

Nonviolent Quotations

Purpose: to explore what we think we understand about nonviolence and to identify some characteristics.

Time: 40 minutes

Preparation: collect some appropriate quotations about peace, activism and nonviolence and put them on separate pieces of paper or card (or use the ones in the 'Nonviolence Quotations Exercise Resource' document). Make sure they are printed big enough for people to read. Prepare a reasonable space for the quotes to be laid out and read by everyone, maybe in a circle on a table or the floor. Write on a flip sheet the list of TTT 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'
- A 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 of Exercise: This is about personal responses and ideas about nonviolence. We all agree that nonviolence is a Good Thing, but many of us have different ideas and understandings about it. Explain that many people have said many things about nonviolence and you have some quotations for the group to consider. Lay out the quotes so that each person can read each one in turn, such as on a table they can move around or affixed to the wall. Ask them circulate silently reading each quote and to remember the single one that speaks to them most at that moment. Once everyone has read each quote and returned to their seat you will ask them individually a) to pick up and read out loud the quote that speaks most directly to them, b) why that particular quote and c) what characteristic of nonviolence they think it conveys.

Follow-up: Write up each characteristic of nonviolence as people identify it from their quote. Explain that Turning the Tide does not have a definition of nonviolence, but has developed a list of characteristics. Display the TTT list alongside the list you have just written from each person's response. Identify the similarities and differences.

Optional Add-on: This exercise can be followed by "An action is nonviolent if ..." and/or the "Nonviolence Spectrum".