

Restoring Harmony with Others using Nonviolent Communication

Whether personal or global, unresolved conflict divides us from each other and disconnects us from our hearts. Conflict is inevitable and healthy. It is how we deal with conflict that leads to separation, fear and enormous suffering.

Nonviolent Communication (NVC)[™] is a means of reliably making the shift from a disconnected way of dealing with conflict that makes matters worse, to a way of maintaining empathic, compassionate connection whatever the circumstances. When focusing attention in the way NVC recommends, there is a quality of presence that brings about unexpected beauty, depth and healing - even the most entrenched conflicts resolve.

Nonviolent Communication Skills:

This approach to communication emphasises mutual understanding of needs 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. It is definitely not about guilt and tricking people into giving you what you want. The techniques of NVC also support you to make conscious choices about how you will respond whether you get what you want, or not.

NVC is simple to grasp and can be applied immediately. It has been found to be effective in any conflict situation – from minor conflicts between friends and colleagues to major conflicts between warring tribes.

NVC encourages us to focus on four things:

Observations - clarifying exactly what we have seen or heard that has triggered our upset. We are encouraged to express our observation free from judgements, labels and criticisms that are likely to antagonise others.

Feelings – accurately identifying the feelings that have been triggered inside us as a result of the situation and expressing our feelings free from language that attacks and lays blame on the other person.

Needs – identifying the deep, powerful forces inside us which motivate all our behaviour and which generate our feelings. Connecting to and finding a language for these deep and powerful needs is the unique contribution that NVC makes to conflict resolution and communication skills in general. Hearing and expressing the needs inside ourselves and others has tremendous healing power – whether in a conflict situation or when empathically supporting someone who is in deep pain.

Requests – being clear about what specific action(s) we would like taken to meet our unmet needs and who we would like to take the action(s). Communicating our needs separately from our requests creates freedom and flexibility. The other person may not be willing to 'do' our request, but when they are connected to our need they are freed up to think of something else they can do that meets our need and that also works for them.

The Origins of NVC

NVC was originated in the USA by Marshall Rosenberg, in response to the physical, emotional and spiritual violence he witnessed in society. He has been spreading it in diverse cultures for 35 years, with people from every walk of life. He founded the Center for Nonviolent Communication, (www.cnvc.org) which has more than 200 trainers active in more than 65 countries around the world, and is the author of *Nonviolent Communication - A Language of Life* (Puddledancer Press, 2003).