

# Compassionate Communication/Nonviolent Communication (NVC)

## One Purpose:

1. To create the quality of connection among people that supports getting needs met through natural giving.

## Two Questions:

1. What is alive in me/you?
2. How can we contribute to making our lives more wonderful?

## Three Choices/Modalities:

1. Self-empathy
2. Empathy for others
3. Honest expression

## Four Parts of the Model of Nonviolent Communication

1. Observations
2. Feelings
3. Needs
4. Requests

## Key Assumptions of NVC

1. **Universality of Human Needs:** We all have the same needs. Where we differ from each other is in our strategies to meet needs. Conflicts occur at the level of strategies, not needs.
2. **Feelings Result from Needs Being Met or Unmet:** Our feelings are directly related to our needs. When our needs are met, we feel happy, satisfied, excited, etc. When our needs are not met, we feel sad, scared, angry, etc.
3. **All Actions are Attempts to Meet Needs:** Our actions are motivated by a desire *to* meet *needs*. We would *prefer* to meet needs in ways that don't harm others if we recognize a path of action that will also meet our own needs. Even when we resort to violence, we are still *attempting to* meet needs, however tragically.
4. **Compassion:** When human beings live from a place of compassion toward themselves and one another, they are more likely to meet their needs and to make peace.
5. **Natural Giving:** Natural giving is giving by choice, joyfully, and not giving through force, expectation, rules or compromise. Human beings inherently enjoy contributing to others, and will often choose to give what we are asked provided that we trust it is our *choice* to do so.
6. **Sufficiency:** Though in individual situations it sometimes appears that there isn't enough to meet everyone's needs, there is no inherent scarcity in the world for meeting everyone's basic needs. Dialogue and connection greatly contribute to our long-term ability to meet more people's needs more peacefully.

# Key Intentions when Using Nonviolent Communication

We hold the following intentions when using *NVC* because we believe that they help us contribute to a world where everyone's needs are attended to peacefully.

1. **Taking Responsibility for Our Feelings:** We aim to move away from blaming ourselves or others for our feelings, by connecting our feelings to our own needs. This recognition empowers us to take action to meet our needs instead of waiting for others to change.
2. **Taking Responsibility for Our Actions:** We aim to recognize our choice in each moment, and take action based on seeing how that action would meet our needs: we aim to move away from taking action based on fear, guilt, shame, desire for reward, or any ideas that "we should" or "we have to".
3. **Prioritizing Connection:** We aim to focus on connection instead of immediate solutions, and to trust that connecting with our own and others' needs is more likely to lead to strategies that meet everyone's needs.
4. **Caring Equally for Everyone's Needs:** We aim to make requests and not demands; when hearing a "No" to our request, or when saying "NO" to another's request, we aim to work towards solutions that meet everyone's *needs*, not just our own, and not just the other person's.
5. **Expressing from the Heart:** When expressing ourselves, we aim to speak from the heart, expressing our feelings and needs, and making specific, do-able requests rather than demands.
6. **Hearing with Empathy:** When we hear others, we aim to hear the feelings and needs behind their expressions, even when they express judgments or demands.
7. **Beyond "Right" and "Wrong":** We aim to focus on whether or not human needs are being met instead of on "right" and "wrong" assessments. This enables greater self-understanding and deeper compassion for all human beings, whether or not we agree with them, and paves the road to peace.
8. **Protective Use of Force:** We aim to use force only to protect, not to punish others or get our way without the other's agreement and only in situations where dialogue was not sufficient to meet immediate needs for safety. We aim to return to dialogue as soon as safety is re-established.

# Nonviolent Communication Quick Reference Guide

**Observations:** Description of what is seen or heard without added interpretations. For example: instead of “She’s having a temper tantrum,” you could say “She is lying on the floor crying and kicking.” If referring to what someone said quote as much as possible instead of rephrasing.

**Feelings:** Our emotions rather than our story or thoughts about what others are doing. For example: instead of “I feel manipulated,” which includes an interpretation of another’s behavior, you could say “I feel uncomfortable.” Avoid the following phrasing: “I feel like...” and “I feel that...” - the next words will be thoughts, not feelings.

**Needs:** Feelings are caused by needs, which are universal and ongoing and not dependent on the actions of particular individuals. State *your* need rather than the other person’s actions as the cause. For example, “I feel annoyed *because* I need support” rather than “I feel annoyed *because you* didn’t do the dishes.”

**Requests:** Doable, immediate, and stated in positive action language (what you want instead of what you don’t want). For example, “Would you be willing to come back tonight at the time we’ve agreed?” rather than “Would you make sure not to be late again?” By definition, when we make requests we are open to hearing a “no,” taking it as an opportunity for further dialogue.

**Empathy:** In NVC, we empathize with others by guessing their feelings and needs. Instead of trying to “get it right,” we aim to understand. The observation and request are often dropped. When words are not wanted or are hard to offer, empathy can be offered silently.

**Self -Empathy:** In self-empathy, we listen inwardly to connect with our own feelings and needs. It is that connection which enables us to choose our next step.

