



Compassionate Communication: A Language of Peace

A Course Based on Nonviolent Communication: A
Language of Life, by Marshall Rosenberg

We gratefully acknowledge Marshall Rosenberg, Jeff Brown, Miki Kashtan and Inbal Kashtan, and our other teachers who have done much of the work underlying what I present in this course.

Presented by Bruce Campbell

ICL, Fall 2016

Agreements – The Ingredients of a Safe Environment

Confidentiality

We agree that what happens here stays here. We agree that no one will be identified as having said or done any particular thing to anyone outside of the class.

Respect

We agree that all contributions made by any class member shall be received with respect and compassion for the feelings and needs of all persons involved.

Choice

We agree that no member of the class need feel pressured to make any contribution whatsoever. Any person can simply say “pass” and this response will be received with respect by everyone.

Cross-talk

We agree that when someone is speaking, the others will not interrupt until that person signals that he or she is complete.

Electronic Etiquette

We agree to silence or turn off our electronic devices during class.

Coaching

We agree that the instructor may offer coaching, when it can be done in a respectful and constructive way, meeting the needs of all concerned, and when the person to be coached agrees to accept the coaching.



Principles of NVC

Our ideas about human nature shape our expectations of what is possible, the social structures we create, and how we interact with ourselves and other people. Therefore the assumptions we make can have a profound effect on the life we live and the world we collectively create.

Following are key assumptions upon which NVC practice is based. When we live based on these assumptions, self-connection and connection with others become increasingly possible and easy.

1. **All human beings share the same needs:** We all have the same needs, although the strategies we use to meet these needs may differ. Conflict occurs at the level of strategies, not at the level of needs.
2. **All actions are attempts to meet needs:** Our desire to meet needs, whether conscious or unconscious, underlies every action we take. We only resort to violence or other actions that do not meet our own or others' needs when we do not recognize more effective strategies for meeting needs.
3. **Feelings point to needs being met or unmet:** Feelings may be triggered but not caused by others. Our feelings arise directly out of our experience of whether our needs seem to us met or unmet in a given circumstance. Our assessment of whether or not our needs are met almost invariably involves an interpretation or belief. When our needs are met, we may feel happy, satisfied, peaceful, etc. When our needs are not met, we may feel sad, scared, frustrated, etc.
4. **The most direct path to peace is through self-connection:** Our capacity for peace is not dependent on having our needs met. Even when many needs are unmet, meeting our need for self-connection can be sufficient for inner peace.
5. **Choice is internal:** Regardless of the circumstances, we can meet our need for autonomy by making conscious choices based on awareness of needs.

6. **All human beings have the capacity for compassion:** We have an innate capacity for compassion, though not always the knowledge of how to access it. When we are met with compassion and respect for our autonomy, we tend to have more access to our own compassion for ourselves and for others. Growing compassion contributes directly to our capacity to meet needs peacefully.
7. **Human beings enjoy giving:** We inherently enjoy contributing to others when we have connected with our own and others' needs and can experience our giving as coming from choice.
8. **Human beings meet needs through interdependent relationships:** We meet many of our needs through our relationships with other people and with nature, though some needs are met principally through the quality of our relationship with ourselves and for some, with a spiritual dimension to life. When others' needs are not met, some needs of our own also remain unmet.
9. **Our world offers abundant resources for meeting needs:** When human beings are committed to valuing everyone's needs and have regained their skills for fostering connection and their creativity about sharing resources, we can overcome our current crisis of imagination and find ways to attend to everyone's basic needs.
10. **Human beings change:** Both our needs and the strategies we have to meet them change over time. Wherever we find ourselves and each other in the present, individually and collectively, all human beings have the capacity to grow and change.

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The Basics of Compassionate Communication

Compassionate Communication (or Non-Violent Communication) guides us in the reframing of how we express ourselves and hear others. Instead of habitual, automatic reactions, our words become conscious responses based firmly on awareness of what we are perceiving, feeling and longing for.

The four basic steps of NVC are listed on the left. Our habitual, automatic reactions are listed on the right.

1. Observations **or** Judgements

The observer is simply a camera. Observation is not a judgement, evaluation or criticism. It is a simple statement of fact.

2. Feelings **or** Thoughts

Feelings are emotions, not thoughts. It is useful to find the sensations of energy somewhere in your body; they are your feelings. Try not to think about your feelings, but actually to feel them.

3. Needs **or** Strategies

Needs are qualities of your authentic self which you share with all other human beings. They are the source of the energy which we call feelings. Needs are distinct from the strategies that we may use to get our needs met.

4. Requests **or** Demands

Requests use positive action language; they are couched in the present, they are concrete and specific, and they are doable. You know when you have made a request rather than a demand if you are totally OK if the request is refused.

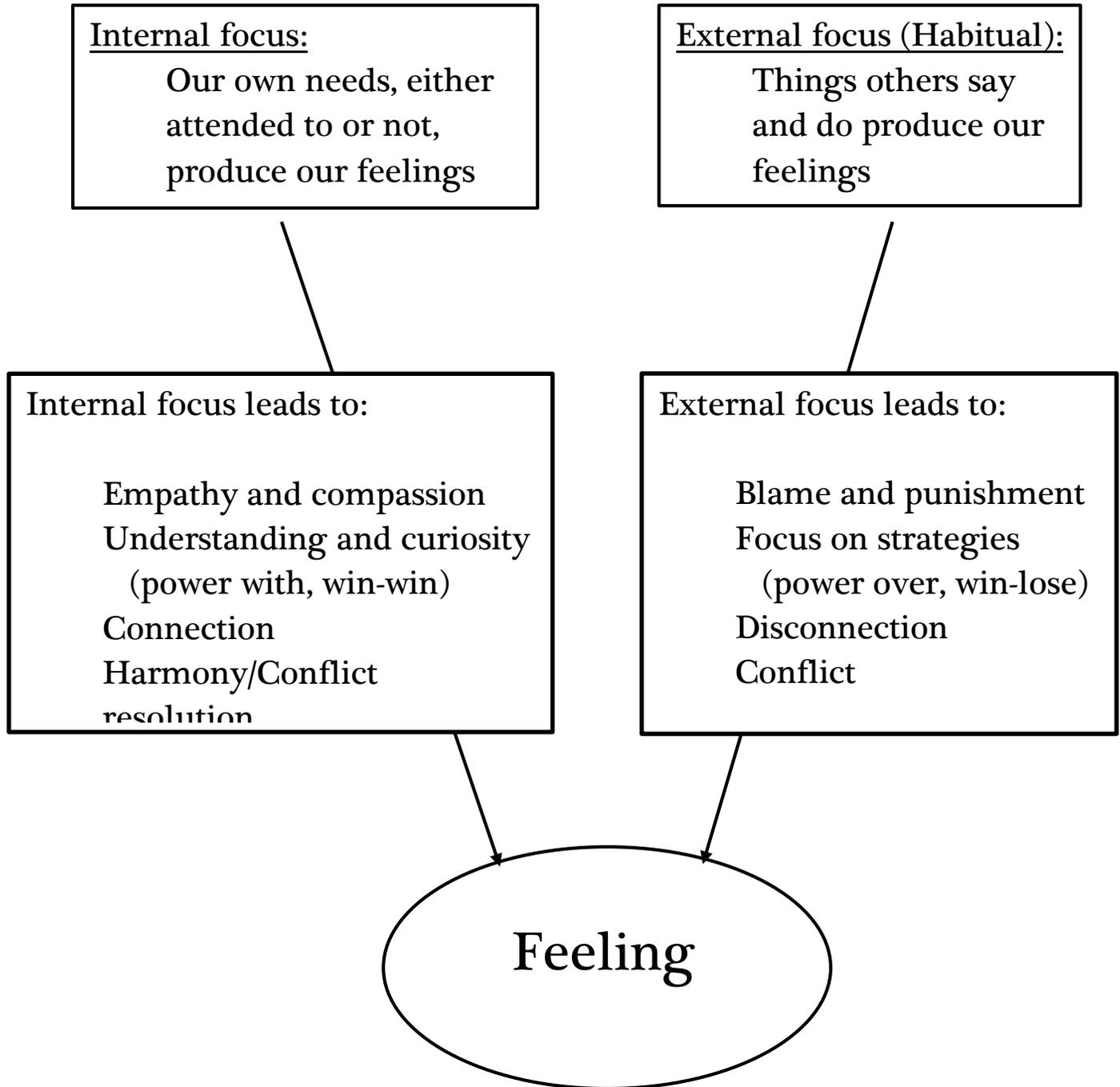
The energy of NVC operates in two ways:

