

Introduction to Nonviolent Communication™



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www.cascadiaworkshops.com



Nonviolent Communication (also known as NVC, Compassionate Communication, and Empowered Communication) is a way of speaking that facilitates the flow of communication needed to exchange information and resolve differences peacefully. It helps us identify our shared values and needs, encourages us to use language that increases goodwill, and avoid language that contributes to resentment or lowers self-esteem.

Nonviolent Communication focuses our attention on compassion as our motivation, rather than fear, guilt, blame, or shame. It emphasizes taking personal responsibility for our choices and improving the quality of our relationships as our goal. It is effective even when the other person or group is not familiar with this process.

Nonviolent Communication is based on the premise that:

- ✧ We are all simply trying to get our needs met.
- ✧ We fare better if we know how to get these needs met through cooperation rather than aggression.
- ✧ People naturally enjoy contributing to the well-being of others when they can do so willingly.

The Intent of Nonviolent Communication is to:

- ✧ Create more satisfying personal connections.
- ✧ Meet our needs in ways that honor and respect our values and the values of others.
- ✧ Heal from previous experiences and relationships that have been painful or unsuccessful.

With Nonviolent Communication Skills, You Can:

- ✧ Resolve feelings of anger, guilt, shame, fear, and frustration.
- ✧ Redirect anger or frustration toward coalition-building and cooperative outcomes.
- ✧ Create solutions based on safety, mutual respect, and consensus.
- ✧ Meet basic individual, family, school, community, and societal needs in life-serving ways.

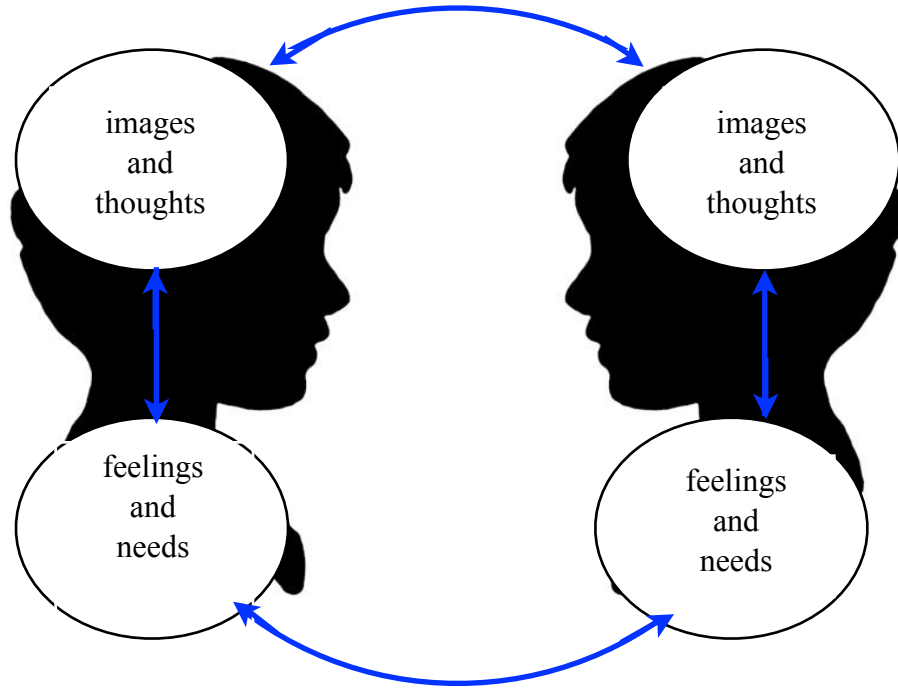
Adapted from *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion* by Marshall Rosenberg.

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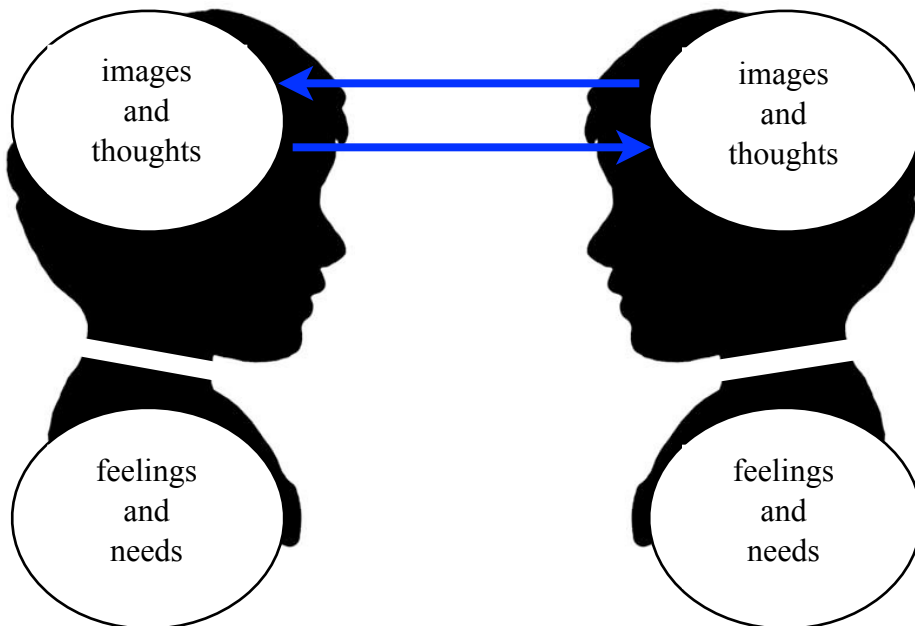
For a (no cost) video training series so that you can go deeper into this process, check out:
<http://BlackbeltCommunicationSkills.com>

How does NVC work?

