

# Explaining Active Nonviolence

Purpose: This exercise is a general exercise drawing upon participants' experiences and knowledge to introduce the concept of active nonviolence.

Time: 1 hour

Preparation: Write up TTT's principles/characteristics of nonviolence on a flip sheet

- Respect for the opponent/everyone involved as fellow human beings
- Care for everyone involved
- Belief that everyone is capable of change and that the opponent's basic humanity can be reached
- Refusal to harm, damage or degrade people/living things/the earth as a means of gaining ends
- If suffering is inevitable, willingness to take it on oneself rather than inflict it on others; not responding to violence with violence
- Recognition that no one has a monopoly of truth, aiming to bring together our 'truth' and the opponents' 'truth'
- Belief that the means are the ends in the making, so the means have to be consistent with the ends
- Openness rather than secrecy
- Necessity of training so that nonviolence thinking and behaviour become part of our everyday lives

Description:

- Introduce the concepts of 'fight and flight' and 'tend and befriend' as recognised biological responses to danger/threat. On a flip sheet brainstorm the qualities of each of these words in turn.
- Reflect on what has come out of the brainstorm and explain how nonviolence is the alternative to fight and flight—the third way that combines qualities of both. Nonviolence is active not passive etc— highlight from the brainstorm list the qualities of nonviolence (15 minutes).
- Ask the group in pairs or small groups to discuss examples of where nonviolence has been used (10 minutes). Give participants the option of drawing from
  - (a) an incident in participants' own life, and/or,
  - (b) a political or social change event they know about
- After 10 minutes small group work, leave the groups in place, and introduce the flip sheet listing TTT's characteristics of nonviolence (as noted above). Explain that this is not intended to be definitive, merely where TTT has got to in its own understanding of nonviolence.
- Invite the pairs/small groups to look at their examples and note which of the principles are present (15 minutes).
- Bring the group back together and feedback on examples and how far each principle fit (20 minutes).

Optional Add-on: This could continue with the 'An Action is Nonviolent if ...' exercise.