To listen: we are present with compassion for the other, with no agenda of our own

To speak: we are willing to reveal our feelings and needs to the other

And most importantly, in NVC we are committed to bring the energy of resonant empathy both to our listening and to our speaking

Where Do Feelings Come From?



Feelings v. Thoughts (Key)

1. I feel you don't love me.

"Not in love with me" is not a feeling. It expresses what the speaker thinks the other person is feeling, rather than how the speaker is feeling. Instead: "I feel sad", or "I'm feeling anguished."

2. I am sad you are leaving.

3. I feel scared when you say that.

4. When you don't greet me, I feel neglected.

I don't consider "neglected" to be a feeling. It expresses what the person thinks the other person is doing to him or her, rather than how the speaker is feeling. Instead: "I feel disgusted".

5. I am happy that you can come.

6. You're disgusting.

"Disgusting" is not a feeling. It expresses how the speaker feels about the other person, rather than how the speaker is feeling. Instead: "I feel disgusted."

7. I feel like hitting you.

"Like hitting you" is not a feeling. It expressed what the speaker imagines doing, rather than how the speaker is feeling.

8. I feel misunderstood.

"Misunderstood" is not a feeling. It expresses what the speaker thinks the other person is doing. Instead: "I feel frustrated" or "I feel discouraged."

9. I feel good about what you did for me.

OK, but the word "good" is vague. We can use clearer words, such as "relieved" "gratified" or "encouraged."

10. I am worthless.

“Worthless” is not a feeling. It expresses how the speaker thinks about himself, rather than how the speaker is feeling. Instead: “I feel skeptical about my own talents” or “I feel wretched.”

11. I feel dismissed when no one at work responds to my suggestions.

I feel anxious when no one at work responds to my suggestions.

12. It feels completely incomprehensible how you can do such a thing.

I feel very puzzled about how you could do such a thing.

13. I'd be furious too if that had happened to me.

I feel concerned that this happened to you. I would have been furious if it had been me.

14. You're wearing me out.

I feel exhausted.

15. I feel independent, now that I have my own car and paycheck.

I feel pleased and proud to have my own car and paycheck.

16. I am flabbergasted to see her picture on the front page.

“Flabbergasted” expresses a feeling.

17. I feel you're annoying me on purpose.

I am upset because I think you are annoying me on purpose.

18. I feel displaced, with all this new technology coming in.

I feel worried and disheartened, with all this new technology coming in.

19. I feel I am being unkind to them.

I feel regret around how I am behaving toward them.

Taking Responsibility for Our Feelings (Key)

Keys:

1. Every feeling we experience is related to a need met or unmet. Identifying those needs is key to taking responsibility for our feelings.
2. Just stating the observation is not sufficient to acknowledge responsibility, because it still implies that what happened caused the feelings rather than the need met or unmet.
3. When we cannot identify our needs that are causing the feeling, we can still take responsibility by recognizing, owning and articulating the thoughts or images that lead to the feeling.
4. We can take full responsibility by shifting both the way we think and the way we express ourselves.

Indicate the cases in which the speaker is acknowledging responsibility for his or her feelings.

1. You irritate me when you leave company documents on the conference room floor.

If your circled this one, we are not in agreement. To me, the statement implies that the other person's behavior is solely responsible for the speaker's feelings. It doesn't reveal the needs or thoughts that are contributing to the speaker's feelings. To do so, the speaker might have said, "I'm irritated when you leave company documents on the conference room floor, because I want our documents to be safely stored and accessible."

2. I feel angry when you say that, because I am wanting respect and I hear your words as an insult



3. I feel frustrated when you come late.

To express the needs or thoughts underlying his or her feelings, the speaker might have said “I feel frustrated when you come late because I was hoping we’d be able to get some front-row seats.

4. I’m sad that you won’t be coming for dinner because I was hoping we could spend the evening together.

5. I feel disappointed because you said you would do it and you didn’t.

To express the needs and thoughts underlying his or her feelings, the speaker might have said “When you said you’d do it and then didn’t, I feel disappointed because I want to be able to rely upon your words.”

6. I’m discouraged because I would have like to have progressed further in my work by now.

7. Little things people say sometimes hurt me.

To express the needs and thoughts underlying his or her feelings, the speaker might have said, “Sometimes when people say little things, I feel hurt because I want to be appreciated, not criticized.”

8. I feel happy that you received that award.

To express the needs and thoughts underlying his or her feelings, the speaker might have said, “When you received that award, I felt happy because I was hoping you’d be recognized for all the work you’d put into the project.”

9. I feel scared when you raise your voice.

The speaker might have said “When you raise your voice, I feel scared because I’m telling myself someone might get hurt here, and I need to know that we’re all safe.

10. I am grateful that you offered me a ride because I was needing to get home before my children arrive.

Taking Responsibility for Our Feelings: Part II

In each of the following statements, does the speaker acknowledge responsibility for his or her feelings? Does he or she express a feeling and a need? If, in your assessment, the speaker is not acknowledging responsibility for his or her feelings, re-write the statement so that responsibility for feelings is acknowledged.

1. You irritate me when you leave your clothes on the floor of your room.
2. I feel angry when you say that because I take it as an insult.
3. I feel scared when you raise your voice.
4. I am very moved by your kindness.
5. I feel frustrated when people don't call me back because I need consideration.
6. I am so impressed by how smart you are.
7. When you used that tone of voice I felt happy because my need for gentleness was met.
8. I feel grief because people are dying for no good reason.
9. I am sad that you won't be coming to dinner because I was hoping we could spend the evening together.
10. I feel horrified because these people are being treated unjustly.