Life-Connected Communication



Life-Alienated Communication



Inspired by Marshall Rosenberg

Characteristics of Life-Alienated Communication

Denial of Responsibility

One example of this characteristic would be using the phrase “have to.”
e.g. “There are certain things you have to do, whether you like to or not.”

Other examples consist of attributing responsibility for our actions to:

✪ Others’ actions:

“I hit my child because he/she ran into the street.”

✪ Vague and impersonal forces:

“I cleaned the house because it was necessary.”

✪ Our psychological condition or diagnosis, or our personal history:

“I drink because I am an alcoholic.”

✪ Authority’s demands:

“I lied to the client because it was the boss’s orders.”

✪ Group pressure:

“I started smoking because everyone else did.”

✪ Institutional policies, rules, and regulations:

“I give my students grades because that’s the school system’s policy.”

✪ Political, social, or age roles:

“I hate going to work, but I do it because I’m a husband and a father.”

✪ Uncontrollable impulses:

“I ate the whole box of candy because I just couldn’t resist.”

Criticism

This characteristic points out that which is wrong or bad about others who act in ways that are not in harmony with our values. This type of communication includes insults, accusations, diagnoses, and judgments.
e.g.: “What’s wrong with you is that you’re too ego-centered/lazy/insensitive/etc.

Demands

Within Nonviolent Communication, a demand is a request which, implicitly or explicitly, threatens with some form of blame or punishment if the request is not complied with.

Justifying Reward and Punishment

This language implies that some actions deserve to be rewarded and others, punished.
e.g. “He deserves to be punished for what he did.”

Coercion

Motivations that, if acted with, will most likely result in resentment, disconnection, or conflict. If you do anything for someone, or someone does something for you, with any of the following energies, there is a high cost to the relationship:

Fear
Guilt
Shame
Duty/Obligation
Reward
Punishment
“Should”
“Have to”
“Ought”

Some Notes on Jackal Language

The Ways of the Jackal Voices (A Partial List)

The jackal voices may be aimed at yourself or other people. They can hurt us and hurt our relationships. If you listen, you can hear them in everyday exchanges between people. They all convey “you” messages that have obvious or hidden judgments.

1. Accusing
2. Blaming
3. Criticizing
4. Questioning, interrogating, probing-out of our needs, not receiver’s needs
5. Advising, giving solutions or suggestions when not requested
6. Moralizing, preaching, exhorting
e.g. “You should, ought...”
7. Explaining, lecturing, teaching, giving logical reasonable arguments
8. Name-calling, ridiculing, shaming, joking
9. Ordering, directing, commanding
10. Demanding
11. Reassuring, sympathizing, consoling, supporting – out of our own needs, not receiver’s needs
12. Warning, admonishing, threatening
13. Praising, agreeing, approving (especially when intention is manipulation or “getting our way”)
14. Ignoring
15. Labeling
e.g. “He’s just a weirdo,” “You are a good hostess.”
16. Categorizing, comparing, generalizing
e.g. “That’s just like...”
17. Withdrawing, distracting, humoring, diverting
e.g. Pouting, not responding to other’s requests, or words, or actions
“It’s not as bad as all that.” “Why don’t you just think about something nice.”
18. Interpreting, analyzing, diagnosing, psychologizing
e.g. “You’re saying that to bug me.” “You really don’t believe all that” “You feel that way because you’re not doing well in school.”

What To Do With Jackal Voices

1. Name them (Just recognize one when you hear it)
2. Claim them (Acknowledge as your own when you are jackaling)
3. Retain them (help the jackal quiet down)
4. Tame them (Give the jackals empathy so you can find out what you or other persons are really wanting and/or feeling)

Original handout by Carrie Howley, inspired by Dr. Marshall Rosenberg, adapted by Alan Seid

“FIX-IT LANGUAGE”

Fix-It language, sometimes called “chicken-soup,” is advice or help oriented around *my* ideas of what’s good for the listener, rather than tuned to what the listener wants. It is advice given without *first* determining (a) if it is a form of help the listener wants right then, and (b) whether or not I am giving it because *I* want to give help or because they want it. Even if the advice is sound or perceptive, such fix-it language is rarely healing or helpful because the listener usually needs empathy and understanding, not advice, and can build his own solutions once he gets empathy.

COMMON VARIATIONS OF FIX-IT LANGUAGE

Things could be a lot worse.

