

HASSLE LINE

Time: Minimum 15 minutes

Goal or purpose of the exercise: To give people an opportunity to solve a hassle or conflict using nonviolence. To practise what it feels like to be in both roles in a conflict. This is a good introductory exercise for many situations.

How it's done/facilitator's notes

Ask people to form two rows of an equal number of people facing one another. (You can add another row to play the role of observers.) Ask people to reach out to the person across from them to make sure they know with whom they will interact. Explain that there are only two roles in this exercise: everyone in one line has the same role and the people opposite them have another role; each person relates only to the person across from them. Explain the roles for each side and describe the conflict and who will start it. Give participants a few seconds of silence to get into their roles and then tell them to begin. Depending on the situation, it may be a brief hassle (less than a minute) or you can let it go longer, but not more than three or four minutes.

Then call 'stop' and debrief. Debriefing questions should include: what people did, how they felt, what ways they found to solve or deal with the conflict, what they noticed about body language, what they wish they had done, etc. (If you have a third row as observers, ask them what they saw.)

Replay the exercise, switching roles. So that people do not interact with the same person, move one line up by having the person at one end go to the other end of that line and everyone in that line shift one person.

Examples of roles

- Someone planning to engage in nonviolent action/someone close to them who is opposed to their participation
- Blockading a weapons or government facility/angry worker
- Protester/counter-protester or angry passer-by
- Protester committed to nonviolence guidelines/protester breaking nonviolence guidelines