



An Introduction to Nonviolent Communicationsm (NVC)

A Language of Compassion Rather Than Domination

Nonviolent Communicationsm (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 judgments. With practice, the tool of NVC helps us navigate within ourselves to transform blame & judgment--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, judgments, 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.)

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
- Center for Nonviolent Communication: web: www.cnvc.org, email: cnvc@cnvc.org, phone: 1-818-957-9393

"Judgments & 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.

4 Components of an NVC Expression

1. OBSERVATION

(free of judgments, labels, diagnoses, opinions, etc.)

“When I see/hear/notice...”

2. FEELING (free of thoughts)

Examples of feelings when needs ARE met:

Affectionate	Confident	Engaged
Excited	Exhilarated	Grateful
Inspired	Hopeful	Exuberant
Joyful	Calm	Refreshed

“... I feel ...”

Examples of feelings when needs are NOT met:

Annoyed	Angry	Disgusted
Uneasy	Detached	Tense
Embarrassed	Tired	Sad
Vulnerable	Scared	Pain

3. NEED (universal human needs free of strategies)

Examples:

Beauty	Autonomy	Empathy
Mourning	Honesty	Love
Meaning	Safety	Respect
Community	Contribution	Mutuality
Authenticity	Transparency	Acceptance
To be valued	Play	Support

“... because I need/value ...”

4. REQUEST (free of demands)

“Would you be willing to ...?”

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

Are you feeling ... because you need ...?



A Comparison of Life-Serving and Life-Alienating Systems

“Giraffe” vs. “Jackal”

	Life Alienating	Life-Serving
Symbol in NVC ...	“Jackal”	“Giraffe”
Consciousness ...	Domination	Partnership
Intention ...	To be right To get others to do what I want	Connection or Understanding
Principal judgments ...	Moral judgments (good/bad, right/wrong) Dualistic (either/or)	Life-serving judgments (needs met or unmet) Dialectical (both/and)
Motivation for actions ...	Extrinsic (rewards / punishment)	Intrinsic (feelings / needs)
Source of feelings ...	Caused by outside actions, people & events	Caused by our own thoughts or needs
Create safety through ...	Obedience	Connection
Relationship with others ...	Caste system / hierarchy Power over win / lose Getting our own way	Equality / mutuality Power with win / win Meeting everyone’s needs
Source of authority ...	External government, church, employer, parents	Internal Divine within
Give through ...	Guilt or shame or anger	Compassion or joy
Want others to feel our pain by ...	Stimulating pain in others	Others empathically present to us
See another’s pain as ...	Causing pain in ourselves.	“Please” ... a cry for help. A cry for empathy ... a gift
“See” another person through ...	Enemy or hero images What do you deserve? What are you? You (object)	Wholeness as a human What do you need? What’s alive in you? Thou (person)
Focus on...	Past behaviors Future events	Present moment

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

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? ...

4 Ears:

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

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.



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 & 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

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.
- 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

- a place of **self-compassion** ... where there are no judgments, 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 ...

Creating the community space that nurtures learning & 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:

