

FIGHT, FLIGHT OR INSIGHT

Purpose: This exercise explores the idea that nonviolence is not simply a strategy or tool. It is an attitude and way of life. The exercise begins with the personal and then moves on to look at nonviolent social change, e.g., the fall of the Berlin Wall or the People Power in the Philippines.

Time: 1 hour

Preparation: flip sheet and pens, photocopies of flip chart 'TTT's Principles of Nonviolence' or write them up on a flip beforehand, case studies demonstrating nonviolent social change (see the case studies section of the website for examples)

Explanation for facilitators:

In this exercise, the group explores responses to conflict: the common responses of 'fight or flight' and the alternative third way of nonviolence or 'insight'. The following explanation summarises these responses. Note that the facilitator passes this information on to the group in stages, as explained in the 'Description of Exercise' section.

Introductory remarks: Fight and Flight

Evolution has equipped us with the capacity to respond to threats in two different ways: fight or flight. In our society one response to conflict and disagreement is to attack, to be angry or to hurt, to fight verbally, psychologically or physically—or any combination of these. This response is summarised by the word 'fight'. The opposite is 'flight', for example feeling hurt and saying nothing, not speaking up when you disagree or worse—pretending to agree when you do not.

Introductory remarks: The Way of Nonviolence: 'Insight'

Instinct has provided us with these two responses, but they are inadequate in today's world. Fight does not solve problems and can often make matters worse. Flight does not solve injustices either. Silence is consent. 'Insight' offers a Third Way, the way of nonviolence. It requires not instinct but considerate and thoughtful response, clean and clear communication, not passive acceptance but active intervention.

The way of nonviolence is not only about peaceful resolution of conflict. It is also about working to overcome injustice and oppression, it is part of our inner journey, lifestyle and personal evolution. For Quakers, nonviolence is an integral part of our beliefs and history.

Description of Exercise:

Part 1: Introductory Remarks, Idea Shower

- Explain to the group that there will be idea shower introductory work followed by small group work.
- Introductory remarks: Fight or Flight. Brief talk about fight or flight. (10 minutes)
- Idea shower about fight/flight. Divide the flip into two sections (fight/flight) and idea storm clear examples of these situations. Very quick without discussion, just to get the basic idea. (5 minutes or less)
- Introductory remarks: Insight or the Third Way—the Way of Nonviolence in the personal everyday. Brief talk about nonviolence, drawing from conclusions above and introducing insight. (5 minutes)

Part 2: Small group work, your life and social change examples

- In groups of 3 or 4, ask each person to think of instances where someone has found the nonviolent solution to a small, personal problem from their own experience. This may be dealing with a chronic situation e.g. bullying or conflict between neighbours, or a sudden situation e.g. angry driver. Participants share experiences in small group. (10 minutes, groups of 3 or 4)
- Continuing in small group, ask the groups to choose one scenario for further discussion and give out the TTT Principles of nonviolence handouts. Ask the groups to consider how the scenario chosen illustrates the principles. Do some of them fit, all of them? (10 minutes)
- Still working in small groups, think of social change examples. Some groups will be able to think of their own. However, some groups may need help, in which case you can give them an example case study taken from the website. Which principles are illustrated in each of these? (10 minutes)
- Share in plenary, facilitator summarising the learning points and drawing out the notion that nonviolence is far more than 'not violence', that it is a whole philosophy, a third way rooted in compassion and the concept of transformation. (10 minutes)

Turning the Tide's principles/characteristics of nonviolence

- 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