

Peacekeeper Training and De-Escalation Manual

A brief guide to peacekeeping

INTRODUCTION

Why Peacekeepers?

Around the world people are rising up against inequity, exploitation, and state-sanctioned violence. As due-process safeguards erode and institutions bend toward oligarchic interests, dissent is increasingly met with intimidation, harassment, and outright force. Protecting the **space** to gather, the **voice** to dissent, and the **dignity** of participants has never been more urgent.

Peacekeepers (PKs) answer that need.

We are neither police nor para-police, and we are distinct from two other commonly conflated roles on an action site:

Role	Primary Function	Relationship to Crowd
Peacekeeper	De-escalate tension, maintain emotional and spatial safety	Embedded within the crowd, horizontal accountability
Marshal	Logistical flow—start/stop marches, timing for speakers	Operates at edges or front, directs but does not enforce
Police Liaison	Communicates action intentions to law enforcement & relays police demands back	One or two designated spokes; not a PK task

Unlike law enforcement, PKs do **not** wield coercive power. Unlike marshals, our goal is steadying, not directing. When tensions spike, PKs ground themselves and create conditions where participants can re-center and choose non-harm.

Demonstration vs. Protest vs. Riot

- **Demonstration** — a public assembly raising awareness of shared ideas or solidarity, whether celebratory or solemn. Chants, speeches, art, and music are common.
- **Protest** — an action demanding change. Protests can be silent vigils, noisy marches, sit-ins, or creative disruptions.
- **Riot** — crowd behavior characterized by widespread, uncontrolled violence or property destruction. A protest is not a riot simply because it is loud, disruptive, or disapproved of by authorities.

Government agencies sometimes blur these definitions to de-legitimize dissent. This manual uses their *actual* distinctions so PKs can respond appropriately: protecting demonstrations and protests, and helping prevent escalation into chaos.

Our Commitment

What is needed now is a **dynamic, rapid, self-organizing framework** that safeguards space, voice, and dignity without assuming control. We stand as anchors, not enforcers—responding to intensity with grounded presence, empathy, and skill.

If you choose this path, expect moments of joy and solidarity interwoven with confrontation and grief. Your task is to meet each moment with humility, steadiness, and mutual care, starting with care for yourself.

1 · READINESS

1.1 Personal Checklist

Item	Purpose	Packed?
High-vis vest	Identifiable to crowd & medics	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 L water + electrolytes	Prevents exhaustion misread as agitation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Compact first-aid kit	Basic bleeds, blisters, eye-wash	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sharpie on arm (legal #)	Detention resilience	<input type="checkbox"/>
Energy bar / fruit squeeze	Blood-sugar stability	<input type="checkbox"/>
Notepad & stub-pencil	Timestamp incident logs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neck gaiter, mask, or other facial covering	Anonymity	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-smart Watch	Time without tracking	<input type="checkbox"/>

Gear Principle: If you can't sprint with it, reconsider carrying it.

1.2 Team Integrity

Buddy Protocol: Each buddy pair stays within audible and visual range while working their sector. Check in with one another regularly about physical and emotional well-being. If contact is lost or either partner becomes unwell, inform your PK team.

1.3 Self-Assessment Matrix

State	Indicators	Action
<i>Green (light)</i>	Heart steady, clear focus	Deploy / lead
<i>Yellow</i>	Mild jitters, thirsty, fixating on "what ifs"	Hydrate, breathe, request buddy check
<i>Orange</i>	Tunnel vision, dry mouth, edgy tone	Alert team, swap to low-stimulus post, 5-min reset
<i>Red</i>	Shaking, intrusive thoughts, hostility	Notify team, step off duty, seek wellness

2 · GAINING PEACE

Peacekeepers exude peace. A relaxed stance, open hands, and steady breath communicate safety and help regulate the space around us. We refuse to mirror hostility, slowing our breath, softening our gaze, and offering choices rather than commands. Think of yourself as a tuning fork. When struck by conflict, you ring at a lower, steadier frequency, inviting others to en-train. The first step to achieving this presence is to acquire it within.

| *Fear is contagious; so is steadiness.*

2.1 Mindfulness

Mindfulness practices, based in the insights of the Yoga Sutras and reaffirmed by modern cognitive neuropsychology, train the brain to notice sensations, emotions, and thoughts without immediately reacting to them. By repeatedly returning attention to the present moment, individuals build neural pathways that increase self-awareness, regulate emotional responses, and quiet the brain's default mode network. An over-crystallized default mode network fuels rumination and narrative overwhelm. In high-stress environments like protests or tense gatherings, this cultivated awareness allows peacekeepers to remain rooted in experience rather than swept up in it.

