

## Conclusion: An Open Way

HOW CAN WE SOLVE our tough problems without resorting to force? How can we overcome the apartheid syndrome in our homes, workplaces, communities and countries, and globally? How can we heal our world's gaping wounds?

The answer to these questions is simple, but it is not easy. We have to bring together the people who are co-creating the current reality to co-create new realities. We have to shift from downloading and debating to reflective and generative dialogue. We have to choose an open way over a closed way.

This injunction to open up is not surprising. Many texts on marriage, management, negotiation, and spirituality give similar advice. What is surprising is that when we make this simple, practical shift in how we perform these most basic social actions—talking and listening—we unlock our most complex, stuck problem situations. We create miracles.

How can you get started? Here are ten suggestions:

1. *Pay attention to your state of being and to how you are talking and listening.* Notice your own assumptions, reactions, contractions, anxieties, prejudices, and projections.
2. *Speak up.* Notice and say what you are thinking, feeling, and wanting.
3. *Remember that you don't know the truth about anything.* When you think that you are absolutely certain about the way

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things are, add “in my opinion” to your sentence. Don’t take yourself too seriously.

4. *Engage with and listen to others who have a stake in the system.* Seek out people who have different, even opposing, perspectives from yours. Stretch beyond your comfort zone.
5. *Reflect on your own role in the system.* Examine how what you are doing or not doing is contributing to things being the way they are.
6. *Listen with empathy.* Look at the system through the eyes of the other. Imagine yourself in the shoes of the other.
7. *Listen to what is being said not just by yourself and others but through all of you.* Listen to what is emerging in the system as a whole. Listen with your heart. Speak from your heart.
8. *Stop talking.* Camp out beside the questions and let answers come to you.
9. *Relax and be fully present.* Open up your mind and heart and will. Open yourself up to being touched and transformed.
10. *Try out these suggestions and notice what happens.* Sense what shifts in your relationships with others, with yourself, and with the world. Keep on practicing.

These suggestions are simple but they are far from easy. Most of us—certainly I—fail to follow them most of the time.