

THE FOUR BASIC STEPS OF NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION

We usually speak with loaded statements that are filled with judgments, blame, guilt, fear, shame, etc. NVC adds clarity by separating communication into four different steps of **Observation, Feelings, Needs & Request (OFNR)**

1. **OBSERVATION:** Share a non-judgmental observation without any charged language that might put someone on the defensive
2. **FEELINGS:** Identify the feelings that are coming up
3. **NEEDS:** Connect these feelings to an underlying and universal human need
4. **REQUEST:** Make a request for the person to reflect back what you said and/or take a specific action.

NVC trainer [John Cunningham](#) has a handout that has a very useful digest of these four different steps.

OBSERVATIONS

- * Differentiate from **evaluations** or **judgments**
- * It's the stimulus and not the cause of my reaction
- * Factual, Observable phenomena
- * What a video camera might record
- * Establishes common ground
- * Remain open to clarification

FEELINGS

- * Differentiate from **thoughts**
- * Thoughts interpret; feelings inform
- * Feelings are messages that point to our needs
- * We are responsible for our feelings
- * "I feel that..." & "I feel like..." or "I feel you..." are thoughts, not feelings

NEEDS

- * Differentiate from **strategies**
- * Needs are universal; strategies personal & specific
- * Needs are the root of our feelings
- * Needs are our shared, universal human nature
- * Identification of needs leads to understanding
- * Needs express the process of our becoming

REQUESTS

- * Differentiate from **demands**
- * Demands have conditions; requests don't
- * Use positive language when making requests
- * Make requests concrete & presently doable
- * Clarifies what's been heard/seen, what feelings are present, or what action might meet the needs

GIVING & RECEIVING GAME VERSUS NAMING AND BLAMING GAME

Peggy Smith began the weekend NVC workshop with a worksheet from "The Compassionate Classroom." It described the differences between our habitual ways of communicating in a "Naming and Blaming" manner versus the NVC approach of "Giving and Receiving."

Marshall Rosenberg likes to represent this dichotomy with the metaphors of the Jackal vs. The Giraffe.

Why a giraffe?

- * Giraffes have a 26 lb heart
- * Have a long neck which can symbolize that they can see the consequences of their actions
- * Are strong enough to kill a lion with a single kick
- * Their saliva can dissolve thorns which symbolizes their ability to transform the barbs of others with compassion and empathy.

GIVING & RECEIVING COMMUNICATION STYLE (i.e. NVC)

GOALS:

- * To make life wonderful
- * To meet everyone's internal needs
- * Create community & have power with others

MOTIVATION

- * A natural state of Joy
- * Meet internal needs through each individual's choice & free will

STRATEGIES

- * Speak "Giraffe Language"
- * Observe exactly what was Seen & Heard without human interpretation or subjectivity
- * Share my feelings and needs in way that takes personal responsibility for them
- * Make requests to make life more wonderful – And it's okay for others to say "No" since they're not obligated to act
- * Listen with Empathy (Everyone has a natural hunger for empathy)
- * Hear feelings and needs

NAMING & BLAMING

GOALS:

- * To be right
- * To get what I want
- * Create a hierarchy & have power over others

MOTIVATION

- * Fear, Guilt, Shame, Obligation, Duty

STRATEGIES

- * Speak Jackal language
- * Judge right or wrong and analyze
- * Blame & criticize
- * Make demands and use punishments and rewards – Can't say "No" without facing negative consequences like a withdrawal of affection
- * Listen without Empathy
- * Agree or disagree, advise, lecture, scold, argue, sympathize, divert

NOTABLE COMMENTS:

- * We can't "get rid" of all of the jackals, but it is merely a piece of information for how we are able to translate their blaming language into the underlying feelings, needs and requests
- * "No one can say or do anything can hurt us"
- * Whenever you say "No" to someone, you're saying "Yes" to one of your own needs
- * We have the power to take responsibility for our own life.
- * We're not victims
- * We have a choice for how we feel, react and respond to situations and people
- * What's the difference between sympathy and empathy? Sympathy is when you get triggered and stimulated by your own feelings and needs and wallow in the suffering of the other by agreeing with the victim stories. Empathy is the power of being fully present and having an open heart with someone in a non-judgmental