Consistent mindfulness practice has been shown to strengthen the prefrontal cortex, enhancing executive function and impulse control, while down-regulating the amygdala's threat response. That means peacekeepers who train in stillness and observation are better equipped to respond rather than react—to pause before interpreting, and to choose words and actions that lower tension. The result isn't passivity, but clarity: a wider space between stimulus and response, where presence becomes a tool of transformation.

This mindfulness practice helps peacekeepers build sensory clarity, emotional resilience, and embodied presence. It draws from yogic self-inquiry (*svadhyaya*) and neuropsychological research on interoception, attentional control, and emotion integration.

| **Time:** 10–20 minutes (or as long as available)

| **Setting:** Any safe and grounded space: field edge, morning porch, indoors; not while operating heavy machinery

1. Sense by Sense Awareness

Begin with a deep exhale. Choose one sense—typically sound—to focus on. Let awareness rest there.

- Listen gently. Notice volume, rhythm, proximity.
- When other senses arise, greet them kindly. Imagine giving each a nod or a small internal hug and allow them to float away.
- When you're ready, shift to another sense: sight (even with eyes closed), smell, taste, touch, and finally bodily awareness.

2. Body Scan & Emotional Echoes

Turn inward. Gently scan your body from feet to crown.

- Strive to feel each muscle, breathing relaxation into them one by one.
- Where does tension linger? What emotions might be housed there?
- Breathe into each region- not to fix, but to *acknowledge*. Let each breath listen and accept.
- Avoid digging. This is not a hunt for trauma or “why,” but a space for felt experience to *be*.

3. Allow Insight, Not Rumination

As thoughts emerge from these sensations, notice their emotional tone and what they’re trying to connect. If reflection flows naturally, follow it briefly, like a brook’s current, not a whirlpool.

- When thoughts loop or analyze, pause and smile at them.
- “Thank you,” you might think. “You’re welcome to drift on now.”

4. Stillness & Awareness of Awareness

If the mind quiets, stay there resting not in a *thing*, but in the soft open space of awareness itself. If this doesn’t happen, that’s fine. The practice is the presence, not the outcome.

5. Reorienting

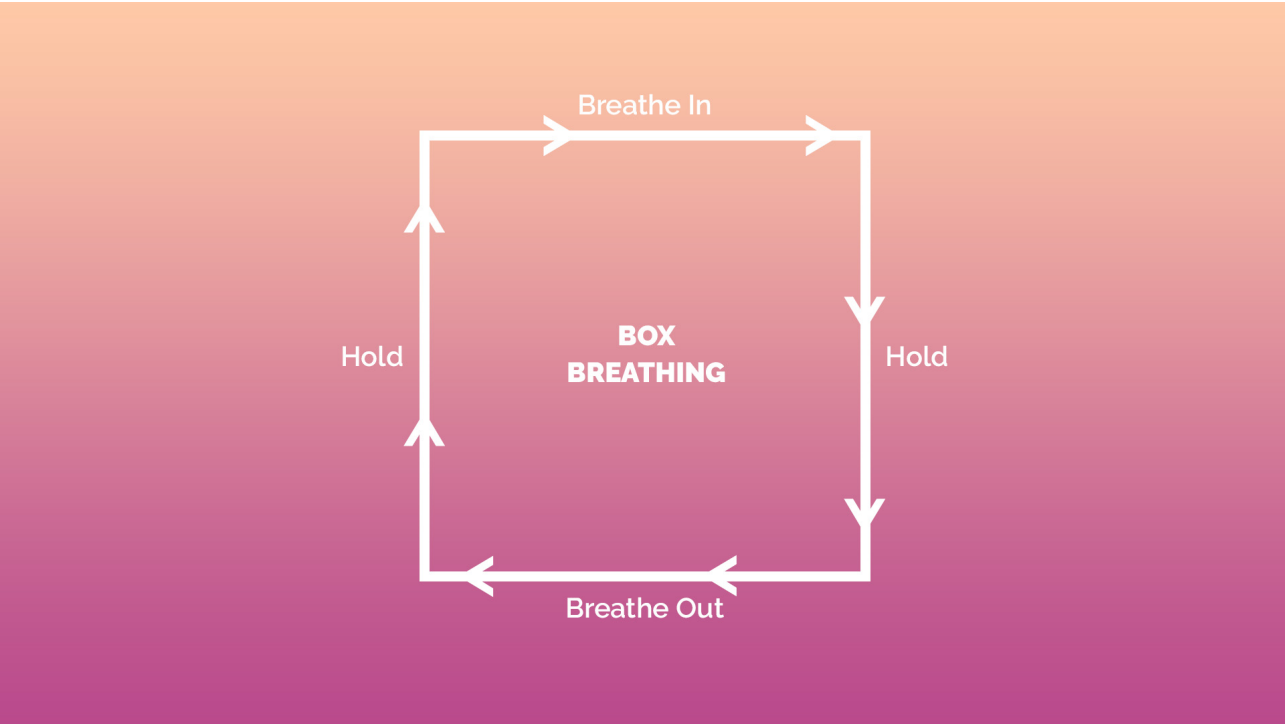
To close, let all your senses merge again. Look around, breathe in, feel the breeze. Try to perceive the space *as if for the first time*—fresh, vivid, whole.

