



BUILDING PEACE THROUGH VIRTUAL AND HYBRID EXCHANGES

For decades, Rotary has advanced peace by fostering connection between people from different countries and cultures. Although the COVID-19 pandemic made it challenging, unsafe, and even, at times, impossible to travel to be together in person, our members adapted, exploring ways to forge new friendships online.

Inspired by that persistence and by how much we've all learned during the past few years about how to keep cross-cultural conversations enriching our lives, 2023-24 RI President R. Gordon R. McNally has made it a priority to support districts in emphasizing peacebuilding and using virtual components to connect faraway people through their programs and events. By using innovative technologies to make connections, we can offer more people the opportunity to experience our global community. And by enabling participants to have dialogues that help them learn about the perspectives of others and expand their global understanding, we can lay a foundation for constructive relationships — and peace — for years to come.

Adding or maintaining these components in Rotary Youth Exchange (RYE), Rotary Friendship Exchange, and other programs can:

- Give participants new ways to experience other cultures, make new friends, and expand their global awareness
- Make participation more accessible to people who have time constraints, health issues, or financial considerations that could otherwise prevent them from participating
- Build stronger intercultural communication and understanding, and ultimately foster more stable and peaceful communities

ELEMENTS OF VIRTUAL AND HYBRID EXCHANGES

Until 2020, most Rotary exchanges took place in person. When the COVID-19 pandemic began and severely limited international travel, our members found ways to continue both their Rotary Youth Exchange programs and Rotary Friendship Exchange, an intercultural program for our members, by moving them online. Exchanges that were conducted virtually proved to be engaging, effective, and accessible. Now, even though international travel has largely resumed, our clubs' and districts' youth exchange and friendship exchange programs continue to thrive by offering virtual and hybrid experiences in addition to fully in-person exchanges.

There are many ways to get to know exchange partners and their regions, traditions, and values in a virtual setting. Try these ideas or invite exchange participants to develop their own, based on their interests and their reasons for doing an exchange:

- **Introduce participants online.** Host a video call before an in-person exchange or to start a hybrid or virtual one. Prepare discussion questions or other activities that will help participants

and their host communities begin to get to know one another. This is a good time to discuss customs, traditions, and what's culturally appropriate in terms of dress, etiquette, communication styles, etc. This will help both visitors and hosts know what to expect and feel more comfortable throughout the exchange.

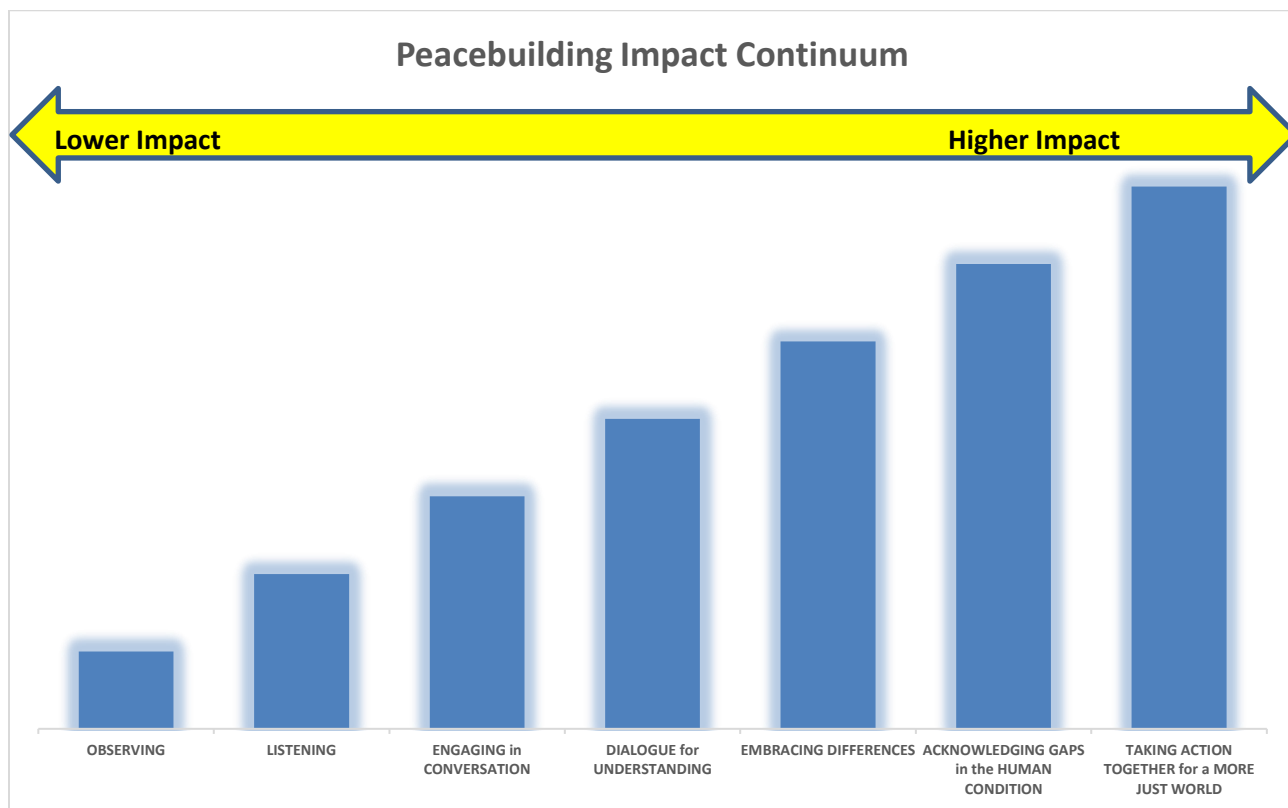
- **Host a virtual cooking class.** Take turns hosting cooking demonstrations, and then share each meal online. Have each participant or group plan a menu and a lesson in how to prepare it. Send a grocery list well before the lesson and, if possible, send any hard-to-find ingredients to one another.
- **Do a virtual tour.** Have exchange partners show off their city or region online. Many tourism bureaus post videos of important sights, and other organizations may offer historical overviews by video. Schedule time to watch these together online and then discuss their importance to the host region.
- **Share key parts of your culture through video calls.** You might feature cultural information, historical background, favorite foods, holiday or festival celebrations, traditional or contemporary stories, or arts and crafts.
- **Talk about local Rotary customs.** Each region, even each club, has its own traditions, projects, and initiatives. Discuss, for example, how each exchange partner determines the most pressing local priorities and then works to address them through service projects and programs.
- **Ask a trained facilitator to lead a virtual conversation.** This can be especially helpful in discussing sensitive topics, like past or current conflicts or how religion shapes life in each of the participants' home regions.

