

“...the more you become a connoisseur of gratitude, the less you are a victim of resentment, depression, and despair. Gratitude will act as an elixir that will gradually dissolve the hard shell of your ego—your need to possess and control—and transform you into a generous being. The sense of gratitude produces true spiritual alchemy, makes us magnanimous—large souled.”
—Sam Keen

Hunger for Appreciation

We tend to notice & express what's wrong rather than what's right. We are all hungry for our intentions to enrich the lives of others to be recognized.

Exercise: "What appreciation might someone give you that would leave you jumping for joy?"

An Introduction to Nonviolent Communication

A Language of Compassion Rather Than Domination

**Free for distribution.
Take one, please**

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Nonviolent Communication (NVC), developed by Marshall Rosenberg, guides us to reframe how we express ourselves, how we hear others and resolve conflicts by focusing our consciousness on what we are observing, feeling, needing, and requesting. It is a tool that leads us toward a quality of connection among people where everyone's needs are valued and get met through compassionate giving—out of the joy of contributing to another human being.

The potency of NVC is in its pragmatic simplicity. In any moment, there are two ways to enhance connection & understanding: (1) vulnerably express our own feelings & needs, or (2) empathically listen to the feelings & needs of the other. These are radically different choices than we are accustomed to experience when we are in conflict: namely, fight, submit or flee. While simple, NVC is often challenging to embody because we are so deeply conditioned to perceive each other through judgements. With practice, the tool of NVC helps us navigate within ourselves to transform blame & judgement--where neither our own needs nor those of the other person are likely to be met--into a mutual awareness of human needs.

Thinking & Language that Alienate Us from One Another

Diagnoses, judgements, labels, analysis, criticism, comparisons, etc.

Deserve thinking (i.e. that certain behaviors merit punishment or rewards)

Demands (denial of other person's choice; intention to punish those who don't do it)

Denial of choice or responsibility (had to, should, supposed to, they made me do it, etc.)

Expressing Gratitude

In NVC, we express gratitude in 3 parts:

1. What specifically did the other person do that enriched your life?
2. How do you feel now as you recall what they did?
3. What need of yours was met by what they did?

Note that these three parts are simply the first three parts of any NVC expression: observation, feeling, need

Example:

"When I remember you asking if I could use some help this morning, I feel grateful because I value mutual support among our team."

Receiving Appreciation

In NVC, I receive appreciation joyfully, even with awe, as I hold in my awareness this power that flows through me to enrich life for others. It is often hard to receive appreciation fully because it is hard to recognize this beauty & power within us.

This is a very different experience than the way we often respond to compliments, through false humility or a feeling of superiority.

False humility: denies the importance of the appreciation; e.g. "It was nothing."

Feeling of superiority: Thinking "I am better than others because I received the appreciation or compliment."

Appreciation vs. Compliments

Appreciation: what's alive in ourselves (feelings & needs met) stimulated by the other person's actions

Compliment: a positive judgement of the other person e.g. "You're really great!" "Good job!"

"You are a kind person."

Compliments, though positive, are still judgements of other people. They are often used to manipulate the behavior of others.

You: "I want to trust that we'll work this out soon ...
would you be willing to talk this afternoon after lunch?"
Mary: "Maybe so, but not now."
You: "OK ... I'll check with you after lunch."

Request Cues

"Would you be willing to ...?"

Request Check

Requests are clear, positive, and immediately "do-able".
They offer a tangible solution to meeting needs in the moment.

Examples:

Clear: "Would you meet me for coffee at 3:30 tomorrow at the Downtown Coffee Shop?"

Vague: "Would you have a conversation with me sometime?"

Positive: "Would you be willing to explore with me what needs of yours are met by smoking?"

Negative: "Would you stop smoking?"

Do-able: "Would you be willing to tell me what you just heard me say?"

Not do-able: "Would you listen to me?"

Connecting Requests

Did the person hear what you wanted to communicate?: "Would you be willing to tell me what you just heard me say...?" What's going on in the other person after hearing what you said?: "Would you be willing to tell me how you feel after hearing what I said ?"

Giving and Receiving Gratitude

Gratitude or appreciation is recognizing when a person has contributed to our life or to the lives of others.

