

FOR THE SESSION FACILITATOR

As facilitator for one session, your role is to stimulate and moderate the discussion. You do not need to be an expert or the most knowledgeable person about the topic. Your role is to: begin and end on time, and ask the questions included in this guide or your own.

In the first session, ask everyone to briefly introduce themselves. Then, open each discussion session with a circle question, designed to get everyone's voice in the room. Be sure that everyone answers it, briefly, without interruption or comment from other participants. For all books, the question will be "Describe one aspect of this book that was meaningful to you."

After that, keep discussion focused on the book. A delicate balance is best — don't force the group into the questions, but don't allow the discussion to drift too far.

Manage the group process, using the guidelines below:

A primary goal is for everyone to participate and to learn from themselves and each other. Draw out quiet participants by creating an opportunity for each person to contribute. Don't let one or two people dominate the discussion. Thank them for their opinions and then ask another person to share.

Be an active listener. You need to hear and understand what people say if you are to guide the discussion effectively. Model this for others.

The focus should be on personal reactions to the books — on personal values, feelings, and experiences.

The discussions are not for judging others' responses.

Consensus is not a goal.

(The above was borrowed from the Northwest Earth Institute facilitator instructions www.nwei.org)

FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

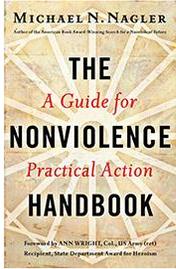
Welcome to the **Peacebuilding** book discussion series. It includes four recently-published, highly-readable nonfiction books that focus on positive alternatives to violence. We know that violence and war hurt people, but also know that conflict is inevitable. These award-winning books illuminate ways to transform those conflicts nonviolently.

The Nonviolence Handbook by Michael Nagler condenses his award-winning but longer book *The Search for a Nonviolent Future*, winner of the 2002 American Book Award. The handbook provides a roadmap to the practice of nonviolence, at the personal to societal level.

Knowing Mandela by John Carlin looks at the personal characteristics of a nonviolent peacebuilder. The *Booklist* starred review called this a "moving portrait of a man...pragmatic enough to know that anger and revenge would destroy South Africa." Carlin's other book, *Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game that Made a Nation* was the basis for the film *Invictus*.

The book *What Do You Buy the Children of the Terrorist Who Tried to Kill Your Wife?* describes author David Harris-Gershon's search for understanding and reconciliation after a terrorist bomb almost kills his wife. The starred *Booklist* review called it "A transformative reading experience."

Walk Out Walk On by Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze models how we can make creative, positive change in our communities by working together. Heroic leaders are not needed.



The Nonviolence Handbook: A Guide for Practical Action by Michael N. Nagler. 2014. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 96 pages.

“It is not me against you but you and me against the problem”—thus does Nagler’s brief

handbook transform our views of conflict. He describes nonviolence as powerful, the conversion of negative energy, and a means to a positive end. He analyzes the stages of escalating conflict as progressive dehumanization of the enemy and describes proportional nonviolent responses to transform the conflict. He encourages us all to be nonviolently constructive whenever possible and obstructive when necessary. This is a guidebook for responding to conflict at all levels of our lives, from the personal to the political.

Discussion Questions to Consider:

1. Dr. Vandana Shiva said “if we do not adopt nonviolence we risk compromising our humanity” (page 2) When a person is violent, what inner damage is done?
2. Using an example of structural violence in your community (exploitation or dominance built into a system), how could nonviolence be used to improve that situation?
3. A quote by Mahatma Gandhi begins this book: “Nonviolence is the greatest power humankind has been endowed with.” In what ways is the nonviolent approach powerful?

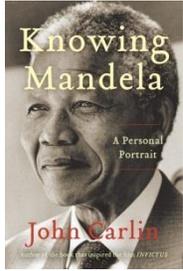
4. Nonviolence includes (re)awakening the humanity of one’s opponent (pg. 17). Give an example of this approach.
5. How does putting a label on a person depersonalize and even dehumanize him? Why do we label people? Give an example.
6. The Rotarian Action Group for Peace recommends that you review your relationships, create dialogue and resolve conflicts. Nagler would add that it is better if you intervene early. Using the graph on page 23, describe why intervening early is important.
7. Both adversaries in a conflict are trying to satisfy their needs. Give an example of a conflict in your community and the needs that are not being met on each side. Imagine and discuss a resolution that satisfies the needs of both parties.
8. Explain how anger can be useful if activists control it and release its energy “under discipline” as described by King on page 60.

