



**Thousand Waves**  
Martial Arts & Self-Defense Center, NFP

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## Conflict Resolution at Thousand Waves and Beyond

The mission of Thousand Waves includes advocating for a healthy and violence-free society and advancing the skills of all of us to resolve conflicts non-violently and stop violence when it erupts. We start in our own community center, by cultivating a culture of safety and respect, and by addressing issues of violence and conflict that arise in our space. But our peacemaking extends beyond our walls, as members transfer skills to their homes, schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods. Our mission—of cultivating compassion, developing non-violence, and building peace—is supported by concrete skills learned in martial arts and self-defense, and by a broad understanding of violence and violence prevention.

Below we share the approach to prevention of violence and resolution of conflict in place at Thousand Waves. This approach can be used in any social setting, and with any group: a classroom, playground, neighborhood basketball court, school, or a family. The skills we teach for stopping violence can be used by individuals for themselves, and by other community members who witness conflict.

### Create a culture of respect

- **Make a place for everyone.** Create a welcoming and warm space for all who enter.
- **Teach etiquette.** Students say ‘excuse me,’ ‘thank you,’ and ‘please,’ which makes people feel safe, respected, noticed, and cared for.
- **Nurture mutually beneficial relationships.** Remind students that they are not isolated individuals, but members of a community.
- **Value diversity.** Our shared interest in karate unites us, but our diversity—of age, race, background, religion, sexual orientation, ability—makes our school a vibrant place.
- **Create rituals that enhance order and harmony.** When students enter our *dojo*, they bow as a way to mark their transition to their karate time. They greet others, practicing using their voice, confronting shyness, making themselves known, acknowledging others.
- **Develop guidelines that promote positive actions.** We teach all children and teens the karate “code of ethics:” love, respect, non-quitting spirit, courage, and responsibility. This teaches ‘rules’ in a positive way, and gives a framework for addressing infractions.
- **Provide safe outlets to release negative feelings.** Karate is a physical practice, giving students a physical way to rid themselves of stress, anger, and fear. Teachers give clear guidelines about when students can go full out (into the air, into a heavy bag, using their *kiai*-karate yell) and when they need to control their power (with another person).
- **Teach that when conflict happens, our community solves it actively and fairly.** Conflict is inevitable. Teaching students that they will get help solving conflicts, that our goal is to resolve them successfully, that we will heal individually and collectively, all promote feelings of safety and community.

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## Teach conflict resolution skills to use for yourself and for others in conflict

### Internal skills include:

- **TAKE TEN.** This anger management system teaches ways to calm yourself before using violent words or actions. Most successful when it works across power lines, as when a child can call TAKE TEN on a parent who is about to erupt in violent anger.
- **Harness your courage.** Karate develops self-confidence and courage, both needed when facing the scary situation of interrupting violence or solving conflict.

### External skills include:

- **Address the person directly.** Teach strong and peaceful ways to use your voice against hurtful speech and actions, such as “I don’t want to be pushed.”
- **Get help if needed.** Students know that all teachers are available to help students who need help resolving a conflict.
- **State your case respectfully.** No name calling, blaming, attacking intention or character. Say what happened and how it made you feel. Use “I” statements and a respectful tone.
- **Listen actively.** Listen with your ears and your body: use body language that lets the other person know you want to hear what they say. No interrupting.
- **Apologize.** Both sides need to actively participate in the apology: the person giving the apology and the person receiving.
- **Be prepared to compromise.** Sometimes there is no clear ‘guilty party’ and both sides have made mistakes. Other times it is clear that one person made the mistake. Either way, both participants may need to accept some resolution that doesn’t give them everything they want. That’s the nature of being in community.
- **Address both facts and feelings.** Acknowledge the emotions that accompany violence—verbal or physical, intended or accidental. This is a critical part of the process for both sides, often more important than addressing the facts of what happened.
- **Consequences, not punishment.** Punishment doesn’t necessarily make the person change their behavior, nor benefit the community. Consequences of behavior are more clearly linked to infractions, not based on the whim of the one who doles it out. Thus they are fair, able to be explained, often involve service to the community.
- **Restore the community.** Remember that our final goal is for the community to accept back into its folds the people involved in the incident. This reifies the system as one that is not vindictive, but accepts that individuals make mistakes, and that we can learn and heal from these incidents.

### **Thousand Waves as a resource**

Thousand Waves specializes in support and problem solving for all types of violence that may happen in other parts of students’ lives: at home, school, work, and in public spaces. We give support, teach skills, share resources, and follow up when students seek guidance for dealing with bullying, harassment, and other types of violence. Additionally, we teach the “Five Fingers of Self-Defense:” Think-Yell-Run-Fight-Tell in our karate program and in our public self-defense classes. Thousand Waves is committed to creating a violence-free Center, developing peace activists who practice non-violence and conflict resolution skills, and building peace in ourselves, our families, and our communities.

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