NVC ADVOCATES RADICAL PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

- * We Can Choose How We Act
- * We Can Choose How We Think
- * We Can Choose How We Listen
- * We Can Choose How We Talk

KEY ASSUMPTIONS AND INTENTIONS OF NVC

1. Our world offers sufficient resources for meeting everyone's basic needs

- * Scarcity is a lack of imagination, lack of skills or systemic limitations.

2. All actions are attempts to meet needs

- * Core of NVC is that people want to meet their needs, and we are at conflict with the external strategies that we use to meet our needs

3. Feelings point to needs being met or unmet

- * Feelings serve as a barometer that measures the degree to which our needs are being met
- * NVC frowns upon statements like "You make me feel..." because no one can make you feel anything.
- * Need to look for the root cause of the feelings, which are the universal human needs
- * We feel happy, satisfied & peaceful when our needs are met, and feel sad, scared, angry when they're not met.

4. All human beings have the capacity for compassion

- * No one is "evil" – everyone has the capacity for compassion even if they don't know how to access it

* Compassion increases our capacity for meeting our needs peacefully.

5. Human beings enjoy giving

* If we have choice, we're more likely to choose to serve and contribute to the well-being of others

* We inherently enjoy giving to others when we recognize our own needs and the needs of others

6. Human beings meet needs

* Relationships are the source for meeting most of our needs

* When others needs are unmet, then some of our needs are also unmet.

7. Choice is internal

* Autonomy is the ability for us to make our own choices

8. The most direct path to peace is through self-connection

* Needs can be fulfilled when we are at peace with them and able to internally embrace, accept and love it. They don't necessarily have to be met through an external strategy or from a particular person.

* NVC is not learning something new, it is remembering the essence from when we were born

* It tends to take adults longer to learn NVC than children.

OTHER NOTABLE COMMENTS:

* Our culture is speed-based and solution-based, and NVC advocates SLOWING down to notice the needs underneath our feelings

* Move away from static "I am" statements, and towards "I am feeling X because of my need for Y" -- allows for change moment-to-moment.

* We habitually identify ourselves by our suffering and trauma, NVC tends to see our past as mostly irrelevant

* We have a cultural taboo to not ask because we may be putting people in a position to say "No."

* Need to learn to ask for your needs and be willing to ask anything you need to make your life more wonderful from anyone.

KEY INTENTIONS WHEN USING NVC

*** OPEN-HEARTED LIVING**

1. Self-compassion

* Release self-blame, self-judgments & self-demands

* You can make yourself sick through blaming yourself, which isn't very helpful

2. Expressing from the heart

* Authentically communicate your feelings and needs in a way that establishes connection

3. Receiving with compassion

* Look beyond the surface-level expressions and actions from others to extrapolate what their feelings and needs might be.

4. Prioritizing Connection

* NVC isn't mediation or compromise, it is about connecting with an open heart and trying to stay in "the dance" long enough to meet everyone's needs

5. Beyond "right" and "wrong"

* We have a habit to judge between right and wrong, and we have a lot of resistance to giving up the need to be right – focus on meeting needs instead.

*** CHOICE, RESPONSIBILITY, PEACE**

6. Taking responsibility for our feelings

* No one has the power to make us feel anything – we have choice, and it's up to us to take actions to meet our needs

7. Taking responsibility for our actions

* Act in a mindful and intentional way to meet our needs rather than from a place of fear, guilt, shame, potential reward, duty or obligation.

8. Living in peace with unmet needs

* Focus on connecting with the feelings around unmet needs rather than obsessing on the various external strategies to meet them.