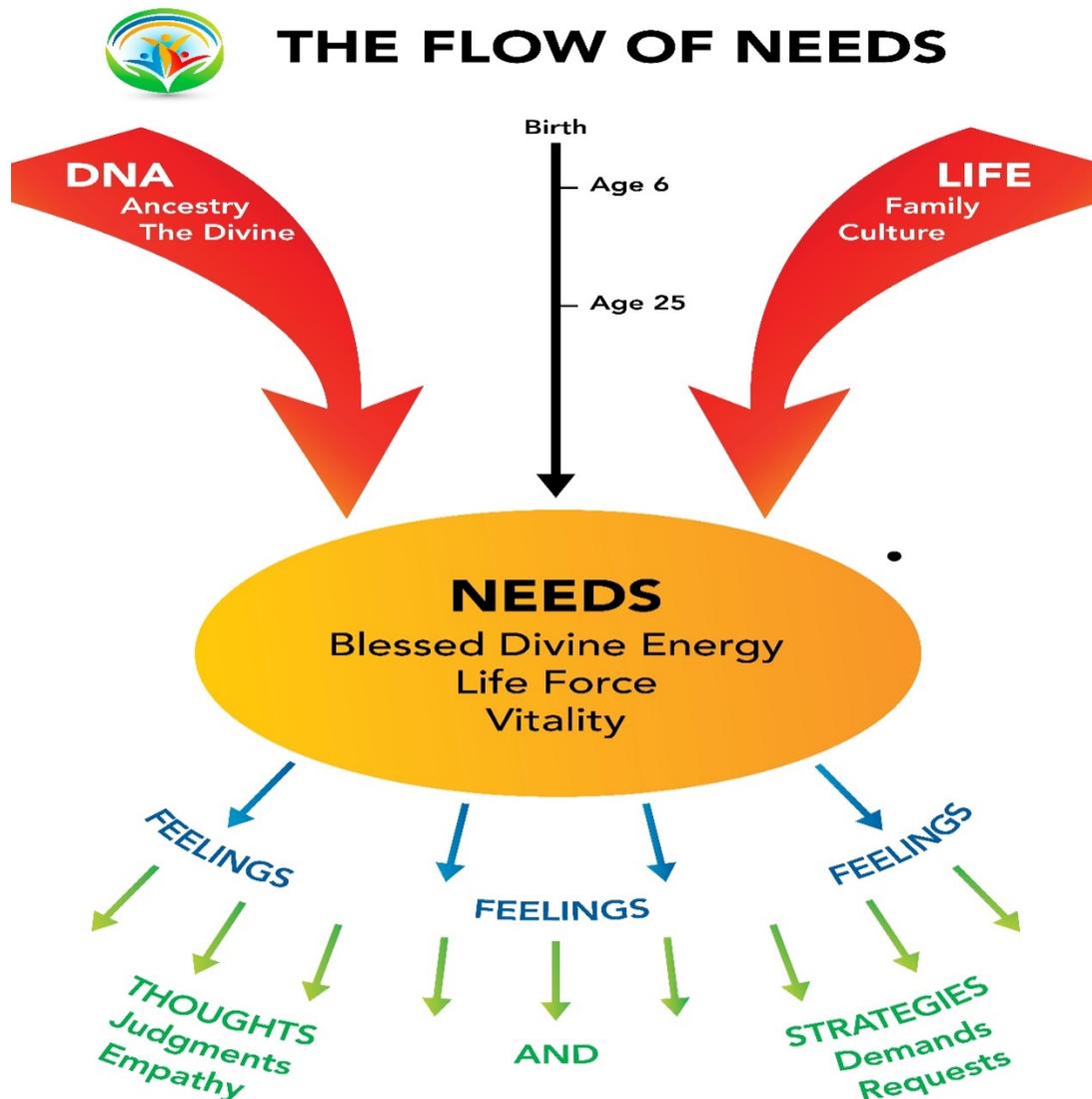
Evaluations Masquerading as Feelings (Faux Feelings)

When you say:	What you might be feeling:	What you might be needing:
Abandoned	Terrified, hurt, bewildered, sad, frightened, lonely	Nurturing, connection, belonging, support, inclusion
Abused	Angry, frustrated, frightened, hurt	Compassion, nurturing, support, safety, consideration
Attacked	Scared, angry, defensive, confused guilty	safety
Belittled	Angry, frustrated, tense, defensive	Respect, autonomy, acknowledgment, appreciation
Betrayed	Angry, hurt, disappointed, enraged	Trust, integrity, honesty, respect, commitment, clarity
Blamed	Angry, scared, confused, defensive, hostile, bewildered, hurt	Respect, consideration, accountability
Coerced	Angry, frustrated, stubborn, aloof, hostile	Autonomy, equality, freedom
Criticized	Pain, scared, anxious, embarrassed, defensive, hurt, withdrawn, hostile	Respect, understanding, acknowledgment, compassion
Harassed	Angry, frustrated, hostile, bitter	Respect, peace, consideration
Ignored	Lonely, scared, hurt, embarrassed	Connection, belonging, inclusion, to contribute
Insulted	Angry, embarrassed	Respect, support, consideration, recognition, acknowledgment
Intimidated	Scared, anxiety, embittered, worried	Safety, equality, autonomy
Invisible	Sad, angry, lonely, hopeless, helpless	Inclusion, connection, acceptance, appreciation
Isolated	Lonely, afraid, irritated, dejected	Connection, appreciation, inclusion, belonging
Left out	Sad, lonely, hurt, anxious	Inclusion, appreciation, belonging
Let down	Sad, disappointed	Consideration, support, respect, understanding, warmth
Manipulated	Angry, defensive, scared, frustrated	Autonomy, trust, equality, respect, connection
Misunderstood	Upset, angry, frustrated, sad	Understanding, acceptance, connection, inclusion
Neglected	Lonely, scared, bitter	Connection, inclusion, consideration, appreciation
Pressured	Anxious, resentful, overwhelmed, angry	Consideration, autonomy, respect, support

The Flow of Needs

Marshall Rosenberg called needs “blessed divine energy.” Needs are the life force that motivates all behavior; the dreams we all have for our lives

Needs come from two sources, our genetic inheritance and our life experience.



Basics of Empathy

Empathy is different from sympathy. How?

1. Empathy in NVC refers to having an open-hearted interest in what is happening in ourselves and/or another person. It means being curious.
2. Empathy is an energy rather than a particular form of speech. It is the quality of connection wherein we touch what is alive in someone's heart of hearts at the present moment, the life energy moving through them.
3. Empathy allows us to move from "communication skills" to embodying NVC. This is embodiment is called the spirituality of NVC.

What is the purpose of empathy?

For the person receiving empathy (note that you can receive empathy from yourself!)

