

Time:

20 minutes (as an introduction or warm-up), 45 minutes (as a full exercise).

Goal or purpose:

To give people an opportunity to solve a hassle or conflict using nonviolence.

To experience a conflict from various viewpoints.

Preparation:

A series of role plays are needed, each focusing on a conflict between two people, with a clear protagonist (see the sidebar for ideas of scenarios).

How it's done/facilitator's notes:

The facilitator asks people to form two rows of an equal number of people facing one another (you can use another row, which will play the role of observer and then comment during the debriefing on what the person saw during the exercise – the 'observer role' is also useful to give to those who do not wish to participate in the exercise.) Ask the participants to reach out to the person across from them to make sure they know who they will be relating to.

Explain that there are only two roles in this exercise, everyone in one line has the same role, the people opposite them have another role. Each person relates only to the person across from them. The facilitator explains the roles for each side, describes the conflict and who will start it. Encourage creativity and spontaneity.

Allow for a few seconds of silence and then tell them to begin. Depending on the situation, it may be a brief hassle (less than a minute) or you can let it go longer, but do not let it extend beyond 3 or 4 minutes. Call 'stop' and debrief.

Debriefing questions might include:

- what did people do?
- how did they feel? What did you notice about your body language, voice, or other ways your body responded to conflict?
- what ways did you find to solve or deal with the conflict?
- are there things you think you could have done differently to respond more constructively to the conflict?
- Replay the role play (perhaps add another element, or develop the situation), switching roles around. Moving one line up and having the person at the end go to the other end of that line is a quick and easy way of mixing up the lines.

Examples of roles:

- Conflict between two activists; perhaps someone new wants to join an action after the planning and training process.
- Someone planning to engage in nonviolent action/someone close to them who is opposed to their participation.
- Blockading a weapons or government facility/frustrated or angry police officer.

In some cases it may help to brief the two sides separately – as the role plays develop, you might want some to play the role of angry or belligerent police or security – so that the other 'side' responds as naturally as possible. Feel free to change the "rules" without letting the whole group know - for example, brief the 'police line' to target one individual (perhaps someone they identify as an 'organiser'), ignoring the others. How does the rest of the group respond in this situation?

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