

STORIES OF VIOLENCE

Time 40-50 minutes

Materials Markers

Posters One titled Violence, one titled Nonviolence, and the Storytelling Guide

Steps **Now we will practice telling Stories of Violence.** In order to live nonviolently, we need to be able to face and talk about violence. We will practice some tools for how to stay well when telling or listening to stories of violence.

- **Brainstorm Violence**, forms of violence. Fill up the sheet, but wear out the group. Add ideas that are missing: emotional abuse, betrayal, deceit, family, religion, neglect, violation of rights, hunger, racism, systemic injustice, etc. Remind the group to be good companions—stay relaxed and non-anxious grounded in your core self—as you listen. Stay grounded. Stop and do groundings as a group when vision starts to narrow. Ask them to make sure the violence they have experienced is added.
- **Brainstorm Nonviolence.** Encourage participants to think beyond the personal to the community and society.
- **Invite everyone to stand and come up to circle three things** on the “Violence” sheet that they have experienced personally. Hand out dark-colored crayons. Look at the sheet and see that everyone experiences violence.
- **Invite each person to tell a brief story** of one incident of violence that they experienced personally that has some persisting emotion, but not the worst thing that ever happened. If it happened more than once, speak about only one incident. Use the Storytelling Guide.

Storytelling Guide

- Where did it happen?
- What happened?
- How did you feel?
- When was it over (at that time)?
- **Do a grounding** with everyone between stories. Prompt the listeners to remember their core selves. Prompt the speaker by asking questions from the Storytelling Guide whenever they stop, wander, or begin to repeat themselves.
- **Debriefing.** *Any comments before we move on? How might learning these tools to speak about and listen to stories of violence without being re-traumatized change us as a people or a culture?* Keep debriefing short. Move on to an active, moving, laughing Light and Lively or a break.

Facilitator Tips to better adapt, respond to questions or needs, or avoid pitfalls.

- When we give people the storytelling guide first, then when we direct them to those questions they feel supported, not interrupted. We interrupt the patterns of trauma – loss of language, wandering, avoidance, repetition – not the person.

- This comes from the **First Responders Protocol**. Following critical incidents, first responders may tell the story using these four prompts in order to mitigate the effects of trauma. It's important to share facts, express emotions, and help the brain acknowledge that the incident itself is over, even if the consequences persist. It's important also to understand distress reactions and coping and recovery strategies, so more tools are needed.

Variations Be open to cultural variations and adaptations for various people, groups, or settings.

- **Make notes of variations here:**

Daily Practices Commit to a practice – for a few days or weeks – until it feels natural or becomes a habit.

- **Remember** when you enter a room that the people in the room have had many varied experiences of violence, and naturally need to ensure they can protect themselves. Community agreements and addressing issues when they arise, especially in their smallest forms, reassure people that they are safe. Then they may let their guard down, and open up to curiosity, learning, and experimentation.
- **Speak about violence**, honestly and openly: where, what, how did you feel, and when was it over, at least at that time.
- **Ask others to share their stories of violence** and support them with these guides. It's important to help them state when the incident was over, at least at that time, and do a grounding before moving on.
- **Stay grounded** when listening to stories of violence, talking about violence, or witnessing violence.

Justice & Peace Applications Learn from experiences of applying this in justice and peace work.

- **Add your own stories here:**