

Tools for grounding, protecting and blockading

Time: 5 to 10 minutes to practice each variation.

Goal or purpose:

■ To learn physical tools that can help you protect yourself and others in your group, and de-escalate a situation.

How it's done/facilitator's notes:

Centring When you are centred, you are calm, stable, present in the moment, and hard to push off balance physically or emotionally. You can also have a calming effect on those around you. In order to centre yourself, focus on your centre of gravity. It's just below your navel, deep inside your body. Focus here when you feel upset or under pressure in order to ground yourself and reconnect with your power within.

Point to attacker You can make a violent attack very visible by getting everyone in the vicinity to sit down so the attacker is suddenly visible to all and to the media.

Step in between perpetrator and demonstrator Keep your palms open and visible, try not to touch the attacker, or at very least, do not hold onto him or her. Just inter-positioning yourself can often be enough to stop an attack. Talk reassuringly to the attacker.

Surround ('U') and move perpetrator away With several people, step between the attacker and the demonstrator, form a U shape around the perpetrator, and move him or her away. Don't completely surround the attacker; make sure to leave him or her an 'out'. Talk with the attacker reassuringly as you do this.

Surround ('O') and absorb demonstrator Totally surround a demonstrator who's being attacked and absorb him or her back into the crowd.

Form a line between opposing factions/blocking Knees relaxed and not locked, stand shoulder-width apart. Be aware of how strong a line you need to make and the different impacts of different stances, for example standing separately > holding hands > linking elbows > linking wrists.

Staying put/holding your ground Specially in a blockade. Centre yourself, send your roots down deep into the earth, feel yourself relaxed and heavy.

Going limp It is much harder to move someone if they go limp. Practice sitting on the floor with very relaxed muscles; if someone lifts an arm, it should flop back

Nonviolence

Violence
Nonviolence training

Strategy

Forms of nonviolent action
Maintaining nonviolence

Nonviolent actions

Chile: Gandhi's insights gave people
courage to defy Chile's
dictatorship

Training

Hassle lines
Role playing

Training



ACTIVISTS PRACTICE BLOCKADING IN SOUTH KOREA.

PHOTO: WRI ARCHIVE

to the floor! Practice being carried, too – it will be very hard for one person to lift a ‘protester’, and it will likely take two, three or even four people to lift just one person and move them. Demonstrate the difference by having someone tense all of their muscles; people are much easier to carry when their muscles are tense.

Other variations

Sitting in a row Place larger people to the ends.

Sitting/lying in a circle Cross your hands over your legs and hold each others’ wrists with a strong grip. In this formation, you can see each other and give emotional support. Make sure to warn each other about what’s happening behind, where the other side of the cannot see. Lying down, with your feet behind you, means you take up more space and you can lie on your hands so it’s harder for police or security to get at your hands to break your grip.

Sitting in a column Wrap your legs round the person in front, lean forward, put your hands around the chest of the person in front of you, and keep your head down.

Self-defence posture First, lace your hands together at the base of your skull, with your elbows together protecting your temples. Curl up in a foetal position on the ground, lying on your right side to protect your liver. Most main organs and head are thus protected, although your kidneys are still vulnerable.

When practicing these techniques, it should always be made clear that using them in ‘real life’ will often mean putting oneself in very vulnerable and dangerous situations. Having good knowledge of how police officers and security guards are likely to respond in different contexts can help and could be used in conjunction with parallel lines (p193) to create more complex role plays (p214).

*