

## Nonviolent Communication

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is sometimes referred to as compassionate communication. Its purpose is to:

1. **create human connections that empower compassionate giving and receiving**
2. **create governmental and corporate structures that support compassionate giving and receiving.**

NVC involves both communication skills that foster compassionate relating and consciousness of the interdependence of our well being and using power with others to work together to meet the needs of all concerned.

The two sides of the NVC model are

- 1) Empathetically listening
- 2) Honestly expressing

Both follow these four steps:

- i. Observations
- ii. Feelings
- iii. Needs
- iv. Requests

This approach to communication emphasizes compassion as the motivation for action rather than fear, guilt, shame, blame, coercion, threat or justification for punishment. In other words, it is about getting what you want for reasons you will not regret later. NVC is NOT about getting people to do what we want. It is about creating a quality of connection that gets everyone's needs met through compassionate giving.

The process of NVC encourages us to focus on what we and others are observing separate from our interpretations and judgments, to connect our thoughts and feelings to underlying human needs/values (e.g. protection, support, love), and to be clear about what we would like towards meeting those needs. These skills give the ability to translate from a language of criticism, blame, and demand into a language of human needs -- a language of life that consciously connects us to the universal qualities "alive in us" that sustain and enrich our well being, and focuses our attention on what actions we could take to manifest these qualities.

Nonviolent Communication skills will assist you in dealing with major blocks to communication such as demands, diagnoses and blaming. In CNVC trainings you will learn to express yourself honestly without attacking. This will help minimize the likelihood of facing defensive reactions in others. The skills will help you make clear requests. They will help you receive critical and hostile messages without taking them personally, giving in, or losing self-esteem. These skills are useful with family, friends, students, subordinates, supervisors, co-workers and clients, as well as with your own internal dialogues.

## Nonviolent Communication Skills

NVC offers practical, concrete skills for manifesting the purpose of creating connections of compassionate giving and receiving based in a consciousness of interdependence and power with others. These skills include:

1. Differentiating observation from evaluation, being able to carefully observe what is happening free of evaluation, and to specify behaviors and conditions that are affecting us;
2. Differentiating feeling from thinking, being able to identify and express internal feeling states in a way that does not imply judgment, criticism, or blame/punishment;
3. Connecting with the universal human needs/values (e.g. sustenance, trust, understanding) in us that are being met or not met in relation to what is happening and how we are feeling; and
4. Requesting what we would like in a way that clearly and specifically states what we do want (rather than what we don't want), and that is truly a request and not a demand (i.e. attempting to motivate, however subtly, out of fear, guilt, shame, obligation, etc. rather than out of willingness and compassionate giving).

These skills emphasize personal responsibility for our actions and the choices we make when we respond to others, as well as how to contribute to relationships based in cooperation and collaboration.

With NVC we learn to hear our own deeper needs and those of others, and to identify and clearly articulate what “is alive in us”. When we focus on clarifying what is being observed, felt, needed, and wanted, rather than on diagnosing and judging, we discover the depth of our own compassion. Through its emphasis on deep listening—to ourselves as well as others—NVC fosters respect, attentiveness and empathy, and engenders a mutual desire to give from the heart. The form is simple, yet powerfully transformative.

Founded on consciousness, language, communication skills, and use of power that enable us to remain human, even under trying conditions, Nonviolent Communication contains nothing new: all that has been integrated into NVC has been known for centuries. The intent is to remind us about what we already know—about how we humans were meant to relate to one another—and to assist us in living in a way that concretely manifests this knowledge.

The use of NVC does not require that the persons with whom we are communicating be literate in NVC or even motivated to relate to us compassionately. If we stay with the principles of NVC, with the sole intention to give and receive compassionately, and do everything we can to let others know this is our only motive, they will join us in the process and eventually we will be able to respond compassionately to one another. While this may not happen quickly, it is our experience that compassion inevitably blossoms when we stay true to the principles and process of Nonviolent Communication.

NVC is a clear and effective model for communicating in a way that is cooperative, conscious, and compassionate.

