

## Educational Unit 1

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# TURNING OPPRESSION UPSIDE DOWN



Working Group on

**Christian Nonviolence**

Christianity and Justice Research Center



Centre d'estudis

**Cristianisme i Justícia**

*"Move Nonviolence"* is an educational commitment to initiate a process of personal transformation before the conflicts we face in our times, creating nonviolent strategies that free up situations that are at an impasse. This tool consists of a series of videos accompanied by the corresponding educational units so that the teaching guides have the material and direction for their work. The dynamics of this document are classified into sections and their topics in accordance with their appearance in the video. In some sections we suggest suitable options for each end-user profile. This proposal is intended for groups who can be accompanied by someone with a capacity for in-depth reflection on each subject.

Acquire all the material

**[www.movenonviolence.net](http://www.movenonviolence.net)**

Each unit plan incorporates a series of associated material accessible from the project website: [www.movenonviolence.net](http://www.movenonviolence.net). The material of this specific unit is found in: <https://movenonviolence.net/U1>.



## Breaking the Ice. Dynamics of Structural Violence

### ■ CHILDREN

Three groups are made. Each student from the 1st will hold a page from a large newspaper in their hands. The 1st and 2nd Group are then asked to close their eyes. The third group is placed around the other two. Suddenly the guide shouts: "Attaaaack!!!". After the initial chaos, everyone sits down: What has happened? How did we feel? Do we react violently just because the "leader" says so? Have we felt the violence?

### ■ YOUTH

Two groups are made. One is given a large quantity of words written on papers. The 2nd group too, but with less words. In 15 minutes the 2 groups must form the longest meaningful sentence they can. At the beginning and during the activity, the guide repeats: "Anything goes, what's important is to win!" If there are confrontations but are not extreme the guide should not intervene. At the end the following questions are assessed: Accumulated structural

violence gives rise to inequalities (different initial levels). Do we act according to what is ethical or according to what is legal? What if the law builds up structural violence?

### ■ ADULTS

A volunteer is accompanied out of the room and told that his mission is to make sure that every gesture he makes must be obeyed by the rest: Raise your right hand, put your index finger on the tip of your nose... The rest (not the volunteer) are told to obey everything the volunteer does but only as long as the guide, who is standing behind him, folds his arms. The volunteer is then made to reenter and the guide keeps his arms folded (easy obedience). Later, discreetly, the guide changes position and disobedience is massive. How does the volunteer react? Will he impose violence? Each party evaluates their feelings. Power is only maintained if there is obedience, and this decision is made from below. Reflection: What do we mean by power? And by authority? Who has the power to change?

# 1

## Opening Sequence

This section is linked to the initial title sequence. Elements such as the finger, the pencil that draws a path, and the "O's" that roll are an open invitation to discover nonviolence through movement: Contrary to popular belief, an active initiative is required to promote and practice nonviolence. The session can be stimulated by the following useful questions. We add suggestions so that the guides have examples when accompanying the group's response:

- **What do you associate with the finger that pushes the word "move"?**

The finger is the "provocative" part of nonviolence, which shakes still-armored awareness. When dialogue is closed, nonviolent action disturbs the foundations of violence for positive change.



- **What is the marker pointing at?**

Nonviolence is not improvised: a path has to be drawn. This means training in conflict by using new answers.



- **When you see the "O's" falling and rolling, what does it suggest?**

The "O's" fall when they are defused, touched by nonviolence, they escape all control, roll off the screen and can cause more nonviolence as the cycle repeats. Domino effect.