No pain, no gain.

You’re absolutely right, those bureaucrats are impossible; you might as well forget it.

Don’t worry, it’s going to be alright.

Well, you could use up your savings to have your car’s motor rebuilt, and *then* apply for welfare.

That happens to nearly everyone at one time or another.

Why don’t you just quit! You deserve better than that and shouldn’t put up with it.

Well, what can you expect with all those _____’s running the place?

You should hang in there. After _____ things will change and improve.

Look at the bright side, Sue, some people were allergic to your cat anyhow.

What do you expect from him, he’s:

“Fix-It” Language
combined with evaluative
language.

a businessman.

a knee-jerk Liberal.

a straight-shooter.

a family man.

from the wrong side of the tracks.

worrying about his own family.

NEW-AGE VARIATIONS OF FIX-IT LANGUAGE

You must have created that for some reason.

This is just your karma and nothing to be ashamed of.

Oh, you have to learn to let go of your fears.

This is a wonderful opportunity to practice letting go of your judgments.

Well, if you would meditate on that, I’m sure you would find a solution.

You need to trust the universe more.

You need to get out of that poverty consciousness.

A star is best seen at night. (Said in response to a person saying, “*My days are dark with pain.*”)

Look at what you have left, not at what you’ve lost.

What do you expect from her, she’s:

New-Age Fix-It
language, combined
with New-Age
evaluative language.

a Capricorn.

a left-brained person.

a visual-learner.

an unenlightened being.

an adult-child-of-an-alcoholic.

a very old soul.

a devotee.

was abused as a child.

Suffering from zinc, vitamin-C, spirulina, and ____ deficiency.
only reflecting your own consciousness back to you.

FAUX-FEELINGS

“I FEEL LIKE YOU’RE EXPRESSING A THOUGHT”

Oftentimes we use the words “I feel” and then follow them with words that express what we’re thinking rather than what we’re feeling. Below are examples of common expressions describing thoughts instead of feelings.

WE EXPRESS WHAT WE THINK OTHERS ARE DOING TO US, SUCH AS, “I feel....”

~ignored	~abandoned	~misunderstood
~betrayed	~disrespected	~let-down
~put-down	~disliked	~mistrusted

There are many more that fit this category. See if you can identify others.

WE EXPRESS WHAT WE THINK WE ARE OR WHAT WE THINK OTHERS THINK WE ARE, SUCH AS, “I feel....”

~incapable	~unworthy	~unlikable
~smart	~ugly	~lovable
~competent	~beautiful	~inadequate

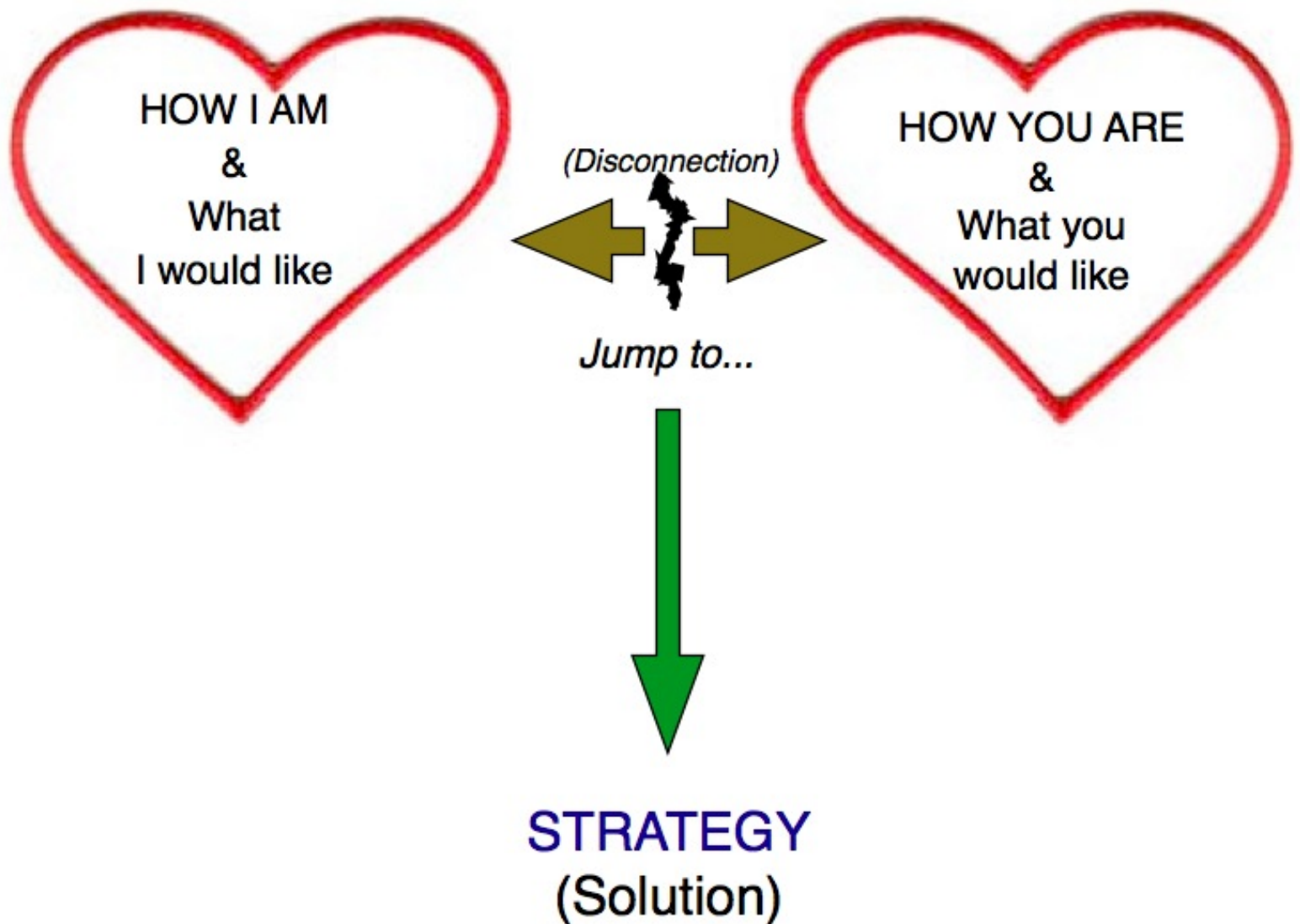
Again, there are many more of these. Notice your use of them.

