



Connecting Across differences

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With Aya Caspi

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“Differences of opinion should never mean hostility”

~ Gandhi

“It is no nonviolence if we merely love those that love us. It is nonviolence only when we love those that hate us.”

~ Gandhi



The 5 D's that block connection

We learn to communicate in a protective way which invites distrust:

- **Diagnosis**, judgments, analysis, criticism, comparisons - "Who is what?"
"He is a narcissist", "They are not capable of caring"
- **Denial of responsibility** - attributing the cause of one's feelings or actions to someone else or to circumstances.
"It's your fault", "I had no choice"
- **Demands** - Shoulds, have to's, must, need to
"You need to do what's right", "you should apologize"
- **Deserve Thinking** followed by punishments and rewards
"If you do as I say i will give you the money"
- **Disowning** our perception - presenting our beliefs/thoughts/interpretations as *the* truth
"Vaccines are dangerous" / "vaccines are safe"



Reactive Communication

This sort of protectiveness tends to register in our brains as aggression/threat:

- We snap into our alarm zone - fight/flight/freeze - brain shutdown (defending, attacking back, etc)
- We lose access to our natural human care and generosity.
- We lose our power to connect and make an impact.

“Let your presence be something that convinces the world” ~ Ken Wilber



Reclaiming Trust with NVC : The Assumption of Innocence

Assuming trust that everything human beings are doing or saying is an attempt to meet their human needs, no different than our own.

“ If you treat a man as he appears to be you make him worse. But if you treat a man as if he already were what he potentially could be, you make him what he can be. ”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgVA6nXCj1U> - Victor Frankel, 'A man in search of meaning'.



SOME FEELINGS WHEN NEEDS ARE MET

SOME FEELINGS WHEN NEEDS ARE NOT MET

Affectionate

- Loving
- Friendly, warm
- Tender

Confident

- Empowered
- Safe, secure

Fascinated

- Engaged
- Involved
- Amazed

Inspired

- Awe
- Wonder

Fascinated

- Engaged
- Involved
- Amazed

Stimulated

- Animated
- Excited, eager
- Aroused

Hopeful

- Anticipating
- Optimistic

Content

- Satisfied
- Fulfilled
- Blissful

Energetic

- Lively
- Passionate
- Exhilarated

Elated

- Ecstatic
- Exuberant
- Thrilled

Curious

- Alert, Absorbed
- Interested

Refreshed

- Rejuvenated
- Restored

Centered

- Trusting
- Clear
- Open

Joy

- Happy, glad
- Jubilant
- Pleased

Gratitude

- Appreciative
- Moved, touched

Amused

- Ticked
- Delighted

Peace

- Calm
- Relaxed

Love

- Affection
- Compassion
- Consideration
- Intimacy
- Love
- Nurturing
- Warmth
- Companionship
- Touch

Connection

- Empathy
- Closeness
- Communication
- Presence

Peace

- Beauty
- Communion
- Ease
- Equality
- Harmony
- Inspiration
- Order

Community

- Acceptance
- Appreciation
- Belonging
- Inclusion
- Cooperation
- Support
- Participation

Play

- Joy
- Humour
- Laughter

To Matter

- Purpose
- Contribution
- Creativity
- Celebration of life

**I FLOURISH WHEN I NOURISH
THE NEEDS BENEATH MY FEELINGS**

Based on the work of
Marshall Rosenberg
(CNVC.org)

Embarrassed

- Flustered
- Self-conscious

Agitated

- Distressed
- Disturbed
- Uncomfortable

Disconnected

- Bored
- Detached
- Apathetic

Shame

Shocked

- Unnerved
- Unsettled
- Startled

Confused

- Lost
- Mystified
- Torn

Afraid

- Panicky
- Cautious
- Freaked out

Anger

Fatigue

- Burnt out
- Tired
- Exhausted

Vulnerable

- Insecure
- Shaky
- Helpless

Averse

- Disgusted
- Hate/dislike
- Repulsed

Guilt

- Regret
- Remorse

Annoyed

- Frustrated
- Exasperated
- Cheesed off

Tense

- Stressed
- Overwhelmed
- Frazzled

Depression

Sad

- Discouraged
- Hopeless
- Disheartened

Pain

- Grief
- Misery
- Hurt

Longing

- Jealousy
- Resentment
- Pining

Autonomy

- Choice
- Freedom
- Self-expression
- Independence
- Space
- Spontaneity
- Respect/self-respect

Physical Well-being

- Air, breath
- Food and water
- Movement
- Rest and sleep
- Sexual expression
- Safety
- Comfort, shelter

Shared Reality

- To know and be known
- To see and be seen
- To understand
- Be understood
- Stability
- Consistency

Meaning

- Challenge
- Competence
- Clarity
- Efficacy
- Effectiveness
- Understanding
- Stimulation

Trust

- Security
- Safety

Growth

- Awareness
- Consciousness
- Discovery
- Learning

Honesty

- Authenticity
- Integrity



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What if I don't care?

