



CENTER FOR DOMESTIC PEACE CORE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Core Principle 1. The abuse of non-dominant group members by dominant group members isolates and divides us from each other. This process is a hurt to all of us. It dulls our sense of what is possible, conditions us to accept injustice, leads us to rationalize human suffering, keeps us from our strength in human community and teaches us to give up on one another.

Core Principle 2. Sexism, racism, homophobia, classism, etc, is not biological or natural. No human being is born a male chauvinist, a darling housewife or a rapist. Anatomy is not destiny. Boys do not "need to be boys" for instance.

Core Principle 3. No young person acquires sexist, racist, homophobic information voluntarily. These attitudes and beliefs are a mixture of lies and ignorance, which have to be imposed upon young people through a painful process of social training. Boys have to be pushed and pressured for years to measure up: girls have to be curbed and trained for years to submit. We have to be taught to hate and fear. All of this training counts as abuse against children and it takes different forms for boys and girls.

Core Principle 4. Stereotypical attitudes are harmful to all women and men. Having attitudes and beliefs that are sexist, racist, or homophobic is like having a clamp on one's mind: it distorts one's perception of reality.

Core Principle 5. People retain sexist or racist attitudes and beliefs because it is the only information they have, it is the best thinking they are capable of at the time, and because no one has been able to help them out of this misinformation.

Core Principle 6. People will change their minds about deeply-held convictions when:

- a) a new position is presented in a way that makes sense to them;
- b) they feel safe with the person who is presenting the new position;
- c) they are not being blamed for having believed misinformation.

Core Principle 7. Sometimes we have failed to act, failed to help a friend, failed to help ourselves, or failed to help our children. Unlearning unhealthy and unequal relating involves understanding the difficulties we have had, and then learning how to overcome them without blaming ourselves. It is exciting, creative, and joyous work.

Core Principle 8. The situation is not hopeless. People can grow and change: the world as it stands is not built in stone. Everywhere women actively fight violence and inequality, they are not helpless but are and can be strong leaders. And

everywhere there are men who do not voluntarily approve of or engage in disrespect, discrimination or abuse and who do stop their own and other men's violence. Men can take responsibility for male violence: they are natural allies for women. Women can and do achieve long-lasting intimate relationships with other men based on love and not oppression.

Core Principle 9. There are many different ways to be male and female, and many different kinds of personal and collective relationships between men and women. A crucial part of unlearning sexism is the reclaiming of some truths about ones own gender. One truth is that both women and men can and have acted powerfully outside, and in spite of the gender role training and the violence they have experienced.

Core Principle 10. We cannot make permanent change acting from guilt or hopelessness. We each come from personal heritages and traditions that have a history of resistance to sexism, racism, other forms of oppression, and every person has their own individual history of resistance. When we recall and celebrate that we are more effective.

Adapted from the work of Ricky Sherover-Marcuse, Unlearning Racism and Liberation Theory