| *In tense moments, even a 60-second mini-version can bring you back to center.*






2.2 Self-regulation

Adrenaline is inevitable; *dysregulation can be mitigated*. Grounding practices are brief, intentional actions that re-engage the body’s awareness and interrupt stress spirals. By regulating breath, posture, and attention, they shift the nervous system from threat response into a state of safety and presence. This not only restores access to clear thinking but also signals calm to others through tone, eye contact, and body language inviting co-regulation. In tense situations, your nervous system becomes a tuning fork: the steadier you are, the more likely others will attune to that steadiness. With use they become more efficient, even automatic. A practiced exhale can restore executive function within ten seconds.

Box breathing is a simple yet powerful technique to reset your nervous system. You inhale for four counts, hold for four, exhale for four, and hold again for four, tracing the shape of a square in your mind. This rhythmic pattern calms the body, sharpens focus, and brings you back into control when tension spikes. It's discreet, repeatable, and ideal for grounding yourself in high-stress environments.



The **5-4-3-2-1 technique** is a rapid grounding exercise that anchors you in the present moment by engaging your senses. It works by naming *five* things you can see, *four* things you can touch, *three* things you can hear, *two* things you can smell, and *one* thing you can taste. This structured sensory check-in interrupts spiraling thoughts, activates the parasympathetic nervous system, and reestablishes a sense of safety and control in the body. It's especially useful in moments of anxiety, overwhelm, or sensory disorientation.

Sense	Prompt	Example
 Sight	Name 5 things you can see	"Tree, cloud, shoe, shadow, sign"
 Touch	Name 4 things you can feel	"Shirt, breeze, gravel, hand"
 Hearing	Name 3 things you can hear	"Birdsong, traffic, voice"
 Smell	Name 2 things you can smell	"Grass, coffee"
 Taste	Name 1 thing you can taste	"Minty gum"

3 · SHARING PEACE

Effective peacekeeping rests upon three core skill sets: Purposeful Actions (deliberate physical interventions), Verbal Techniques (carefully chosen words and phrasing), and Body Language (intentional, calming non-verbal communication). This chapter dives deeply into these areas, layering in tactical applications and psychological insights to help you navigate tense situations with grounded confidence.

Harmful posture	Non-violent alternative	Why it matters
Squared shoulders & clenched fists	45 ° stance, open hands	Reduces subconscious threat cues
Barking commands	Invitations & options	Preserves agency, lowers defensiveness
Rapid gestures	Slow, predictable motions	Minimizes startle reflex

3.1 Purposeful Actions

Purposeful action means moving with intention and that intention is to reduce tension. Every gesture, position, and step should be deliberate, signaling calm and clarity without imposing control. Rather than reacting or commanding, peacekeepers use quiet presence, subtle shifts in body language, and intentional pacing to shape the emotional tone of their environment.

Purposeful action can also mean quietly offering useful context to an organizer, checking in with a familiar attendee, or making light contact with someone who looks lost (while maintaining conversation length and situational awareness). Your presence is relational, not directive; sometimes a short exchange is all that’s needed to ground someone else or build trust before a moment of strain.

It’s easy, in high-energy moments, to slip into over-functioning: giving orders, trying to manage the entire scene, or stepping beyond the peacekeeper role. These impulses often come from adrenaline or a desire to help but can edge into performance or control. Self-awareness is key: a peacekeeper must notice their own energy, needs, and stress levels, and respond accordingly. If your actions no longer reflect the grounded posture we train for, it’s time to pause, reset, or rotate out.