Purpose of NVC

.. To inspire compassionate, heartfelt connection so that all needs may be valued

.. To connect to the life in ourselves and others

.. To be inspired and to inspire others to give from the heart

"In every moment, each of us is trying to meet our needs in the best way we know how." ~ Marshall Rosenberg

Background of NVC

.. Developed by Marshall Rosenberg during the Civil Rights era; influenced by Carl Rogers

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"Judgements & violence are tragic expressions of unmet needs." ~ Marshall Rosenberg

What NVC is not ...

NVC is not about being nice; it's about being real. It's not about stifling intensity, but transforming it.

NVC is not about changing other people or getting them to do what we want.

It's about creating connection & understanding.
NVC is not a technique or formula. It's a
process that helps guide our consciousness to
a new awareness.

2 Ways of Moving Toward Connection

1. Honestly express your own feelings & needs
Ongoing awareness of feelings & connected needs in
present moment Willingness & courage to express those
feelings & needs (vulnerability)

Example: "When I see you read the
newspaper while I'm talking, I feel
frustrated because I'm wanting to be
heard. Would you be willing to close
the newspaper for 5 minutes and hear
my idea?"

2. Empathically listen to other's feelings & needs
Qualities of empathic listening: presence, focus, space,
caring, verbal reflection of feelings & needs
NOT advising, fixing, consoling, story-telling,
sympathizing, analyzing, explaining, ...
No matter what is said, hear only feelings, needs,
observations & requests

The "4 Ears": How We Choose to Hear Difficult Messages

4 Ears:

1. Blaming others
(attacking)
2. Blaming ourselves
(submitting)
3. Sensing our own feelings
& needs
4. Sensing others' feelings &
needs

The Path to Emotional Liberation

Stage 1, Emotional slavery: We believe we are
responsible for the feelings of others.
Stage 2, Obnoxious: We no longer want to be
responsible for the feelings of others ... and often
express it with anger
Stage 3, Emotional liberation: We accept responsibility
for our own intentions & actions, but not the feelings of
others. We respond to the needs of others only out of
compassion & a desire to contribute, never guilt, fear or
shame.

Requests vs. Demands

Only after a connection has happened between people
(i.e. a mutual understanding of each person's feelings &
needs) do we seek to find solutions. ("Connection FIRST,
then solutions") We are more likely to get our needs met
when (1) we are conscious of our needs and (2) we
explicitly make a request that may fulfill our needs. ("Ask
for what you need.")

REQUESTS vs. DEMANDS

In making a request, we honor a "NO" as much as a
"YES." For example, are we willing to try to understand
what a person is saying "YES" to while they are saying
"NO" to us? Do we value the other's needs in that
moment as much as our own?

Example:

You: "I'd really like to understand your needs so we
can work this problem out. Would you be willing to talk
about it right now for 5 minutes?"

Mary: "I don't want to talk now."

You: "Are you exhausted and want to get some rest?"

Mary: "No, I just want to sit here & be left alone."

You: "So you want to just be with yourself right
now?"

Mary: "Yeah, just leave me alone."

Taking Responsibility for our Feelings

We take responsibility for our own feelings by connecting them to the need within us that is either being met or not met. For example, "I am disappointed because I would like companionship." Contrast this expression to the more common way we often blame others for our feelings:

"You never want to spend time with me ... why are you so selfish." When we blame others for our feelings we tend to stimulate feelings of guilt in the other person. If we express our needs we have a better chance of getting them met.

Need vs. Request

Need: Universal human quality without reference to place, person or time

Request: A specific strategy to meet a need that usually involves a particular person doing something at a particular time

EXAMPLE

I have a need for companionship. I can imagine that need being met by making a particular request of you: "Would you be willing to meet with me at 2pm today at Williams Restaurant for a cup of coffee and conversation?" If you say "No," then I may try other dates or times or places with you that might work. Or I may ask someone else to meet me. For every need, there are an enormous (i.e. infinite) range of possible strategies that could meet that need.

Self-full vs. Selfish vs. Selfless

Selfish: I only value my own needs

Selfless: I only value others' needs

Self-full: I value my own needs and others' needs equally

Blaming is the realm of the jackal. The jackal part of us sees the only choices as fight, submit or flee. More than likely, the jackal doesn't even see choices, but responds in a habitual or automatic manner.

We are each responsible for how we hear what other people are saying.

