

# Throwing stones

*When arguing with a stone, the egg is always wrong.*

African Proverb

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|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Themes</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• War and Terrorism</li> <li>• Peace and Violence</li> <li>• Children</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Complexity</b>     | Level 2   |
| <b>Group size</b>     | 12 – 20 (small groups: 6-7)   |
| <b>Time</b>           | 90 minutes  |
| <b>Overview</b>       | This activity uses role play to look at the reasons why people engage in violent acts.  |
| <b>Related rights</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Right to life, liberty and personal security</li> <li>• Right to recognition as a person before the law</li> <li>• Right to equal protection of the law</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Objectives</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop understanding of what causes people to be violent and the consequences of their violence</li> <li>• To develop skills to respond to violence in a non-violent manner</li> <li>• To promote a sense of compassion, justice and responsibility</li> </ul> |
| <b>Materials</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copies of the handout, one per small group</li> <li>• Stones (optional)</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Preparation</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photocopy the handout, one copy for each small group.</li> </ul> <p>Enough space for groups to rehearse and then present a small role play to the rest of the group.</p>   |

## Instructions

1. Ask participants to recall an incident when they felt angry or frustrated and when they felt the desire to do something destructive. Leave a few minutes of silence for people to take themselves back mentally into the state they were in.
2. Ask a few volunteers to share their incidents with other members of the group, describing briefly what happened and their emotions at the time.
3. Now introduce the role play by posing as someone about to throw a stone. Your pose should express someone in extreme anger or frustration and in the act of deliberately throwing a stone. Hold the position for a few seconds.
4. Divide the participants into small groups of 6-7. Tell them they have 30 minutes to prepare a short role play that shows an incident, and which ends in the act of being about to throw a stone.
5. Hand out the copies of the questions for consideration and explain that these are to help them plan their role play.
6. After 30 minutes bring the small groups back together and invite them to show their role plays to the rest of the group. After each showing, leave a few minutes for the audience to react to what it has seen and to ask questions.
7. Then go on to the debriefing and evaluation.



War and  
Terrorism



Peace and  
Violence



Children



Level 2



12 – 20 (small  
groups: 6-7)



90 minutes





## Debriefing and evaluation

- Did you feel that the different role plays made sense? Did they help you understand what could provoke someone to throw a stone?
- Were there feelings or emotions that were common to the different role plays and which were central in leading to the desire to be violent?
- Why do you think that people sometimes feel the need to damage or hurt someone or something? Does the act of causing damage or hurt actually help to resolve whatever it was that caused it? Why? Why not?
- Has the activity helped you to understand better either your own acts of violence or those of others around you? How?
- Are there acts of violence that you cannot understand at all? Can you understand what leads people to fight in wars or blow up buildings or other people?
- How do you understand the terrorist threats that some countries face?
- Is there a difference between understanding what caused an act of violence and justifying it? Is important to try to understand what lies behind violent acts? Why? Why not?
- What is the best way of responding to violent acts? What are the advantages and disadvantages of responding with more violence, or of responding in a peaceful way?
- Which human rights were at stake in each of the role plays?



## Tips for facilitators

If the group does not know each other very well, you may decide to miss out the first reflective task. Alternatively, you could run the first part of individual reflection, but leave participants free to share their feelings within the small groups, if they wish to do so.

The role plays can provide an opportunity for participants to give voice to real frustrations. Thus you may find that you need to allow more time so that they can explore these without rushing.

Allow a few minutes between each role play for each group to feel appreciated and to raise any issues specific to their presentation, but do not allow the discussion to take too much time at this stage. It is best to watch all the role plays first and then move on to discussion of the general issues raised in all of them.

In the debriefing, you may find it useful to raise the issue of terrorist violence directly, or the young people may raise it themselves. Try to allow a free discussion of possible motives for terrorist acts without condemning them outright to begin with. It will be helpful to separate out the possible psychological causes of such acts from their probable consequences; you may want to use a problem tree to do this as an activity with the group (see below).

It is important to try to strike a balance between, on the one hand, relating to those who carry out acts of violence as individuals and human beings, and on the other hand, of identifying acts of violence as unacceptable, particularly where their consequences cause others to suffer. Both of these positions are consistent with the idea of human rights – and both are necessary in order to find ways out of cycles of violence and mutual mistrust.



## Variations

The image of throwing stones is connected in many people's eyes with images from the Palestinian Occupied Territories and the media reports of young Palestinians, including very young children, throwing stones at Israeli soldiers. You may like to role play this as a scenario, either by itself or as follow-up, to reflect on how war infringes the human rights of children.

## Suggestions for follow-up

Take a real example of violence within your community, and try to provide a narrative for the acts leading up to it. You could represent this as a timeline, with each event leading on to another. Ask the group to try to identify points in the timeline when the violence could have been prevented or the conflict could have been de-escalated.

You may wish to pursue the theme of terrorism further in the activity "*Chahal v. UK*" on page 120.

Throwing stones is sometimes associated with the custom of execution by stoning. The relationship between religious and cultural customs and human rights is always interesting and often controversial. If the group would like to explore how customs and beliefs change over time, look at the activity "Soon to be outdated" on page 272.

Alternatively, you could use the activity "My life is not a show" on page 232 to explore the violence carried out by cyber-bullies.

## Ideas for action

Choose from the examples of acts of violence within your community that were identified in the activity and find out which organisations are working to address the problems, and helping those involved, both the perpetrators and the victims. Find out what the group can do to stop the various acts of violence.

In 2008 the UN estimated that there were more than 250,000 child soldiers worldwide. Find out more about these children, who are forced into violent acts, and join one of the many campaigns to stop the use of minors as soldiers. You can also find out about the work of organisations that rehabilitate ex-child soldiers. Put "child soldiers" into your search engine or start at [www.warchild.org](http://www.warchild.org), [human rights watch](http://humanrights.watch), [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org) or [www.redhandday.org](http://www.redhandday.org).

## Further information

A problem tree is a useful, visual tool for analysing problems. It is a combination of brainstorming and mind-mapping. The trunk of the tree represents the problem. People start by identifying the causes of the problem represented by the roots and then go on to identify the consequences, represented by the branches. Problems and consequences can be, for instance, due to social, economic and political factors. They may also be due to people's attitudes and behaviour. For more information go to [www.thechangeagency.org](http://www.thechangeagency.org) and search for "problem tree analysis".

## Handouts

### Questions for consideration

You should try to think about the following questions when planning your role play:

- Who is this person and at what or whom are they throwing the stone?
- What is the relationship between the person who is throwing and the object or person at whom they are throwing the stone?
- Is there anyone with them or are they alone?
- If there are others present, how are they involved in this incident, if at all?
- What does the person want to achieve by throwing this stone?
- What have been the events leading up to throwing this stone: is it an impulsive gesture, or has it been planned?
- Was there one particular event that triggered the decision to throw the stone?
- What feelings are going through the person's mind as he or she prepares to throw it?
- What feelings or frustrations went through his or her mind in the period leading up to this act?

### KEY DATE



12 February  
Red Hand Day



Organisations supporting the Global Red Hand campaign include Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Youth Red Cross Germany, Terre des homes and Plan International. [www.redhandday.org](http://www.redhandday.org).



### Note

The activity is based on an idea in *Playing with Fire*, Fiona Macbeth and Nick Fine, New Society Publishers, 1995.