

# Transforming Explosive Encounters: Tips for Transformation

"Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding." - Albert Einstein

## Summary of Transforming Practice

*Recognize your instinctive hot button reaction to a challenge, then redirect the energy of that reaction to finding inspiration for your response by imagining what it is like to be your challenger **no matter how much you disagree, understanding the challenger's point of view even though you disagree, thinking before responding, seeking a nonviolent solution while caring for yourself and your needs, deciding whether and how to meet any of the challenger's needs depending on the situation and your willingness. The briefest summary is "redirect reaction to understanding." Ironically, redirecting reaction to understanding allows one to act from one's center at present in powerful choice.***

## Possible Conflict Resolution Tools

1. What common ground or ideas do you share?
2. Listen before making judgments. Everyone has made a journey. Try to understand where the other person is coming from, the reasons they feel and act the way they do, before you chose a response.
3. Base your position on truth. Because people tend to seek truth, no position based on falsehood can long prevail.
4. When you are clear about your position, expect to experience great inward power to act on it. A response that relies on this power will be courageous.
5. A humorous surprise comment may help transform a potentially violent situation.
6. Take a step that saves the face of the challenger, maintaining dignity.
7. Learn to trust your inner sense of when to act and when to withdraw.
8. Do not expect that a nonviolent response will automatically ward off danger. If you cannot avoid risk, then risk being creative rather than violent, working toward nonviolence.

## Help Along the Way

- A. Prepare to redirect reaction to understanding by learning your hot buttons: previously what has enraged you, frightened you? What buttons cause you pain that would cause rage or fear if pushed? How would you choose to

respond when someone pushes one of your hot buttons?

- B. Respect yourself and others as human beings.
- C. Attack the problem not the person.
- D. Use "I" language not "you" language.
- E. Don't threaten or put down.
- F. The following non-compassionate phrases probably won't be chosen: "Calm down" "Be reasonable" "What is your problem."
- G. Pause—find your center—give yourself time before responding in choice. Pausing may open you to transforming power.
- H. Don't rely on weapons, drugs, or alcohol. They weaken your inner strength.
- I. Commit to nonviolence in most situations.
- J. Risk changing yourself.
- K. Trust your inner sense of what is needed.
- L. Expect the best.

## The Transforming Experience Feels Like:

- AHA! Inspiration.
- There is a letting go of something, possibly patterns of behavior or grudges.
- There is a sharing of something.
- You transform any fear you had into focus.
- You feel a great internal power to act.
- Your responses are courageous without hostility.

## The Guidelines for Dealing with Conflicts Positively:

If you don't like the way a conversation is going, stop talking and breathe deeply to give yourself a moment to choose to really listen. Reflect the venting that you're hearing to let the challenger know you're listening. Redirect the useful power of your anger from counterattacking to understanding the person even while disagreeing. Sense the common spark of life in both of you. Imagine what it's like to be the person looking out at the world through those eyes from that point of view. Become aware of more about the challenger and find out more about what's needed, to help you advocate for your needs. In a relationship, always winning is losing if you lose your love. Imagine different ways to improve the situation temporarily while exploring win-win solutions that meet some of the needs of both persons.

## **Verbal Judo**

Verbal Judo by George Thompson PhD. This worthwhile book contains many guidelines and case studies. The following notes were inspired by this book:

Empathy allows one to be impartial, not biased, and open and flexible instead of defensive and reactionary.

Exchange an emotional win for a tangible win: If a person is in a weak position he may need to sound strong even though he looks weak. So empathize to let him vent his emotions as criticism and complaints, while paraphrasing his venting, to let him know that he has been heard and to give him an emotional win, then say "I hear what you're saying" or "I got that..." "And I need you to..." to give yourself a tangible win. Allow the other to save face with an emotional win if not always a tangible win.

He may be resisting and arguing in order to practice self-assertion. To redirect to problem-solving and to interrupt a tirade say "Wait a second, let me be sure I understand what you're saying," then paraphrase, "This is what I am hearing you say. You are feeling... because of..." Then "I sure hope that we can work on it to make it right."

Can you remind him of important information about gain or loss that he may not be considering at the moment?

When stating options and consequences, include context by letting him know why.

If someone is not saying what they mean or want, find out or guess it.

Empathizing relieves tension.

While empathy means walking a mile in another's shoes, that does not mean agreeing, sympathizing, approving of another's actions, or meeting all of the challenger's needs.

LEAPS: listen empathize ask paraphrase summarize

Find out the facts with general questions: what when where why how who.

Leading and direct questions such as "Did you litter?" are irritating because they put words into people's mouths instead of letting people speak for themselves, with questions such as "Isn't it true that you littered?"

Asking an opinion relieves the pressure of direct questions: What is your view of how we can solve this problem?

While empathizing ask for compliance by making professional, polite, ethical, practical, reasonable, or rational appeals, or showing how it is in their personal interest, also possibly using humor or redirection.

Distinguish between emotional venting and severe resistance. Even if resistance is severe, is there a solution from the other's viewpoint that works for you?

Flexibility is stronger, lasts longer than rigidity. Using the person's name esteems, dignifies, instead of depersonalizing with an abstraction, for example referring to a taxi passenger as a fare, leading to labeling.

Emphasize the positive.

Redirect your pride and ego into performance.

## **Other References**

The Alternatives to Violence Project

[www.avpusa.org](http://www.avpusa.org) Indonesian example of AVP workshops in nonviolence:

[consciencestudio.com/index.php?q=indonesia-nonv](http://consciencestudio.com/index.php?q=indonesia-nonv)

[www.avpinternational.org](http://www.avpinternational.org)

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