### DEFINING: WHAT WE MEAN BY...

To make sure that we all imbue the same content in the words, an interesting activity is to create definitions of violence and nonviolence in groups, specifying the limits clearly. Below we offer proposals that are not meant to be applied directly, but that can be used by the guide as a reference to accompany debate:

**Violence:** *Gesture or word aggression that seeks to harm a living being.*

**Nonviolence:** *A way of living that provocatively loves the aggressor to save him. It goes beyond simple pacifism or rejection of violence: It is a combat of personal transformation and creative strategy using the weapons of spiritual force and innocence.*

## 2

## Limits of Dialogue

The first way of bridging conflicts must be dialogue. When one of the two sides builds a wall and does not want to talk, then the other side will have to opt for nonviolent actions that releases the situation. The objective of this section is to raise awareness that dialogue and negotiation is always difficult when choosing between two constructive options, because moral criteria no longer determine any initial choice.

To begin this session, the following questions can be asked: What do we experience from difficult but successful dialogue? And impossible dialogue? Share the situation and the topics debated in each case. Ask the group: Can we talk to terrorists? The guide shows the need to do so, and proposes examples. Dialogue can go a long way. Love those who have committed evil, but never accept the evil itself. An example of transformation:

### 01 Human



Finally, we propose two role-playing individuals who will act before an audience by each suggesting creative proposals to reach an agreement (perhaps impossible). At the end, it is noted how difficult dialogue can be between constructive options. Below we describe different situations according to the public's age:

#### ■ CHILDREN

Two groups of children want to play two different games at the same time and in the same place: one football and the other basketball.

#### ■ YOUTH

To spend a weekend together, two friends have different preferences: one wants to go camping for a couple of days in the mountains, and the other wants to go to a music festival.

#### ■ ADULTS

Two members of a nonprofit foundation must decide which project they finance in the next fiscal year. The budget is limited. One is committed to the education of unschooled children, and the other wants to help the disabled build entrances to difficult-to-access homes.

# 3

## Fight or Flight

Neuroscience research confirms<sup>1</sup> that the development of inner discipline through meditation or prayer allows us to transform our visceral reactions into secondary ones, aiding us to think calmly. We therefore propose starting the session by going through a mindful experience.

Secondly, the dynamics that follow will seek to train reflection in everyday conflicts.

Everyone can remember a heated disagreement with someone who has been very upset.

### OBJECTIVE

To make plain that neither violence nor flight solves anything. The guide will make people acknowledge how violent reactions crushed the opponent, but ultimately did not heal the conflict. The escape reactions perpetuate the cycle but little else. Only decisions in favor of nonviolence truly improve the root of the conflict.

- **How did I feel?**

Through an act of inner reflection share a brainstorm of feeling. Name those emotions. Write them down.

- **What did I do? What do I usually do?**

Forget myself to not explode in anger? Assume that any mutual agreement was impossible? Ignore them and not talk to them for days or weeks? Face them violently? Shut up and, when you can, stab them?... On a blackboard you can group the answers into three columns, but at the

beginning there should be no headings or title. At the end, everything should fit into one of three groups: Escape, violence, nonviolence. The third will probably have been left empty, and this last point is worth emphasizing.

Then, everyone should imagine a nonviolent alternative for dealing with the conflict. If anyone cares to share, they can do so publicly.

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1 BUENO, David (2017). *Neurociència per a educadors*. Barcelona: Associació de Mestres Rosa Sensat, p. 149-156.