- Being heard/understood
- Compassion
- Growth, deeper self-understanding
- Healing
- Clarity of purpose
- Trust in mattering

For the person giving

- Clarity (by checking our understanding of the other's internal reality)
- Being present (especially if triggered or disconnected and wanting to reconnect)
- Compassion (opening our heart fully)
- Choice (about how to respond, instead of responding from our habits)
- Interdependence (in particular, spaciousness for conscious choice about how to hold our own and others' needs through an empathic dialogue)
- Movement toward purpose (by understanding another's needs, we can align better)

Self-empathy and Empathy Exercise

Imagine each of the following examples is something someone says to you. Write down what you might say habitually. Then write your feelings and needs which give rise to this response. Then write down your guess of the other person's feelings and needs that might lead them to say what they are saying.

1. Your child says to you "You aren't the boss. You can't tell me what to do."

Habitual response:

Self-Empathy: (I feel...because my need for ... is not met.

Empathy guess: (Do you feel ... because your need for ... is not met?)

2. Your partner says to you: "You just don't care about what I want."

Your habitual response:

Self-empathy:

Empathy guess:

3. A stranger pulls into your lane closer to your car than you like.

Your habitual response:

Self-empathy:

Empathy guess:

4. A friend tells you "I don't want to be your friend anymore."

Your habitual response:

Self-empathy:

Empathy guess:

Jackal Intentions (Our habits!)

- To make you wrong
- To be right
- To correct or educate you
- To control you
- To change you
- To shame/blame you
- To punish you
- To get my way

The Four D's of Disconnection (Jackal Language)

Diagnose

Judge, label, criticize

“The problem with you is that...”

“You are such a pretty girl/handsome boy.”

Deny

Responsibility for one's actions and feelings

“I have to pay taxes.”

“He made me feel bad.”

Demand

Asking for compliance without willingness to consider the needs of the party being addressed.

“You have to (must, should, ought to, are supposed to...) take out the garbage.

“You can't wear that.”

“You have to eat your vegetables.”

Deserve

Thinking that certain behaviors or individuals deserve certain consequences in the form of reward or punishment.

“You don't deserve to...

get a new car.

have a good time.

be happy.

You deserve...

what you get.

to be punished for what you've done.

to get a better grade on your homework.

Giraffe Intentions

- To connect with myself and with you
- To help create mutual understanding and trust
- To help reach a win/win in our conflicts
- To live with equal power

The Four R's of Connection (Giraffe Language)

1. Remember

That we are all unique, interconnected and interdependent

2. Respect

Others and ourselves, knowing we are all acting to meet needs and to enrich all life.

3. Take responsibility

For our own beliefs, thoughts, feelings and actions.

4. Request

And accept the answers “yes” and “no” as a gift, the beginning of a dialogue

Empathy Blockers or Thirteen Ways to Fix Another Person's Pain

1. **Giving Advice/Fixing** Telling the other person what you think they should do.

“I think you should... How come you didn't...”

You should leave you job and go work somewhere where you will be appreciated.

2. **Analyzing/Diagnosing** Interpreting or evaluating a person's behavior

I think you are taking this out on your wife when, in reality, you are angry with your mother about things that happened in your childhood.

3. **Story-telling** Shifting the attention to your own experiences

“That reminds me of the time when the same thing happened to me...”

4. **Pity/Sympathy** Feeling sorry for someone, or sharing your own feelings about what they said.

Oh, you poor thing...I feel so sad for you

5. **Reassuring/Consoling** Trying to make someone feel better by suggesting that the way s/he feels is not valid

“It wasn't your fault, you did the best you could.”

6. **Shutting Down/Denial of Feelings** Discounting a person's feelings and trying to shift them in another direction

“Cheer up, don't feel so bad.”

7. **Changing the Subject**...Avoiding uncomfortable moments that you don't know how to deal with, and changing the course of the conversation.

“Yeah, how about those presidential candidates? Who are you going to vote for in the primary?”

8. **Interrogating** Using directed questions to expose a person's behavior or to provoke guilt.

"When did this begin?" "Why did you do that?" "What got into you?"

9. **Commiserating** Agreeing with the speaker's judgments of others.

"I know what you mean, your boss is one of the biggest jerks I have ever met!"

10. **One-Upping** Convincing the speaker that whatever they went through, you had it worse.

"That's nothing, wait until you hear what happened to me!"

11. **Educating** Pointing out facts that, if known, would resolve the person's difficulties

"This could turn into a positive experience for you if you would only..."
"If you would just...your problem would be solved"

12. **Explaining** Attempting to avoid responsibility for the other person's pain

"I would have called, but..."

13. **Correcting**...Telling the other person that you see the world differently (and that your way of seeing the world is the correct one)

"You have that wrong. It didn't happen that way."

My gratitude to Jeff Brown for providing many of these examples. You may contact Jeff at jeff@speakingpeace.org 812 320-3824

Observation or Evaluation? (Key)

Decide if each statement is an observation, or if it contains an evaluation. If the latter, revise the statement to be an observation.

1. John was angry with me yesterday for no reason.

“For no reason” is an evaluation, as is the inference that John was angry. He could have been scared, hurt, sad or something else.

“John told me he was angry” or “John pounded his fist on the table” are examples of observations.

2. Yesterday evening Nancy bit her fingernails while watching television.

3. Sam didn't ask for my opinion during the meeting.

4. My father is a good man.

“Good man” is an evaluation.

“For the past 25 years, my father has given one-tenth of his salary to charity” is an observation.

5. Janice works too much.

“Too much” is an evaluation.

“Janice spent more than 60 hours at the office this week” is an observation.

6. Henry is aggressive.

“Aggressive” is an evaluation.

“Henry hit his sister when she switched the television channel” is an observation.

7. Pam was the first in line every day this week.

8. My son often doesn’t brush his teeth.

“Often” is an evaluation.

“Twice this week my son didn’t brush his teeth before going to bed” is an observation.

9. Luke told me I didn’t look good in yellow.

10. My aunt complains when I talk to her.

“Complains” is an evaluation.

My aunt called me three times this week and each time talked about people who treated her in ways she didn’t like” is an observation.

Strategies, Requests and Demands

STRATEGIES: Strategies are defined as actions or behaviors created to meet a need. Whatever we think, say or do comes from the energy to meet a need.

REQUESTS: Requests are Strategies! Requests are:

- ✓ Action Specific. They are neither general nor ambiguous.
- ✓ Doable. Requests must be possible for the other person to do or say.
- ✓ Positive. Ask for what you want, not what you don't want.
- ✓ Time specific. Include a time by which you ask that the request be carried out. It should be in the present or the near future.
- ✓ Open-ended. You should be able to receive a "no" and continue the conversation.

A request is an invitation to the other person to give me an honest response. It is made with the clarity that the other person's needs are as important as mine. It is made with complete openness to what the other person's response will be. And if the response is a no, I am willing to continue the conversation in order to find a strategy that meets both of our needs. Requests live at the core of the Partnership Paradigm.

There are two different kinds of requests.

