

## Responses to Violence

### **Accommodating violence is a common and traditional way of responding to violence**

This approach sees no other option but passivity or silence. It goes along with violence. It maintains that there is nothing that can be done about this violence. This point of view holds that violence is the bottom line. It is the way things are. Passivity and silence often seem the most sensible approach.

The problem with accommodating violence is that it is demeaning and dehumanizing. It reinforces a relationship that is fatally out of balance. It keeps an inhuman situation intact, where one person is above another. We become defined and dealt with in terms of our roles: the dominator and the dominated. Why? Because for both of them, this imbalance creates more and more distance from their true selves. It gets them stuck in a role, in a movie script, that keeps them from making contact with their true selves and the selves of others. Because of this, the dominator/dominated model makes it more difficult to ultimately change this situation – and that is, to bring this relationship into balance.

### **Another traditional method of dealing with violence is avoidance.**

Avoidance means standing on the sidelines, to evade “getting involved,” to decide it’s not “my problem”, or to deputize someone else (the police, the army) to deal with it. It is the act of becoming a bystander. This is what we mean by avoiding it - avoiding having to deal with the root conflict or to deal with the consequences, especially if others are bearing those consequences. Instead, we flee from the conflict.

The difficulty with this approach is that it does not resolve the problem at hand, and it creates the illusion that we can stay “above the fray” and not face the conflicts in our lives and in the life of the world.

### **The third traditional response to violence is to use counter-violence**

This approach maintains that there is no other option, and that violence only ends through a show of greater violent force.

The problems with this method are that it reinforces the cycle of retaliatory violence; it does not address the roots of conflict; and it does not create a solution that meets the needs of the parties involved. Not only does it prolong suffering, it is often ineffective.

Taken from the book *From Violence to Wholeness*.