

# BRAINSTORMING

**Time:** 15 minutes or longer

**Goal or purpose of the exercise:** A group technique designed to generate a large number of ideas in a limited amount of time.

## How it's done/facilitator's notes

Give the group a question such as 'what is nonviolence'? Or 'how do we develop a fund-raising strategy'? Then ask the group to come up with as many ideas and responses as possible.

Here are five recommendations for holding a brainstorming session:

1. Focus on quantity: The greater the number of ideas generated, the more you have to pick from.
2. No criticism: Criticism, challenges, and discussion should be put 'on hold' until the brainstorming is done.
3. Unusual ideas are welcome: To get a good and long list of ideas, unusual ideas are welcomed.
4. Combine and improve ideas: Good ideas can be combined to form a single very good idea, as suggested by the slogan '1+1=3'.
5. A brainstorm usually starts slowly, picking up speed as ideas spark other ideas, and then slowing down again. This is why some call it 'popcorn'.

After all the ideas are listed (preferably written up for all to see), ask if people have any questions about or disagree with any of the ideas. Open this up for discussion. You may not need to come to consensus on a brainstorming session. Or you may want to sort out the answers for further discussion.

At a nonviolence training session, you are not trying to come up with a single definition to answer the question 'What is nonviolence'? But through the brainstorm, participants can share many answers to that question. It can be enlightening to do a 'What is violence?' brainstorm at the same time. Pay attention to key words. Check to make sure that words like 'power' and 'anger' don't appear only in the violence brainstorm.