1. Connection Requests are requests that create connection with someone or with yourself. Some examples are:

- ✓ "Would you be willing to tell me what you're hearing me say?"
- ✓ "I'd like to hear how you feel when you hear me say this."
- ✓ "Would you share your ideas about this?"
- ✓ Would you tell me your understanding of my feelings and needs?
- ✓ Would you be willing to listen to me talk about my experience?
- ✓ Would you tell me how you're feeling about what I just said?
- ✓ Would you tell me what specifically I can do that would help you feel more confident that I understand what you're saying?

2. Solution or Action Requests are designed to support connection toward the solution of a dilemma. Some examples are:

- ✓ “Would you be willing to talk after lunch?”
- ✓ “Would you help me with the report revision this afternoon?”
- ✓ “Would you be willing to get the groceries from the car in the next ten minutes?”
- ✓ “Would you be interested in going to the movies with me this weekend?”
- ✓ Would you tell me what needs of yours are preventing you from saying yes to my request?
- ✓ Would you tell me what you’re hearing in my expression that’s leading you to say no to my request?
- ✓ Would you brainstorm together to come up with solutions that would work for both of us?
- ✓ Would you tell me if there is any way for us to work this out other than my agreeing to your request?

DEMANDS: Demands come from a completely different energy than requests. Demands represent an attempt to impose our will on another person, without regard to his or her feelings and needs. Demands live at the core of the Domination Paradigm.

Demands are also strategies. Some characteristics of demands:

- ✓ Are attached to a single outcome, what I want.
- ✓ Deny choice to the other person: “Because I said so.”
- ✓ Imply some punishment or negative consequence: “...or else...”
- ✓ Do not consider the bigger picture which includes the other person’s needs

Doable Requests Exercise

Keys:

Specific – say exactly what you want the person to do.

Doable – the request is possible to accomplish

Time specific – the request includes a specific time for completion in the present or the near future

In positive language – what you want the person to do, rather than what you don't want them to do

Which of the following are requests? If not, revise them to make them into requests.

1. I'd like you to tell me whether you'd be willing to wash the dishes today.
2. Would you be willing to give me a kiss before you go to sleep?
3. Would you be willing to stop lying?
4. Would you be willing to come home on time?
5. Would you be willing to clean your room better?
6. Would you be willing to tell me what you heard me say?
7. Would you help me?

Expressing Requests (Key)

1. I want you to understand me.

The word *understand* does not clearly express a request for a specific action. A request for a specific action might be “I want you to tell me what you heard me say.”

2. I'd like you to tell me one thing that I did that you appreciate.

OK

3. I'd like you to feel more confidence in yourself.

The words *feel more confidence* do not clearly express a request for a specific action. A request for a specific action might be “I'd like you to take a course in assertiveness training which I believe would increase your self-confidence.

4. I want you to stop drinking.

The words *stop drinking* do not express what the speaker wants, but rather what he or she doesn't want. A request for a specific action might be “I want you to tell me what needs of yours are met by drinking, and to discuss with me other ways of getting those needs.

5. I'd like you to let me be me.

The words *let me be me* do not clearly express a request for a specific action. A request for a specific action might be “I want you to tell me you won't leave our relationship – even if I do some things that you don't like.

6. I'd like you to be honest with me about yesterday's meeting.

The words *honest with me* do not clearly express a request for a specific action. A request for a specific action might be “I want you to tell me how you feel about what I did and what you'd like me to do differently.”

7. I would like you to drive at or below the speed limit.

OK

8. I'd like to get to know you better.

The words *like to get to know you better* do not clearly express a request for a specific action. A request for a specific action might be "I'd like you to tell me if you would be willing to meet for lunch once a week."

9. I would like you to show respect for my privacy.

The words *show respect for my privacy* do not clearly express a request for a specific action. A request for a specific action might be "I'd like you to agree to knock before you enter my office."

10. I'd like you to prepare supper more often.

The words *more often* do not clearly express a request for a specific action. A request for a specific action might be "I'd like you to prepare supper every Monday night."

Making Requests Exercise

Keys:

1. Requests are key to our ability to stay in dialogue.
2. We can cultivate the capacity to hold our requests lightly and be open to other outcomes, while returning our attention to our own and others' needs. Part of this capacity comes from facing the possibility that our need may not be met and mourning it.
3. Connection requests enhance our ability to create connection in the moment and insure that our needs are not met at the expense of others.

Pick a situation in which someone is doing something that is not in harmony with your own needs.

1. Write down your observations, feelings, and needs with regard to this situation.
2. What would you like this person to do (action request)?
3. Is your request specific? If not, revise it.
4. Is your request in the present or near future? If not, revise it.
5. Is your request in positive action language (what you do want)? If not, revise it.
6. Do you predict your needs will be met if this action is taken?
7. Can you imagine other strategies for meeting your needs other than agreement to your requests?
8. How do you feel and what needs come to life for you when you imagine that the person would say no and not shift, or that your need may not be met in this situation?
9. What would you want to hear from this person that would help you find a strategy to meet both your needs and theirs (connection request)?
10. What need of yours would be met by this request?

Observations and Requests Exercise

1. What is your observation? _____

Check in with yourself.

2. How are you feeling? _____

3. What need is this feeling connected to? _____

4. What request would meet your need? _____

Six Stepstones for Making Requests

Intention A

For Honesty

I want to know what's going on for you.

Request for Connection A

“Would you be willing to tell me what you are feeling and needing as you hear me say this?”

Intention B

For Empathy

I want to know that you heard what is going on for me.

Request for Connection B

“Would you be willing to tell me what you hear I might be feeling and needing in this moment?”