Connection is the realm of the giraffe. The giraffe part of us knows that there are two ways to connect in any moment: to sense our own feelings & needs, or to sense the feelings & needs of the other person. The giraffe is also keenly aware of the choices she is making in every moment.

EXAMPLE #1

Person A: How dare you walk out of the room when I'm talking! You inconsiderate S.O.B.! You just can't stand to hear the truth.

1. B (blaming A): Me the S.O.B. ... how about you! You're the one who started all this in the first place. You are so self-righteous telling me I'm inconsiderate. You've never thought about another human being besides yourself!

2. Person B (blaming himself): Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be disrespectful. It's just that I don't know what to do. I never know what to do, or what to say. I feel so worthless!

3. B (sensing his own feelings/needs): When I hear you say that, I feel hurt because I'm needing respect and to be seen for who I am. And I really need some space because I'm in a lot of pain right now...

Would you be willing to tell me what you heard me just say?

4. B (sensing A's feelings/needs):

Are you feeling angry and wanting respect and to be heard? ...

EXAMPLE #2

[Mother has a 1-1/2 hour coffee with a friend... her first time away from the children in 3 days.]

6-Year-Old: Mama I don't want you to go! What could be more important than being with me?! (tugging at her leg, crying loudly)

1. M (blaming child): Let go of my leg! And be quiet! You've got no reason to cry ... I've been with you all day. You always make this so hard! ... when all I want to do is have a few minutes to myself!

2. M (blaming herself): Oh, my gosh, I've really upset you! Why do I always do this?! ... Why am I so selfish? ... I'm such an awful mother.

3. M (sensing her own feelings/needs): Honey, I'm really feeling exhausted and needing to just have some personal time to connect with my good friend, Betty. Would you be willing to let Mary (the babysitter) hold you? ...

4. M (sensing her child's feelings/needs):

Are you feeling sad and wanting to be held? ...

Are you feeling hurt and needing to know that you are precious and loved? ...

3. Now imagine this need being richly & completely fulfilled for you, and then spend at least 1 or 2 minutes to experience each of the following...what are you imagining would be happening? ...notice any body sensations within you ...what feelings arise in you? ... simply BE with this feeling & need for a few minutes ... what request might you make of yourself that would contribute toward this need being fulfilled in your life?

Self-Awareness: Autonomy/Choice, Beauty, Body sensations, Feelings, Intentions, Interdependence, Intrinsic value, Needs, Responsibility, Unity, Wholeness

Significance: Celebration, Clarity/Insight, Communion, Hope/Trust, Inspiration, Meaning, Mourning, To be valued

Authenticity: Honesty, Integrity, Freedom, Growth, Learning, Play/fun, Self-reliance, Competence, Resources, Self-connection, Self-compassion, Self-acceptance, Self-expression, Creativity, Be fully alive, Challenge, Stimulation, Spontaneity, Discovery, Exploration, Personal space

Transparency: Affection, Communication, Closeness, Companionship, Compassion, Consideration, Connection, Empathy, Feedback, Harmony/ease, Intimacy, Nurturing, Respect, Security, Express sexuality, Stability, Support, Touch, Trust, Understanding, Warmth

Solidarity: Community, Contribute, Equality, Inclusion, Justice, Mutuality, Participation, Recognition, Simplicity

Physical Well-Being: Air, Food, Health/healing, Movement, Rest/sleep, Safety, Shelter, Water

Awareness of Needs

The “Life Energy” in Each of Us
by Gregg Kendrick, Certified Trainer

At the core of NVC is the awareness of the “life energy” that stirs in each of us in every moment. We see this life energy related to a quality we cherish which sustains life. It may be expressed as a particular dream, need, want, longing or desire whose fulfillment or lack of fulfillment causes our feelings. In NVC, we try to identify the “universal human needs” that are common to all human beings. We distinguish these fundamental needs from more specific (time-place-person-action) wants and desires which reflect strategies to fulfill these needs. The distinction of “needs” vs. “strategies” is crucial in NVC. The following list of needs is neither exhaustive nor definitive. While needs are universal, the words to express them are simply words, and different people may use different words to convey a perceived need. As we develop our vocabulary of needs, our objective is not correctness, but awareness ...*

Exercises to Build Awareness of Needs ...