Done well, purposeful action isn’t dramatic. It’s a soft hand guiding movement, a breath slowing the tempo, a body angled to defuse tension, a rhythm of movement sparking connection where needed. People sense it without being told and often follow.

Tool	How to execute	Field cue
Vent Valve	Offer “listening post”—stand, nod, paraphrase, no fixes	Solo shouter, ranting loop
Spatial Buffer	Extend arm slightly, step between parties at 45°	Two people nose-to-nose
Tempo Shift	Slow own speech & motion by 15%; others en-train	Crowd chant accelerating
Silent Signal	Hand gestured downward	Music intensifying past plan

3.2 Verbal Techniques

Reflect–Guide–Anchor model:

1. **Reflect:** “I hear your concern and understand the feeling.”
2. **Guide:** “Let’s step over here for ____ reason, so that we can ____.”
3. **Anchor:** “I hear ____ is what you want *and* I think I see ____ solution.”

Pro Tips

- Replace “*but*” with “*and*”, “*you*” with “*we*,” and avoid negative pragmatic markers, such as “actually.”
- Use people’s names if known (triggers social bonding).
- Ask permission before problem-solving: “Would brainstorming help, or do you mostly need to vent?”

Interventions are *offers*, not orders. Use the formula:

Acknowledge + Option + Outcome

“I see you need space. Would stepping over here help? That way the crowd keeps flowing and we can breathe.”

3.3 Body Language

- **Feet:** Point toward where you want energy to flow.
- **Eyes:** Soft focus at bridge of nose; avoids dominance stare.
- **Breath Mirrors:** Subtly match then lead breaths 2-counts slower.

3.4 The B R E A T H E Loop

The BREATHE loop builds on grounding by giving the nervous system a guided path back to regulation. Each step, beginning with breath and ending in reflection, offers both internal stabilization and outward signals of safety. By consciously slowing down, recognizing tension, and responding with empathy and attuned presence, peacekeepers create space for others to follow suit. This loop transforms instinctive reactions into deliberate choices, reinforcing connection over control, and allowing emotional intensity to settle without suppression.

Letter	Action	Field Example
B – <i>Breathe</i>	Inhale 4 s, exhale 6 s	“I feel my ribs expand... and soften.”
R – <i>Recognize</i>	Name the tension	Identifies early escalation cues.
E – <i>Empathize</i>	Remember the humanity	“They’re scared too.”
A – <i>Ask / Authentic</i>	Ask permission or offer authentic reflection	“Can we talk over here where it’s quieter?”
T – <i>Tune</i>	Match then lead pace/volume downward	Speak two beats slower.
H – <i>Hold Space</i>	Stay present without fixing; allow venting	Maintain soft eye contact.
E – <i>Exit / Evaluate</i>	Debrief with buddy, hydrate, reset	“How’s your pulse? Need water?”

3.4 Agitated Psychology

Imagine walking through a forest at night. You hear a twig snap nearby. Instantly, your body shifts: heart racing, breath shallow, muscles tensed. This **primal alertness** is a survival gift: it readies us to assess threat and act.

But what happens next defines the path forward. If you breathe, observe, and let the moment pass, the fear dissolves. But if you *project* that fear outward - "*I'm being hunted*" - your mind begins scripting a threat. Those imagined threats, when left unchecked, become **narratives**. And narratives, especially when shaped by fear or bias, drive action.

Agitation works the same way. At its root, it's an emotional spike (**fear, anger, shame, alienation**) that seeks relief. That relief often comes by assigning blame or asserting control over others. Thoughts born from emotion become justifications. When reinforced by echo chambers or cultural narratives, they escalate into aggression.

A **dysregulated person**, whether ranting solo or seeking confrontation, is often someone trying to resolve a deep internal contradiction. Their fear *needs* to make sense. Their identity *demand*s coherence. Cognitive dissonance, the tension between belief and reality, creates immense discomfort. Many resolve this discomfort by projecting it outward: "*The problem isn't me. It's them.*"

To interrupt this cycle, peacekeepers must understand that most disruptive behavior is a chain reaction:

emotion → thought → action.

When we encounter dysregulation, whether a counter-protester shouting slurs or an agitated participant spiraling, it's rarely about what they're *saying* on the surface. It's about what they're *feeling* beneath it.

