

Needs-Based Communication A Language of Life

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is a process of communicating that significantly improves all relationships because it espouses a way of communicating that strengthens our emotional and social intelligence. The Nonviolent Communication (NVC) process is a 'needs-based' model of communicating created by Marshall Rosenberg. It holds that if you or someone else is upset, a deep need of yours/theirs is not being met. His seminal book on the technique is called *Nonviolent Communication, A Language of Life*.

Emotional Intelligence is the ability be in control of our emotions, and understand from where they arise.

Social Intelligence is to be empathetic, and aware of other people's energy, and how this energy interacts with others, and how to effect group energy.

The 4 components of NVC: Observations Feelings Needs Requests

The 2 parts of NVC:
1) Expressing honestly through the 4 components.
2) Receiving empathically through the four components.

The Process

The concrete actions we **observe** that affect our well-being

How we **feel** in relation to what we observe

The **needs**, values, desires, etc. that create our feelings

The concrete actions we **request** in order to enrich our lives

Step 1: Observing

For most, it is difficult to make observations, especially of people and their behavior, that are free of judgment, criticism, evaluation, or other forms of analysis. People often mix up observing with evaluating. "John talks too much" is an evaluation, where as "During the last meeting, John told 3 personal stories" is an observation. The first step in NVC is observing, not evaluating.

Step 2: Identifying & Expressing Feelings

Most people are not adept at expressing feelings, and often times are actually expressing thoughts, instead of how they feel. A common confusion, generated by the English language is our use of the word 'feel' without actually expressing a feeling. "I feel like a failure." "I feel Amy slighted me..." "I feel like they should know better..." etc.

Second step is distinguishing what we are feeling, from what we are thinking. Of the 4 ways to respond, 3 & 4 are imperative for NVC.

4 ways to respond to a negative message:

- 1) Blame ourselves
- 2) Blame others
- 3) Sense our own feelings & needs**
- 4) Sense others' feelings & needs**

Step 3: Identify the Need or Value that is not being met

Judgements, criticisms, diagnoses, and interpretations of others are all alienated expressions of our needs. The moment people begin talking about their needs rather than what's wrong with one another, the possibility of finding ways to meet everyone's needs is greatly increased.

Here are some basic human needs we all share:

Autonomy Integrity Celebration Interdependence Play Physical Nurturance

Step 4: Clearly Requesting that which would Enrich our lives without demanding

Use positive language. Saying "I don't want you to do this or that," is not stating what you would like, but what you would not like someone to do. Making requests in clear, positive, concrete action language reveals what we really want, while vague language contributes to internal, & external confusion.

Exercise: Think of a time you weren't getting along with someone, what needs were not being met?

In Conclusion

I promise, that if you use NVC, you will be able to see through drama and misunderstandings, and see the root of your, and anyone else's distress. I have not had drama or an argument with anyone for over 10 years. Another book that is very helpful in reaching that end, is 'The 4 Agreements' & habitually practicing meditation. Every time I see someone having issues with anyone, I wish they knew about this process! It is extremely useful. I hope you find it helpful!

About Marshall Rosenberg

Marshall Rosenberg, creator of the Non-Violent Communication process, pioneered it in the 1960s, using it in federally funded school integration programs to provide mediation & communication skills training. The Center for Nonviolent Communication now has hundreds of certified NVC trainers and supporters teaching NVC in more than sixty countries around the globe. His book has been translated in more than 30 languages. The NVC process has and is being used with educators, managers, peacemakers, health care providers, lawyers, prisoners, police, government officials, & individual families. He very much believed that humans are naturally compassionate, but have been conditioned away from this compassion. In his studies, he was struck by the crucial role of language and our use of words in remaining compassionate.

"Most of us have been educated from birth to compete, judge, demand, and diagnose-to think and communicate in terms of what is "right" and "wrong" with people. At best, communicating and thinking this way can create misunderstanding and frustration. At worst, it can lead to anger, depression, and even emotional or physical violence." -Marshall Rosenberg

"NVC guides us in reframing how we express ourselves & hear others. Instead of habitual, automatic reactions, our words become conscious responses based firmly on awareness of what we are perceiving, feeling, and wanting." -Marshall Rosenberg