1. Read over the entire needs list slowly—out loud if you are comfortable doing so— pausing at least 5 or 10 seconds on each need.
2. Pick a need from the list and spend at least 1 or 2 minutes to experience each of the following ... remember a moment when that need was NOT met for you ...as you focus on remembering this past moment, notice any body sensations within you ...what feelings arise in you? simply BE with this feeling & need for a few minutes ...

On Learning NVC ...

It’s About Awareness not Content
by Gregg Kendrick, Certified Trainer

In my experience, learning NVC involves a different kind of “understanding” or “learning” ... very little learning from the head or making sense of concepts ... more learning from the heart, learning with my whole being, expanding my awareness ... it’s not a linear progression, but spiraling more deeply & more expansively. I have observed that this kind of learning does not happen very meaningfully by talking about NVC. It happens most powerfully when we seek to connect with one another and with ourselves ... when we engage in and witness the experience of NVC. The learning happens in the struggle and the longing to connect. I am often more empowered to engage in NVC when I remember that it is not about getting it right, but about moving toward the connection that I want (what Marshall calls “growing progressively less stupid”). Amidst these experiences, each one of us is learning what we are ready for. In the same exercise or experience, we may each be learning something very different. I find that I am nearly always surprised. If I am willing to share my experiences, I often notice that my own learning seems to deepen as it is received by the other person or people that I am with.

Creating the internal space that nurtures learning and connection

I have found that my learning of NVC happens more fully when I create a place in myself that supports that learning:

- a place of spaciousness ... we're discovering what's already there, not putting more stuff in
- a place of awareness of self in this moment ... noticing my thoughts ... my body sensations ... my feelings ... my intentions ... my needs... my choices
- a place of openness ... finding where I am tense or distracted, and “letting go” to a place of being alert, yet relaxed ... not doing, but being
- a place of choice ... where there is no “have to”, no “should”, no “supposed to” ... there are only choices
- a place of self-compassion ... where there are no judgements, no right or wrong, no punishments or rewards ... remembering that I am trying to get my needs met in the best way I know how
- a place where I remember what I am responsible for and what I am not responsible for... what are your intentions for being here?... only you are responsible for your intentions, your feelings, your needs, your choices ... only I am responsible for my intentions, my feelings, my needs, my choices ...

Some strategies that may enhance your learning during this workshop:

- Remember often the intentions with which you came ... take responsibility for their fulfillment.
- Pause often to notice what is going on within you ... connect to your own feelings & needs
- Express your needs and ask for what would fulfill them.
- Remember the common intentions of the group.

Afraid: Apprehensive, Dread, Frightened, Mistrustful, Panicked, Petrified, Scared, Suspicious, Terrified, Wary, Worried

Pain: Agony, Anguish, Bereaved, Devastated, Grief, Heartbroken, Hurt, Lonely, Miserable, Regretful, Remorseful

Sad: Depressed, Despair, Despondent, Disappointment, Discouraged, Disheartened, Forlorn, Gloomy, Heavy hearted, Hopeless, Melancholy, Unhappy, Wretched

Yearning: Envious, Jealous, Longing, Nostalgic, Pining, Wistful

Feelings vs. Thoughts

Authentic feelings emanate from the "heart"—they express vulnerability. Our language, however, enables us to use the word "feel" when we are actually expressing thoughts, not feelings. For example:

"I feel like you aren't telling the truth." (thought)

Translated: "I think you aren't telling the truth."

"I feel inadequate to raise my children." (perception of ourselves)

Translated: "I think I am inadequate to raise my children."

"I feel abandoned." (perception of what others are doing to us)

Translated: "I think that you have abandoned me."

Other examples of thoughts that sound like feelings:

Neglected, Manipulated, Abused, Misunderstood, Mistreated, Unappreciated, Betrayed, Taken for granted, Disrespected, Bullied, Put down, Violated, Insulted, Victimized

Peaceful: Calm, Clear headed, Comfortable, Centered, Content, Fulfilled, Mellow, Quite, Relaxed, Relieved, Satisfied, Serene, Still, Tranquil, Trusting

Feelings When Needs are NOT Met

Annoyed: Aggravated, Dismayed, Disgruntled, Displeased, Exasperated, Frustration, Impatient, Irritation, Irked

Angry: Enraged, Furious, Incensed, Indignant, Irate, Livid, Outraged, Resentful

Disgusted: Animosity, Appalled, Contempt, Dislike, Hate, Horrified, Hostile, Repulsed

