



The following activities are options for you to implement as works best for your family throughout the entire month. None are very demanding, but each one requires of us our full presence of mind and heart. You are invited to be creative with the activities: find your own way to make it work for the children with whom you participating. Invite each other to add to the activities in ways that add to their meaning and beauty.

Here's a list of the activities for the month.
Find descriptions below.

- Journal
- Family Meeting
- Gandhi Searches for Truth, Reading and Discussion (for whole family)
- Search for a Nonviolent Future, Reading and Discussion (for older teens and adults)
- Mealtime Activity
- Wisdom Tradition Passage
- Nature Activity

Journal

Thich Nhat Hanh said the following about empathy:

“When you plant lettuce, if it does not grow well, you don't blame the lettuce. You look for reasons it is not doing well. It may need fertilizer, or more water, or less sun. You never blame the lettuce. Yet if we have problems with our friends or family, we blame the other person. But if we know how to take care of them, they will grow well, like the lettuce. Blaming has no positive effect at all, nor does trying to persuade using reason and argument. That is my experience. No blame, no reasoning, no argument, just understanding. If you understand, and you show that you understand, you can love, and the situation will change”

Take time to reflect on these ideas and relate them to a situation you and/or your family may be facing.

Family Meeting

This could take place around your nonviolence altar. Or in a space that you create intentionally to hold this meeting. Begin the meeting with something beautiful. Maybe a short song or a poem or an inspiring quote. Allow time for quiet reflection. Then, invite each other into the discussion.

Suggested topic for this month:

Explore the topic of conflict from the perspective that conflict is normal, even healthy, but there are ways of engaging in conflict that do not require us to use violence. Find ways of handling conflicts that draw on creativity, not violence. Explain that this knowledge about conflict is not something that is well understood in our media, but it is understood by peacemakers.

Reading and Discussion with Children:

Gandhi Searches for Truth can help grown-ups and children have important conversations about ideas related to nonviolence. It's most effective when we take our time with the content. Each chapter is divided into a quote, a story, and a nonviolence principle. The quote is intended largely for the older child/adult reader, but feel free to read and then explain, in your own words, to the children with whom you are working.

You may want to make a copy of the chapter's illustration (or have the child/children draw it themselves) as well as take the Gandhi quote, and write it out on a piece of paper, decorate it, make it beautiful, and add these to your nonviolence altar for the month. When the month is over, you can choose to leave them on the altar, or create a book where you post your journey together, something to look back upon.

We're on Chapter FOUR now. As previously explained, read it on your own first. Take time to consider how you would put the quote and the content of the chapter into your own words. Depending on the age of the child, you may be called on to simply show the picture, read it through, and then explain in your own words. That's OK. If the child is able to engage with the material (and I believe, if you are patient and creative, that this is possible as early as three years), ask them to put what they heard into their own words too. Ask the child to "read" it to you--to teach YOU about Mahatma Gandhi when he was a little boy.

Before starting into Chapter Four, review with the children some of the main ideas from the first three chapters.

Chapter Four's focus is AHIMSA. You may want to review the term in the glossary in the back of the book.

Questions/Thoughts that might accompany this chapter and help us to dig deeper into the concepts of nonviolence are: Gentleness, Truth, and care for others/ourselves (ahimsa) can help us to transform conflict. Explore how Gandhi and his father drew from these values. Explore the notion that making mistakes is to be expected as we are learning about life and ourselves and brainstorm about how we learn from our personal conflicts to transform ourselves.

Reading and Discussion for Adults

Read Chapter Four of *Search for a Nonviolent Future*. Over the whole month. Take your time. In your journal, take notes on key ideas that strike you, or key passages that move/inspire you, as well as any questions you may have. Talk about these ideas with the other adult working with you on this program, and/or write them into the Metta Center.

Mealtimes

Gandhi's father taught him something powerful about ahimsa, and Gandhi always remembered him for that. Take time at mealtime to discuss our grandparents and parents and share stories about your relationship with them.

Wisdom Tradition Passage

Gandhi wanted children to have a "reverential study of the world's religions." Choose a passage from the book *God Makes the Rivers to Flow*, and read it together. Wishing those who practice that faith the courage to use nonviolence; and the courage for everyone regardless of faith or religion to live together in harmony with respect, dignity, and equal rights. Share with us with one you chose this month!

Activity in Nature:

Ahimsa in nature: ask your child to help you think of a way to honor, protect, and care for the even the smallest of creatures and then make a plan to carry out your idea.