



Welcome to the Metta Center <http://www.mettacenter.org>

The mission of the Metta Center is to inspire, educate and support the practice of nonviolence. While we focus on educators, activists, and the media, we are a resource for anyone who wishes to explore the integrative power Gandhi called “the greatest force at the disposal of humanity”.

Metta (loving-kindness) can bring about — is bringing about — a paradigm shift toward peace and justice.

### Principles of Nonviolence

As Gandhi observed, “Nonviolence is not the inanity it has been taken for down the ages.” It is far deeper — it requires changes of action, word, and thought, and also far broader — it reaches into every compartment of life: economic, ecological, interpersonal, and social. More, it is a real, positive force and not (as the word might imply) something that happens when something else, namely violence, does not. Just as violence can be physical or built into systems of government or practice — what Johan Galtung has taught us to call ‘structural violence’ — so nonviolence can be institutionalized. It begins, however, with our own thought, attitudes, and practice. In our own study and practice of nonviolence over the years we have found the following principles helpful. We offer them as a work in progress and would always welcome your responses.

1. Never confuse the person with the problem. That is, regard every problem as a misunderstanding and be confident that when you prevent another from acting unjustly you are helping him or her. Indeed, the more you can support the person, the more effectively you can counteract the problem.

2. Never use harmful means. No matter how tempting it may be to repay unkindness in the same coin, no matter how much another person may seem to ‘deserve’ harsh treatment, remember that “means are ends in the making.” Wrong means can never bring about a right end in the long run, while right means can never fail to bring about a right end even if it takes time, even if it is not the end we had in view. With nonviolence, distant results are often better than we hoped for — the opposite of violence.

3. Never accept indignity, or inflict it. This principle gives the nonviolent actor her or his remarkable ability to compromise: because focusing on human dignity — for all parties, always — relieves one of the need to fight over inessentials. Real nonviolence always elevates human dignity, just as violence always degrades it. “A threat to justice anywhere,” as Martin Luther King wisely observed, “is a threat to justice everywhere.”

4. Always aim for longterm consequences. In nonviolence, as in ecology, we try to work on a deep level to bring about lasting change. Thus we are sometimes willing to sacrifice immediate gain for longterm improvement, often through the restoration of relationships rather than the mere readjustment of situations. This is why we prefer persuasion to coercion whenever the former is possible.

5. In our search for truth, we always give preference to concrete and constructive means. If we understand that nonviolence is a positive force, naturally we will not rely overmuch on symbolic means of expression to bring it into play. In the same way, we will always look for what Gandhi called ‘Constructive Programme’ — fixing our own problems — rather than what we call ‘obstructive program’ — stopping someone else’s harmful actions directly, again, to the extent this is possible. If we start early enough, and maintain our determination long enough, we can bring about a revolution entirely by constructive means. In practice, we can try to keep confrontation to a minimum and maintain our momentum through constructive projects.

As you will see, these principles arise from — and help to sustain — a belief that all life is an interconnected whole and that no problem can not be solved once its real nature is understood. Otherwise put, as King so

well said, "I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be." This is the nonviolent actor's creed.