9. Increasing capacity for meeting needs

* When we focus on developing our sense of inner peace and NVC competencies, then we have more connection and a broader range of potential strategies to meet our needs

10. Caring equally for everyone's needs

* Strive towards solutions that can meet as many different people's needs as possible

* Everyone's needs are universal and completely valid, it's the various strategies for meeting needs that are in conflict

* When we say "No" to someone's else's strategy for meeting a need, we're also saying "Yes" to one of our own strategies to meet one of our needs

* We should explain why we're saying "No" to people

* Marshall Rosenberg says that "we can only hear 35 words at a time"

* We are usually trying to prove to the other person that we're right when we go on and on and on about something.

* We'll regret it in the long-run if we overwhelm people with our reasoning or demands until they surrender to our strategy. People should do things because they want to.

11. Protective Use of Force

* When dialogue fails to meet an immediate need for physical safety, then use the minimal amount of force necessary to restore balance.

OTHER NOTABLE COMMENTS

* Learning NVC doesn't mean that you have to use it.

* It's possible to use NVC to beat yourself up and make judgments like "That's not NVC!"

- * It's true power when we're able to share what it is that we're really feeling
- * We gain power and autonomy by being able to express our feelings
- * Needs are Universal, but whenever specific people are connected to a need then it becomes a specific "strategy" for meeting that need. So people can be our "preferred strategies" for meeting needs, but they are not the only way to meet our needs
- * Our needs are never in conflict, it's the external strategies that conflict
- * Self-Empathy: Ask yourself, "Are you willing..."
- * Identifying the underlying needs has the capability of removing the loaded emotional charges from our "stories."
- * One surprising universal need is "Mourning our Limitations." We all have regrets and grief over our limitations, and it is better to recognize and honor this need. Otherwise if they are ignored and brushed underneath the rug, then it'll grow and manifest in other ways like rage or anger.
- * "Are you feeling X, because of your need for Y?"

FAUX FEELINGS THAT MASK PAINFUL FEELINGS

There are a number of "non-feelings" that are feelings that are mixed with judgments. These "Faux Feelings" tend to protect us from the feelings that we don't want to have by placing the blame onto others.

Some examples of "Non-Feelings":

Abandoned, abused, betrayed, blamed, cheated, criticized, ignored, insulted, intimidated, inadequate, invalidated, isolated, let down, manipulated, neglected, pressured, rejected, smothered, ridiculed, stupid, unimportant, untrusted, unwanted, used, violated, worthless, useless

WAYS THAT WE CAN BLOCK EMPATHY

Empathy and Compassion is the energetic glue for NVC. Here are some common pitfalls that block empathy:

- * Advising
- * One-Upping
- * Educating
- * Consuling
- * Storytelling
- * Shutting Down
- * Sympathizing
- * Interrogating
- * Explaining
- * Correcting

THE FOUR DIFFERENT CHOICES FOR HOW WE LISTEN

We can either Submit, Rebel, Express or Empathize.

Two of the options focus on your internal reaction and two of them focus on the other person's reaction.

Two of the options are the Naming and Blaming Jackal, and the other two are Giving and Receiving Giraffe.

1.) Submitting: Internalized Naming & Blaming (Jackal In)

Blame myself by believing any criticism and fall towards shame, guilt and depression.

2.) Rebelling: Externalized Naming & Blaming (Jackal Out)

Perceive that you're being judged and act defensively by attacking the other person because they're wrong

3.) Expressing Self-Empathy: Internalized Giving & Receiving (Giraffe In)

Checking in with your feelings and expressing them in the form of: "When I hear X, I feel Y because of my need for Z."

4.) Empathize: Externalized Giving & Receiving (Giraffe Out)

Empathetic Guess about the feeling that is pointing to an unmet need: "I'm wondering if you're feeling X because you have a need for Y?"

* Submitting and Rebelling are our habitual patterns that we're very accustomed to.

* The more that you practice #3 of Giraffe In, then the more that the Empathetic Guess will come and flow.