NVC assumes that we have an innate need for care because of being interdependent. So the real question is not whether we care, but what are the obstacles to access our innate care.

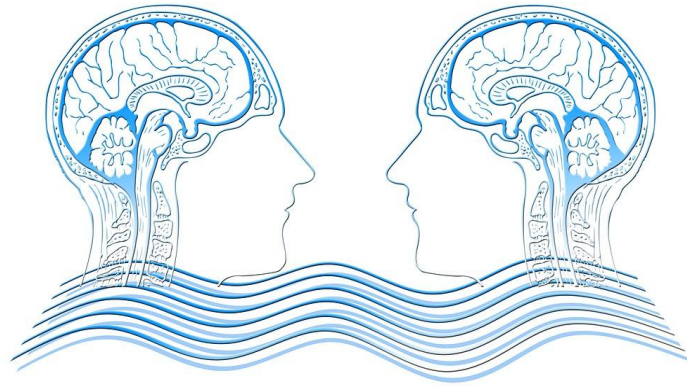
NVC offers us the language to respond with care, even if we can't access care from within in the moment, knowing this is our deeper truth.

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 listen and hear what is important to others, even when we don't agree with them.



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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 is love’s other name. If you don’t understand, you can’t love.”

— How to Love (2014) Thich Nhat Hanh

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The 4 layers of understanding without agreement

1. The assumption of innocence: I understand and trust that there is a human need behind the other person's experience, even when I do not understand what this need is, or why they are having the experience they are having.
2. I can identify, make sense and connect with the other person's feelings and needs that are stimulated in them, as a result of how they interpret the situation, even when I can't make sense of their interpretation.
3. I can make sense of **why** the other person is having the experience they are having, without having to share their interpretation.
4. In situations where I have done or said something that is triggering the other person's experience: I can make sense of how I have contributed to the other person's interpretation with my choices of words and/or actions. I may or may not share their interpretation.

Practice: translating protection to vulnerability

1. What is the observation (the other person's words or actions)
2. What is it that this person doesn't want?
3. What is it that this person wants?
4. Identify what's important (need/longing): if they get what they want what would that give them?
5. Opening my heart fully to their need (I actively want them to meet their need without giving up my own)



Empathic Responses

- Anything I'm being moved or touched by.
- Anything I resonate with or can relate to.
- Shared reality or shared-experience.
- Anything I agree or sympathize with.
- Anything I'm inspired by.
- Anything I appreciate / grateful for.
- Why their sharing matters to me.
- Expressing my authentic desire for this person to meet their needs (even if I do not align with their strategies)



Inspiration

In this Emmy-winning documentary, acclaimed Muslim filmmaker Deeyah Khan meets U.S. neo-Nazis and white nationalists face to face and attends the now-infamous *Unite the Right* rally in Charlottesville as she seeks to understand the personal and political motivations behind the resurgence of far-right extremism in the U.S.

Speaking with fascists, racists and proponents of alt-right ideologies, Deeyah attempts to discover new possibilities for connection and solutions. As she tries to see beyond the headlines to the human beings, her own prejudices are challenged and her tolerance tested.

[White Right: Meeting the Enemy - Kanopy](#)

- In this video, The Empathy Award 2023 is given to film producer and director, Deeyah Khan, for her work on empathy with groups who do not like or understand her. The recording was made at the Awards Ceremony on 2 July 2023, where Khan participated on a video link from Washington D. C.

<https://youtu.be/ieTO91gSlpA>

“The answer is grace. The important piece on our part is the willingness to put ourselves in a vulnerable position of encountering the perceived enemy, the rest is up to God” ~ Martin Buber

- Meet Daryl Davis, a Black musician who helps convince KKK members to leave Klan

<https://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/america-in-crisis/meet-daryl-davis-a-black-musician-who-helps-convince-kkk-members-to-leave-the-klan>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORp3q1Oaezw>

- This letter was written by John Lewis, the civil rights leader and congressman, who died on July 17 2020. He wrote this essay shortly before his death, to be published upon the day of his funeral.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/30/opinion/john-lewis-civil-rights-america.html>

How to express what matters to you in a way that helps others hear you, especially when they don't agree

Reclaiming truth: *Connecting to our authentic experience in every given moment, aligning how we show up with our inner reality.*

Reclaiming Vulnerability: *Embracing our needs and longings with radical compassion, while accepting not-knowing whether they will be met or not. Recovering our sense of mattering as inherent to our needs being an expression of life.*



“Whenever you have truth it must be given with love,
or the message and the messenger will be rejected.”

