



Creating Workplaces Where People Thrive™

An Introduction to Needs-Based Communication (NVC)

Revision 2.3

AN INTRODUCTION TO NEEDS-BASED COMMUNICATION (NVC)

Communication and consciousness
for a human-needs-centered organization

A workshop based on the experiences of Gregg Kendrick in implementing the processes of Nonviolent Communication®, Integrated Clarity®, and the Sociocratic Circle Method®

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ON LEARNING NVC ...

In my experience, learning Needs-Based Communication (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
- 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

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 stirred up in you.
- Remember: we are all doing the best that we can.

- a place where I remember **what I am responsible for** and what I am not responsible for ...
 - ... 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

Whether conscious of it or not, we are each co-creating and contributing to the quality of the community space that holds us. 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

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
- Embrace your “jackal” (reactive thinking) ... he/she has many gifts for you

NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATIONSM (NVC)

A Language of Human Needs Rather Than Judgments

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*

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:

Moved	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	Frustrated

3. NEED (human needs free of strategies)

Examples:

To be heard	Autonomy	Empathy
Mourning	Honesty	Inclusion
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)

“When I see you read the newspaper while I’m talking, I feel frustrated because I want 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 ...?”

EXAMPLES: RECEIVING DIFFICULT MESSAGES

EXAMPLE #1

John: 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. Bill (blaming himself): Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be disrespectful. It's just that I don't know what to say. I never know what to do, or what to say. I feel so worthless!
2. Bill (blaming John): 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!
3. Bill (sensing his own feelings/needs): John, hearing what you say, I feel my stomach tie in knots, because I really want to connect with you right now. I'm scared that if I speak out of the anger I'm feeling, that we're only going to move further away from the connection I want. I need a little time to take care of myself, but I'd like to connect with you later today. Are you willing to go out & have a cup of coffee together after lunch?
4. Bill (sensing John's feelings/needs): John, are you feeling angry because you need respect and to be heard? ...

EXAMPLE #2

[On Monday, Tuesday & Thursday of this week, Bob has arrived 20 to 30 minutes after the time that is posted in the accountabilities regarding employee attendance. Sam is the leader of the team on which Bob participates.]

1. Sam (blaming himself): [says nothing to Bob, but says to himself: "I guess I haven't emphasized the importance of being on time. I really should do that. I'll try to get a memo out later this week."]
2. Sam (blaming Bob): Bob, this is the third time this week that you've been late. I'm docking you an hour's pay in the hopes that you'll learn to come on time. I want you to know that if it keeps happening, you'll be looking for another job.
3. Sam (sensing his own feelings/needs): Bob, this is the third time this week that I've noticed you arriving 20 to 30 minutes after the agreed upon time. I'm frustrated because I want to trust that agreements will be fulfilled. I'm also concerned because I value having sufficient resources to be able to respond to our clients' phone calls. Would you be willing to tell me what you're hearing me say?
4. Sam (sensing Bob's feelings/needs): Bob, are you feeling overwhelmed because you need to take care of your family's needs and still want to get to work on time? ... Are you concerned because you need understanding about how hard it is to get everything done?

4 OPTIONS AS TO HOW WE RECEIVE DIFFICULT MESSAGES

1. **Blaming ourselves**
2. **Blaming others**
3. **Sensing our own feelings & needs**
4. **Sensing others' feelings & needs**

When we sense the other person's feelings & needs, difficult messages become gifts: an opportunity to give to someone in pain, to enrich someone's life.

SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-CONNECTION

SELF-AWARENESS

Self-awareness is the skill of being conscious of what is going on within your being in this moment. It is getting enough distance from our thoughts that we can notice them without getting caught up in them ... and have the space to notice what else is going on in us. It is being fully in the present moment. It is a pre-requisite of self-empathy. Some examples ...

BODY SENSATIONS

- Pressure of what is touching one's body
- Breathing & heartbeat
- Tension, soreness, aching
- Visual sensations (colors, shapes, location in space, physical objects, ...)
- Auditory sensations
- Olfactory sensations
- Taste sensations

THOUGHTS

- Perceptions
- Moral judgments
- Diagnosis, problem solving

FEELINGS

INTENTIONS, LONGINGS, DESIRES, NEEDS

CHOICES THAT I AM MAKING

SELF-CONNECTION

Self-Connection is the skill of being conscious of your feeling(s) and need(s) that are present or alive in this moment. It is also being conscious of your intentions and the choices you are making in this moment.

SELF-EMPATHY

Self-Empathy is the skill of being able to connect with your feeling(s) and need(s) when stimulated into reactive thinking

AWARENESS OF NEEDS

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

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
Connection
Consideration
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

* 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 ...

3. Now connect to the essence/beauty of the need itself, and then spend at least 1 or 2 minutes to experience each of the following...

- ... remember a time when you experienced the need fully
- ... imagine a scenario where it could be met ...
- ... notice any body sensations within you ...
- ... what feelings arise in you? ...
- ... simply BE with this feeling & need for a few minutes ...
- ... express the essence/beauty of the need through body movement and sound ...

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

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.

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

AWARENESS OF FEELINGS

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	

Feelings When Needs are NOT Met

ANNOYED

Aggravated
Dismayed
Disgruntled
Displeased
Exasperated
Frustration
Impatient
Irritation
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

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 ...

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.

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

OBSERVATIONS

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 mic of a tape recorder?

