



Educational Information Package

Nonviolence Now exists to expose people, especially youth, to the benefits of reducing discrimination and violence. Using interactive workshops and awareness events, Nonviolence Now promotes the values of respect, acceptance, and empathy. We believe a nonviolent approach to life will contribute to peoples' ability to respond positively to conflict, ultimately supporting the global peace movement.

background INFO:

The Need: Nonviolence Now was founded in 2001 by Charlie Johnstone and Jamie Porteous after Charlie experienced a life-altering event. After he was diagnosed with the vision impairing disease, Leber's disease, Charlie's life took a turn for the worse. He became involved in Hamilton's drug and crime scene as a way to get by.

In August 1998, Charlie was shot in the back of the head with a crossbow. This act of violence occurred as a result of his involvement with a marijuana growing operation. Charlie survived intensive neurosurgery and rehabilitation and later said that he thought there was some greater purpose to his survival - to help youth practise nonviolence. And so Nonviolence Now came to life. Over the course of its existence, NVN has been involved in advocacy and implementation of our educational programs.

Nonviolence: The idea of nonviolence has been in existence for many centuries, however awareness of it grew as a result of the actions and teachings of notable figures such as Mohandas Ghandi, Martin Luther King Jr, Dorothy Day, and Desmond Tutu. Nonviolence is not a specific action, it is a way of living ones life which rejects the use of violence and which encourages individuals to embrace diversity, seeking of the truth, and living sustainable lives.

A Culture of Peace: This idea is one of the guiding principles behind NVN and the global peace movement as a whole. It is the belief that in order to move towards nonviolent living, we must shift our fundamental ways of dealing with conflict, human rights, and social issues. A culture of peace is one founded upon values such as empathy, respect, acceptance, equality, understanding, trust, communication, and justice. While it started out as a philosophical idea, over the past years, the notion of a "Culture of Peace" has been applied in more tangible ways through initiatives of United Nations Organizations, universities worldwide, and many individual citizens and community groups. We believe that it is important to expose youth to these values if we wish to affect positive change within future generations.

OBJECTIVES:

- To bring awareness to the issues we seek to address
- To make new partnerships within the community and strengthen existing ones
- To make peace education a part of Ontario's education curriculum
- To create an extra-curricular theatre production on issues of violence and discrimination
- To establish branches of NVN at other universities in Canada and abroad
- To start sustainable projects in schools which contribute to their overall wellbeing as well as the community's. For example, community gardens and special events.

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EduCAtION:

Nonviolence Now offers educational workshops to youth ages 10 and up both in and out of the classroom. We presently run a six session series in which participants have the chance to develop knowledge and skills related to nonviolence, conflict management, human rights, and social justice. Our workshops are based on models of experiential learning which engage participants in interactive role-playing, discussion, and brainstorming activities.

We are constantly evaluating and improving our sessions so that they are as thought-provoking and fun as possible. For further detail on our workshops please consult our “sample curriculum” found on the following pages.

AwAREnESS:

Nonviolence Now is committed to promoting the values of nonviolence in all aspects of community life. Over the past four years, we have been involved in numerous events and awareness campaigns, all which aim to make nonviolence sustainable.

Our activities include:

- * Presenting at the Halton Regional Police’s Victimless Conference in 2001 & 2002
- * Presenting at the 2003 *McMaster Peace Education Conference*
- * Organizing the 2004 *Concert for Peace and Nonviolence*
- * A book donation campaign for *United Talmud Torah School’s* library after terrorist attack
- * Running free Zen meditation sessions at McMaster
- * Screenings of the international documentary *Poetry in Wartime*
- * Bringing Craig Kielburger of *Free the Children* to speak at McMaster

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SAMPLE CURRICULUM:

Each session concludes with a group discussion and debriefing led by NVN facilitators.

Workshop 1: Introduction to Peace and Conflict

- An introduction to a culture of peace and its associated values

- 1) *Definition of Peace and Conflict*: Participants brainstorm what the terms peace and conflict mean to them.
- 2) *Da Bomb*: A simulation game where participants rebuild a society destroyed by a nuclear disaster by using the values of a culture of peace. A group discussion will follow the exercise.

