

Nonviolent Communication

Introductory Reference Materials

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Needs Inventory

The following list of needs is neither exhaustive nor definitive. It is meant as a starting place to support anyone who wishes to engage in a process of deepening self-discovery and to facilitate greater understanding and connection between people.

SUSTENANCE

air
food
health
movement/exercise
rejuvenation
renewal
rest/sleep
shelter
water
well-being

SAFETY

consistency
order/structure
peace (external)
protection
safety (emotional)
security
stability
trust

EMPATHY

care
compassion
consideration
to hear and be heard
to know and be known
to Matter
to see and be seen
to understand and
be understood

LOVE

affection
appreciation
closeness
companionship
connection
harmony
intimacy
joy
kindness
nurturing
respect/self-respect
sexual expression
support
tenderness
touch
warmth

CONSCIOUSNESS

alertness
attention
awareness
effectiveness
efficacy
presence
responsibility
strength
wisdom

CREATIVITY

competence
growth
healing

COMMUNITY

acceptance
belonging
communication
cooperation
equality
equality
inclusion
mutual recognition
mutuality
participation
partnership
sharing

AUTONOMY

choice
freedom
independence
self-expression
self-reliance
space
spontaneity

REST

balance
ease
humor
leisure/relaxation
play
pleasure

MEANING

aliveness
authenticity
beauty
celebration
challenge
clarity
contribution
dignity
discovery
exploration
faith
flow
honesty
hope
inspiration
integration
integrity
learning
making sense of life
mourning
peace (internal)
purpose
self-acceptance
self-care
self-connection
self-knowledge
self-realization
sense of self
stimulation
transcendence
understanding

Feelings Inventory

The following are words we use when we want to express a combination of emotional states and physical sensations. This list is neither exhaustive nor definitive. It is meant as a starting place to support anyone who wishes to engage in a process of deepening self-discovery and to facilitate greater understanding and connection between people.

There are two parts to this list: feelings we may have when our needs are being met and feelings we may have when our needs are not being met.

Feelings when your needs are satisfied

AFFECTIONATE

compassionate
friendly
loving
open hearted
sympathetic
tender
warm

ENGAGED

absorbed
alert
curious
engrossed
enchanted
entranced
fascinated
interested
intrigued
involved
spellbound
stimulated

HOPEFUL

expectant
encouraged
optimistic

CONFIDENT

empowered
open
proud
safe
secure

EXCITED

amazed
animated
ardent
aroused
astonished
dazzled
eager
energetic
enthusiastic
giddy
invigorated
lively
passionate
surprised
vibrant

GRATEFUL

appreciative
moved
thankful
touched

INSPIRED

amazed
awed
wonder

JOYFUL

amused
delighted
glad
happy
jubilant
pleased
tickled

EXHILARATED

blissful
ecstatic
elated
enthralled
exuberant
radiant
rapturous
thrilled

PEACEFUL

calm
clear headed
comfortable
centered
content
equanimous
fulfilled
mellow
quiet
relaxed
relieved
satisfied
serene
still
tranquil
trusting

REFRESHED

enlivened
rejuvenated
renewed
rested
restored
revived

Feelings Inventory (continued)

Feelings when your needs are not satisfied

AFRAID

apprehensive
dread
foreboding
frightened
mistrustful
panicked
petrified
scared
suspicious
terrified
wary
worried

ANNOYED

aggravated
dismayed
disgruntled
displeased
exasperated
frustrated
impatient
irritated
irked

ANGRY

enraged
furious
incensed
indignant
irate
livid
outraged
resentful

AVERSION

animosity
appalled
contempt
disgusted
dislike
hate
horrified
hostile
repulsed

CONFUSED

ambivalent
baffled
bewildered
dazed
hesitant
lost
mystified
perplexed
puzzled
torn

DISCONNECTED

alienated
aloof
apathetic
bored
cold
detached
distant
distracted
indifferent
numb
removed
uninterested
withdrawn

DISQUIET

agitated
alarmed
discombobulated
disconcerted
disturbed
perturbed
rattled
restless
shocked
startled
surprised
troubled
turbulent
turmoil
uncomfortable
uneasy
unnerved
unsettled
upset

EMBARRASSED

ashamed
chagrined
flustered
guilty
mortified
self-conscious

FATIGUE

beat
burnt out
depleted
exhausted
lethargic
listless
sleepy
tired
weary
worn out

PAIN

agony
anguished
bereaved
devastated
grief
heartbroken
hurt
lonely
miserable
regretful
remorseful

SAD

depressed
dejected
despair
despondent
disappointed
discouraged
disheartened
forlorn
gloomy
heavy hearted
hopeless
melancholy
unhappy
wretched

TENSE

anxious
cranky
distressed
distraught
edgy
fidgety
frazzled
irritable
jittery
nervous
overwhelmed
restless
stressed out

VULNERABLE

fragile
guarded
helpless
insecure
leery
reserved
sensitive
shaky

YEARNING

envious
jealous
longing
nostalgic
pining
wistful

Quick Reference Guide

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

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:

Asking concretely and clearly for what we want (instead of what we 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 sometimes 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.