About the Author.

Michael Nagler is Professor Emeritus of Classics and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Berkeley. He founded the Peace and Conflict Studies Program at the university and is founder and president of the Metta Center for Nonviolence. He is the author of *Our Spiritual Crisis* and *The Search for a Nonviolent Future*.



“Nonviolence isn’t about putting the right person in power; it’s about awakening the right kind of power in people.”



Knowing Mandela: A Personal Portrait by John Carlin. 2013. New York: Harper Perennial, 160 pages.

As a journalist, author, John Carlin, is cynical. His default position is that human conduct is always motivated by self-interest. Like many of us, Carlin's faith in political leaders was low, but then he met Nelson Mandela. Was Mandela's charm calculated or sincere? Carlin explores that question focusing on the qualities of Mandela's leadership--self-depreciation, not trampling on his opponent's pride and identity, courtesy, respect, forgiveness, integrity, and courage—traits that enabled Mandela to lead South Africa's peaceful revolution.

Discussion Questions to Consider:

1. In *The Nonviolence Handbook*, Michael Nagler discusses how to transform a conflict by focusing on the problem and not the person, offering them dignity and a way out of conflict. Give examples of how Nelson Mandela used this form of nonviolence.
2. Progressive dehumanization of opponents occurs as conflicts continue. While in prison, Mandela learned Afrikaans, the oppressor's language, and then studied Afrikaans history. How did this work to reverse the dehumanization of both sides of the conflict?
3. Mandela worked to convince people that vengeance in response to violence would only continue the bloodletting. Carlin writes that Mandela said this because of "straight, cold, practical politics" (pg. 57). Why is it more practical to work for reconciliation than retribution?

4. Mandela and white supremacist General Viljoen viewed each other as terrorists. How was Mandela able to avoid a war between their groups that would inevitably end in "the peace of the graveyards"? (pg. 77)
5. Mandela avoided scrapping the old South African national anthem because it was a symbol of identity and pride for the Afrikaners. Why did he want to protect it? Isn't destruction of valued items and traditions what the winner usually does in a conflict?
6. When asked what he thought Mandela had been fighting for all his life, his friend answered "Ordinary respect." (pg. 98) Discuss the importance of respect to you personally and to a democracy.
7. Discuss how Mandela's nonviolent approach to conflict benefited his opponents and was actually a gift to them.
8. Mandela showed great empathy toward those around him, including his adversaries. Discuss why the book says that empathy is important to leadership.

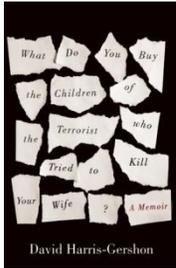
About the author.

John Carlin is an award-winning journalist who was based in South Africa during the post-apartheid years. Carlin had unique access to Mandela beginning in 1989, thirteen months before Mandela was released from prison, and was the first person to interview Mandela as president. *Knowing Mandela* has received a starred review in *Booklist*. Carlin's other book, *Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game that Made a Nation* was the basis for the film *Invictus*.



photo by Gisele Wulfsohn

"integrity, respect, charisma, and empathy"



What Do You Buy the Children of the Terrorist Who Tried to Kill Your Wife?: A Memoir by David Harris-Gershon. 2013. London: Oneworld Publications, 288 pages.

A bomb ripped open Hebrew University's cafeteria. The author's wife Jamie was there and her body was sliced with shrapnel. She survived but the friends sitting next to her were killed. Harris-Gershon was frantic with worry, anger and shock. This book follows his journey to understand and reconcile the personal pain and trauma inflicted by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Discussion Questions to Consider:

1. At the end of Part 1, Harris-Gershon describes Palestinian-Israeli violence in response to violence. What has been the consequence of responding to conflict with violence?
2. On page 77, the author looks at a Palestinian man lying on the sidewalk, perhaps needing help, but fear and anger had paralyzed the Israeli onlookers. Discuss how this is an example of how we dehumanize enemies.
3. Why did the author previously view Israeli and Palestinian peace activists as anti-Israel, anti-Semitic? Describe your feelings toward peace organizations in the U.S.--are they unpatriotic?
4. The author examines the Truth and Reconciliation process in South Africa and quotes from the Interim Constitution: "There is a need for understanding but not for vengeance." (page 153) How can knowing and understanding the truth result in reconciliation?

