

Restoring Harmony with Others using Nonviolent Communication

Whether interpersonal or organisational, unresolved conflict divides us from each other and demotivates us. Conflict is inevitable and healthy. It is how we deal with conflict that leads to separation, fear and sometimes 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, human connection whatever the circumstances. When focusing attention in the way NVC recommends, there is a quality of presence and depth of understanding that brings about unexpected change - even the most entrenched conflicts resolve.

Nonviolent Communication Skills:

This approach to communication emphasises mutual understanding of needs / values 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-tripping or 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 groups.

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, when useful or necessary, expressing our feelings free from language that attacks and lays blame on the other person.

Needs/Values – 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 / values 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 comply with our request, but when they are connected to our need they are freed up to think of something else they would be willing to do that meets our need and that also works for them.

The Origins of NVC

NVC was originated in the USA by Marshall Rosenberg (1934-2015), in response to the physical, emotional and spiritual violence he witnessed in society. He shared NVC in diverse cultures for 40 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 95 countries around the world, and is the author of *Nonviolent Communication - A Language of Life* (Puddledancer Press, 2003).

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