



Violence and nonviolence spectrum

Purpose

To explore what we mean by nonviolence and the range of different understandings.

It is useful to follow this exercise with **An action is nonviolent if...**

Time

30 minutes

Group size

Up to 25

Materials

Flipchart, marker pens, tape or Blu-tac.

Related tools

⇒ **An action is nonviolent if...**

Toolkit theme:



Violence and nonviolence

Preparation

Review the scenarios below. Make sure you choose ones that will be most meaningful for the group. You may need to write your own.

Prepare two signs, one AGREE and one DISAGREE. Place on opposite walls.

Scenarios

- ⇒ A group of campaigners break into the empty office of an arms company at night and trash the computers and office equipment. *Is this nonviolent?*
- ⇒ Trees are going to be cut down to clear a site for an out-of-town supermarket; activists sit in the trees to prevent this happening. *Is this nonviolent?*
- ⇒ Two members of an anti-militarist group gain entry into a military base by dressing as security or medics. *Is this nonviolent?*





TURNING THE TIDE

Toolkit

- ⇒ During a mass protest in central London, demonstrators refuse to leave Parliament square and are held by police for several hours in a 'kettle' – a static containment. As evening falls it gets colder and there is no access to toilets. Several protestors start fires in bins. Some hurl objects at the lines of police. *Is this nonviolent?*

- ⇒ After years of trying to get a response from their MP, a group of local campaigners finally win an appointment and blockade the room until the MP gives them a commitment to take action on their issue. *Is this nonviolent?*

- ⇒ Indian women in Andhra Pradesh campaign to get the sale of alcohol banned. They attack the shops, pour the alcohol into the streets and shave the heads of men found drunk there. In some villages where shops refuse to close, they seize drunken patrons, wrap skirts round them, place them backwards on donkeys and parade them. *Is this nonviolent?*
 - ⇒ You can follow up with the scenario that the state government prohibited the sale of any alcohol on paydays. Does that change anyone's position?

Description

Explain the purpose of the activity and describe how it will work. Explain that there is no 'right' or 'wrong', just different opinions. But you can move your position if you are persuaded by someone's view.

Indicate the opposite walls with 'Agree' / 'Disagree' signs and ask them to imagine a line between the two.

Read out a scenario and ask:

Is this nonviolent?

Invite everyone to place themselves at a point on the line that is true for them. If you agree 100% go to the 'Agree' wall; part agree go to somewhere in the middle; totally disagree go to the 'Disagree' wall.





Ask someone nearest to a wall why they've placed themselves there. Then someone at the other end, then someone in the middle. If someone moves position during the discussion, ask them why. An important part of the activity is listening to one another and trying to understand other perspectives.

Debrief

Ask the whole group:

How was that?

What did you notice?

You could share what you as facilitator noticed about areas of agreement and divergence.