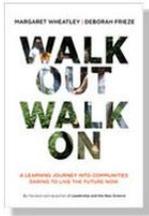
5. After seeing the film *Encounter Point*, Harris-Gershon said that "his goal was to try to be a reconciler, not a forgiver." (page 181) What is the difference for him?
6. When the author learned that Mohammad said that he felt remorse, Harris-Gershon wanted to talk to him. Why did remorse matter?
7. In Chapter 22, fight or flight are discussed as the automatic response to fear. For negotiation to be possible, the conflict must be framed as having a resolution that is positive for both sides, and be coming from an attitude of sympathy for the other side. How does one get that attitude of sympathy?
8. At the end, Harris-Gershon said that at least partial reconciliation had occurred and that it was a testimony to the force of restorative dialogue, that it had shown him that people on the other side were not monsters. Discuss the potential for restorative dialogue to transform conflicts in your community.

About the author.

David Harris-Gershon is a popular online columnist on Israeli-Palestinian issues, the Middle East, and America's role in the region. He received his MFA from the University of North Carolina, and his essays and creative writing have been published in numerous venues. He and his wife live in Pittsburgh.



"For my friends and foes—our hope is not yet lost."



Walk Out Walk On: A Learning Journey into Communities Daring to Live the Future Now by Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze. 2011. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 288 pages.

This is a learning journey through seven different countries. We go to where people have discovered enduring solutions and created healthy and resilient communities by working together in new and different ways. They demonstrate that lasting change does not come from top down, but rather from us learning to trust ourselves to find our own solutions. This book is an opportunity.

Discussion Questions to Consider:

1. Have you ever begun a project without plans or strategies? What did you learn by starting anywhere?
2. Discuss the relevance of the *Walk Out Walk On* approach to the success of democracy.
3. What are some large-scale global problems you would like to fix that seem too big to fix. Imagine and discuss how one of these problems might be impacted locally.
4. We usually motivate people using punishment or reward. Discuss how and why “play at changing the world” motivated the creativity and hard work that revitalized communities in Brazil.
5. Discuss how top-down fixing of problems may hinder community involvement.
6. On page 61, Deborah describes how she had thrown her creativity and effort into building a brick stairway, only to have part of it removed and repositioned. When she recovered from her anger, she realized how

not being right opens the way to other people’s ideas. Why was this important to learn?

7. Where might you next offer your talents, ideas, and skills as gifts?
8. How often do you find yourself playing the hero? Discuss the results. When you have trusted others to do the work themselves, what were the results?
9. Self-organizing by the people involved is an important element to the successful projects described in the book. Is there an issue or place in your community you would like to self-organize to change? Are there others in the community with common history, interests, sense of place—people part of that interacting system—who might join you?
10. In the preface, the authors say that this book is “an opportunity to shake up our thinking, engender new insights, and strengthen our commitments.” (page XV) Discuss whether and in what way this has happened for you.

About the authors.

Margaret Wheatley was co-founder and president of The Berkana Institute; **Deborah Frieze** succeeded her. Berkana partners with people developing healthy and resilient communities worldwide, many of whom are described in this book. Meg is author of five other books, including *Leadership and the New Science* and *Perseverance*.



“Start anywhere, follow it everywhere.”

RESOURCES

Michael Nagler:

www.mettacenter.org

www.michaelnagler.net

Nelson Mandela/John Carlin:

<http://www.nelsonmandela.org>

<http://www.johncarlin.eu>

Palestine and Israel/David Harris/Gershon:

www.davidharrisgershon.com/

www.traubman.igc.org/peace.htm

Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze:

www.berkana.org

www.walkoutwalkon.net

Other resources:

www.rotarianactiongroupforpeace.org

www.warpreventioninitiative.org

www.worldbeyondwar.org



www.BeyondWarNW.org

Peacebuilding

A book discussion series

At

(the local sponsor, location, date and time)