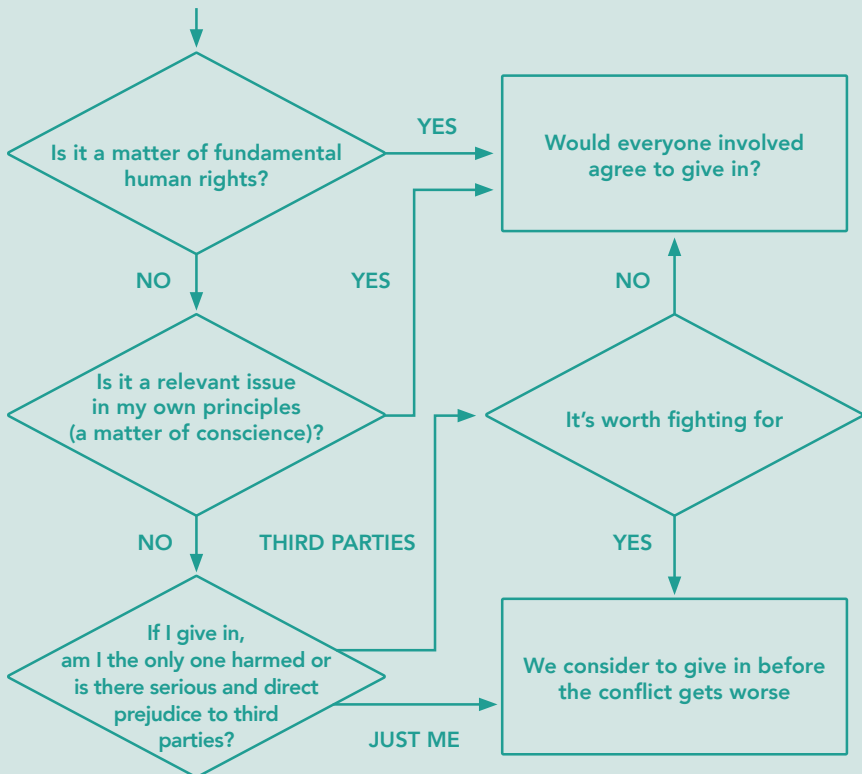
# 4

## Road-Map: Discerning Proper Criteria. What Issues Are Worth Fighting For?

Before defending a nonviolent action, it is necessary to assess whether it is an issue worth fighting for. Here we offer a possible road-map to make this appreciation. Responding to these series of questions, the positive (worthwhile) or negative (no need to fight) result should serve as a point of departure fitting the inner will of the party concerned. We propose to publicly display

the diagram testing it in group with various conflict topics, and assess if the result was expected. The option of giving up is not naive if it is public (externally): When interacting with the other party, it may even become a force of habit and either the other will be moved, or the solidarity of third parties will be awakened in pursuit of justice.

### 02 Is it worth fighting?



# 5

## An Analysis of Bullying: Oppression and its Networks

Harassment (school, work...) or bullying is a violence that harms and can psychologically destroy, capable of generating significant damage and even the commission of suicide.

According to "School Violence and Bullying" (UNESCO 2017), two out of ten students suffer from this violence around the world.

This activity will analyze the bullying case presented in the video, with various questions to discuss in the next forum. We propose two options, one in Spanish and the other in English:

- **We regard the case of oppression**  
Why is violence effective? What pillars sustain it?
- **Consider the aggressor**  
How do they behave before the victim and before the group? Is there any violence in their history that makes them take it out on others?

### 03 Se buscan valientes



### 04 The Bus stop





- **The aggressor controls the situation through A) fear and B) animalizing the other (scorning them)**

Can you recognize scenes from these two sources of power?

- **To reverse fear and animalization, we must be courageous and face the situation firmly**

On the one hand, to disobey the fear of the aggressor questioning them bravely and creatively, trying to save them; on the other hand, to create a network of human relations in all directions (that do

not allow for contempt or threats). How did they achieve this in the video?

- **Now, remember a similar bullying situation that may have affected you closely or have heard about**

Apply these principles. Can you recognize the elements? Would you be able to "rewrite" the ending?

The activity can end with an anti-bullying video-clipp: Langui "Se buscan valientes" and Rachael Lynn "Dare to be different".

## 05 Se buscan valientes (Cançó)







## 06 Dare to be different





## Humanization: 30 Tweets to Reverse Violence

To choose an action that reverses the mechanism of violence, it is necessary to understand it. Here are a chain of Tweets to generate debate. The sentence length includes two stages: Going and returning.

