

## English Project - Peacecamp

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## Why did we choose this topic?

On July of 2019 we participated in Peacecamp in Lackenhof, Austria. This experience was unforgettable for us and we wanted to dig inside and see what is the main idea behind Peacecamp and how it all began.

It was no doubt that we would choose this subject, those ten days we spent in Peacecamp were the best time of our lives and we wanted to get as much as we could from it.



## ABOUT PEACECAMP

Peacecamp is a camp with 4 delegations of 8 children from 4 different nations: Austria, Hungary, Jewish Israelis and Arab Israelis. The 4 delegations are brought together to a beautiful small village called Lackenhof in Austria.

A team of artists, educators, teachers and a group analyst elaborate with them on these issues, using “4 questions about peace” as a guideline through the obstacles and possible solutions of the problems and conflicts prevailing in the societies.

Peacecamp tries to raise awareness of individual and group resources and to develop and spread skills apt to cope with, and resolve problems in non-violent, creative ways, based on knowledge and mutual understanding.

Work is done in a pleasurable, playful and mindful manner leading to a final “show4peace” that shows on stage what the participants experienced and learned during these ten days.

Every day there are different workshops:

**Large Group-** this is the place for the participants to talk about whatever they want however they want. In the Large Group the participants are their own guiders, there are no “adults” and “children” everyone is the same.

**Talk4peace-** The talks4peace workshop, allow the participants to share and juxtapose different narratives of their respective histories, to argue and debate about the question of truth in historical fact finding, and of the way in which information is communicated and passed on by the media or the history books of each group and nation.

**Art4peace-** The art4peace is more about music, movement, acting and improvise. This workshop is the part of the day where the participants learn about each other

and how to cooperate by games and trust exercises . tThere are some acting and improvising sessions,the participants create music by movement and more...

## HOW IT ALL BEGAN- THE IDEA BEHIND PEACECAMP

Evelyn Bohmer Laufer and Ronny Bohmer are the people behind Peacecamp.

Evelyn was born in postwar Vienna to survivors of the hHolocaust. Throughout her childhood and youth she was trying to understand how it was possible that so many nations joined in the genocide of Jews. She wanted to know how this could happen and – how such a catastrophe could be avoided.

This is why she studied psychology and later psychoanalysis. After 3 years of studies at Vienna University she immigrated to Israel and did her M.A. at the Hebrew University.

While being in Israel she joined the “Peace Now” movement, put all her hopes in the idea of “land for peace” and believed in the “Road to Peace” designed in Oslo by the American president Bill Clinton, Rabin, Peres, and Arafat - a peace process which would eventually lead to “two states for two people”.

Personal and political events brought Evelyn back to Vienna in 1991. Then she started searching for ways to continue the process which would eventually lead to peace between the Jews and the Arabs. After Rabin was assassinated and all the following peace negotiations failed and she once said, talking with friends: “tToday’s peacemakers fail because they do not understand one another. There is a trauma on both sides”. Each party perceives itself as actual or potential victim and the other one as actual or potential perpetrator. Here the Jews, victims of the Holocaust, there the Arabs victims of the arrival of the Jews into the land of Palestine, which they call Nakba. Both hold the (understandable) wish never to be victims again. Therefore, each party needs to be “strong” – rather perpetrator than victim.”

“The peacemakers of tomorrow need to be invented” Evelyn once said, in an almost joking manner. But this thought did not leave her mind. Yes – the future peacemakers need to be invented. But how?

Evelyn thought that she needed to start with the young people, because their parent’s generation, traumatized by the Holocaust and Nakbah and the many wars between the Jews and the Arabs, were failing in changing their perception of victims and perpetrators. Evelyn thought that both, Jews and Arabs, were victims, victims of concurrent historic processes, victims of political events that made them enemies rather than partners. She wanted to break the victim-perpetrators perception and get people to see that they were BOTH victims and that none needed to be a perpetrator in the present or future.

Evelyn thought that if the Jews and the Arabs of Palestine could both see themselves as victims of history, they may join and try together to get out of this deadend and create a situation which would allow both people to live in this country which they both love and consider their homeland.

In the meanwhile, in Europe, something incredible, a real miracle happened: the fall of the Iron Curtain. The nations, which during many centuries had suffered bloodshed of two World Wars, of a divided Europe, of the despotism of communism started to cooperate and join a common project: the European Union.

Evelyn witnessed this miraculous growing together of the nations which for decades had been caught in wars against one another: if this was possible, peace between the Jews and the Arabs could also be achieved.

**To achieve this – Evelyn needed to “invent the peacemakers of tomorrow”.**

Evelyn wanted to bring young Jewish and Arab teenagers together to learn and understand one another, to develop empathy for the suffering of the other - and to achieve this, she wanted teenagers of two European Nations to be there and to prove that peace between former enemies is indeed possible.

## WHAT IS THE MAIN IDEA BEHIND PEACECAMP?

The first idea was to bring Jews and Arabs together in a neutral place in the middle of nature and to let them experience that they could LISTEN and TALK to one another about their conflicts and problems in words, rather than with weapons.

