



The Six Steps of Nonviolence

Step 1: Information Gathering

The purpose is to gain an understanding of all parties involved in a conflict – to who, what, why, and where of a situation. You need to identify all sides involved and meet with them to hear their issues and concerns. Direct contact, surveys, or other forms of polling people's opinions can do this. You want to put away your own assumptions and hear other truths. Most conflicts are solved here.

Step 2: Education

Once the information has been gathered, it now needs to be presented to the parties involved, even if they are your enemy. Since misunderstandings and assumptions lead to many conflicts, this allows all parties to see and hear the issues and concerns. This is the second steps where most conflicts are resolved.

Step 3: Personal Commitment (Self-Purification)

This step deals with people committing themselves, and in some ways, strengthening themselves for the tasks ahead. This involved preparing yourself for moral battle. It also keeps you focused on a just cause – helping to keep you from moving from the moral high ground. Gandhi fasted to stay focused and help others focus. During other nonviolent movements they would hold services, sometimes nightly, to keep the community together and striving for a just cause. Each person's technique may differ.

Step 4: Negotiation

Typical negotiation is a win-lose proposition. In nonviolence, it becomes a win-win proposition. Your goal is not to win over them but to win them over. Compromise does have a place in this, but not always. There are certain moral truths that cannot be compromised such as equality and justice; there was no room for compromise in segregated buses and facilities. In a moral and ethical struggle your goal is to get your opponent to see the unjust conditions, not to beat them. Negotiation must be done out of love, not out of hate and revenge.

Step 5: Direct Action

Direct action can take two forms, as a means to educate, and a means to move parties back to the table when negotiation has failed. In this format and most cases, it is used to apply pressure on others so that they come back and communicate. Nonviolent direct action must hold to all six principles and never use violence. Ends and means must be the same.

Step 6: Reconciliation

This step is the greatest and most important step of all. The goal is to build the beloved community. Your goal is to create understanding, relationships, friendship, and forgiveness that can endure the next struggle, not as adversaries, but as allies. The purpose of utilizing nonviolence in a conflict is not to destroy your enemies, but to create a just, win-win situation and bonds of unity.