

What is "Needs-Based Communication" or NVC?

By Gregg Kendrick, CEO, Basileia LLC v1.2 092118

Needs-Based Communication (NVC) is a potent process that can support us when we are having – or need to have – challenging conversations that matter to us ...

*... like giving **authentic feedback** to a co-worker ...*

*... or **listening** to someone at work or at home when we **disagree** with what they are saying ...*

*... or how we respond when we perceive ourselves as **being "attacked"** in a conversation ...*

*... or expressing clearly our **personal or professional boundaries** when a colleague has stepped beyond them ...*

*... or what we do when we **feel anger rising in ourselves** and we know we will likely regret the words we are about to say ...*

*... or when we've just expressed something in a meeting that really matters to us, but no **one seems to have heard it** ...*

*... or when we're **too scared to speak up** at all.*

NVC guides us to move beyond blame.

- To recognize our own reactivity.
- To understand our reactivity in terms of what matters to us.
- To see another person's reactivity in terms of what matters to them.

- In this new way of perceiving the situation, we are better able to respond consciously in a way that is likely to create mutual understanding.
- In that understanding, we can make choices and take actions that are more likely to advance all of us toward what matters to each of us.

Here are some of the skills and benefits of using Needs-Based Communication (NVC) in the workplace ... or at home:

listening – so that the other person has an experience of being heard, even if we don't agree with what they are saying

empathy – the basis of care and compassion -- recognizing the weird ways that we unconsciously ask for empathy

expressing disagreement without blame -- an integral skill of conscious feedback and mutual accountability

recognizing our own unconscious reactions and limiting beliefs – these are what diminish our relationships and effectiveness, especially as leaders

seeing conflict as something to be harvested, not avoided – learn to "lean into" conflict instead of away from it, learn to hear the underlying essence of what matters to the people involved

Needs-Based Communication invites us to expand our perception so that we see ways to bring connection amidst conflict. At the core of this expanded perception is the skill to focus our attention on the underlying human needs that are seeking to be nurtured in any moment, both within ourselves and within the people around us.

These underlying human needs are the motivation for our actions and our words ... the "why" behind what we do or say. Because human needs are universal – they are common to all human beings – when we bring them into explicit focus, they tend to stimulate understanding and draw us closer together.

The potency of NVC is in its pragmatic simplicity. In any moment, including a moment of conflict, there are two ways to enhance connection & understanding:

1. authentically 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, freeze or flee.

While simple, NVC is often challenging to embody because we are so deeply conditioned to perceive each other through judgments and blame.

With practice, the process of NVC helps us navigate within ourselves to transform unconscious reactions into conscious responses.

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 changing ourselves, so that we inspire the quality of communication and relationship that we want.
- NVC is not a technique or formula. It's a process that helps guide our consciousness to a new awareness around human needs.