Evelyn is a psychologist and sometimes she treats couples who don't get along with each other. "When they come to my office, each one tells me about what the other one did or does wrong. So I listen to them and sometimes – because I don't know these people – ask a "stupid question": "Why do you keep fighting and arguing over an issue which happened 5 or 10 year ago? Why can you not just leave this behind and focus on what's happening now?" Or: "How could you contribute to make a change". And sometimes, because I asked these "WHY" and "HOW" questions, these people can pause for a moment and realize how they are making themselves miserable by repeating a fight of the past over and over again instead of creating something new, in the present and for the future" says Evelyn.

She thought that the teenagers of the two nations would be the ones to ask such questions: "Why do you keep fighting your parents and grandparents fight? Why can't you find new ways to live together now? Why do you blame people of your generation for what happened two or more generations before you were even born? And – most important: what can YOU yourself contribute to a more peaceful future based on coexistence, cooperation and mutual understanding?"

## WHAT ARE THE MAIN GOALS IN PEACECAMP?

The main goals are to break this vicious circle of victim-perpetrator and prove that you achieve more if you play with rather than against the other. Peacecamp make to people to ask themselves what they themselves (or their own group/community/nation) could do to improve things, instead of saying how the other one was or is doing wrong and how the other one should act differently.

We don't have any tools to make another person/group/community change THEIR way of action. We can only think of how WE can change our perception, our way of action, our approach to the other and see what happens if we do that.

Peacecamp creates an opportunity for young people of different nations

- To learn with, about and from one another about their personal, national, religious history and their respective actual social and political conflictual issues prevailing in their societies.
- To get to know themselves and others and to become aware of their personal resources, talents, competences.
- To try out totally new things and cope with new challenges and discover the benefit of working with, rather than against the other(s).
- To discover the similarities and shared aspects between different religions, cultures and nations.



- To demonstrate that history has witnessed changes for the better - the end of hostilities, animosities wars and opened new chapters of coexistence between nations which had been fighting against one another.

One of the main goals of Peacecamp is to allow a group of young people to experience something different from what they may have been told by their parents/teachers/authority figures so that they would eventually go home and tell others that it is, indeed, possible, to live together with others different from you and yet at the same time also similar to you in many ways.

## How peacecamp changed people's lives?

For this question, we asked many Peacecamp participants over the years we combined all of their answers and we wrote the main things that came up from everyone.

At first, everyone started with the fact that Peacecamp is an unforgettable experience and it changed their life FOREVER.

Peacecamp changes the mindsets in a few ways:

- we have to accept and respect the other no matter who he is...
- If we are different it doesn't mean that we don't have anything in common
- In anyone, there is something special.
- Peacecamp changed how we all look forward to the future, It made us realize that we really are the ones who can change all of this and to make peace! And to look for the conflict between the Palestinians and the Jews from another side for co-existing
- Deeper looks into cultures
- gives the ability as the hope to make a real change in the world.
- gives more knowledge about the "politics of the world"

## Conclusions

When we participated at Peacecamp we lived “in the moment”, we didn’t really think about how it all began and what’s the real story behind Peacecamp.

Now, that we know the real story behind everything we look at the workshops in a different perspective and we appreciate it even more than how much we appreciated it.

We learned that Peacecamp is not only talking about conflicts and the issues, it’s mostly about how can WE make a difference to create a better society.

Evelyn is a special woman who follows her truth and educating teenagers for a better future.

Now, we can teach other people about the important things that we learned in peacecamp and from the project and to continue to achieve the Peacecamp goals.

## Bibliography

- Peacecamp official website <https://2019.peacecamp.net/>
- Evelyn Bohmer Laufer
- Peacecamp Participants

# Reflection

## **Maya:**

This project meant a lot to me, Peacecamp is a huge part in my life and I'm "taking" it with me everywhere I go. I had the best partner because we both experienced the same thing. We had a lot of questions about Peacecamp after we came back so this project was a perfect opportunity to ask these questions and get answers. This project was also a great opportunity to talk with Evelyn, an amazing woman who I appreciate a lot, she helped us so much and gave us all the answers we needed. I enjoyed every second working on this project, I learned so much about Peacecamp, I feel like I rediscovered Peacecamp, I look at the experience I had in Peacecamp from a different perspective and now I fully understand the meaning and the "story" behind every workshop we had. It's also amazing to see how the events that happened during the years effected people's "timeline" and how one thing leads to another.

## **Tamary:**

When my teacher Yarden suggested me to do the project about Peacecamp without thinking twice, I said yes. Peacecamp was a life changing experience for me. I did this project with love to Peacecamp. It was a super interesting to understand how the idea of Peacecamp came. Evelyn follows her true and faith and from that she created the idea of Peacecamp. Most people would stop at this stage, but not Evelyn. She took her idea and made it to be reality. She created Peacecamp from true love of the idea of Peace. This project made me understand how much Evelyn is a special woman that change so many people's lives (including mine) and i can tell for sure that she is my role model.

While doing this project we had a problem to find information sources regarding Peacecamp.

Unfortunately there is not enough information about Peacecamp so most of our project based on the interview with Evelyn and Peacecamp participants.

I enjoyed doing the work and I had the best partner I could ask for.



## Project Assessment 2019-2020

Name of Project:

Participants:

<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Your Grade</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Language: spelling, punctuation, grammar (20%)		
<b><u>Content (80%)</u></b>		
Introduction 10%		
Body 40%		
Conclusion 10%		
Cover sheet & table of contents 5%		
Bibliography 5%		
Self assessment and reflections 10%		
<u>TOTAL</u>		