WE ALSO EXPRESS OUR THOUGHTS, INTERPRETATIONS, AND PERCEPTIONS, BY USING THE FOLLOWING WORDS AFTER “I feel”:

~ <u>that</u> (you don’t care)	~ <u>as if</u> (she doesn’t like me)
~ <u>as though</u> (I’m the only responsible one)	~ <u>like</u> (he’s invading my space)
~ <u>you</u> (are too quiet)	~ <u>I</u> (don’t get enough respect)

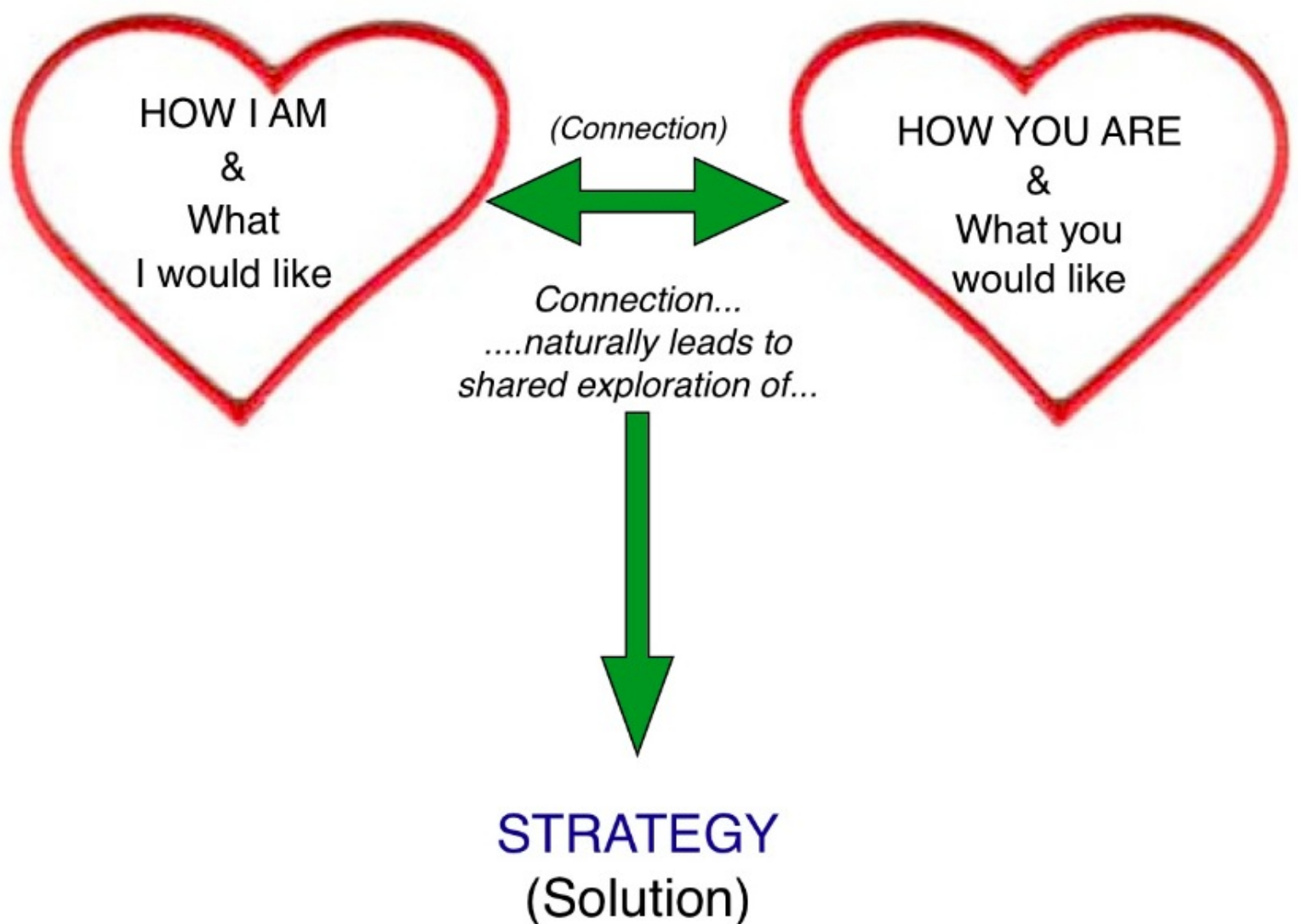
When we express our thoughts in place of our feelings, we decrease the likelihood that we, or others, will respond compassionately to our needs.