~ Gandhi

Inspiration

- A 5 minutes video showing what happened when Black Lives Matter activists were invited on stage at a pro-Trump rally.

<https://www.facebook.com/NowThisPolitics/videos/3786860994678696>

When interviewed after the event, the Black Lives Matter spokesman says: "Here we went from being their enemy to someone they want to take pictures with their children. And that's the power of communication".

Making it as easy as possible for others to hear us, without compromising our truth

1. Check my intention:

- * Connect vs. educate/convince,

- * My needs vs. everyone's needs

2. Consent about expression

3. Owning our experience and perception:

- From interpretations to observations
- From thoughts to feelings (what do I feel when I think I am being disrespected?)
- From strategies to needs.
- From demands to requests

Correspondence with my holocaust denier neighbor

W: The Holocaust has long been proven to be a hoax. in Germany and many states it is not allowed to doubt that narrative then you go to Jail for a long time....does the truth need legal protection? Or would a lie need legal protection?

Aya: W, from what you say I'm getting that you would like what you believe as truth to be seen, acknowledged and respected(?)... at least to be spoken about freely? I don't need to use my empathy skills to imagine the frustration? fury? rage? you might feel hearing about the Holocaust again and again, as I am experiencing similar intense reaction myself, feeling sick to my stomach, hearing from you (not for the first time here on FB) that "The Holocaust has long been proven to be a hoax". I want the truth I know to be seen, acknowledged and respected... I could present here all the living testimonials (I have some in my own family) to prove you wrong, and I don't have a sense that this will bring us closer... I'm asking myself what would it look like for us to relate to each other from conscious love and not from fear in this impossible situation? How can we bridge such a horrifying gap in reality, in a way that would still honor each of us and leave us connected, not separated? Is there a way I can "love my neighbor as myself" when my neighbor is saying that the horrifying truth which killed 6 millions of my people is a hoax?



Correspondence Continued...

I believe there is, when I'm truly willing to focus on my connection with you, my fellow human, there is. See Rumi's field: "out beyond ideas of right-doing and wrong doing there is a field, I'll meet you there", will you meet me there ?

Since we are neighbors... are you willing, with the support of our community, to meet and listen to each other? You see, I'm tired of wars... I don't want to make you my enemy.. I want to heal the pain, both yours and mine... I've learned that it is not going to work for me to exclude the pain of my "enemies"... it is just going to bring more and more pain... more and more Holocausts... My hope for the world and for our human species lies in our willingness to include each other in our hearts, no matter what... I want to invite you to walking this path with me...

W: Dear Aya, the Holocaust Story is something which separates us and brings misgivings between jewish People and white People. **As Human beings we should connect in a Human Way and that means at least with Respect, and better with friendship. Therefore I appreciate very much your answer and reaction.** For me as a German I of course defend my people and I guess any decent Person does defend his or her people naturally.



Check list

Track our language, especially when there is tension:

- **Diagnosis**, judgments, analysis, criticism, comparisons
- **Denial of responsibility** - attributing the cause of one's feelings or actions to someone else or to circumstances.
- **Demands** - Shoulds, have to's, must, need to, ought to
- **Deserve Thinking** followed by punishments and rewards
- **Disowning** our perception - presenting our beliefs/thoughts/interpretations as *the*

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How to make clear requests and transition between listening and expressing to weave togetherness, even within divergence, and move the conversation forward.



Being effective by prioritising togetherness / trust

- Solution requests attend to content (action steps)
- Connection requests attend to the relationship and mattering.
- We can shift back to connection requests or empathy at any point.



Key points to making requests

- Openness to a 'no'
- Doable & Specific
- Positive language
- Cares for all needs

Connection requests: examples

- **Checking for understanding** - asking for reflection to make sure that message expressed is message received.
“Would be willing to share what are you getting that is important to me around this...? It will really help me settle...”
“Would you be willing to tell me what you hear is important to me?”
- **Checking for impact** - 1) shifting focus to the other person 2) caring for our vulnerability
“I’m wondering how are you doing hearing this...?”
“I’m feeling nervous saying this and would like to know if this is hard for you to hear?”
- **Checking for willingness/choice** – when we want to know if the other person is open to hearing from us, transition



Criteria for moving to a solution (action) request:

- Time pressure
- Little willingness to engage in a conversation.
- You have reached sufficient connection and trust for the purpose at hand.



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<https://www.cnvc.org/trainers/aya-caspi>

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