

Overcoming Family Violence Study Reflection Materials



Some general questions

What struck you positively in this story?

What did you find challenging, or difficult?

What can we learn from this story to apply to our own situation and journey towards peace?

Some further questions arising from the stories in the Family circle of peacemaking:

What special places or people have been rocks of our salvation and healing?

Are there wounds in our family lives through which we have learnt about overcoming violence?

What has helped us in dealing with family conflict? What processes have we used?

How far do we live as 'overcomers', rather than finding life in the midst of death?

Whom do we have a tendency to demonise?

How do we deal with others' fears and anger when it is projected on to us, or on to others close to us?

What journeys through our personal, family and wider histories are we making? What are the stages or circles of our journeys?

What songs have been seeds of healing for us?

Some further thoughts for reflection and discussion

Circles of Listening

'Circles of listening begin as places of safety, where people can trust one another and be trusted', says Robert Schreiter (founding director of the Cardinal Bernadin Centre at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago in his paper 'Creating Circles of Listening in a Parish'): 'A circle of safety means that, in virtue of our common baptism into Christ, we are committed to the well-being of all those in the circle. We acknowledge that we do not understand why or how some people hold the positions they do, but we are committed to hearing their stories so as to understand better their views. At the deepest level, we extend to them trust – we suspend our doubts about their motives, and see in them people trying to travel the path of trust. Without this level of trust, communication is not possible.

'Circles of listening have two major characteristics: they should be small (ordinarily not more than six, or seven, persons), and they should be ongoing. Listening is much more difficult than it first appears to be. In seeking common ground, it becomes clear that listening is a discipline, that is, it is a patterned response that must be attended to and worked at...Listening takes a special kind of mindfulness and attention.'

Family Pledge of Nonviolence

Making peace must start within ourselves and in our family. Each of us, members of the _____ family, commit ourselves as best we can to become nonviolent and peaceable people.

To respect self and others: To respect myself, to affirm others and to avoid uncaring criticism, hateful words, physical attacks and self-destructive behaviour.

To communicate better: To share my feelings honestly, to look for safe ways to express my anger, and to work at solving problems peacefully.

To listen: To listen carefully to one another, especially those who disagree with me, and to consider others' feelings and needs rather than insist on having my own way.

To forgive: To apologize and make amends when I have hurt another, to forgive others, and to keep from holding grudges.

To respect nature: To treat the environment and all living things, including our pets, with respect and care.

To play creatively: To select entertainment and toys that support our family's values and to avoid entertainment that makes violence look exciting, funny or acceptable.

To be courageous: To challenge violence in all its forms whenever I encounter it, whether at home, at school, at work, or in the community, and to stand with others who are treated unfairly.

This is our pledge. These are our goals. We will check ourselves on what we have pledged once a month on _____ for the next twelve months so that we can help each other become more peaceable people.

Pledging family members sign below:

“Eliminating violence, one family at a time, starting with our own.”

(Families Against Violence Advocacy Network c/o Institute for Peace and Justice)