The Most Overlooked Insight to Preventing and Resolving Conflicts, Part 1: What NOT to do



Check your tendency to jump to fixing or solving before a connection is established.

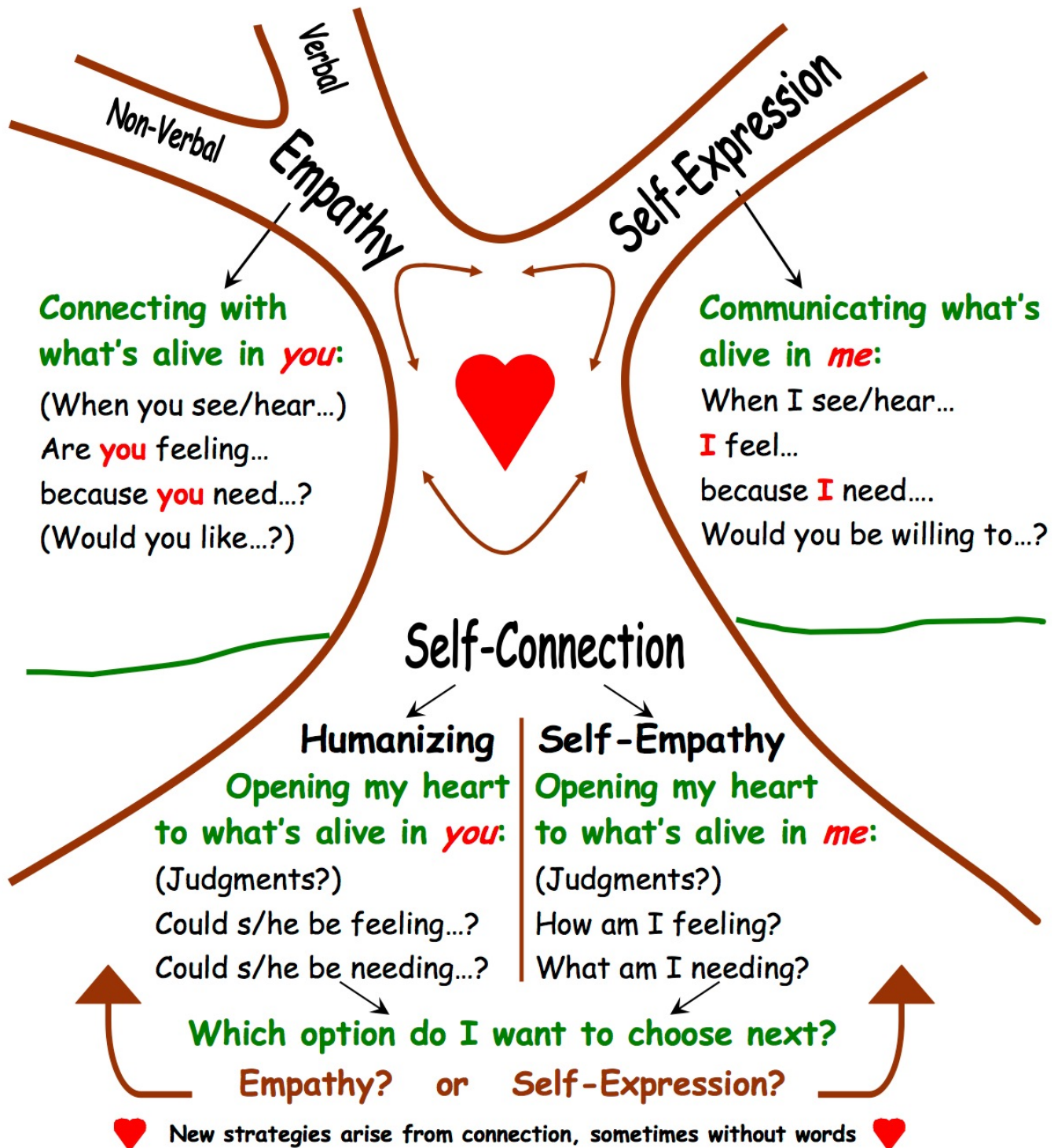
The Most Overlooked Insight to Preventing and Resolving Conflicts, Part 2: What *to* do



Create a connection first. Fixing or solving will be more effective after all the needs are clear.

