

What I Learned from the Peace Education Program: An Inmate's Perspective on Peace



Luis Calderon, a [Peace Education Program](#) (PEP) participant at Everglades Correctional Institution (ECI) in Miami, Florida, says that PEP has enriched his perspective on life. He enjoys sharing what he learned in the course and would like to facilitate PEP when he leaves ECI and returns to his home in Colombia. Here, Luis gives us his new view of peace from behind prison walls.

What have I learned about this inner treasure?

I have learned that this treasure lies hidden inside of us, that it's called peace, and that we must look for this peace inside of ourselves.

I have learned that peace is a state of being which is possible for every human being to attain. It's an attitude toward life that leads us to an incredible awakening, allowing us to see and understand the beauty and amazement of being alive, to be happy, to appreciate what life itself is. And that peace is not what we *think*.

Peace is an innate human attribute, which we choose to look for and apply to our lives so we may become complete human beings. When we let inner peace be the natural, guiding force in our lives, then joy — for life, for love, for contentment, for clarity -- sprouts from our being, and that is when our greatest, most precious dreams become reality.

I have learned that the peace we find within ourselves is the only thing that can give full meaning to our lives. It allows us to know ourselves with our virtues and defects, and to know others as well. By knowing ourselves, which is the greatest and most marvelous adventure, we can discover what is important in this life. Then, many of the struggles within us and with others go away, and the world around us gets better.



If we let peace be our guide, it can also become our source of wisdom and bring us the answers to the great questions of life. We can understand who we are and where we are going; why we live and why we die; why we hate and why we love. We can know our humanity and see, admire, feel, and be content. We can recognize that to be rich we must be generous, to be wise we must be simple, and to be powerful we must be kind.

Although we are made of the same elements and we look for the same things, each one of us is absolutely unique. We can learn — without judgment — to forgive, to accept ourselves, to treat others well, and to be tolerant. Then, our hearts will be touched by the admiration and gratitude of our fellow human beings. Because then, I won't be myself and myself alone, but I will be you. There won't be hate; there will be love. There won't be confusion and disharmony; there will be clarity and understanding. There will be no tomorrow, just today -- no sadness, no poverty, but only the richest of all riches, the beauty of all beauties, no need for envy, because I'll know the value of what I already have. Then, I will be at peace with myself and with everything around me.

What else can I say about this marvelous treasure God has given me, which I must discover within myself? That you also have it within you. Discover it. Consider it your most priceless gift -- a gift of incomparable value in your life, your fountain of fresh water that allows you to cross deserts and

get through the most difficult hours during your moments of uncertainty. Only the peace inside can give you contentment and the joy of living. That is what's important.

Remember, it's up to you. Choose. Quench the thirst to be content that resides within you. Be a complete human being. Make the effort to be happy.