

**The Nature of Violence and
The Response of Nonviolence
By
Dr. Darlene Treese**

*“The path of true nonviolence requires much more courage than violence”
-Mahatma Gandhi*

Conflicts can be predicted by the presence of three things in any society: a high infant mortality rate, a lack of means for economic survival, and a lack of access to government to improve conditions. These three things add up to hopelessness, helplessness, isolation and despair - which lead to frustration and anger erupting in violence. In this context, we can understand why desperate people do desperate things.

Violence is common in our daily encounters as well. Your individual response to situations is based on your personal “set point”. What are the conditions that create your feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, isolation and despair? When are the times that you lash out in anger, frustration or physical or verbal violence? To heal the world, we must first heal ourselves. To heal ourselves, we must own what we feel and what we do without blaming any other person, event or circumstance.

We have been taught to think in terms of rewards and punishments. Nonviolent communication requires going beyond that to identify what’s alive in us (both what we need and feel passionate about) and what can we do to make life more wonderful (what you can do for me, what I can do for you and what we can do for ourselves). This is where simple tactics require practice to become easy!

Think about a situation where someone is not behaving the way you want them to. Nonviolent communications requires that you honestly define what you need without implying wrongness, criticism, insult or judgment. Labeling the other person causes self-fulfillment and intensifies the conflict between you.

A classic example is a conflict between parent and child about household chores. The common response is to set up rewards and punishments (which you must always be there to enforce) or to critically insult the kid (you are lazy). In nonviolent communication, the parent describes how they are feeling (annoyed) because of their need that is not being met (keeping a clean, orderly, safe environment). The parent then states in very clear terms exactly what behavior is wanted (clean your room is too vague – say instead “hang up your clothes, make your bed and put your dirty clothes in the hamper”).

It’s important to ask the kid what is interfering with the task completion and teach them to go through the same communication process with you. Guide them to express what they are feeling and needing- without criticism, wrongness, insult or judgment-and what can make life more wonderful for everyone concerned.

Your bottom line in any conflict is to have “power with” rather than “power over”. “Power with” is getting people to do things willingly, because they see how everyone will benefit – including them. One of the most powerful ways to do this is to show that you are just as interested in their needs as your own. People in any situation will be more concerned about your well-being when you share power with them rather than tell them what is wrong with them.

In any personal conflict, isn’t this what you would want for yourself?
In any international conflict, isn’t this what you would want for your world?

Dr. Darlene Treese has been in private practice in hypnosis and counseling since 1983. She is a Diplomate in Counseling with the National Institute of Sports, Past President of the American Psychotherapy and Medical Hypnosis Association and Vice President of the Rotary eClub of Southwest, USA. Darlene has been internationally acknowledged for her positive action and solution-based therapies and work with corporations. “A person for the people,” Dr. Dar is always available to help with your questions and dilemmas through office visits, email or telephone consultations. Call her at **850-201-0073** or visit **www.AskDrTreese.com**