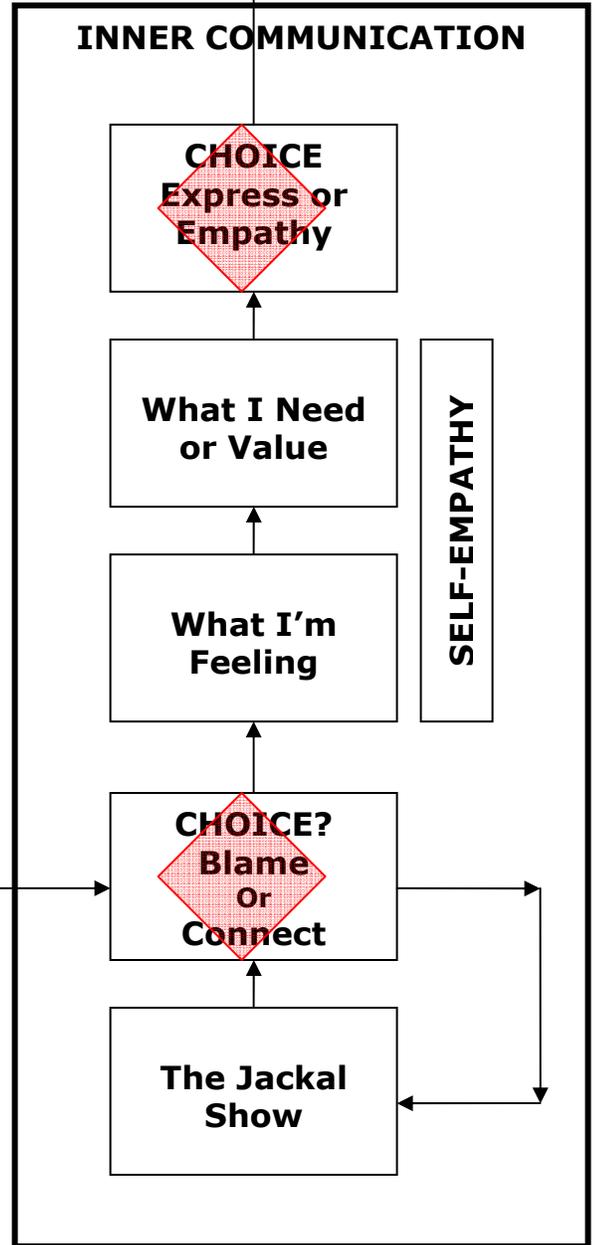
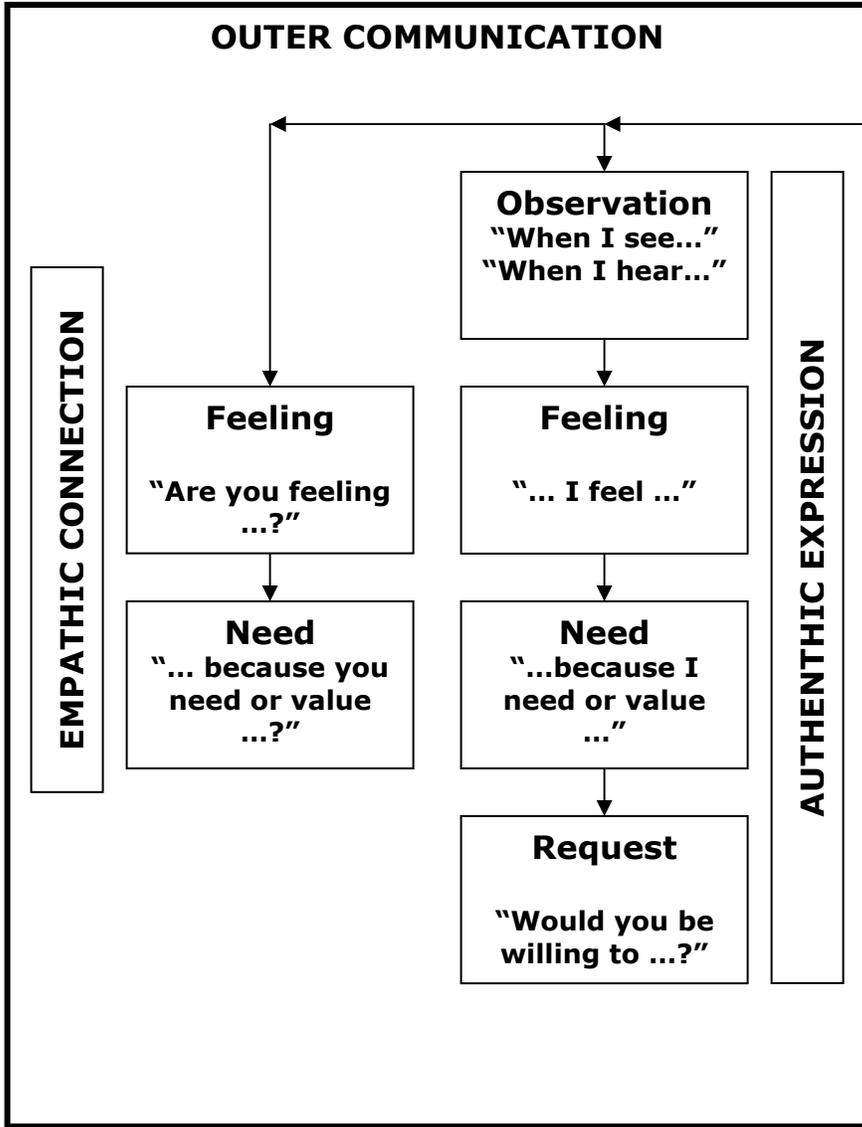
- a space of **remembering our common intention** for coming together ... to connect with one another ... to learn and grow in our understanding of that connection and in the process of NVC that takes us toward it
- a space of **inclusiveness** ... where each person is invited and given the space to 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 judgments, 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

stirred up in you.

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

Some strategies that may enhance your learning after this workshop:

- Get empathy. Empathy is the fuel we need to connect.
- Find an empathy buddy & meet at least weekly.
- Participate in an NVC practice group.
- Meet with an experienced mentor who can nurture your growth
- Participate in a 7-day or 9-day NVC immersion training
- Strive to live NVC throughout your life: at home, in your workplace, in the organizations in which you participate
- Pause often to notice what is going on within you ... connect to your own feelings & needs
- Meditate on needs
- Love your jackal ... he has many gifts for you



Stimulus

**Nonviolent
Communicationsm
Process Overview**

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Observations vs. Evaluations

By Gregg Kendrick, Certified Trainer

When we express what has stimulated us, we strive in NVC to express it without blame or criticism—simply by stating the observations of what happened without evaluation.