Key Principles for Peacekeepers

- **Start with presence, not persuasion.** Your calm can interrupt their storm.
- **Validate feeling, not content.** "That sounds really intense" works better than "Here's some facts."
- **Offer exits that preserve dignity.** Nobody escalates from feeling heard.

Lever	Tactic	Why it works
Regulate Emotion	Breathe, offer water, lower vocal timbre	Calms limbic system before thoughts crystalize
Disrupt Projection	Curiosity questions ("What worries you most right now?")	Forces cortex to re-evaluate story
Redirect Preparation	Find a concrete objective	Adapts intention into purposeful action
Deny Audience	Flag/Umbrella Wedge or silent turning of nearby crowd	Without validation, motivation collapses

3.4.1 - Redirection

Even aggressive actors can often be re-centered if their emotional root is engaged. Calm presence and authentic curiosity invite reflection. If we can differentiate their position (without validating harm), connect it to shared human values, and offer an alternate outlet or audience, they often stabilize.

Differentiate → Integrate → Redirect

1. **Differentiate** - Start where you *agree*.

"I'm hearing that 'Free Palestine' sounds like supporting violence against certain groups; is that how you're seeing it used here today?"

2. **Integrate** - Offer a shared stake.

"I feel like we're actually on the same page about wanting peace and safety."

3. **Redirect** - Point to a constructive arena consistent with their identity.

"There's a local group called the Jewish Muslim Alliance here today. They talk in depth about exactly this stuff. Do you want me to introduce you?"

When the nervous system feels *seen* rather than *judged*, alarm chemicals drop. Roughly half of encounters resolve at this step; the person either blends into the crowd or leaves peacefully.

3.4.2 - Deny audience

Some actors come primed for display. Here, projection has already matured into open contempt; the target group is less than human, and the gratification comes from spectatorship, dominance, or perceived moral vindication. When attempts to engage fall flat, our best tool becomes silence. **Without audience, performance collapses.**

Containment tactics and redirection of group attention rob the agitator of their fuel. Most disengage when the spotlight fades.

Goal: Re-humanize *if possible*; otherwise contain and starve the platform.

- **Re-humanize (first sixty seconds)**

- Offer a *name* and a *tiny personal link*: "I'm Jay; I already connect with you <in some way>."
- Match then lead breaths two counts slower (3.3 *Breath Mirrors*).
- Use *Reflect-Guide* tone, not debate: "I'm gathering that you're angry about ____ and that's important to me. I'd like to hear you better, so let's talk away from the speakers."

- **Contain & Deny Audience (if re-humanizing stalls)**

- Signal nearby PKs for a **Flag/Umbrella Denial Wedge** (4.2).
- Crowd shifts attention to chants or silence; cameras turn away.
- Maintain open exit path; speak in low tones only the individual can hear.

Without an audience the cortisol reward fizzles; many Dominance Seekers self-eject in under thirty seconds. Call in the team if weapons appear or physical threat reaches Cat-2 (see 6.1).

Remember: Both tracks start with the *forest alarm*. We either help them recognize the wind in the rustle of bushes or make sure the rest of the forest stays unharmed while they calm themselves elsewhere.

4 · CROWD & ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT

4.1 Crowd Physics 101

Humans en masse behave like fluid: they flow toward perceived low-pressure zones. Create deliberate “low pressure” (space, music, banners) to guide movement.

Density Thresholds

- ≤ 2 people /m² = Loose flow, easy pivots
- 3–4 /m² = Restricted arm movement
- ≥ 5 /m² = Crowd turbulence risk (danger of crush)

4.2 Formation Tactics

Formation	Primary Purpose	How to Deploy
Soft Arc	Redirect line of march around obstacle	Multiple PKs staggered, arms relaxed
Circle Buffer	Protect vulnerable individual	Peacekeepers touch or link elbows, occupying space as needed to form a protective barrier
Flag/Umbrella Denial Wedge	Remove agitator's audience view and provide a clear exit channel	Peacekeepers form an open _ / with backs shielding the main crowd; the wide opening faces the nearest safe egress. Walk slowly, at the individual's pace while maintaining the wedge, to encourage their exit.
Interlock Barrier	Prevent hostile ingress or hold a soft perimeter	Line of PKs link hands or interlock arms; maintain relaxed stance, knees soft; release link for retreat on agreed cue

4.3 Barrier Etiquette

Cones, banners, and even human chains can signal boundaries without appearing repressive. Always leave visible exits. When possible, position physical objects (bikes, planters) rather than bodies between crowd and hazard; objects don't fatigue or misinterpret.

