

Empathy

“Let your presence be something that convinces the world”

~ Ken Wilber

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A Spiritual Practice

"The whole Torah on one foot: "Love Thy Neighbor as Thyself", and the rest is commentary. Now go and learn"

~ Talmud, Hillel Hazaken

"Love Your Neighbor As Thyself" means that your neighbor *is* yourself, and this recognition of oneness is love"

~ Eckhart Tolle

"Our survival as a species depends on our ability to recognize that our well-being and the wellbeing of others are in fact one and the same."

~ Marshall Rosenberg

How to Love ?

- NVC was developed from Marshall Rosenberg's desire to know how to connect with Beloved Divine Energy through the practice of love.
- LOVE = giving our attention (presence) freely, with the intention to serve life (needs)
- Life manifests through the energy of needs (longing)
- We all share the same feelings and needs.
- 'Tikkun Olam' - world peace - when everyone's needs matter

“The things we desire are sacred, who put them in our hearts if not god?”

~ Talmud

A Path to Transforming Separation / Restoring Togetherness

The assumption of innocence

Everything human beings are doing or saying is an attempt to meet one or more of their human need, no different than our own.

“In spite of all similarities, every living situation has, like a newborn child, a new face, that has never been before and will never come again. It demands of you a reaction that cannot be prepared beforehand. It demands of you nothing of what is past. It demands presence, responsibility; it demands you”.

~ Martin Buber

Empathy - Etymology

From Latin:

Pathos = "suffering" or "experience" or "something that one undergoes," or "something that happens to one"

- Sy(n)m-pathia - for
- Anti-pathia - against
- A-pathia - without
- E(n)m-pathia - in, within

**“Understanding someone’s suffering is the best gift you can give another person.
Understanding is love’s other name. If you don’t understand, you can’t love.”**

— How to Love (2014) Thich Nhat Hanh

Empathy for Liberation

- Empathy is one of the 3 components of Nonviolent Transformation - Love, Truth & Courage.
- Facilitates the way for truth into the heart.
- Builds trust and connection that fuels the other person's openness to be impacted and changed by what they hear.
- Only offering empathy without speaking truth is not sufficient for liberation (including when we are in power position).
- Leadership = holding the whole. To be able to hold the whole - "Love Thy Enemy".
- Caring for everyone's needs is different from equally empathising with everyone under all circumstances.
- Caring for everyone's needs within a context of power differences may mean that we prioritize people with less power and who may absorbed more impact.
- The more power a person has in a situation the more I invite them to stretch so long as it's within trust and capacity.
- When people with access to structural power need empathy they may need to receive it from outside the situation.
- When done with full choice, empathy for those with more power is likely to support our liberation and capacity to create change.
- Empathize with the human experience (feelings and needs) not with strategies and narratives.

"This Capacity for loving is at the heart of what's needed for the world's transformation" ~ Miki Kashtan

“The hearing that is only in the ears is one thing. The hearing of the understanding is another. But the hearing of the spirit is not limited to any one faculty, to the ear, or to the mind. Hence it demands the emptiness of all the faculties. And when the faculties are empty, then the whole being listens. There is then a direct grasp of what is right there before you that can never be heard with the ear or understood with the mind”.

~ Chuang-Tzu

Inner orientation - creating the conditions for magic:

- Grounding in my own innocence while being open to learning about how my choices impact others.
- Grounding in my choice (why am I choosing to empathize?) with an orientation to a ‘yes’
- Grounding in my truth while being open to be impacted and changed by what I hear
- Releasing attachment to any outcome while being aware of my power to make an impact with my presence.
- Orientating to service (Mitzva) - the joy of contributing to life.
- Relying on Trust / Faith - “The answer is Grace”.
- Humility - not knowing, openness to be corrected
- Fearlessness- I can only encounter in others what I am willing to encounter in myself.
- Orientating to love - active looking for beauty and innocence (longings/yearnings of the heart)
- Curiosity
- Connection to vision (the world I want to live in)

Inner Obstacles

- A. Needing self love / self acceptance.**
- B. Needing Empathy Ourselves.**
- C. Unwillingness to Consider the Person's Strategies.**
- D. "Enemy Images"**
- E. Concern About Seeming to Agree**
- F. Not trusting the other person's authenticity**
- G. Trauma Response.**
- H. Challenge to open ourselves to be moved.**
- I. Attachment to an outcome.**

Skills

Empathic listening:

- Nonverbal language embodies inner orientation.
- Tracking what comes up for me / my capacity to maintain focus on the other person.
- Hearing the unspoken
- Listening from within the other person's heart and soul without leaving myself.

Empathic guess:

1. Capturing the longing / heart of the matter - translating protectiveness to vulnerability (innocence)
2. Positive language
3. Non-judgement of everyone in the field.
4. Checking for understanding

Empathic response:

Sharing how I'm being moved, touched, things I'm resonating with, inspired by, appreciating, etc.