The NVC Tree of Life

Three Focus Options for Connection



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Embodied Self-Connection Process

- 1) Situation:** What is a situation you'd like to explore or transform? It could be a challenge or a celebration related to someone else, yourself, or a life situation.
- 2) Observations:** What is a specific event that happened in relation to this situation? Describe in factual terms a thing that someone else (or you) did or said.
- 3) Beliefs:** What thoughts do you have in relation to this situation? These beliefs often take the form of statements like: "He is such a _____!"; "She is too _____!"; "I'm not _____ enough!"; "I'm so _____!"; "They should _____!"; "The world is _____!"
- 4) Body Sensations:** When you think of this situation, what body sensations do you notice? Breathe fully and feel these body sensations. (If you are doing this practice with a listener, the listener can verbally reflect back to you the body sensations you identify.)
- 5) Feelings:** When you think of this situation, what feelings do you notice? Breathe fully and feel these feelings. (The listener can verbally repeat back to you the feelings.)
- 6) Needs:** When you think of this situation, what values/needs are you longing for or appreciating? Breathe fully and notice what sensations accompany these needs. (The listener can reflect back the needs and body sensations identified.)
- 7) Requests:** From this connection with your needs, what would you like to do next or request of yourself or someone else?

Original Handout by Karl Steyaert, CNVC Certified Trainer, findflow.org
Adapted by Alan Seid

FEELINGS INVENTORY

This is not intended as the comprehensive and definitive list, but rather as a good starting point.

Feelings likely to be experienced when our needs are being fulfilled

♦ Absorbed ♦ Adventurous ♦ Affectionate ♦ Alert ♦ Alive ♦ Amazed ♦ Amused ♦ Animated ♦ Appreciative
 ♦ Aroused ♦ Astonished
 ♦ Blissful ♦ Breathless ♦ Buoyant
 ♦ Calm ♦ Carefree ♦ Cheerful ♦ Comfortable ♦ Complacent ♦ Composed ♦ Concerned ♦ Confident
 ♦ Contented ♦ Cool ♦ Curious
 ♦ Dazzled ♦ Delighted
 ♦ Eager ♦ Ecstatic ♦ Effervescent ♦ Elated ♦ Electrified ♦ Encouraged ♦ Energetic ♦ Engrossed ♦ Enlivened
 ♦ Enthusiastic ♦ Excited ♦ Exhilarated ♦ Expansive ♦ Expectant ♦ Exultant
 ♦ Fascinated ♦ Free ♦ Friendly ♦ Fulfilled
 ♦ Gay ♦ Glad ♦ Gleeful ♦ Glorious ♦ Glowing ♦ Good-humored ♦ Grateful ♦ Gratified ♦ Groovy
 ♦ Happy ♦ Helpful ♦ Hopeful
 ♦ Inquisitive ♦ Inspired ♦ Intense ♦ Interested ♦ Intrigued ♦ Invigorated ♦ Involved ♦ Joyous ♦ Joyful ♦ Jubilant
 ♦ Key-up ♦ Loving ♦ Mellow ♦ Merry ♦ Mirthful ♦ Moved
 ♦ Optimistic ♦ Overjoyed ♦ Overwhelmed ♦ Peaceful ♦ Pleasant ♦ Proud ♦ Quiet
 ♦ Radiant ♦ Rapturous ♦ Refreshed ♦ Relieved
 ♦ Satisfied ♦ Secure ♦ Sensitive ♦ Spellbound ♦ Splendid ♦ Stimulated ♦ Surprised
 ♦ Tender ♦ Thankful ♦ Thrilled ♦ Touched ♦ Tranquil ♦ Trusting ♦ Warm ♦ Wide-awake ♦ Wonderful ♦ Zestful