Does my observation contain words such as "always," "never," "whenever," "constantly," etc.? ... am I using these words factually or evaluatively?

REQUESTS

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."

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 ...?"

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?"

EMPATHY

Being heard is one of our most fundamental of needs as human beings. In NVC, no matter what the other person says or how they say it, we only hear what they are observing, feeling, needing, and requesting.

WHAT EMPATHY IS ...

- **Presence:** listening with our whole being
- **Focus:** bringing our attention to what the other person is feeling or needing—no matter what is being said
- **Space:** empathy is mostly silence, giving the person all the space they need to express themselves fully, and to be with the feelings & needs that arise
- **Intention:** listening empathically to this human being is the most joyful activity I could be doing in this moment
- **Wonder:** extending myself through wonder & curiosity ... what is this person experiencing?
- **Caring:** seeing & valuing the beauty within the person
- **Confirmation:** verbal reflection of feelings and needs

WHAT EMPATHY IS NOT ...

- "Fixing"
- Advising
- One-upping
- Educating
- Consoling
- Story-telling
- Sympathizing
- Explaining
- Correcting
- Interrogating
- Analyzing

Intellectual understanding blocks empathy.

—Marshall Rosenberg

I can testify that when you are in psychological distress and someone really hears you without passing judgment on you, without trying to take responsibility for you, without trying to mold you, it feels damn good! At these times it has relaxed the tension in me. It has permitted me to bring out the frightening feelings, the guilts, the despair, the confusions that have been a part of my experience. When I have been listened to and when I have been heard, I am able to re-perceive my world in a new way and to go on. — Carl Rogers, A Way of Being

EMPATHY VS. SYMPATHY

- **Empathy** is focusing your full consciousness on the feelings & needs of the other person
- **Sympathy** is when one's consciousness is focused on our own feelings & needs

SELF-EMPATHY AND SELF-COMPASSION

SELF-EMPATHY

Self-Empathy is a process that occurs within ourselves. It begins with the awareness of being disconnected from our needs and moves us toward connection to the living energy of the needs that are alive in that moment. Here are the steps of self-empathy:

Step 1: Awareness of Disconnection. The feelings of anger, guilt, shame and depression are all signals of disconnection, the source of which is your own thinking & perceptions. Another related signal is the "jackal show" (what we are telling ourselves) that will likely be going on in your head. Connect to your uncensored jackal either in your head or in an environment where you are free to vent.

Step 2: Connecting to the feelings and needs. Describe the triggering event as a neutral observation. What are your body sensations and feelings? What clues is the jackal show giving you about your needs in the moment? Every judgment is a tragic expression of unmet needs. What's the unmet need?

Step 3: Mourning the unmet need. As you direct your consciousness to the unmet need, what feelings arise in you? Be with these feelings and with the awareness of the unmet need. Take your time ...

Step 4: Experience the essence or beauty of the need. Once you have fully mourned the unmet need, now imagine the need richly fulfilled within you. What are you imagining? How do you feel as you imagine the need completely fulfilled? Be with these feelings and with the awareness of the need completely fulfilled. Again, take your time ...

SELF-EMPATHY VS. ACTING OUT

Self-empathy: a process by which we transform reactive thinking (judgments, blame, etc.) into the connecting energy of feelings & needs

Acting out, repressing or wallowing in feelings: being focused on the feelings that result from our reactive thinking (judgments, blame, etc)

SELF-COMPASSION

In NVC, there are no mistakes. There are things you would have done differently had you known then what you since have learned. Every "mistake" is just an opportunity for learning. But it is difficult to learn when we are beating ourselves up about how stupid we are, or how we never can do anything right, or how worthless we are ...

TWO PARTS OF SELF-COMPASSION:

1. **Mourning.** Empathize with that part of you that doesn't like what you did. Mourn the needs that were not met by what you did.
2. **Self-Forgiveness.** Empathize with that part of you that was trying to get your needs met by what you did. Connect to the needs you were trying to meet.

"Every action in every moment is trying to meet a need."

GRATITUDE

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

"...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

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.

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?"

DOMINATION VS. PARTNERSHIP PARADIGMS

	Domination	Partnership
Consciousness ...	Judgment-centered	Values- or Needs-Centered
Relationship with others ...	Leader's needs matter Caste system Power hierarchy Power-over/Power-under win / lose	Everyone's needs matter Equality / mutuality Functional hierarchy Power with win / win
Loyalty to ...	Leader (a person)	Shared purpose & aim
Intention ...	To be right To get others to do what I want	Clarity of shared mission, aim Mutual understanding of needs
Judgment of actions ...	Moral judgments good/bad, right/wrong Dualistic (either/or)	Needs-based judgments Moving toward fulfillment of mission, aim & needs Dialectical (both/and)
Motivation for actions ...	Extrinsic (rewards / punishment) Blame, guilt, shame, praise Coercion	Intrinsic (shared mission/aim/needs) Longing to contribute
Create safety through ...	Obedience Conformity	Connection Diversity
Source of authority ...	External government, church, employer, parents	Internal Divine within
Organizational culture	Fear	Trust
Organizational structure	Hierarchy of Power and Function	Hierarchy of Function and Interlinked Circles of Power
Policies	Static Rules	Dynamic Guidelines toward purpose
See people as ...	Objects to do tasks	Human beings
Want others to know our pain by ...	Stimulating pain in others (Punishment)	Others empathically present to us
Source of feelings ...	Caused by outside actions, people & events	Caused by our own thoughts or needs
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