Intention C

For Specific Action

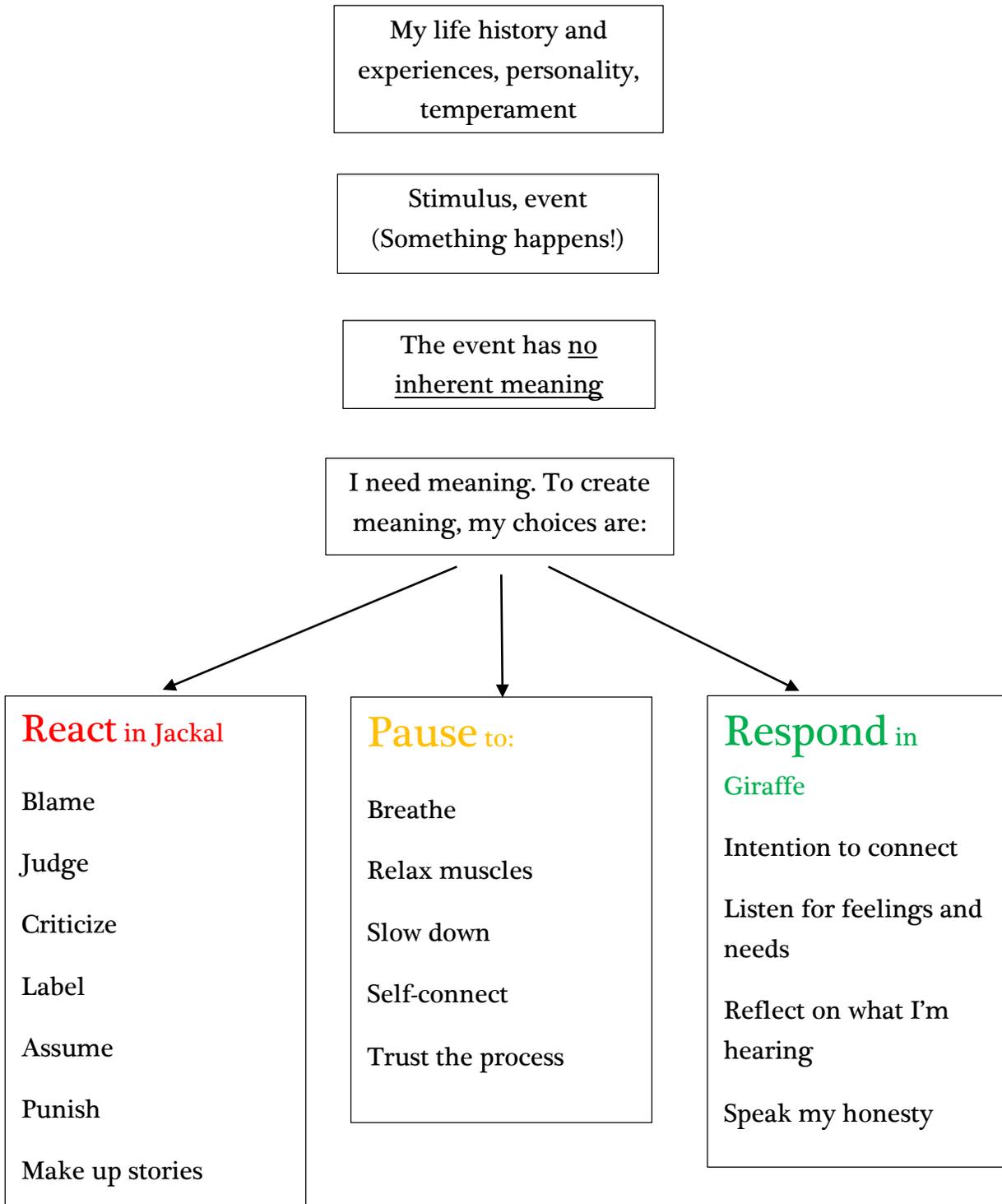
I want to know if you are willing to perform a particular action.

Request for Action

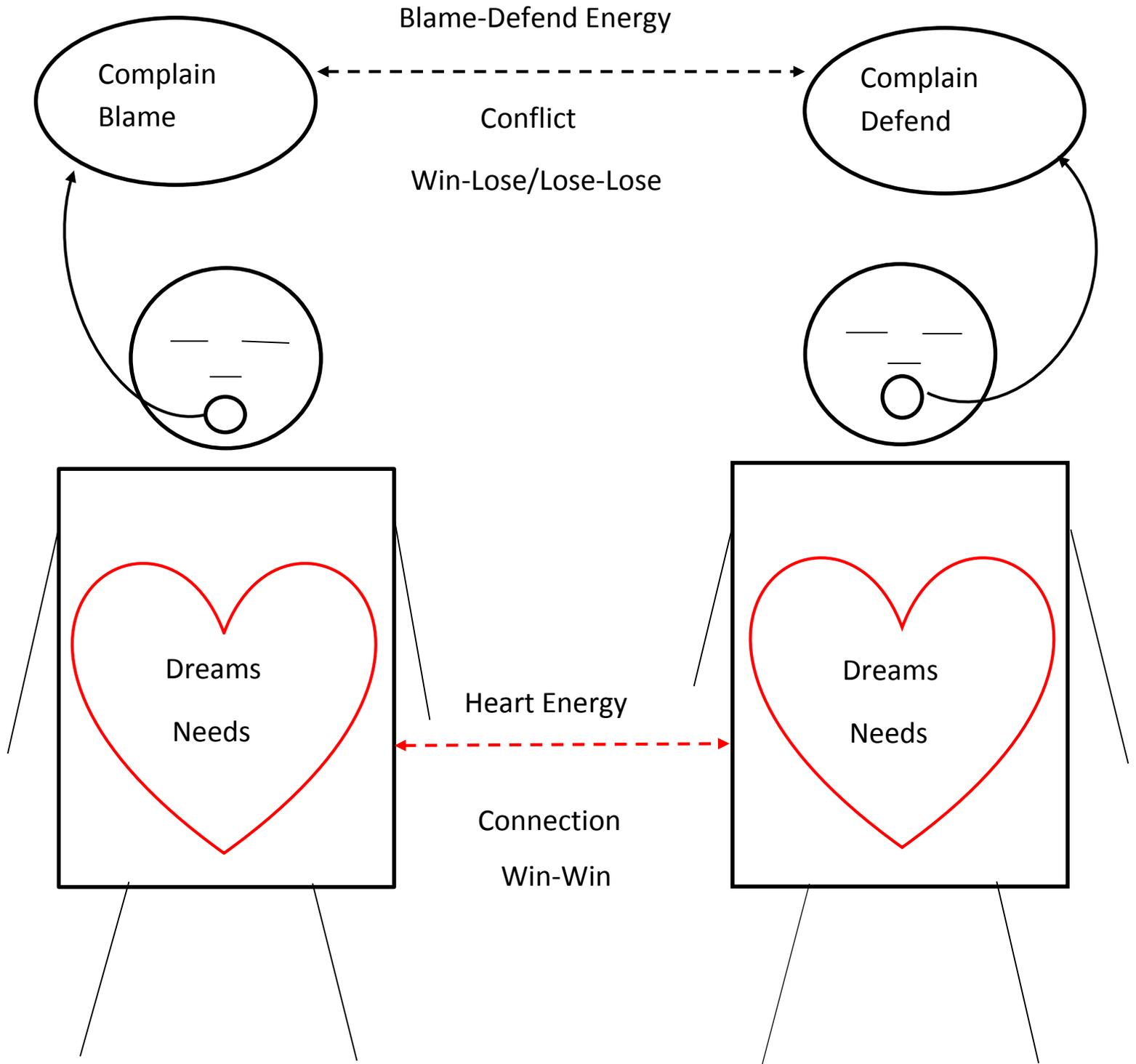
“Would you be willing to ...?”

(Use positive, concrete language that invites immediate response.)

The Choices We Have (To Transform Habitual Responses)



From which Energy Do We Want to Come?

