

Bystander Intervention Training

Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice
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WHAT IS ACTIVE NONVIOLENCE? SOME INSIGHTS

Active nonviolence is not simply a protest against violence...

It also presents a vision that Another World is Possible, and suggests a way to fulfill that vision. Against the makers of violence, it proposes not passivity, but action, and because it is nonviolent it has a unique power greater than the power of guns and bombs.

- Inspired by Howard Zinn, *The Power of Nonviolence*

We grow deeper into Active Nonviolence by practicing...

We don't have to be perfectly nonviolent before we take action; nonviolence is something we practice and grow into...As Gandhi said, "Nonviolence is a continual (and lifetime) series of *'experiments with truth'* through which we gradually learn to become more human."

Active nonviolence is a spiritual journey...

Addressing the violence in our lives and the life of the world launches us on a journey bringing us face to face with our illusions as well as the merciful and replenishing love of the Nonviolent God/Source/Spirit/Interconnectedness that longs for our wholeness as individuals and as community. It is therefore not purely mechanical, where one simply applies a particular technique.

Active nonviolence does not propose to end conflict

Real nonviolence does not attempt to create a world where there is no conflict; it recognizes that we face conflict all through our lives, and recognizing conflict is the first step towards finding common ground.

Active nonviolence takes the reality of evil seriously, but it takes the reality of good even more seriously...

Nonviolence maintains that while violence is a fact, the world also rings with love, courage and grace which are ultimately more powerful than violence and capable of transforming it. *"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice."* (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.)

Active nonviolence begins with taking responsibility for our own state of mind, feelings and actions...

In most conflicts, we have two ways of responding. The first is to react defensively. Often we do this by instantaneously acting out our deeply ingrained "conflict scripts." The second way is to allow our true self to take action. This is the way of active nonviolence. Nonviolence is a means of creating a situation that stops the immediate violence, clarifies the real issues and produces a resolution. Ultimately this means taking responsibility for our own behavior, no matter what others do.

Active nonviolence can be used to respond to EVERY level and type of violence...

This includes interpersonal violence, violence in the workplace, violence between communities, and violence against the Earth. It also includes the overarching structures of violence that consciously and unconsciously shape and inform our personal and social lives in profoundly disturbing ways, including economic violence, racism, and sexism. The nonviolence practitioner actively seeks creative and persistent ways to use nonviolent methods to transform these conditions and their underlying attitudes and assumptions.

(compiled by Elizabeth Walters, IHM for the Meta Peace Team. Inspired by Howard Zinn and Pace e Bene, San Francisco (*Peace and All Good*): <http://paceebene.org/>)

ASSESSING THE SITUATION: How do you decide what to do?

- **CACI - Center, Assess, Choose a Goal, Intervene**

The more you practice, the more quickly you'll be able to be ready to choose an appropriate way to intervene, and the more your answers to these questions will become intuitive.

- Centering: Unlock your knees; drop down a little bit. Take 3 deep breaths.
- Every situation is different - you will have to use your best judgment, and adjust as you go.
- We never have the whole story. We need to act based on our best instincts.
- Look for resources in the environment.
- Look for common ground you may share with the harasser(s).
- You may need to step outside your comfort zone - how far are you willing/able to go?
- Center yourself - get ready to stay calm and hold your ground, while also being flexible to change as the situation develops. Dropping your knees a little can help you feel grounded
- Legal Risks
- Risks of Weapons
- When to Call the Police – risks and benefits

Some questions to ask yourself:

- What's going on? What kind of incident is it? (see "Three Buckets" below)
- Who am I intervening with, and how does it make a difference? (stranger vs. someone you know; one-time vs. ongoing relationship; distance vs. close relationship)
- What is the goal of my intervention?
- What am I willing to risk?
- What is my comfort zone? Am I willing to go beyond it?
- What are my assumptions/prejudices?
- What resources are available in the moment?
- What privilege do I bring?