Feelings likely to be experienced when our needs are not being fulfilled

♦ Afraid ♦ Aggravated ♦ Agitated ♦ Alarmed ♦ Aloof ♦ Angry ♦ Anguished ♦ Animosity ♦ Annoyed ♦ Anxious
 ♦ Apathetic ♦ Apprehensive ♦ Aroused ♦ Averse
 ♦ Beat ♦ Bitter ♦ Blah ♦ Blue ♦ Bored ♦ Breathless ♦ Brokenhearted
 ♦ Chagrined ♦ Cold ♦ Concerned ♦ Confused ♦ Cool ♦ Cross
 ♦ Dejected ♦ Depressed ♦ Despair ♦ Despondent ♦ Detached ♦ Disappointed ♦ Discouraged ♦ Disgruntled
 ♦ Disgusted ♦ Disheartened ♦ Dislike ♦ Dismayed ♦ Displeased ♦ Disquieted ♦ Distressed ♦ Disturbed
 ♦ Downcast ♦ Downhearted ♦ Dread ♦ Dull
 ♦ Edgy ♦ Embarrassed ♦ Embittered ♦ Exasperated ♦ Exhausted ♦ Fatigued ♦ Fearful ♦ Fidgety ♦ Forlorn
 ♦ Frightened ♦ Frustrated ♦ Furious
 ♦ Gloomy ♦ Grief ♦ Guilty
 ♦ Hate ♦ Heavy ♦ Helpless ♦ Hesitant ♦ Horrified ♦ Horrible ♦ Hostile ♦ Hot ♦ Humdrum ♦ Hurt
 ♦ Impatient ♦ Indifferent ♦ Inert ♦ Intense ♦ Irrate ♦ Irked ♦ Irritated
 ♦ Jealous ♦ Jittery
 ♦ Keyed-up ♦ Lassitude ♦ Lazy ♦ Lethargic ♦ Listless ♦ Lonely
 ♦ Mad ♦ Mean ♦ Melancholic ♦ Miserable ♦ Mopey ♦ Nervous ♦ Nettled ♦ Overwhelmed
 ♦ Passive ♦ Perplexed ♦ Pessimistic ♦ Puzzled ♦ Rancorous ♦ Reluctant ♦ Repelled ♦ Resentful ♦ Restless
 ♦ Sad ♦ Scared ♦ Sensitive ♦ Shaky ♦ Shocked ♦ Skeptical ♦ Sleepy ♦ Sorrowful ♦ Sorry ♦ Sour ♦ Spiritless ♦ Startled
 ♦ Surprised ♦ Suspicious
 ♦ Tepid ♦ Terrified ♦ Tired ♦ Troubled ♦ Uncomfortable ♦ Unconcerned ♦ Uneasy ♦ Unglued ♦ Unhappy
 ♦ Unnerved ♦ Unsteady ♦ Upset ♦ Uptight
 ♦ Vexed ♦ Weary ♦ Withdrawn ♦ Woeful ♦ Worried ♦ Wretched

Inspired by Marshall B. Rosenberg

NEEDS INVENTORY

This is not intended as the comprehensive and definitive list, but rather as a good starting point.

Autonomy

To choose one's dreams, goals, values

To choose one's plans for fulfilling one's dreams, goals, values

Celebration

To celebrate the creation of life

To celebrate the loss of life (mourning)

Integrity

Authenticity

Meaning

Creativity

Interdependence

Acceptance

Appreciation

Closeness

Consideration

Contribution to the enrichment of life (to exercise one's power by giving that which contributes to life)

Empathy

Honesty (the empowering honesty that enables us to learn from our limitations)

Love

Reassurance

Respect

Support

Trust

Warmth

Physical Nurturance

Air

Food

Movement, Exercise

Protection from life-threatening forms of life: viruses, bacteria, insects, predatory animals (especially human beings)

Rest

Sexual Expression

Shelter

Touch

Water

Play

Spiritual Communion

Beauty

Harmony

Inspiration

Order

Peace

Inspired by Marshall B. Rosenberg

Statements for Guessing Feelings and Needs

1. "Why vote? You politicians are all a bunch of crooks."
2. "Being cared for by you is worse than being destitute. I'd rather be homeless."
3. "You never write or call me."
4. "After all those psych courses you took, you'd think you'd know how I feel and what I'm going through! But you don't have a clue do you?!"
5. "I can't believe I married such a nutcase!"
6. "We need to ship you immigrants back to where you came from."
7. "This is the third time in a month you've asked for a sick day. If all my employees did that how do you think we'd get anything done around here?"
8. "Not another twenty thousand pages of this stupid homework!"
9. "I wish you wouldn't just waste your life away."
10. "I just don't think I'll ever be able to do this right."
11. "I can't stand your sarcasm."
12. "Living with you is like living with a rock."
13. "Mom and Dad, you guys never let me do anything."
14. "I can't believe I bought this gadget from you yesterday and it's already broken!"
15. "You're a parasite!"

Listening with Empowered Communication

- **OBSERVATION**

optional: ("When you [see, hear, etc]...)

- **FEELING**

"Are you feeling _____ ...

- **NEED**

"because you have a need for _____?"
(or, "because you value _____?")

- **REQUEST**

optional: ("...and you would like me to _____?")

*Some notes about empathy:

What empathy is:

- Defined as a respectful or compassionate understanding
- Has a quality of being completely present with what is alive in the other person *at this moment*
- Has a quality of *following* instead of *leading*
- We *guess* how the other person is, with the intention of connection and understanding

What empathy is not:

- Sympathy ("I feel your pain. I've been there.")
- Suggestions ("Let me tell you what I think you should do...")
- Fixing or resolving things ("Daddy will buy you a new one!")
- Investigation ("When was the first time you felt this way?")
- Diagnosing ("This is because you're an [egomaniac, Aries, etc.]")
- Honesty ("When I hear what you're saying I feel upset...")

Expressing with Empowered Communication

- **OBSERVATION**

"When I (see, hear, think of) _____ ...

- **FEELING**

"I feel _____ ...