INCORPORATING PEACEBUILDING ELEMENTS INTO EXCHANGES

Exchange leaders and participants are encouraged to incorporate elements that promote [Positive Peace](#) into their exchanges. These efforts are an important part of connecting Rotary's varied, grassroots work to our global, interconnected peacebuilding mission.

Positive Peace, a concept popularized by sociologist Johan Galtung, states that lasting peace cannot be built on the mere absence of violence. Rather, it requires a supportive social system that includes features such as good governance, access to needed services, a sound business environment, and respect for the right of others. Rotary's areas of focus all support integral components of Positive Peace.

Through our global Rotary network, we strive to create environments where peace can be built and maintained through sustainable and measurable activities in communities worldwide. The graphic below illustrates steps, from lower to higher impact, that we can take in our interactions with others to promote peace.



Analysis presented by NewGen Peacebuilders/Rotary Peace Fellow Patricia Shafer. Dec. 1, 2022

RESOURCES

- **Take the [Rotary Positive Peace Academy training course](#)** to discover the strategies and tools that can help individuals, cities, and nations build and sustain peace. Understanding Positive Peace allows each of us to see our everyday interactions and relationships as tools for building peace.
- **Watch a recorded webinar on [good versus toxic polarization](#)** from The Horizons Project. (Available in English only)
- **[How to Talk to Your Neighbor](#)** is a downloadable guide created by the One America Movement to help people have conversations about issues that matter to them.

ACTIVITIES

- **This Is Me, This Is You, This Is Us activity** guides participants to reflect on their circumstances and life experiences. Such facilitated reflection helps participants feel comfortable with one another and reminds them that, despite their differences, they are united by a common goal. This activity can be done online using digital breakout rooms or as a facilitated discussion during in-person exchanges. [Available on page 87 of the Positive Peace in Action Guide.](#)
- **[Reference the Positive Peace in Action Guide](#)** for more activity guides.
- **Check participants' countries' rankings on the Global Peace Index.** This allows participants to analyze and reflect on the findings in the [Institute for Economics and Peace Global Peace Index](#).

FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT HOW ROTARY BUILDS PEACE

Building personal connections through exchanges is just one of the many ways that Rotary members and participants build peace around the world. If exchange participants or anyone else wants to learn more about Rotary's peacebuilding work, refer them to the following resources. They can:

- Read about [Rotary's commitment to peacebuilding and conflict prevention](#)
- Get an overview of Rotary's programs, activities, and resources for peacebuilding and conflict prevention from the [Rotary Builds Peace brochure](#)
- [Learn about Rotary's work with the Institute for Economics and Peace](#)
- [Get inspiration](#) from Rotary and Rotaract clubs that are leading peacebuilding and conflict prevention projects
- Read blog posts about peacebuilding on [Rotary Voices](#) and [Service in Action](#)
- Review [The Rotary Foundation's policy statements for global grants in peacebuilding and conflict prevention](#)
- Learn about [Rotary Peace Fellowships](#)