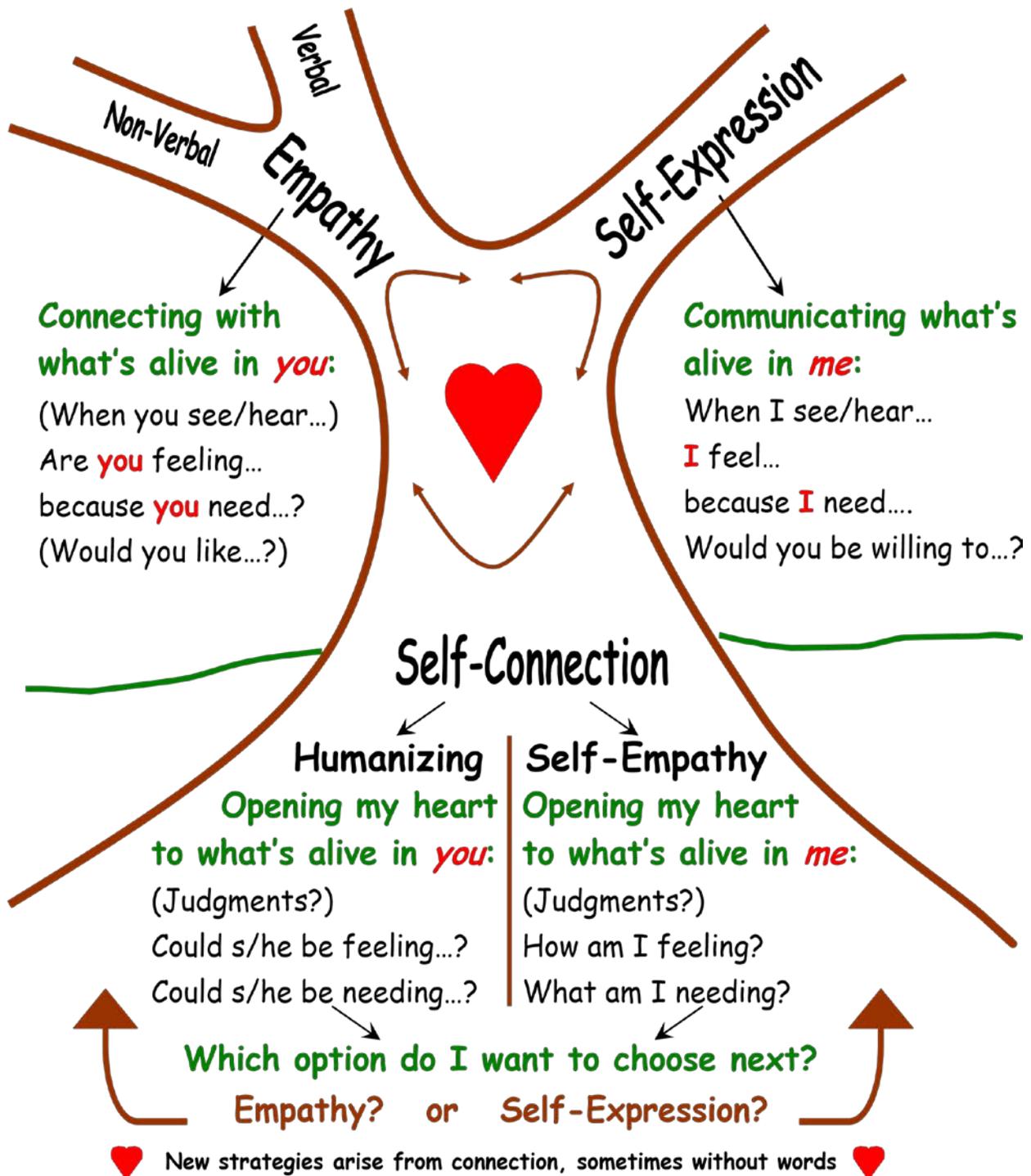


Three Steps to Change from Old Habits to NVC

1. Practice returning to situations to repair inevitable breaks in trust. Ask for support from someone who knows NVC to help you with your own feelings and needs and guessing others' feelings and needs. This is an empathic and healing process.
2. Practice with ourselves or others how we may have wished to respond in the moment. This is sometimes called a “do-over”. Journaling is an excellent way to do this. When you are ready, ask to try a do-over with the person with whom you are in conflict.
3. Work to make changes and act differently in the moment of conflict. If you don't succeed, go back a step or two and try again.

The NVC Tree of Life

Three Focus Options for Connection



Written Practice in Conjunction with the NVC Tree of Life

A. Trigger

Someone says/does:

B. Self-Connection

Self-Empathy

Judgments? Thoughts? (Write them down if that's what comes up first, to help you connect with feelings and needs.)

I feel

Because I need:

What I want to do next is:

Humanizing the Other Person (Guess and try to connect with a real human experience):

What could s/he be feeling?

What could s/he be needing?



C. Self-Expression

When I see/hear:

I feel:

Because I need:

Would you be willing to:

