

# Working with Equality: Negotiation and Fairness & Nonthreatening Behavior

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## Thoughts on Working with Equality in a Men's Nonviolence Class

Knowledge of what is proceeds change

Any movement toward equality must start with  
an acknowledgement and an understanding of  
the oppression that proceeded it.

“That the problem was not about being human, but specifically about being a female human. For centuries, the world divided human beings into two groups and then proceeded to exclude and oppress one group. It is only fair that the solution to the problem should acknowledge that.”

- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

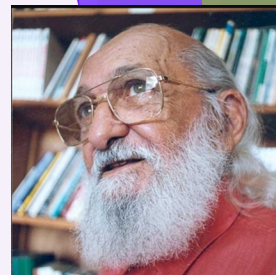
*Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: 'I decided to call myself a Happy Feminist', Guardian, 2014*



To surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity.

- Paulo Freire

*Pedagogy of the Oppressed, The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 2005*



## What Facilitators Bring to the Dialogue

What lens do you listen to the men's answers through?

### What a survivor experiences

- Subjugated
- Silenced
- Invisible
- Assaulted
- Humiliated
- Coerced
- Lives in fear
- Her life is not her own

### What he believes

- I'm the head of this family
- I'm always right
- Women submit
- I get what I want or there will be consequences
- Everything is mine
- Do as I say
- She is/kids are mine

If negotiation is the process of identifying the highest priority, in this space what would that likely be?

## When Change Comes Home: Women's Perspective

"He can't be trusted."

"Indecision. Confusion. I don't know what to do with this."

"Now you finally want to work with me?!"

"What's your angle? What do you want from me. I couldn't even write a check out before and then he comes home, writes all the checks and lets me sign them. That was his version change."

"I don't believe this. He spent so long proving he was abusive. Now he needs to spend time proving he's in a partnership."

From a child: "If it's not good enough, then he's going to go back to being how he originally was. It doesn't seem super real and I have to expect that something bad will happen. I don't understand why he thinks it's ok to treat me fine and no one else."

## Consultant Feedback on What Can Happen During a Session on Equality

The dialogue leads to a political debate about equality between men and women.

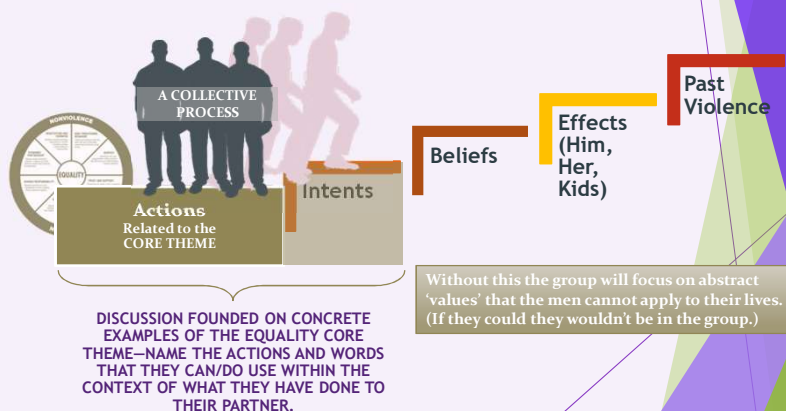
- “I’m here and she’s not. Who has the power now?”
- “Men and women are pretty equal nowadays.”
- “The police and the courts always believe women. It’s men that don’t have equal rights?”

Teach him to be kind so she can be equal rather than dialogue with him about equality to position him to be kind.

- He knows how to be nonthreatening because he does it everyday. Why doesn’t his partner and kids get treated that way?
- People who oppress don’t stop because they know how to listen. The shift begins by acknowledging they treat some people as if they have nothing to say.

## Actions as the foundation of the Equality Log (Part 1)

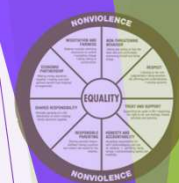
Discussion based on equitable and non-abusive ways of behaving (not abstract ideals)



## Using the Equality Log: Discussion based on equitable ways of behaving (not abstract ideals)

### Facilitator Questions

1. Preliminary question related to the core theme:  
What does **Non-threatening behavior** mean to you?
2. Answers: being loving and kind/listening
  - What do/can you do?
  - What do/can you say?
  - How would you say it?
  - Why would you say it?
  - If Non-threatening behavior means what you have on the board, what would you have to start doing to achieve this?
  - What Beliefs would support this behavior?
  - What would happen to you (Effects) if you did this consistently?
  - Given your abuse, what else will you have to do to acknowledge what she know about you and what you are capable of?



## Past Use of Violence on the Log

She knows what he's done. She also wants to know that he knows what he's done.

- Foundation of trust
- The step that men who batter would like to skip over

He sees her reluctance to believe in his change as one more character flaw. Instead, it is accepting how much patience he will need to rebuild trust he has violated.

For victims of battering, this is truth and reconciliation.

This is the heart of negotiation and fairness and non-threatening behavior. It is not a calm voice, active listening, etc. Those are actions in negotiation but they are not the essence.

It's essence is acknowledging the harm, repairing the harm, building trust and moving toward an equal relationship.

# Exercise

Please take out Handout 1

## 911 Call

Take out Handout 2

For each of the six segments, pay attention to what he does.

Take any notes on the page about intents, beliefs or context you think is relevant.

## Getting to the Equality in the Context of the Abuse

What is the core problem that needs to be addressed in the context of moving toward Equality?

How do the following conversations in Handout 1 end up missing the problem:

- Managing feelings
- How to get kids to do chores
- Developmental benchmarks for children
- How to stay positive and not give up

Please take out Handout 3

