

Nonviolence Training: From Violence To Wholeness

Descriptions/Definitions of Violence (From: *Violence to Wholeness*, p. 13)

Violence is any emotional, verbal, physical or social-structural behavior that comes out of fear and desperation when people do not see other options for meeting their needs. In such circumstances, the likelihood increases that people will act in ways that compromise the emotional, physical, social or spiritual safety of others. Violence involves losing one's awareness of other people's humanity and leads people to act in ways that they would otherwise not choose (e.g. batterers).

~ Violence is emotional, verbal, or physical behavior that dominates, diminishes or destroys ourselves or others.

~ Violence crosses boundaries without permission, disrupts authentic relationships, and separates us from other beings.

~ Violence is often motivated by fear, unrestrained anger, or greed to increase domination or power over others. It can also be motivated by a desire for justice in the face of injustice: a longing to put things right, to overcome an imbalance of power, to end victimization or oppression and overcome a prior violence or injustice.

~ Violence often provokes new violence. This spiral of retaliatory violence is often propelled by social or personal scripts that are enacted in situations of conflict.

Traditional Responses to Violence (*FVTW*, p. 25-26)

- 1) **Avoidance** – fleeing from the conflict, standing on sidelines, not getting involved, it's not my problem, get someone else to deal with it, not dealing with causes of conflict.
- 2) **Counter-Violence** – responding to violence with violence
- 3) **Accommodation** – using passivity and silence in going along with the violence. Not avoiding it, but accepting it with no hope of doing anything about it.

Two Hands of Nonviolence (From: Barbara Deming, *On Revolution and Equilibrium*, p.16)

With one hand we say to one who is angry, or to an oppressor, or to an unjust system, "Stop what you are doing. I refuse to honor the role you are choosing to play. I refuse to obey you. I refuse to cooperate with your demands. I refuse to build the walls and the bombs. I refuse to pay for the guns. With this hand I will even interfere with the wrong you are doing. I want to disrupt the easy pattern of your life."

But then the advocate of nonviolence raises the other hand. It is raised out-stretched – maybe with love and sympathy, maybe not – but always outstretched. With this hand we say, "I won't let go of you or cast you out of the human race. I have faith that you can make a better choice than you are making, and I'll be here when you are ready. Like it or not, we are part of one another."

Descriptions/Definitions of Nonviolence (From: Michael Nagler, UC Berkeley)

- Nonviolence is a creative power for justice and well-being that uses authentic communication and highlighting of injustice rather than passivity or violence.
- **Satyagraha** – holding on to the Truth (Saty) – truth, real, good; Graha – to grab, to hold). Sanskrit term coined by Gandhi in 1908 because Nonviolence is an active and powerful (vs. passive) energy released into the social field by an individual's successful struggle with a potentially destructive negative drive. Means "Soul Force" or "Truth Force".

- **Ahimsa** – Sanskrit word meaning: Himsa – desire to harm another; a – prefix meaning the opposite. So, ahimsa, or nonviolence, is the desire not to harm another being. In English, nonviolence has little resonance because it is a double negative. In Sanskrit, a double negative is actually a strongly positive term. So, the spirit ahimsa doesn't exactly equate with nonviolence in English. In a positive way, Gandhi said that nonviolence is the desire for the well-being of all. We can also say it is a loving concern for others or unattached personal love. This includes our worst enemy. Gandhi's ultimate goal was not Indian independence but brotherhood and sisterhood for all.
- **Beloved Community** – Term used by Martin Luther King, Jr. This includes: Radical Love, Agape – Love of the Enemy
- **Principled Nonviolence**: Nonviolence as principle, is a way of life. Unlike strategic nonviolence, principled nonviolence has a spiritual basis. It is concerned about the well-being of the opponent. It can also be defined as the change of state in a person where all desire to be injurious to another has been replaced by the desire for the well-being of all.

Some Principles of Nonviolence from Mahatma Gandhi:

1. All life is one.
2. We each have a piece of the truth and the un-truth.
3. Human beings are always more than the evil they commit.
4. The means must be consistent with the ends.
5. We are called to celebrate both our differences *and* our fundamental unity with others.
6. We reaffirm our unity with others as we transform “us” vs. “them” in thought and action
7. Our oneness calls us to desire and work for the well-being of all.
8. The nonviolent journey is the process of becoming increasingly free from fear.

Some Principles of Nonviolence by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

1. Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.
2. Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding.
3. Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice, not people.
4. Nonviolence holds that voluntary suffering can educate and transform.
5. Nonviolence chooses love instead of hate.
6. Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice.

4 Steps of Nonviolence (CARA: Drawn from *FVTW*, p. 43-44 and 81)

1. **Center Ourselves** – take whatever steps you need to in order to be grounded in your deeper truth; to respond from our deepest reality and not simply react using destructive scripts. This takes practice and experimentation about what works to get/remain centered.
2. **Articulate our True Selves** – To Ourselves and Our Opponent – Getting in touch with your feelings, emotions and underlying needs and honestly sharing them.
3. **Receive the Truth of the Other** – deeply listen to and hear the opponent, even though we may not agree with him/her.
4. **Agree, Don't Assume** – with the truth and untruth of both sides on the table, we can find the common ground around which we can agree.