Three Buckets of Incidents

- Physical violence
- Hate speech
- Micro-aggressions

Tools for Intervention

- **Distract** (interrupt), **redirect**, **reinforce**
- **Protective accompaniment** - walk with someone
- **Interpositioning** - standing between two people or two groups of people
- **Observe, monitor, document**
- **(Proactive) presence** - sometimes just our presence can make a difference (Man stripped and lay down with Palestinians who were being detained at a checkpoint)
- **Humor** (Two groups getting ready to fight: "Are you rehearsing for West Side Story?", start singing)
- **Tolerate your distress** - especially important if you have a history of trauma
- **CLARA** - Calm and center; Listen; Affirm; Respond; Add Information (will be discussed later)

Some Things You Can Do if You Witness Someone Being Harassed or Intimidated

1. **Move close to the person being harassed, introduce yourself, and begin a discussion - this will create a zone of safety.** Continue the conversation until the harasser leaves. Stay with your new friend or offer to provide accompaniment to the point that the person feels safe.
2. **Rally others in the vicinity to form a protective circle around the person being harassed,** or encourage others in the area to join you in loudly shouting, "Stop it now."
3. **Interrupt the behavior by asking the aggressor a question to throw him/her off balance** ("Excuse me, can you tell me how to get to..." or "Hey, didn't we go to highschool together?") Try to redirect the person's energy by creatively engaging the person. Don't debate. Look for common ground or an entry point into a conversation that takes the focus off the person being harassed. The point is to stop the person's behavior, not win a political argument.
4. **If you cannot directly intervene, document what you are witnessing.** Observe details. Use your phone to take pictures or videotape. Discern whether or not it is a good strategy to let it be known that you are documenting. Sometimes this works as a deterrent; sometimes it escalates situations.
5. **Do not take away people's agency to defend themselves.** Sometimes the best approach is to remain physically close, using body language to convey solidarity and support, especially if the person being harassed is verbally responding to the abuse. An outside voice in this case can possibly disempower and escalate the situation. Observe before jumping in.

Keys to Effective Nonviolent Communication

Many of us grew up being told that the only response to violence was to be a victim or to retaliate with violence. When our physical safety is threatened, each individual must make their own choices about how to respond. We believe it possible to look beyond the classic “fight or flight” response. How do we maintain our own safety and dignity without taking it away from others?

Eye contact. Make as much as is accepted by the culture.

Make no abrupt gestures. Move slowly. When practical, tell your opponent what you are going to do before you do it. Don't say anything threatening, critical, or hostile.

Don't be afraid of stating the obvious. Say simply, “You're shouting at me.” Or “You're hurting my arm.”

Behave differently. Some in the process of committing an act of violence have strong expectations as to how his/her victim will behave. If you manage to behave differently - in a non-threatening manner - you can interrupt the flow of events that would have culminated in an act of violence.

Seek to befriend your opponent's better nature. Even the most brutal and brutalized among us have some spark of decency which the nonviolent defender might reach.

Don't shut down. In response to physical violence the best rule is to resist as firmly as you can without escalating anger or aggression. Try varying approaches and keep trying to alter your opponent's pictures of the situation.

Get your opponent talking. Listen for beliefs, wishes, or fears. Don't argue, but don't give the impression you agree with many assertions that are cruel or immoral. Listening is more important than what you say - keep the talk going and keep it calm.

Michigan and Meta Peace Teams <http://www.metapeaceteam.org/>

Active Listening - Building Rapport, Understanding, and Trust

Active Listening Tools

1. Restating

To show you are listening, repeat every so often what you think the person said — not by parroting, but by paraphrasing what you heard in your own words. For example, “Let’s see if I’m clear about this. . .”

2. Summarizing

Bring together the facts and pieces of the problem to check understanding — for example, “So it sounds to me as if . . .” Or, “Is that it?”

3. Minimal encouragers

Use brief, positive prompts to keep the conversation going and show you are listening — for example, “umm-hmmm,” “Oh?” “I understand,” “Then?” “And?”

4. Reflecting

Instead of just repeating, reflect the speaker’s words in terms of feelings — for example, “This seems really important to you. . .”

5. Giving feedback

Let the person know what your initial thoughts are on the situation. Share pertinent information, observations, insights, and experiences. Then listen carefully to confirm.

6. Emotion labeling

Putting feelings into words will often help a person to see things more objectively. To help the person begin, use “door openers” — for example, “I’m sensing that you’re feeling frustrated. . . worried. . . anxious. . .”

7. Probing

Ask questions to draw the person out and get deeper and more meaningful information — for example, “What do you think would happen if you. . .?”

8. Validation

Acknowledge the individual’s problems, issues, and feelings. Listen openly and with empathy, and respond in an interested way — for example, “I appreciate your willingness to talk about such a difficult issue. . .”