-  1. The violent person is very insecure.
-  2. With fear, one cannot convince: their truth is imposed.
-  3. To impose truth, they opt for the fastest option: brute force and fear.
-  4. Brute force requires some exemplary punishments to dominate victims.
-  5. Fear threatens and intimidates victims: If they disobey they will pay dearly.
-  6. From time to time, you need to show who's boss by "sacrificing" someone.
-  7. Sacrificing someone is not always popular, so they animalize the other.
-  8. If the other "is inhuman", then any kind of violence enjoys impunity.
-  9. Message spread: the other is an animal, a monster, a dirty rag.
-  10. The manipulated obey the violent, they believe it.
-  11. + pressure implies + sacrifice... until genocide.
-  12. Through violence he believes he is in control.
-  13. The violent one feels safe. For sure?
-  14. A victim does not want to cooperate and takes initiatives.
-  15. Seeks to humanize the victims: Begins with some creative initiatives.
-  16. Victims perform actions that disobey fears, express dignity, do not harm.
-  17. The victim seeks to change the heart of the violent one inventing new actions.
-  18. The violent, full of wrath, demonizes victims and may sacrifice them as an example.
-  19. Other victims sympathize with the sacrificed, raising their voices with similar initiatives.
-  20. The violent lives without bound, defends himself with an excess of violence.
-  21. Others refuse to cooperate with these cruelties, isolating the violent.
-  22. Victims understand that they are strong without arms and united.
-  23. Victims create strategies and organize themselves to lower fear.
-  24. Non-cooperation with evil wounds the violent empire.
-  25. The violent loses power, and can no longer impose.
-  26. To change, integrate and renounce evil is a must.
-  27. The attitude of the victims is convincing.
-  28. The victim eventually feels safe.
-  29. Stops being a victim.
-  30. Peace comes.

## Action: Invent a New Ending!

When it comes to deactivating a conflict situation, effective actions must be invented. Training creativity is necessary to internalize nonviolence and practice its spontaneity. This section aims to exercise the imagination with third ways at different ages.

### ■ CHILDREN

Draw a picture or write about a conflict that they have experienced up close, expressing how they have felt. Choose some and read/show them in an anonymous way. Start a dialogue with them to identify the problem in each, how we feel when it takes place, and then learn to recognize how these feelings are asking us for a solution: Be courageous and take a decision (ask for help... etc.). After each case is presented, ask for brainstorming: What could we invent to **create a happy ending**? Accompany the answers according to the final 5 questions. End the session with a relaxing exercise, maybe singing something cheerful.

### ■ YOUTH AND ADULTS

Bring several different newspapers. Form six groups to choose and cut out news articles about conflicts in each of the following six issues: Family, neighborhood, labor, international, social, religious. If more than one of each is found, choose one that is representative. Each group will discuss the news by identifying key elements: sources of power, resources or situation in conflict, elements of fear and animalization... In presenting them, each group should explain and offer an **example of nonviolent action that would advance the situation**.

Five questions to ask regarding the action decided as a response...:

1. Does the action seek to save the aggressor, or exclude and retaliate?
2. Does the action refuse to cooperate with all injustice even if there is a risk of further suffering to come?
3. Does the action reinforce confidence in the victim's power?
4. Does the action intend to acknowledge the dignity of the victims?
5. Is the action creative and does it take the violent by surprise?

## Arms Detector

The dynamics of this session is to try to make us aware of the many mechanisms that we employ to attack others.

The guide makes an entrance with a stick or instrument wrapped in a plastic bag to simulate a weapons detector. First, the guide explains that before starting there is an order to scan the group with a detector because there are suspicions that they carry weapons. Facing the group, the guide asks: "Do you carry, yes or no? Let's see them!" The guide carries the detector around and makes a beeping noise with their mouth.