Observation with Evaluation Mixed In	Observation Separated From Evaluation
You are too generous.	When I see you give your lunch money to others, I think you are too generous.
Doug procrastinates.	Doug studied for the exam the night before.
She won't get her work in.	I don't think she'll get her work in.
If you don't eat balanced meals, your health will be impaired.	If you don't eat balanced meals, I fear that your health will be impaired.
Minorities don't take care of their property.	I have not seen the family living at 1679 Ross shovel the snow on their sidewalk.
Hank Smith is a poor soccer player.	Hank Smith has not scored a goal in 20 games.
Jim is ugly.	Jim's looks don't appeal to me.
You seldom do what I want.	The last three times I initiated an activity, you said you didn't want to do it.
He frequently comes over.	He comes over at least twice a week.

Observation Cues:

- “When I see ...”
- “When I hear ...”
- “When I recall seeing/hearing ...”
- “When I imagine seeing/hearing ...”

Examples:

“When I see you reading the newspaper ...”

“When I hear you say, ‘I’ll never amount to anything,’ ...”

“When I remember seeing you hit the table with your fist, ...”

“To observe without evaluation is the highest form of human intelligence.”

—J. Krishnamurti

Observation Check:

- Is my observation free of evaluation?
- Can my observation be recorded by the lens of a movie camera or the mike of a tape recorder?
- Does my observation contain words such as “always,” “never,” “whenever,” “constantly,” etc.? ... am I using these words factually or evaluatively?

* parts of this document are adapted from the book “Nonviolent Communication,” by Marshall Rosenberg, 2nd Edition, 2005, Puddledancer Press



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.

Feelings When Needs ARE Met

AFFECTIONATE	EXCITED	HOPEFUL	JOYFUL
Compassionate	Amazed	Expectant	Amused
Friendly	Animated	Encouraged	Delighted
Loving	Ardent	Optimistic	Glad
Open hearted	Aroused	INSPIRED	Happy
Sympathetic	Astonished	Amazed	Jubilant
Tender	Dazzled	Awed	Pleased
Warm	Eager	Wonder	Tickled
	Energetic	REFRESHED	PEACEFUL
ENGAGED	Enthusiastic	Enlivened	Calm
Absorbed	Giddy	Rejuvenated	Clear headed
Alert	Invigorated	Renewed	Comfortable
Curious	Lively	Rested	Centered
Engrossed	Passionate	Restored	Content
Enchanted	Surprised	Revived	Fulfilled
Entranced	Vibrant	GRATEFUL	Mellow
Fascinated	EXHILARATED	Appreciative	Quiet
Gratitude	Blissful	Moved	Relaxed
Interested	Ecstatic	Thankful	Relieved
Intrigued	Elated	Touched	Satisfied
Involved	Enthralled	CONFIDENT	Serene
Spellbound	Exuberant	Empowered	Still
Stimulated	Radiant	Open	Tranquil
	Rapturous	Proud	Trusting
	Thrilled	Safe	

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 NOT Met

ANNOYED

Aggravated
Dismayed
Disgruntled
Displeased
Exasperated
Frustration
Impatient
Irritation
Irritated
Irrked

ANGRY

Enraged
Furious
Incensed
Indignant
Irate
Livid
Outraged
Resentful

DISGUSTED

Animosity
Appalled
Contempt
Dislike
Hate
Horrorified
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
Cold
Closed 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

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



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 ...

SELF-AWARENESS	AUTHENTICITY	TRANSPARENCY	SOLIDARITY
Autonomy/Choice	Honesty	Affection	Community
Beauty	Integrity	Communication	Contribute
Body sensations	Freedom	Closeness	Equality
Feelings	Growth	Companionship	Inclusion
Intentions	Learning	Compassion	Justice
Interdependence	Play / Fun	Connection	Mutuality
Intrinsic value	Self-Reliance	Consideration	Participation
Needs	Competence	Empathy	Recognition
Responsibility	Resources	Feedback	Simplicity
Unity	Self-Connection	Harmony / Ease	
Wholeness	Self-Compassion	Intimacy	
	Self-Acceptance	Nurturing	PHYSICAL
SIGNIFICANCE	Self-Expression	Respect	WELL-BEING
Celebration	Creativity	Security	Air
Clarity / Insight	Be fully alive	Express sexuality	Food
Communion	Challenge	Stability	Health / Healing
Hope / Trust	Stimulation	Support	Movement
Inspiration	Spontaneity	Touch	Rest / Sleep
Meaning	Discovery	Trust	Safety
Mourning	Exploration	Understanding	Shelter
To be valued	Personal Space	Warmth	Water

* adapted from "Nonviolent Communication Workbook" by Lucy Leu, CNVC, 2001

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 ...
- (continued on back...)

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

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.

Exercise (cont.)

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?

15Feb07



Requests vs. Demands

By Gregg Kendrick, Certified Trainer

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."

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 & Receiving Gratitude

By Gregg Kendrick, Certified Trainer

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

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."

* parts of this document are adapted from the book "Nonviolent Communication," by Marshall Rosenberg, 2nd Edition, 2005, Puddledancer Press

Appreciation vs. Compliments

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

Compliment: a positive judgment of the other person

e.g. "You're really great!" "Good job!"
"You are a kind person."

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

"...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?"