9. Effective pause

Deliberately pause at key points for emphasis. This will tell the person you are saying something that is very important to them.

10. Silence

Allow for comfortable silences to slow down the exchange. Give a person time to think as well as talk. Silence can also be very helpful in diffusing an unproductive interaction.

11. “I” messages

By using “I” in your statements, you focus on the problem not the person. An I-message lets the person know what you feel and why — for example, “I know you have a lot to say, but I need to. . .”

12. Redirecting

If someone is showing signs of being overly aggressive, agitated, or angry, this is the time to shift the discussion to another topic.

13. Consequences

Part of the feedback may involve talking about the possible consequences of inaction. Take your cues from what the person is saying — for example, “What happened the last time you stopped taking the medicine your doctor prescribed?”

Communication Blockers

These roadblocks to communication can stop communication dead in its tracks:

“Why” questions. They tend to make people defensive.

Quick reassurance, saying things like, “Don’t worry about that.”

Advising — “I think the best thing for you is to move to assisted living.”

Digging for information and forcing someone to talk about something they would rather not talk about.

Patronizing — “You poor thing, I know just how you feel.”

Preaching — “You should. . .” Or, “You shouldn’t. . .”

Interrupting — Shows you aren’t interested in what someone is saying.

Excerpted and adapted from Lee Scheingold, “Active Listening,” McKesson Health Solutions LLC, 2003.

6 Simple Conversation Courtesies

“Excuse me...” “Pardon me...” “One moment please...” “Let’s talk about solutions.” “May I suggest something?”

The Art of Questioning: The four main types of questions are:

Leading: “Would you like to talk about it?” “What happened then?” “Could you tell me more?”

Open-Ended: Use open-ended questions to expand the discussion — for example, lead with: “How? What? Where? Who? Which?”

Closed-Ended: Use closed ended questions to prompt for specifics — for example, lead with: “Is? Are? Do? Did? Can? Could? Would?”

Reflective: Can help people understand more about what they said — for example, someone tells you, “I’m worried I won’t remember. . .” Reflective Q: “It sounds like you would like some help remembering?”

2005 National Aging I&R Support Center, Washington, DC <http://www.mitoaction.org/pdf/tipActiveListening.pdf>

CLARA METHOD

(**Note:** Most of us have a tendency to want to start with Step Four, especially if the questions or comment is hostile or threatening. We are more successful if we start with Step One).

STEP ONE: CALM AND CENTER

Many of us – when we feel threatened, attacked, or “put on the spot” – need to internally calm and center ourselves before we can honestly be engaged in listening.

STEP TWO: LISTEN

In a debate, when you’re listening to your opponent, you listen until they get their facts completely wrong and you can use the real facts to make a fool of them. Instead, in CLARA, listen until you hear the moral principle that they’re speaking from or a feeling or experience that you share. Listen until you find a way in which you can open your heart and connect with them.

Try to understand what lies at the core of the questions: the fear, the uncertainty, the anger, the frustration, the truth offered by the person talking to you. What might their voice inflection or emotional state tell you? What assumptions might their question demonstrate? If you know the person, this may help you answer these questions, but it’s still important to listen carefully.

What do they really want to know? What is legitimate? If you believe that they don’t really want to know anything, but are just attacking you, consider what part of their question might be considered reasonable by others in the audience (or within earshot, if you’re not formally speaking to a group). It’s also important to listen to what the person is actually saying. In trying to understand what might be behind the questions or comment, we don’t want to miss what the person literally said.

STEP THREE: AFFIRM

This is the step we don’t usually think about in a conscious way. Express the connection that you found when you listened, whether it’s a feeling, an experience, or a principle that you have in common with the other person. Affirm whatever you can find in their question or statement(s) that represents a reasonable issue or a real fear. If you can’t find anything (and we’ll help you get better at finding something), there are other ways to affirm. The exact words don’t matter – the important part is to convey the message that you’re not going to attack or hurt the other person and that you know that they have as much integrity as you do.

To actually be affirming, this step must be genuine, rather than “sweet” or “slick” talking. It’s also generally best to speak spontaneously from the heart rather than to develop “pat” answers. Share of yourself.

Affirming is not a natural process for many of us, but it gets easier with practice.

STEP FOUR: RESPOND

We often start here. Wait. Listen. Affirm.