- **NEED**

"because I have a need for _____ ...

- **REQUEST**

"so would you be willing to _____?"

*NOTE, it is important to:

- distinguish between **OBSERVATIONS** and **EVALUATIONS**.
- distinguish between **FEELINGS** and **FAUX-FEELINGS**.
- distinguish between **NEEDS** and **STRATEGIES**.
- distinguish between **REQUESTS** and **DEMANDS**.

Some notes about **specific, do-able, present-moment, positive action requests:

1) Connecting requests:

a) *Requesting empathy or understanding*

"Could you tell me what you heard me say?"

b) *Requesting honesty*

"Could you tell me what comes up for you when you hear that?"

(or, "Could you tell me how you feel about what I just said?")

c) *Clarification*

"Could you tell me if you heard any blame, criticism, judgment or demand in what I've just said?"

2) Strategy requests: requesting a particular action

"Would you be willing to bring me a glass of water?"

Exercises for each of the 4 NVC components

Exercise I: Observations

Do the statements below contain observations, evaluations or both?

- 1- My brother talks too much.
- 2- I strongly dislike it when you always raise your voice at me for no reason.
- 3- I see you being cynical and disconnected.
- 4- My husband never mows the lawn.
- 5- You didn't call on me when I raised my hand in the meeting.

Exercise II: Feelings

Identify the statements below in which feelings are clearly expressed.

- 1- I love when you hug me.
- 2- I'm sad.
- 3- You gross me out.
- 4- When I hear you say that, I feel like hitting you.
- 5- I feel abandoned and rejected.

(4 NVC components, exercises, cont'd.)

Exercise III: Needs

Practice distinguishing needs by identifying the statements below in which the speaker is taking responsibility for their own feelings.

- 1- I'm sad and disappointed because I need you to love me more.
- 2- I'm irritated because I'm needing respect and equality.
- 3- Little things people say sometimes hurt me.
- 4- I'm scared and need understanding from you right now.
- 5- I'm feeling a bit disappointed because I was wishing I had been more productive by now.

Exercise IV: Requests

Identify the statements below in which specific, do-able, positive-action-language, present requests are expressed.

- 1- Would you be willing to always do the dishes?
- 2- Can you give me a back massage right now?
- 3- Can't you see what you're doing?!?
- 4- Would you be willing to agree to give me more space in this relationship?
- 5- Roger, I'd like that report in by five tomorrow morning. Can you agree to do it?

Expressing Appreciation

Three Components of Giraffe Appreciation (may be expressed in any order)

1. The action or words that contributed to your well-being.
2. The need which was fulfilled when the other person did or said the above.
3. Your pleasurable feeling in response to the fulfilled need.

“I am thrilled to see you kids spending your weekend creating this mural. It means so much to me when people work together to make our neighborhood beautiful like this!”

Compare to:

- a. “You kids are good workers!”
- b. “That is a beautiful mural.”
- c. “Thank you for doing that.”

Practice

Think of someone who has done something to contribute to your wellbeing. What did they do? What need of yours was (or is) being fulfilled? How do you feel in relationship to that fulfillment?

Receiving Appreciation

Now imagine you have expressed all three pieces of your appreciation to that person. How would you wish them to respond?

- (a) “You’re welcome.”
- (b) “Oh, it was nothing.”
- (c) With Giraffe honesty and empathy: “_____.”

Inspired by Lucy Leu

About Alan Seid

I began studying under Dr. Marshall Rosenberg, Ph.D., in 1995. I learned most of my Nonviolent Communication directly from Dr. Rosenberg (whom I also refer to informally as Marshall), although I have studied with many trainers also trained by him.

My first opportunity to teach NVC - and to mediate a conflict using it - was in 1998. The following year I attended a 10-day International Intensive Training (IIT) followed immediately by a trip to Colombia, South America to serve as Marshall's Spanish interpreter for 10 days.

This was the same year (1999) that the Executive Director of the international Center for Nonviolent Communication asked me to consider certification as a trainer, which I completed in 2003.

In addition to producing hundreds of workshops for the general public, I have worked with clients in the academic, government, nonprofit, and business sectors.

I work primarily with *positive change agents* - people who are committed to making the world a better place and themselves better people - so that they can make their biggest contribution and craft their dream life.

I have expertise in several areas besides NVC, including Permaculture Design, Financial Integrity (*Your Money or Your Life*), the 8-Shields Model (*Art of Mentoring*), Integral Sustainability, and a few tools under the umbrella of "visioning and manifesting."

You can access a **Free Video Training Series** at BlackbeltCommunicationSkills.com. After the free training videos you have an opportunity to see if the *Blackbelt Communication Skills Coaching Program* is for you.

To learn more about the *Blackbelt Communication Skills Online Program*, which was created to offer the entire NVC curriculum, beginner to intermediate to advanced, in a way that supports multiple learning modalities and offers a learning community, see <http://bit.ly/BlackbeltNVC>.

You can also find out more about me and my work at CascadiaWorkshops.com.



Photo: Ariana Seid