About Nonviolent Communication

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is sometimes referred to as compassionate communication. Its purpose is to:

- create human connections that empower compassionate giving and receiving
- create governmental and corporate structures that support compassionate giving and receiving.

NVC involves both communication skills that foster compassionate relating and consciousness of the interdependence of our well being and using power with others to work together to meet the needs of all concerned.

This approach to communication emphasizes compassion as the motivation for action rather than fear, guilt, shame, blame, coercion, threat or justification for punishment. In other words, it is about getting what you want for reasons you will not regret later. NVC is NOT about getting people to do what we want. It is about creating a quality of connection that gets everyone's needs met through compassionate giving.

The process of NVC encourages us to focus on what we and others are observing separate from our interpretations and judgments, to connect our thoughts and feelings to underlying human needs/values (e.g. protection, support, love), and to be clear about what we would like towards meeting those needs. These skills give the ability to translate from a language of criticism, blame, and demand into a language of human needs -- a language of life that consciously connects us to the universal qualities "alive in us" that sustain and enrich our well being, and focuses our attention on what actions we could take to manifest these qualities.

Nonviolent Communication skills will assist you in dealing with major blocks to communication such as demands, diagnoses and blaming. In CNVC trainings you will learn to express yourself honestly without attacking. This will help minimize the likelihood of facing defensive reactions in others. The skills will help you make clear requests. They will help you receive critical and hostile messages without taking them personally, giving in, or losing self-esteem. These skills are useful with family, friends, students, subordinates, supervisors, co-workers and clients, as well as with your own internal dialogues.

Nonviolent Communication Skills

NVC offers practical, concrete skills for manifesting the purpose of creating connections of compassionate giving and receiving based in a consciousness of interdependence and power with others. These skills include:

1. Differentiating observation from evaluation, being able to carefully observe what is happening free of evaluation, and to specify behaviors and conditions that are affecting us;
2. Differentiating feeling from thinking, being able to identify and express internal feeling states in a way that does not imply judgment, criticism, or blame/punishment;
3. Connecting with the universal human needs/values (e.g. sustenance, trust, understanding) in us that are being met or not met in relation to what is happening and how we are feeling; and
4. Requesting what we would like in a way that clearly and specifically states what we do want (rather than what we don't want), and that is truly a request and not a demand (i.e. attempting to motivate, however subtly, out of fear, guilt, shame, obligation, etc. rather than out of willingness and compassionate giving).

These skills emphasize personal responsibility for our actions and the choices we make when we respond to others, as well as how to contribute to relationships based in cooperation and collaboration.

About Nonviolent Communication (continued)

With NVC we learn to hear our own deeper needs and those of others, and to identify and clearly articulate what “is alive in us”. When we focus on clarifying what is being observed, felt, needed, and wanted, rather than on diagnosing and judging, we discover the depth of our own compassion. Through its emphasis on deep listening—to ourselves as well as others—NVC fosters respect, attentiveness and empathy, and engenders a mutual desire to give from the heart. The form is simple, yet powerfully transformative.

Founded on consciousness, language, communication skills, and use of power that enable us to remain human, even under trying conditions, Nonviolent Communication contains nothing new: all that has been integrated into NVC has been known for centuries. The intent is to remind us about what we already know—about how we humans were meant to relate to one another—and to assist us in living in a way that concretely manifests this knowledge.

The use of NVC does not require that the persons with whom we are communicating be literate in NVC or even motivated to relate to us compassionately. If we stay with the principles of NVC, with the sole intention to give and receive compassionately, and do everything we can to let others know this is our only motive, they will join us in the process and eventually we will be able to respond compassionately to one another. While this may not happen quickly, it is our experience that compassion inevitably blossoms when we stay true to the principles and process of Nonviolent Communication.

NVC is a clear and effective model for communicating in a way that is cooperative conscious, and compassionate.