"Somebody is carrying a weapon! Let's see, We're not going to pick on anyone without proof. Everyone! Take out a sheet of paper and draw the last weapon you've used in your life." They draw and turn the paper face down. Then the guide goes through, and turns

the pages over one by one while looking at the weapons drawn. Most or all will be kitchen knives or carnival shotguns. "It's not this, or this, or this..." In the end, the guide asks, "But, you know what a weapon is?" They define it among themselves. Then, ask for examples: They come out with pistols, machine guns, grenades, knives... and all

these weapons are written on one side of the blackboard and finally this section is titled: "Physical Weapons". And next to it, write: "Psychological weapons". The guide asks what these are (silence for the purpose of ignoring others, laughter and mockery, social rejection...). And one more: "Structural weapons". The guide asks what these are (economic violence, unfair decisions...).

The question is restated: "Do you now understand why the detector has beeped?" They contemplate and then answer some questions:

- **Why do you think the violent need these weapons?**
- **Will using these weapons improve the situation someday?**
- **For the bravest and smartest, a challenge: Train yourself in the use of the "Weapons detector"!** To deactivate a bomb, specialized equipment is needed. When at school, at home, with friends... detect weapons like those mentioned previously, and ask yourself: How can we act to deactivate them? (proposals are solicited).



# 9

## Forward! Move Nonviolence Without Falling into Structural Perversion

**Debate:** By arming ourselves, are we safer? Not only are we talking about weapons like those used in crimes which we would never use, but also none of those mentioned in the previous section (rumors and gossip, complicity with the violent, silences that exclude...). Two groups prepare arguments, some in favor, others against. Provide data, if

possible search the web for reliable sources. Those who guide the activity can give suggestions of nonviolent reflection. Needing a weapon is proof that the soul does not know how to convince and defending violence is to silence the other. How to disarm? Replace defeating by convincing.



### PAY ATTENTION TO... RADIO VIOLENCE!

Discuss this among yourselves (and add more if you can)  
-this hailstorm of statements or "environmental attitudes" that reach us by ear, tuning into a frequency we too often praise.  
How can we change the tune?

#### **There can be no dialogue with radicals**

Prevent contact with the other, treating them like an idea, without knowing their day to day reality.

#### **They are Nazis**

Compare others to the most extreme form of violence that we know, so that hatred against them can reach your core.

#### **They all do the same thing, they look like puppets**

Stereotype all those who think differently, by generalizing and considering them manipulated and stupid.

#### **That man/woman does not deserve to live, has destroyed family/country...**

Denying the existence of a plural reality, reducing conflict and guilt to a visible leader who must be eliminated.

#### **Think like that and you'll see how they take you for a ride**

Promotes distrust in relationships, avoids creative or constructive solutions that build bridges and seek to reach out to a victor-victor situation.

#### **They are playing with fire, it can easily flame up into war**

Frighten and raise the discourse of fear and the specter of catastrophic consequences, to blame the other and justify any measure or violent reprisal.

#### **They'll get what's coming to them**

Justify violent or punishing reprisals.

## Those Who Have Already Started... Three Testimonies of Nonviolent Struggle Today

At the end of this journey to turn oppression upside down, we suggest three real examples of groups and initiatives employing nonviolent struggle to transform conflicts:

- **Women in Black**

International women's movement against wars, born in 1988 in Israel. Using methods of nonviolent resistance they aim to give voice to the victims of armed conflicts and to weave solidarity networks between women around the world.

[www.womeninblack.org](http://www.womeninblack.org)



- **Christian Peacemakers Team**

International ecumenical Christian movement that trains and sends nonviolent resistance teams in the struggle for human rights of indigenous people, against the war in Colombia, Iraq, Palestine..., etc.

[www.cpt.org](http://www.cpt.org)



- **Albert Einstein Institution**

Institution founded in 1983 by Gene Sharp dedicated to the study, learning, and use of nonviolent strategy in international conflicts. Their publications have decisively influenced dozens of conflicts, and many activists have been inspired to overthrow regimes in a nonviolent way.

[www.aeinstein.org](http://www.aeinstein.org)



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A project of

**CJ** Centre d'estudis  
**Cristianisme i Justícia**

 Working Group on  
**Christian Nonviolence**  
Christianity and Justice Research Center

With the suport of

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