Debaters, politicians, and sometimes the rest of us often avoid answering the question that was asked and answer a different question in order to stay in control of the situation, not lose the debate, etc. Instead, in CLARA, answer the question. Respond to the issue the person raised. If you agree with them, say that too, even if it feels like

you're giving up some ground. By doing this, you're conveying the message that you're not afraid of the other person and that their questions and concerns deserve to be taken seriously. If you don't know the answer, so say. Refer them to other sources if you have some or tell them you'll find out the answer if that seems appropriate.

Sometimes it seems that the person does not really want information but is simply trying to fluster you or attack you. Reacting with respect rather than defensiveness or anger is important; it show respect when a question or statement of this nature is addressed rather than "blown off."

Personal insights and experiences often reach people in a way that abstract facts do not.

STEP FIVE: ADD INFORMATION

Step five gives you a chance to share additional information that you want to give the person. It may help the other person or the audience to consider the issue in a new light or redirect the discussion in a more positive direction. This is a good time to state whatever facts are relevant to the questions the person asked. This may involve correcting any mistaken facts they mentioned; you can do this now because now that you've made a heart connection, the other person is probably more open to hearing your facts than they would have been if you had started there.

Some other possibilities include offering resources (such as books, organizations, or specific people) or adding a personal anecdote.

There is simply no one "recipe for success" in de-escalating a potentially violent person. "One cup inter-positioning mixed in with equal amounts of CLARA and a pinch of modeling" is simply not the way it works. We each bring our gifts and limits to the field and what works for one person may not work as well for someone else. Flexibility and creativity are the keys!

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Some Thoughts on Power and Privilege

What is power?

The definition of power has been debated by many people and there continue to be different understandings of the term. One definition that we think is both simple and useful is: “the ability to get what you want.”³

Power is a relational term. It can only be understood as a relationship between human beings in a specific historical, economic and social setting. It must be exercised to be visible.

It is worth noting here the difference between forms of power that are ‘power-over’ and ‘power-with’. Power-over is power that is used in a discriminatory and oppressive way: It means having power over others and therefore domination and control over others (e.g. through coercion and violence). Power-with is power that is shared with all people in struggles for liberation and equality. In other words, it means using or exercising one’s power to work with others equitably, for example, in a social movement.

What is privilege?

Privilege is an unearned, special advantage or right that a person is born into or acquires during their lifetime. It is supported by the formal and informal institutions of society and conferred to all members of a dominant group, by virtue of their group membership.

Privilege implies that wherever there is a system of oppression (such as capitalism, patriarchy, or white supremacy) there is an oppressed group and also a privileged group, who benefit from the oppressions that this system puts in place. Privilege and power are closely related: privilege often gives a person or group power over others.

Sometimes the privileged group benefits from the system in obvious, material ways, such as when women are expected to do most or all of the housework, and male partners benefit from their unpaid labour. At other times the benefits are more subtle and invisible and involve certain pressures being taken off the privileged group and focused on others, such as Roma people being much more likely to be targeted and harassed by police.

Privilege is “an invisible package of unearned assets” that members of privileged groups “can count on cashing in every day,” but about which they “are meant to remain oblivious.” Privilege is usually invisible to those who have it because we’re taught not to see it, but nevertheless it puts them at an advantage over those who do not have it. A lot of people find it difficult to accept this idea when they belong to a ‘dominant’ group that is part of the ‘norm.’ After all, ‘they didn’t ask for it’ and ‘it’s not their fault.’ However, building awareness and understanding about the privileges you can count on and others cannot, due to systems of oppression, is an important part of building solidarity and becoming an ally.

It makes sense that where there is an oppressed group, there is a privileged group, because systems of oppression wouldn’t last long if nobody benefited from them. It is crucial to understand that members of

the privileged group of any of these systems may also be oppressed by any of the others. This allows struggles to be divided and social change activity to be weakened. We are divided, socially and politically, by a lack of awareness of our privileges and how they are used to set our interests against each other and break our solidarity.

It is also true that a privileged group can also, in some ways, be oppressed by the expectations of the system that privileges them. For example, men under patriarchy are expected not to show weakness or emotion. However, men are not oppressed by patriarchy for being men; they are oppressed in these ways because it is necessary in order to maintain women's oppression. For women to see themselves as weak and irrational, they must believe that men are stronger and less emotional. For these reasons, men showing weakness, and emotion are punished by patriarchy for 'letting the team down.'

From http://antiracist-toolkit.users.ecobytes.net/?page_id=124