

Foreword

Speak Peace in a World of Conflict

by David Hart
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As I sit down to write this foreword about the importance of Nonviolent Communication, the world is still reeling from the bombings on the London subway on July 7, 2005. We woke to learn that “it” had happened again. We saw the sites and sounds of violence and felt a deep personal connection to those who were suffering and whose loved ones are suffering still.

Somehow, across the miles that separate us from the site of the bombings, we grasped the pain that violence brings. Once again we saw the reality that bombs destroy fragile human forms and rip apart lives of valuable human beings. Though distance could provide a cushion to the shock, instead, in Washington DC and throughout the United States and the world, we sensed the crushing power of fear.

As I celebrate the tools of Nonviolent Communication presented in the work you hold in your hands, I wonder what it will take to truly “Speak Peace in a World of Conflict.” The violence that shocked us on July 7, 2005, is all too common, too familiar, too much a part of our lives. Sometimes we recognize our connection to those who are affected by this pandemic of violence. Mostly, we seem to go numb - unable to either feel the pain of violence or the beauty of our shared humanity.

The day before the London bombings, lives were ripped apart in Baghdad and Fallujah. We participated in this violence, but we failed to mourn those victims or to ask when it will end. We only tend to notice if those whose lives are snuffed out prematurely are seen to be “like us.” If they wear the right uniform or look “like us,” we recognize our common experience and see them as fully human. If not, we may fail to grasp the value of their lives.

In this important book, Dr. Rosenberg reminds us that, “we’ve been living under this destructive mythology for a long time, and it comes complete with a language that dehumanizes people and turns them into objects.” Moreover, he offers us a suggested path out of this darkness. He reminds us that what you say and do matters. Our actions and our failure to act in the face of growing violence shapes the world and determines our future.

In my position with the Association for Conflict Resolution, I have the great pleasure of working with skilled professionals who strive every day to help people resolve conflicts in a manner that is creative, constructive, and does not resort to violence. As practitioners in the expanding and vital field of Conflict Resolution, our members recognize conflict as a natural and healthy part of life. We would never seek to eliminate conflict, because we believe that conflict can help us grow as individuals and as societies. Instead, we seek a more effective response to conflict. Dr. Rosenberg offers us a creative approach to communication in a world awash in violence.



I celebrate the pragmatic visionaries who seek a better world and work every day to bring that world into being. Through our collaboration, we may just find a path that brings us from the darkness of violence to the light of peace. Dr. Rosenberg has added his thoughtful voice to an important conversation. His approach is insightful, provocative, and is sure to spark discussion. While his presentation doesn't exactly match my approach, that is not the point. He would not want simple agreement. He wants to engage us in a vital dialogue that allows us to look within and ask ourselves what role we can play in making the world a better place.

Nonviolent Communication is part of the solution to the problems we face today. As I brace myself to enter the subway here in Washington DC, I am strengthened by the work of Dr. Rosenberg and those like him all around the world who are not willing to accept the status quo of violent responses to conflict.

Read this book, take its message to heart, and let it be a step in a life-long journey of self-discovery and peacemaking. Together, bit by bit, word by word, day by day, we can truly "Speak Peace in a World of Conflict" and by so doing we can build a brighter future.

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