Adapted from: Rosenberg, Marshall B., Ph.D., *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*. PuddleDancer Press, 2003.

## **10 Things We Can Do to Contribute to Internal, Interpersonal, and Organizational Peace**

**(1)** Spend some time each day quietly reflecting on how we would like to relate to ourselves and others.

**(2)** Remember that all human beings have the same needs.

**(3)** Check our intention to see if we are as interested in others getting their needs met as our own.

**(4)** When asking someone to do something, check first to see if we are making a request or a demand.

**(5)** Instead of saying what we DON'T want someone to do, say what we DO want the person to do.

**(6)** Instead of saying what we want someone to BE, say what action we'd like the person to take that we hope will help the person be that way.

**(7)** Before agreeing or disagreeing with anyone's opinions, try to tune in to what the person is feeling and needing.

**(8)** Instead of saying "No," say what need of ours prevents us from saying "Yes."

**(9)** If we are feeling upset, think about what need of ours is not being met, and what we could do to meet it, instead of thinking about what's wrong with others or ourselves.

**(10)** Instead of praising someone who did something we like, express our gratitude by telling the person what need of ours that action met.

The Center for Nonviolent Communication (CNVC) would like there to be a critical mass of people using Nonviolent Communication language so all people will get their needs met and resolve their conflicts peacefully.

## NEEDS INVENTORY

---

The following list of needs is neither exhaustive nor definitive. It is meant as a starting place to support anyone who wishes to engage in a process of deepening self-discovery and to facilitate greater understanding and connection between people.

### **CONNECTION**

acceptance  
affection  
appreciation  
belonging  
cooperation  
communication  
closeness  
community  
companionship  
compassion  
consideration  
consistency  
empathy  
inclusion  
intimacy  
love  
mutuality  
nurturing  
respect/self-respect  
safety  
security  
stability  
support  
to know and be known  
to see and be seen  
to understand and  
be understood  
trust  
warmth

### **PLAY**

joy  
humor

### **PHYSICAL WELL-BEING**

air  
food  
movement/exercise  
rest/sleep  
sexual expression  
safety  
shelter  
touch  
water

### **HONESTY**

authenticity  
integrity  
presence

### **PEACE**

beauty  
communion  
ease  
equality  
harmony  
inspiration  
order

### **AUTONOMY**

choice  
freedom  
independence  
space  
spontaneity

### **MEANING**

awareness  
celebration of life  
challenge  
clarity  
competence  
consciousness  
contribution  
creativity  
discovery  
efficacy  
effectiveness  
growth  
hope  
learning  
mourning  
participation  
purpose  
self-expression  
stimulation  
to matter  
understanding

# How You Can Use the NVC Process



Clearly expressing  
how **I am**  
without blaming  
or criticizing

Empathically receiving  
how **you are**  
without hearing  
blame or criticism

## OBSERVATIONS

1. What I observe (*see, hear, remember, imagine, free from my evaluations*) that does or does not contribute to my well-being:

“When I (see, hear) . . . ”

1. What you observe (*see, hear, remember, imagine, free from your evaluations*) that does or does not contribute to your well-being:

“When you see/hear . . . ”

*(Sometimes unspoken when offering empathy)*

## FEELINGS

2. How I feel (*emotion or sensation rather than thought*) in relation to what I observe:

“I feel . . . ”

2. How you feel (*emotion or sensation rather than thought*) in relation to what you observe:

“You feel . . . ”

## NEEDS

3. What I need or value (*rather than a preference, or a specific action*) that causes my feelings:

“ . . . because I need/value . . . ”

3. What you need or value (*rather than a preference, or a specific action*) that causes your feelings:

“ . . . because you need/value . . . ”

Clearly requesting that  
which would enrich **my**  
life without demanding

Empathically receiving that  
which would enrich **your** life  
without hearing any demand

## REQUESTS

4. The concrete actions I would like taken:

“Would you be willing to . . . ?”

4. The concrete actions you would like taken:

“Would you like . . . ?”

*(Sometimes unspoken when offering empathy)*