Constructive vs. Obstructive Activism

- **Constructive Program (CP)** (M. Nagler, *Is There No Other Way?* p. 177-183, 189-193).
Creating a positive alternative that liberates people from their oppression.
- **Obstructive Program:** Opposing an oppressive situation. This can take many forms, including marches, demonstrations, civil disobedience, etc.

Gandhi's view of Constructive Program

- CP supports "complete independence by truthful and nonviolent means". (See C.P., p. 5)
- Increasingly important dimensions of nonviolence during his life
- Always did Constructive Programs – nonviolent resistance only done occasionally.
- Gandhi developed 18 CP's (currently, there are hundreds of groups in India doing it)
Examples: Education, uplift of women, sanitation, improved diet, child welfare, etc.
- Best example: khadi. Spinning khadi created communal unity and empowerment because everyone was involved, was a daily spiritual practice, increased self-esteem and self-reliance, created clothes they could wear
- For Gandhi, Constructive Program is the foundation of social change. Good work by community during CP strengthens the community's discipline and readiness for times when nonviolent resistance was necessary.

Some Advantages of Constructive Programs/Activism

Constructive Program has advantages of being concrete, creative, practical, proactive, independent of the oppressor, empowering, ongoing, effective in the long-term, inclusive.

Current Examples of Constructive Programs

1. Alternative education – home schooling, Montessori
2. Sustainable energy – solar, wind, biomass, etc.
3. Church starting community dinner program instead of soup kitchen

Scott Peck's 4 Stages of Community-Building

1. **Pseudo-community** – The first response of a group in seeking to form a community is most often to try to fake it. The members attempt to be an instant community by being extremely pleasant with one another and avoiding all disagreement.
2. **Chaos** – The chaos always centers around well-intentioned but misguided attempts to heal and covert... In the stage of chaos individual differences are, unlike those in pseudo-community, right out in the open. Only now, instead of trying to hide or ignore them, the group is attempting to obliterate them. Underlying the attempt to heal and covert is not so much the motive of love as the motive to make everyone normal – the motive to win as the members fight over whose norm might prevail.
3. **Emptiness** – There are only two ways out of chaos... one is into organization – but organization is never community. The only other way is into and through emptiness. Emptiness requires overcoming the following; expectations and preconceptions; prejudices, ideology, theology, and solutions; the need to heal, covert, fix, or solve; the need to control. The stage of emptiness in community development is a time of sacrifice. Such sacrifice hurts because it is a kind of death, the kind that is necessary for rebirth. This is an

extraordinary testament to the human spirit. What it means is that given the right circumstances and knowledge of the rules, we human beings are able to die for each other.

4. **Community** – When its death has been completed, open and empty, the group enters community. In this final stage a soft quietness descends. It is a kind of peace. The room is bathed in peace. Then, quietly, a member begins to talk about herself. She is being vulnerable. She is speaking of the deepest part of herself. The group hangs of each word. No one realizes she was capable of such eloquence.

Recommended Books

Ackerman, Peter and Jack Duvall. *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999. (Also has half-hour videos of 6 movements.)

Butigan, Ken in Collaboration with Patricia Bruno, O.P. *From Violence To Wholeness: A Ten Part Program in the Spirituality and Practice of Active Nonviolence*. Las Vegas: Pace e Bene, 1999.

Cane, Pat. *Trauma Healing and Transformation: Awakening a New Heart With Body Mind Spirit Practices*. Watsonville: Capacitar, 2001.

Gandhi, Mohandas. *Non-Violent Resistance (Satyagraha)*. New York: Schocken Books, 1951.

Meyerding, Jane, ed. *We Are All Part of One Another: A Barbara Deming Reader*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1984.

Moyer, Bill, et. al. *Doing Democracy: The MAP Model for Organizing Social Movements*. Vancouver: New Society Publishers, 2001.

Nagler, Michael. *The Search for a Nonviolent Future – The Promise of Peace for Ourselves, Our Families, and Our World*, Inner Ocean Publishing, Maui, HI, 2004. Originally published: Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley Hills Books, 2001.

Rosenberg, Marshall (Editor). *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life – Create Your Life, Your Relationships and Your World in Harmony with Your Values*. 2003

Washington, James M., ed. *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.* San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986.

Wink, Walter, ed. *Peace is the Way: Writings on Nonviolence from the Fellowship of Reconciliation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000.

Zunes, Stephen, Kuntz, Lester R., and Asher, Sarah Beth, eds. *Nonviolent Social Movements: A Geographical Perspective*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999.

For further information on Nonviolent Living, visit *The Holistic Health Learning Center* (HHLC), a self-care library and community action Center at San Francisco State University, HSS 329: www.sfsu.edu/~holistic or call: (415) 338-6416. The HHLC is part of *The Institute for Holistic Health Studies*: www.sfsu.edu/~ihhs, Dept. of Health Education: <http://healthed.sfsu.edu>