



# 'Love Thy Enemy' - Empathy for Transformation

With Aya Caspi

'Time For Empathy'

March 9, 2024

**“Love even for enemies is the key to the solution of the problems of our world”**

**~ Martin Luther King**

**“Mutual trust and mutual love are no trust and no love. The real love is to love them that hate you, to love your neighbor even though you distrust him”**

**~ Gandhi**

**“Darkness can not drive out darkness -only love can do that.  
Hate can not drive out hate - only love can do that”**

**~Martin Luther King**



# Nonviolence + Communication

- Traces its origins to the long-standing tradition of Nonviolence: e.g., Gandhi & The Civil Rights movement.
- Translates from Sanskrit:
  - ‘Ahimsa’ = non-harm, even towards those who harm us.
  - ‘Satyagraha’ = soul force, truth force - holding on to truth without compromising love.
- Invites 3 levels of integration - Thought, Word & Action
- Can be developed through the practice of NVC

***“We may never be strong enough to be entirely nonviolent in thought, word and deed. But we must keep nonviolence as our goal and make strong progress towards it.” ~ Gandhi***



# How our language contributes to distrust:

- **Diagnosis** - judgments, analysis, criticism, comparisons:  
*"What's right/wrong with whom?" "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:  
*"You make me angry" "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 let you stay."*
- **Disowning our perception** - presenting our beliefs/thoughts/interpretations as the truth  
*"Vaccines are dangerous" "Vaccines are safe."*



# Enemy images arise from loss of trust

- When divergence arises, we are met with judgement, blame, shame, threats, demands, criticism, comparisons, punishment, rewards, etc.
- As a result we suffer from collective trauma that manifests as separation from self and others, and loss of trust.

**“My freedom from hatred - I would even claim for myself individually, my love - for those who consider themselves to be my enemies, does not make me blind to their faults.”~ Gandhi**



# The cost of separation

1. **Disconnection** from self and other.
2. **Likely to register as a threat / hostility**
  - \* Contributes to fear and escalation
  - \* losing power to reach the other person and collaborate.
3. **Disempowerment**- everytime we judge we give our power away to the other person (give them the power to do us wrong).



# 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."*

- Goethe



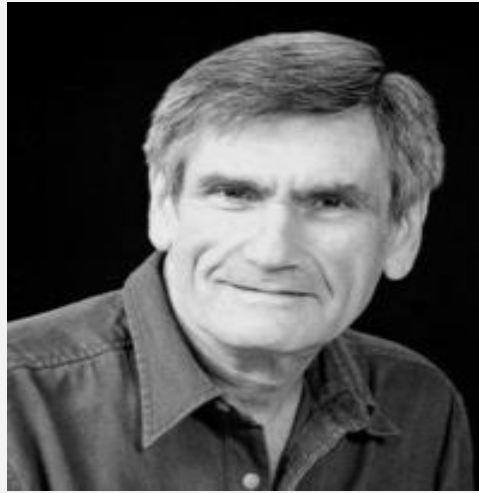


Viktor Frankl (1977): “The Unheard Cry for Meaning”  
Massey Hall, Toronto, Canada

Video clip:  
**Viktor Frankl & Man's Search for  
Meaning**  
Volodymyr | <https://youtu.be/UgVA6nXCj1U?t=80>

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“Every criticism, judgment, diagnosis, and expression of anger is the tragic expression of an unmet need.”

— Marshall Rosenberg



## SOME FEELINGS WHEN NEEDS ARE 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
- Elated**
  - Ecstatic
  - Exuberant
  - Thrilled
- Energetic**
  - Lively
  - Passionate
  - Exhilarated
- Refreshed**
  - Rejuvenated
  - Restored
- Curious**
  - Alert, Absorbed
  - Interested
- Centered**
  - Trusting
  - Clear
  - Open
- Joy**
  - Happy, glad
  - Jubilant
  - Pleased
- Gratitude**
  - Appreciative
  - Moved, touched
- Amused**
  - Tickled
  - Delighted
- Peace**
  - Calm
  - Relaxed