5 · COORDINATION & COMMUNICATION

5.1 Role Grid

Role	Vest Color	Key Duties
Peacekeeper	Orange	De-escalation, safety
Police Liaison	Blue	Interface with law enforcement, relay info
Medic	Yellow	First aid, triage

*Legal observers typically wear distinguishing hats or armbands provided by their organization, not a standardized vest color.

5.2 Signals and Phonetics

Hand Signals

Signal (gesture)	Meaning
Raised open hand at head level, palm forward, gesturing a halt	Stop / hold
Palms pushing toward ground	Slow the pace
Circle at or above head level with index finger	Wrap up / finish
Waving hand toward oneself	Come here / regroup

NATO Phonetic Alphabet

Used to identify checkpoints, locations, or positions in radio communication (e.g., "*Unit 3 is at Alpha*"):

A – Alpha	B – Bravo	C – Charlie	D – Delta
E – Echo	F – Foxtrot	G – Golf	H – Hotel
I – India	J – Juliett	K – Kilo	L – Lima
M – Mike	N – November	O – Oscar	P – Papa
Q – Quebec	R – Romeo	S – Sierra	T – Tango
U – Uniform	V – Victor	W – Whiskey	X – X-ray
Y – Yankee	Z – Zulu		

5.2 Radio Etiquette

1. Press, pause 1 s, speak.
2. [Addressee] this is [Sender], [Message], [Termination]
3. End each transmission with “**over**”; final with “**out.**”

Sample Exchange

Sharktank: “Chainsaw, this is Sharktank; radio check, over!”

Chainsaw: “Sharktank this is chainsaw, I read you Lima Charlie, how copy, over?”

Lima charlie is LC in the phonetic alphabet, which translates to 'loud and clear'

Sharktank: “Loud & clear. Sharktank out.”

At this point the conversation is over, since a proper, clear radio link has been established!

5.3 Prowords

- **WHISKEY** - Rally at the location stated in the call (e.g., “WHISKEY on ALPHA” repeated three times)
- **XRAY** - Organized retreat (peacekeepers lead participants in their sector to withdraw together)
- **YANKY** - Disperse and regroup at the predetermined rally point given during the on-site brief
- **ZULU** - Immediate dispersal, drop identifiers, do not regroup

6 · CONFLICT-ENGAGEMENT PROTOCOLS

6.1 Intervention Threshold

Level	Description	Peacekeeper action
Cat-1	Heated	Observe, body-language cue
Cat-2	Aggravated	Step-in pair, split parties
Cat-3	Violent	Call in WHISKEY

6.2 Step-by-Step Flowchart

1. **Spot** – Scan environment; identify agitation.
2. **Assess** – Cat-level, potential weapons, exits.
3. **Signal** – Radio quick code & hand gesture to buddy.
4. **Engage** – Approach 45°, introduce self, reflective statement.
5. **Separate** – Invite parties to distinct zones. Use buddies.
6. **Stabilize** – Vent-Valve + water + sit if safe.
7. **Close** – Offer next steps: medic, space.
8. **Document** – Time, location, parties (generic), outcome.

7 · POST-ACTION RECOVERY & DEBRIEF

7.1 Hot Wash (within 2 h)

- Rapid feelings round: one word each.
- Safety check: injuries, arrests, gear loss.
- Successes shout-out.

7.2 Full Debrief (24–72 h)

Facilitated agenda:

- Timeline review
- What worked / what lagged
- Emotional processing
- Systems fixes (comms, rotation, training)
- Commit actions + timeline.

7.3 Self Care

- Normalize adrenaline dump (“post-action blues”).
- 20-20-20 rule: within 20 min drink 20 oz water & consume 20 g protein.
- Provide resource list (hotlines, therapy funds, peer gatherings).

8 · SUMMARY

When calm is contagious, courage flourishes. Peacekeepers are the quiet stewards of that calm: pre-planning routes, breathing through chaos, and inviting communities to choose safety over panic. This manual distills field-tested tactics such that any willing soul can step into that role. Study it, practice it, tailor it, join us for IRL training, and bring what you've learned into all your walks, with steady hands and a full heart.

9 · ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all who contributed to this document! Without the help of our fantastic community, those who came before us, and those keeping peace who currently share their wisdom this document would be a fraction of what it amounts to today.

Aux

Misha

Farmer

Hush

John

Zina

Pandoras

Wafflehouse

Prodigal

Goblin