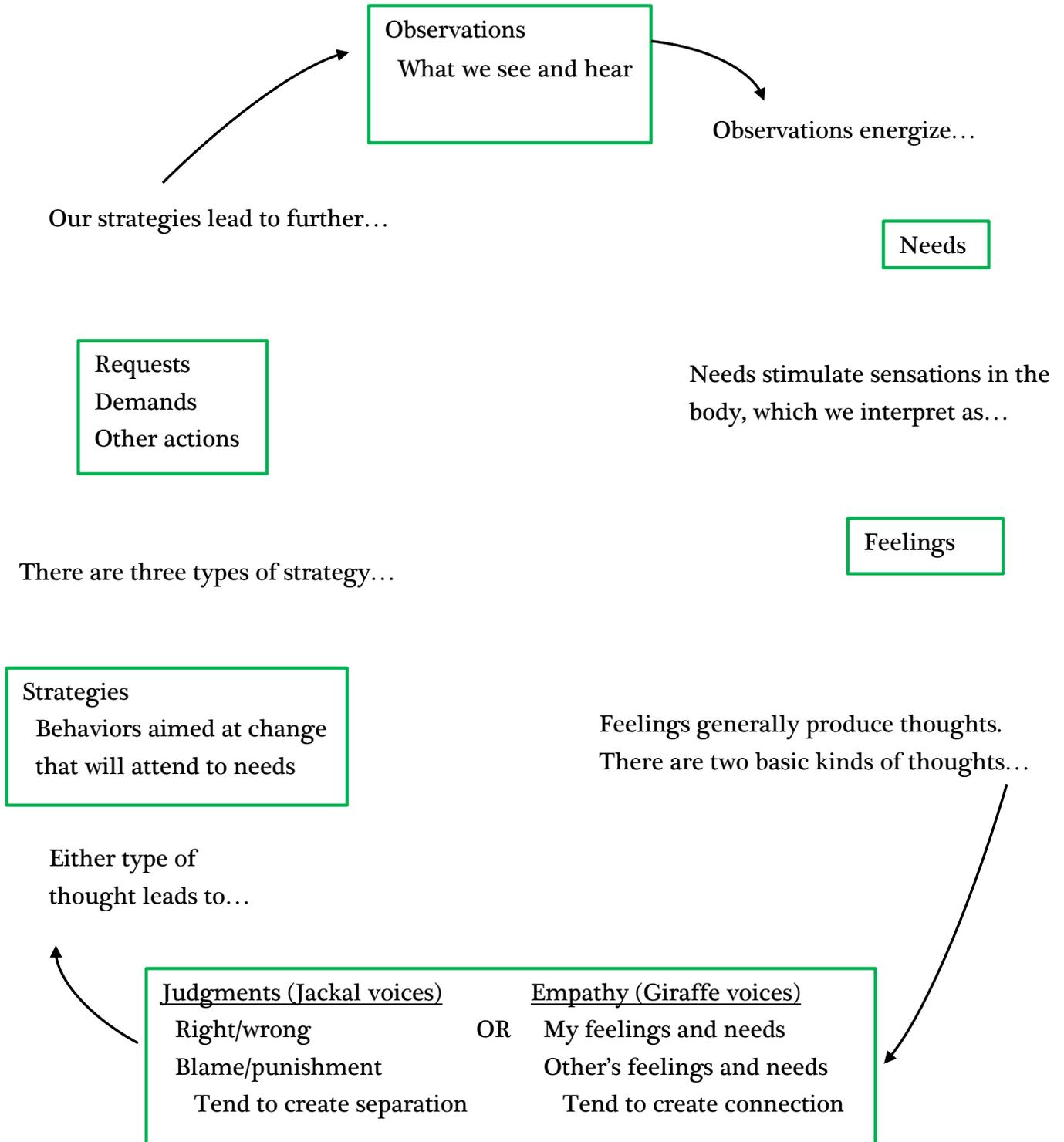
D. Empathy

Are you feeling:

Because you need:

(If/when ready for strategy, might also include) Would you like:

The NVC Cycle



Bibliography

See the following books by Marshall Rosenberg:

Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life, Puddle Dancer Press: 2003

Practical Spirituality: Reflections on the Spiritual Basis of Nonviolent Communication, Center for Nonviolent Communication, 2004

Speak Peace in a World of Conflict, Puddle Dancer Press, 2005.

Being Me, Loving You: A Practical Guide to Extraordinary Relationships, Center for Nonviolent Communication, 2005

Living Nonviolent Communication: Practical Tools to Connect and Communicate Skillfully in Every Situation, Sounds True, 2013

And by other authors... (not necessarily NVC)

John Bradshaw, Healing the Shame that Binds You, Health Communications Inc., 1988

Brene Brown, Daring Greatly, Gotham Books, 2012

Sara Hart and Victoria Kindle Hodson, Respectful Parents, Respectful Kids: 7 Keys to Turn Family Conflict into Cooperation, Puddle Dancer Press, 2006

Harville Hendrix, Getting the Love You Want, St. Martin's Griffin, 2008

Alfie Kohn, Punished by Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise and Other Bribes, Houghton Mifflin, 1993

Jean Morrison and Christine King, Grok it!: 150 Exercises and Games for Teaching and Learning Nonviolent Communication (NVC), communicateforlife.com

Homework for Week One

Read:

Rosenberg, Chapter 5 on needs

Activity:

When you notice someone in your life behaving in a way that you don't enjoy, ask yourself: what might this person need at this moment? Don't do anything differently unless you are moved to, just focus on the question and notice how you feel when you do that.

What behavior did I notice that I did not enjoy?

Example: My friend cracks his/her knuckles, which really irritates me.

What did I guess that person was needing in the moment?

Example: I guess that s/he was needing calm.

How did I feel when I focused on the other person's needs?

Example: I felt less irritated.

What did I do differently (if anything)?

Example: I told my friend that when s/he cracks his/her knuckles, I feel irritated.

Buddy:

If your buddy was absent last week, contact him/her and bring him/her up to date.

Homework for Week Two

Read:

Rosenberg, Chapters 4 and 7 on feelings and empathy

Journal: Taking Responsibility for My Feelings

Think of a time when you gave the responsibility for your own feelings to another person.

1. Write down the incident that you remember from your own life.

Example: I feel outraged because that driver cut me off.

2. In this case, who are you holding responsible for your feelings?

Example: The driver who cut me off.

3. How could you reword the incident so that your feelings are connected to your own needs?

Example: When that driver cut me off, I felt outraged because I need to be safe when I am driving.

4. Having done this, do you feel any differently in this moment? If so, how?

Activity:

Sometime during the week, when you notice someone in your life behaving in a way that you don't enjoy, ask yourself: What am I feeling? What do I need? Don't do anything differently unless you are moved to, just focus on the question and notice how you feel when you do that.

What behavior did I notice that I did not enjoy?

Example: My friend interrupted me when I was talking.

What was I feeling in the moment?

Example: I was feeling irritated.

What were my needs?

Example: My need was for consideration.

What did I do differently (if anything)?

Example: I told my friend that I would appreciate consideration, in the form of being able to finish speaking before s/he begins.

Buddy:

If your buddy was absent last week, contact him/her and bring him/her up to date.



Homework for Week Three

Read:

Rosenberg, Chapters 8 on empathy

Activity:

Sometime during the week, when you notice someone in your life behaving in a way that you don't enjoy, ask yourself: Would I like to focus on self-empathy right now before I respond? .

What behavior did I notice that I did not enjoy?

Example: My neighbor allowed his dog to come into my yard and dig up my garden.

What would I like to say to my neighbor?

Example: What's the matter with you? Can't you keep your @#\$\$% dog in your own yard?

When I focus on self-empathy, what do I discover?

Example: I feel angry because I want respect for my property and the work I put in to make it look nice.



Making Life More Wonderful

After focusing on self-empathy, what would I say to my neighbor?

Example: I am feeling pretty upset about the damage to my garden, because I want my place to look nice.

Do you feel any different about your neighbor after experiencing self-empathy?

Example: Maybe my neighbor will understand my need and make an effort to keep his dog in his own yard.

Buddy:

If your buddy was absent last week, contact him/her and bring him/her up to date.



Homework for Week Four

Read:

Rosenberg, Chapters 3 and 6 (observations and requests)

Activity:

Notice what you ask of at least one important person in your life, and assess: Are these doable requests? Vague wishes? Demands?

Set a timer to beep once per hour. When the timer beeps, ask yourself: “How am I feeling?” “What am I needing?” Take a moment to really tune into your feelings and needs and notice what it is like for you when you do that. If you want, you can ask yourself: “Do I have any requests of myself right now?”

Homework for Week Five

Read:

Rosenberg, Chapters 1 and 2.

Activity:

Once again, set a timer to beep once per hour. When the timer beeps, and you are not alone, ask yourself: “How might the person I’m with be feeling right now? What might she or he be needing?”

Take a moment to connect with this and see if it affects your behavior. You may want to set a time to beep every 10 minutes during a time in your daily life that is particularly stressful for you (e.g. if you are a parent, you may want to pick dinner preparation time, bed time, or the morning routine.)

If you want, you can ask yourself: “What requests do I have for this other person right now?”

If you are alone, ask yourself: “How am I feeling?” “What am I needing?” Take a moment to really tune into your feelings and needs and notice what it is like for you when you do that.

If you want, you can ask yourself: “Do I have any requests of myself right now?”