Embarrassed: Ashamed, Chagrined, Flustered, Guilty, Mortified, Self-conscious

Uneasy: Agitated, Alarmed, Discombobulated, Disconcerted, Disturbed, Perturbed, Rattled, Restless, Shocked, Startled, Surprised, Troubled, Turbulent, Turmoil, Uncomfortable, Unnerved, Unsettled, Upset

Detached: Alienated, Aloof, Apathetic, Bored, Closed, Cold Hearted, Distant, Distracted, Indifferent, Numb, Uninterested, Withdrawn

Tense: Anxious, Cranky, Distressed, Distraught, Edgy, Fidgety, Frazzled, Irritable, Jittery, Nervous, Overwhelmed, Restless, Stressed out

Tired: Beat, Burnt out, Depleted, Exhausted, Lethargic, Listless, Sleepy, Weary, Worn out

Vulnerable: Fragile, Guarded, Helpless, Insecure, Leery, Reserved, Sensitive, Shaky

- Before speaking in the group, be clear what your own needs are and what specific request you have of the group to meet your needs.

- When another person is speaking, focus on their feelings & needs.

- When another person is speaking, pause or check in to see if they are complete before expressing what is stirred up in you.

- Remember: we are all doing the best that we can.

Creating the community space that nurtures learning and connection

We are each co-creating and contributing to the quality of the community space that holds us, whether we are conscious of it or not. What my intention is, where I focus my attention, and the choices I make ... each of these becomes a part of the texture of the space. In my experience, certain qualities in that space support connection and learning among us:

- a space of remembering our common intention for coming together... to connect with one another ... to learn and grow in our understanding of that connection and in the process of NVC that takes us toward it

- a space of inclusiveness ... where each person is invited and given the space to be heard ... where your needs matter as much as my own

- a space of authenticity ... where I vulnerably express my own feelings & needs as best I can

- a space of empathy ... where I strive to hear feelings

and needs no matter what is being said ... where I give each person plenty of space until that person has been fully heard

- a space of conscious choice ... where I strive to hold our common intention, the needs of each person, and my own needs as I choose how to best meet these needs ... where I honor the choices of those around me

- a space of compassion ... where there are no judgements, no right or wrong, no demands, no punishments or rewards ... only people trying to get their needs met in the best way they know how

Awareness of feelings

Distinguishing Feelings from Thoughts
by Gregg Kendrick, Certified Trainer

Feelings are our barometers to tell us whether our needs are being met or not. If we are experiencing pleasurable feelings (e.g. joy, relieved, calm), our present need is being met. If we are experiencing painful feelings (e.g. disappointment, frustration, sadness), our present need is not being met. As long as we are alive, we are always experiencing feelings, regardless of whether we are aware of them or not. Our feelings are dynamic, often changing every few seconds. By training ourselves to be more mindful of our feelings and more aware of the nuances of feelings, we gain a greater understanding of and connection with ourselves.

Exercises to Build Awareness of Feelings ...

1. Read over the entire feelings list slowly—out loud if you are comfortable doing so—pausing at least 5

or 10 seconds on each feeling.

2. Pick a feeling from the list and spend at least 1 or 2 minutes to experience each of the following ... remember a time when you felt that feeling ... notice any body sensations within you ... express the feeling through body movement and sound ...

Feelings When Needs ARE Met

Affectionate: Compassionate, Friendly, Loving, Open hearted, Sympathetic, Tender, Warm

Engaged: Absorbed, Alert, Curious, Engrossed, Enchanted, Entranced, Fascinated, Gratitude, Interested, Intrigued, Involved, Spellbound, Stimulated

Excited: Amazed, Animated, Ardent, Aroused, Astonished, Dazzled, Eager, Energetic, Enthusiastic, Giddy, Invigorated, Lively, Passionate, Surprised, Vibrant

Exhilarated: Blissful, Ecstatic, Elated, Enthrilled, Exuberant Radiant, Rapturous, Thrilled

Hopeful: Expectant, Encouraged, Optimistic

Inspired: Amazed, Awed, Wonder

Refreshed: Enlivened, Rejuvenated, Renewed, Rested, Restored, Revived

Grateful: Appreciative, Moved, Thankful, Touched

Confident: Empowered, Open, Proud, Safe

Joyful: Amused, Delighted, Glad, Happy, Jubilant, Pleased, Tickled