**Honest Expression:** In honest expression, we state what we have seen/heard, what feeling is triggered by our observation, what met or unmet need causes that feeling, and if we have any request to help get our needs met.

Expression	Empathy
Observation <b><i>When I see/hear...</i></b>	[Observation] <b><i>[When you see/hear...]</i></b>
Feeling <b><i>I feel...</i></b>	Feeling <b><i>Are you feeling...</i></b>
Need <b><i>Because I need...</i></b>	Need <b><i>Because you need...</i></b>
Request <b><i>Would you be willing to...?</i></b>	[Request] <b><i>[Would you like...?</i></b>

# UNIVERSAL HUMAN NEEDS

Key distinction: need vs. strategy.

Strategies refer to specific methods used (actions, people, timing) in seeking to get needs met.

<u>Connection</u>	<u>Interconnection</u>	<u>Competence</u>	<u>Peace</u>	<u>Honesty</u>
Acceptance	Belonging	Effectiveness	Beauty	Authenticity
Affection	Consideration	Efficiency	Ease	Integrity
Appreciation	Community	Grow th	Harmony	
Clarity	Cooperation	Learning	Order	<u>Basic Survival</u>
Communication	Dignity	Power	Wholeness	Shelter
Confirmation	Mutuality			Food & Water
Intimacy	Support	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Celebration</u>	Rest
Love		Contribution	Joy	Safety
Understanding	<u>Autonomy</u>	Creativity	Mourning	Security
	Choice	Hope	Play	Sexual Expression
	Space	Inspiration		Touch
	Spontaneity	Purpose		

# FEELINGS & EMOTIONS

Key distinction: feelings vs. feelings in “disguise”: interpretations (I feel attacked/misunderstood/etc), thoughts (I feel like ..., I feel that..); labels ( I feel smart/stupid/etc/).

## When needs are met:

Adventurous	Content	Fascinated	Interested	Relaxed
Affectionate	Curious	Friendly	Joyful	Satisfied
Alive	Delighted	Glad	Loving	Tender
Appreciative	Energetic	Grateful	Moved	Thrilled
Calm	Engaged	Happy	Peaceful	Warm
Confident	Excited	Hopeful	Playful	Wonder

## When needs are not met:

Agitated	Disconnected	Helpless	Protective	Uneasy
Alarmed	Discouraged	Hopeless	Restless	Vulnerable
Ambivalent	Dread	Hurt	Sad	Wary
Angry*	Embarrassed	Impatient	Scared	Withdraw n
Annoyed	Exasperated	Irritated	Stressed	Worried
Anxious	Flustered	Lonely	Suspicious	Yearning
Apprehensive	Frustrated	Longing	Tense	
Confused	Guilt*	Nervous	Terrified	
Despairing	Grief	Overw helmed	Torn	
Devastated	Heartbroken	Panicked	Troubled	

\*Feelings of anger and guilt in particular have moralistic judgment mixed in with them and lack clarity about needs not met. With empathy those feelings often shift to other feelings such as sadness or fear.

# MAKING REQUESTS

Key distinctions: 1. request vs. demand 2. specific vs. vague 3. connection vs. action request

## Request or demand?

- Is my intention to give the other person/s an opportunity to contribute to my life, and to do so willingly?
- To check this intention, think about how you might respond if you hear a “no” to your request. If you are willing to hear a “no”, and to continue the dialogue in NVC spirit, then it is a request. This does not mean there might not be some pain involved in hearing a “no”, but rather the willingness to communicate that and continue connecting until everyone’s needs are met.

## Characteristics of requests:

- Present time (vs. future action)
- Concrete and specific (vs. vague or general)
- Positive action language (vs. negative - a “do” vs. a “don’t”)
- Doable (vs. abstract or asking for an attitude or intention)

## Connection requests:

- In any NVC dialogue, it is important to establish connection before we ask the other person for the solution that we would like. Connection in this sense means an understanding on the part of all parties of their own feelings and needs as well as the feelings and needs of the other/s involved. (Are all the needs on the table?)
- Until that connection is established, any solutions, agreements or strategies are unlikely to be freely given and therefore generally will not hold. Therefore, in the first few cycles of an NVC dialogue it is most important to use what we call connecting requests.
- Do you have a deep enough quality of connection to support the request you are making? **Connection before solution!!!**
- **Connection Request to be understood**
  - a. Would you be willing to tell me what you heard me say? (Was my message received and understood in the way I intended it?)
  - b. Would you be willing to listen to my experience (my feelings and needs)?
- **Connection Request to understand the other**
  - a. Would you be willing to tell me how you feel when you hear me say this? (To connect with the feelings and needs of the other/s in that moment)
  - b. Would you be willing to help me understand what happened here?
  - c. Would you be tell me what would help you feel confident that I understand?
  - d. Would you be willing to tell me what you need in order to agree to my request?
  - e. Would you tell me what you wished would have happened differently?

## Action Requests (also referred to as strategies or solutions)

- a. Would you be willing to brainstorm with me solutions that might work for the both of us?
- b. Would you be willing to (state specific action)?

## **HONEST EXPRESSION (OFNR)**

When I see/hear...

I feel...

Because I need...

Would you be willing to...

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Would you be willing to...