 1990¹

*Can we be like drops of water falling on the stone
Splashing, breaking, dispersing in air
Weaker than the stone by far
But be aware that as time goes by
The rock will wear away
And the water comes again*

Meg Christian and Holly Near, 1976²

Peace is both the intent and the process from which feminist activism arises. To fully enact *Peace* requires that as individuals we act with conscious awareness as we approach group interactions and Know what it is that we as individuals, acting in concert with others, want to Do. *Peace* is the means and the end, the process and the product. By enacting, we also create.

The acronym that follows defines the idea of *Peace* as intent/process. This acronym builds on an understanding of our feminist concept of what *Peace* is and what it is not. Each of the components of the acronym reflects a commitment that guides the ways in which individuals can choose to relate to one another within the context of group process. Each letter of the word PEACE represents a concept of the intent/process from which actions arise:

Praxis
Empowerment
Awareness
Consensus
Evolution

PRAXIS

Praxis is thoughtful reflection and action that occur in synchrony, in the direction of transforming the world.³ Most of us have limited knowledge of praxis, since we exist in a time when “knowing” and “doing” are rarely the same. In Western cultures, we are all familiar with the message “Do as I say, not as I do.” When we choose to convey the message that: “I Know what I do, and I Do what I Know,” we are living our values. We define praxis as *values made visible through deliberate action*. Thus, praxis used with feminist values becomes an ongoing cycle of constant renewal. As actions are informed by awareness of values, reasons, and ethics, our thinking and our ideas are being shaped and changed by our experiences with those actions.

EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is growth of personal strength, power, and ability to enact one’s own will and love for self in the context of love and respect for others. Empowerment is not self-indulgence, but rather a form of strength that comes from real solidarity with/among those who seek PEACE.⁴ Empowerment requires listening inwardly to our own senses as well as listening intently and actively to others, consciously taking in and forming strength.⁵ Empowerment is not power over other people, other creatures, or the earth. In fact, empowerment is only possible when individuals express respect and reverence for all other forms of life and ground the energy of the Self as one with the earth.