## SOME FEELINGS WHEN NEEDS ARE NOT MET

- 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

- 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**



- Honesty**
  - Authenticity
  - Integrity

- Growth**
  - Awareness
  - Consciousness
  - Discovery
  - Learning

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

- Trust**
  - Security
  - Safety

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

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

- Physical Well-being**
  - Air, breath
  - Food and water
  - Movement
  - Rest and sleep
  - Sexual expression
  - Safety
  - Comfort, shelter

- Healing**
  - Mourning
  - Growth
  - Care



enCOMPASSion

# 4-Step Communication Process

**The Goal:** Restore trust and reclaim humanity



**O** - **Observations** vs. Evaluation / Interpretation



**F** - **Feelings** vs. Thoughts



**N** - **Needs** vs. Strategies



**R** - **Requests** vs. Demands



# 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.



# 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 within us in the moment, knowing this is our deepest 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*



# Accessing care

1. Reclaiming humanity.
2. Aligning with interdependence.
3. Integrity - aligning means with ends (BE the change we want to see in the world)
4. More likely to meet everyone's needs, self included.
5. Ultimate freedom from fear and reactivity.



# 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 both people's openness to be impacted and changed by what they hear.
- Building Beloved Community = holding the needs of the whole, including my "enemies".
- When done with full choice, empathy for the 'enemy' is likely to support our liberation and capacity to create change.
- Only offering empathy without speaking truth is not sufficient for liberation (including when we are in power position).
- Empathize with the human experience (feelings and needs) not with strategies and narratives.





# We need understanding (not agreement)

Understanding is like oxygen to the heart. When I am understood I can breathe, I'm heard, I'm seen, I matter and I'm accompanied.

On the side of the person offering the understanding it's a path to connection, compassion, opening my heart and transforming separation and 'enemy images'.

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# Practice: empathy for my enemy

- What is the observation ? Something the other person did or said.
- What is it that this person doesn't want? what are they wanting to avoid, move away from?
- What is it that this person do want? Converting to positive language moves us closer to the heart.
- From strategy to need - identify what's important by asking: if they get what they want what would that give them?
- Opening my heart fully to their need (not to the strategy) - Imagine a time where I had a similar need. Let myself be moved and touched by the innocence of that need.
- Roleplay checking with the person if you got their need correctly



# Language examples:

- Sounds like it's really important to you to have **choice** in this matter...?
- Is it about **care** for your people?
- Do you want me to hear that **freedom** of speech matters ?
- I imagine you are really desperate for some **relief/hope** ?



**“If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man’s life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility”**

**~ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**



# 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>

- 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".

- 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>



## **Katherine, UNA-Golden Empire Chapter, President**

" My experience with the two-hour informal discussion we held called "Is Peace Possible in the Middle East" gave me a renewed appreciation for Aya and Non-Violent Communication. Aya Caspi was one of our three panelists—the other two being a historian and a diplomat. We had invited Aya to advance the discussion by asking her to share her personal feelings and experience from being an Israeli American. We thought that her experience in Non-Violent Communication would help the audience see and understand the suffering of both Israelis and Palestinians and develop a bit more empathy for both sides. Well, we didn't have much of a chance for that. The audience had passionate and diverse opinions, some defending the Israeli people and some defending the Palestinians . The tension in the room rose quickly. Each time Aya stepped in, and calmly and graciously addressed the person that was animated, by repeating what she thought that person had said, and then asking him/her if that was correct. And each time the person said yes and in a much calmer tone. Then Aya would ask him or her if they had felt "heard" and if they felt safe. The answer was always yes. And the tension in the room was diffused, every single time. Aya's skills saved the day for me (I had organized the whole event), for our chapter and for everyone in the room. It was a successful event because it was not only about history and facts. It gave people the opportunity to vent, and at the same time to be heard, validated and understood as human beings. The best part was towards the end of the two hours when Aya asked who in the room wanted the Israeli people to be safe, and everyone raised their hand. Then she asked who wanted Palestinians to be safe, and again, everyone raised their hand. The event ended with the many people expressing their appreciation for having attended such an event and for holding this discussion in a civil and respectful manner. I cannot be more grateful to Aya for her grace and her skills. "



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