

Here are seven inter-locking principles of active nonviolence that explain why nonviolence works.

1. Active nonviolence means choosing means that are consistent with our ends.

Opposing violence by employing violence ourselves simply adds to the sum total of violence. Even when violence appears to 'succeed' in the short run, in the long run it often leads to revenge and counter-violence, thus perpetuating the age-old 'cycle of violence.'

2. Active nonviolence distinguishes between the act and the actor.

Resisting the temptation to dehumanise our opponents avoids making enemies unnecessarily. The more we show respect for other people as human beings – even when expressing our vehement opposition to what they do - the greater the likelihood of them changing their behaviour, or even joining us, such as when insiders become “whistle-blowers.”

3. Active nonviolence seeks inclusive solutions.

This principle does not mean compromising with injustice, exploitation, or violence, it simply means taking into consideration the legitimate needs of our opponents, trying to find ways to accommodate them without surrendering our own - or others' - equally legitimate needs or objectives.

4. Active nonviolence rejects both retaliation and flight.

Refusing to flee or fight - the expected responses to conflict or violence - can cause our opponents to reassess the situation and reconsider their options. Standing our ground without returning violence for violence and without backing down, is the “third way” of active nonviolence.

5. Active nonviolence choose openness, transparency, and truthfulness.

This principle is not an absolute. Sometimes, secrecy may be necessary in order to safeguard the lives of others. In most situations however, secrecy and deceit are not only unnecessary, they are likely to have highly counter-productive consequences for our organisations, our work, and our relationships.

6. Active nonviolence transforms our anger, rather than lets it transform us.

'Righteous anger' in the face of violence, injustice, exploitation, brutality, and indifference is not only understandable, but healthy. The question is how we deal with our anger – through nonviolence we can transform our anger into a positive force for constructive action.

7. Active nonviolence exercises power by withdrawing cooperation.

The authority that power-holders wield is dependent on the continued cooperation of those whom they wield power over. When this cooperation is withdrawn - when people exercise their own power by refusing to

cooperate - power-holders lose the source of their power, and the 'powerless' become empowered.a

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