Workshop 2: Discrimination

- An exploration of the underlying roots of discrimination

- 1) Skit by NVN to students to recap the previous workshop's ideas.
- 2) *Cultures Game*: This is a role playing game where students are grouped and given characteristics of an imaginary "culture" to act out. Students then interact with each other while they follow their group's traits. This game points out the reality of discrimination.
- 3) *Cool or Drool?*: This game exposes students to the ways in which status leads to discrimination by using an interactive and amusing game show situation.

Workshop 3 – Nonviolence in Action

- An examination of how nonviolence can be applied to daily life

- 1) (a) *100 Actions for Peace* (Grades 9-12): This game uses consensus decision-making to expose participants to realistic and practical ways they can apply the values explored in their daily lives (e.g. volunteerism, watching less violent television...).
- (b) *Peace Superhero* (Grades 6-8): In this game participants get to design their own superhero. The superhero has the task of combating an issue facing society (e.g. environmental issues, bullying...). Afterwards, posters of the superheroes are displayed in the school as a reminder to the students of their commitment to act nonviolently.
- 2) *Meditation Exploration*: A trained meditation facilitator will engage participants in a meditation session. This will help build awareness about how relaxation is an important way of fostering nonviolence and positive responses to conflict.

Workshop 4 – Dealing with Interpersonal Conflict

- How to deal with conflict positively

- 1) *The Fist*: During this activity participants flex their creative muscles to try to get their NVN facilitator to do the seemingly simple task of opening his/her fist. The goal is to introduce participants to the idea that there are many ways to deal with conflict, with some being more positive than others.
- 2) *Conflict Style Survey*: The purpose of this activity is to help participants shed light upon how they respond to conflict compared to others. To save time, the participants are asked to complete the surveys prior to the session.
- 3) *Slick'r*: Role playing and skits are used to deliver a technique on how to deal with interpersonal conflict based on anger management.

Workshop 5 – The PATH to Understanding

- An introduction to the meaning and importance of sympathy and empathy

- 1) *Fear in a Hat*: Through the use of role-playing, this activity builds on the value of empathy by exposing participants to the fears of others, some of which they may not have been aware.
- 2) A motivational talk by NVN's founder Charlie Johnstone about how his experience with drugs and violence almost ended his life.

The final workshop is intended for participants to apply the lessons learnt throughout the series. This is typically done by having participants think critically about the environment in which they live and their impact upon it.

Workshop 6A – Militarized Media and Restorative Justice (Grades 9-12)

This workshop will expose students to the role of the media in promoting militarism in various aspects of society. It examines the topic of “structural violence” to show how militarism is a fundamental value in our society. The second part of the workshop takes a critical look at today's judicial system.

Workshop 6B – Drug and violence awareness (Grades 6-8)

By building on Charlie's previous discussion, this workshop discusses the danger of drugs and the violence that may accompany them. It is intended to allow participants to examine these issues in the context of their own community.

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tESTImONIALS:

“Charlie Johnstone overcame a life of drugs and disability to found a group called Nonviolence Now which encourages young people to solve disputes peacefully.”

- *Hamilton Spectator, October 25, 2004*

“McMaster Students who are active in this program... act as mentors to the elementary and secondary students they instruct.”

- *Dr. Peter George, President and Vice Chancellor of McMaster University*

“The topics chosen were relevant and reflect the issues that Grade Five students confront on a regular basis.”

- *Randy Morassut, Teacher at Post's Corner Elementary School, Oakville*

“I am happy to recommend to educators the project on nonviolent approaches to conflict run by the Nonviolence Now group. I believe it is beneficial for students at elementary and secondary levels to meet university students active in such a project. This is an effective method to counter the cynicism and self-oriented values that may hold sway over some young people, and encourages their underlying altruism”.

- *Dr. Joanna Santa Barbara, Child Psychiatrist*

“Nonviolence Now presented an outstanding workshop for the Grade Five and Six classes... factual information was clearly stated and explained using child-friendly vocabulary”

- *Terri Stubbs Densmore, Fessenden School, Ancaster*

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COntAct uS:

Nonviolence Now can be contacted through the OPRIG McMaster Office. Please direct all inquiries to the attention Harris Switzman and Hilary Barber. Please note the best way to contact us is through e-mail via: NVN@leanlink.mcmaster.ca

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OUR PARTnERS:



OPIRG McMaster



McMaster University



Free the Children

CORPORAtE SPONsORS:



Island Ink Jet at the East Gate Square



Smith 's Funeral Homes of Burlington and Grimsby

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