



# Compassionate Nonviolent Communication

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## **Additional Information Sources**

Rachelle Lamb

**[www.rachellelamb.com](http://www.rachellelamb.com)**

The Center for Nonviolent Communication

**[www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org)**

Nonviolent Communication (Book Publisher's Site)

**[www.nonviolentcommunication.com](http://www.nonviolentcommunication.com)**

# WAIT

Why Am I Talking?

## The Importance of Intention

- We always have an **intention** when we speak. The question is: are we fully conscious of our intention?
- Our **intention** significantly determines the quality of our exchanges.
- The words we choose to express ourselves are a reflection of our **intention**.
- We will develop **clarity of intention** to the degree that we place our **attention on intention**.
- When our **intention** is to get our way, the relationship is likely to be compromised.
- When our **intention** is to create a **quality of connection** with others where everyone's needs are valued, collaborative relationships ensue.

The purpose of Nonviolent Communication™ is to facilitate a quality of connection with others where everyone's needs are understood and valued.

# Important things we already know and often forget:

1. We can't change others; we can only change ourselves.
2. When people hear blame or criticism, they will usually shut down and become defensive.
3. When we take things personally, we suffer.
4. Consciously or unconsciously, we choose our responses in every given moment.
5. Everyone experiences struggle in life.
6. Anytime a person is angry or blaming, they are hurting inside.
7. People are doing the best they can.
8. Human beings are designed to strive for happiness; being miserable isn't fun.
9. Everyone needs to know that they matter.
10. Life is more enjoyable when we derive meaning and purpose from it.
11. The way we think, listen and speak has enormous influence on our experience and hence our happiness.
12. People are naturally collaborative and good natured when a) they are wholeheartedly engaged and b) they know that their contribution matters.
13. Human beings are interdependent and need each other. As the Asian saying says "Shared joy is double joy; shared sorrow is half sorrow."

The Nonviolent Communication Model encourages us to examine how we think, listen and communicate internally with ourselves and outwardly with others while also reminding us to hold within our awareness important basic truths about human beings and relationship dynamics. Using a four-step process, NVC supports us in becoming more aware, inclusive and positive in our communication, thereby providing us with the ability to influence mutually productive outcomes more effectively and consistently.

# The NVC Model

## *"Facilitating Respectful Dialogue"*

### **What's going on for me**

1. What I am **observing**
2. What I am **feeling**
3. What I am **needing**
4. What I am **requesting**

#### Language

*"When I see, hear . . ."*

*"I am feeling . . ."*

*"Because I am needing . . ."*

*"Would you be willing . . . ?"*

### **What's going on for others**

1. What they are **observing**
2. What they are **feeling**
3. What they are **needing**
4. What they are **requesting**

#### Language

*"When you see, hear . . ."*

*"Are you feeling . . . ?"*

*"Because you are needing . . . ?"*

*"Would you like . . . ?"*

### **1. Observation: Stating what another is doing/saying that does/doesn't meet needs.**

*"The highest form of human intelligence is the ability to observe without evaluating." Krishnamurti*

### **2. Feelings: Connection with the feelings being experienced in the moment.**

"I feel content", "I feel concerned", "I feel doubtful", "I feel frustrated", "I feel confused",  
"I feel excited", "I feel calm", "I feel perplexed", "I feel inspired", "I feel surprised"

Important: "I feel that ..." or "I feel you/he/she ..." are not feeling statements but assessments.

### **3. Needs: Connection with the need. Needs are universal and shared by all.**

Our goal is to determine the need(s) that are the source(s) of the feeling(s).

Example of needs: Autonomy, Choice, Respect, Integrity, Harmony, Order, Contribution, Growth, Learning, Appreciation, Safety, Inclusion, Trust, Consideration, Understanding, etc.

### **4. Request: Asking for something in order to meet needs.**

Mutual understanding occurs once needs have been identified and valued. Requests are made at this stage. Use of the word "willing" ensures that the choice to respond is always left open to the other eg. "Would you be willing . . .?"

Important: A request is not a demand or strategy to make people do what they do not want to do.

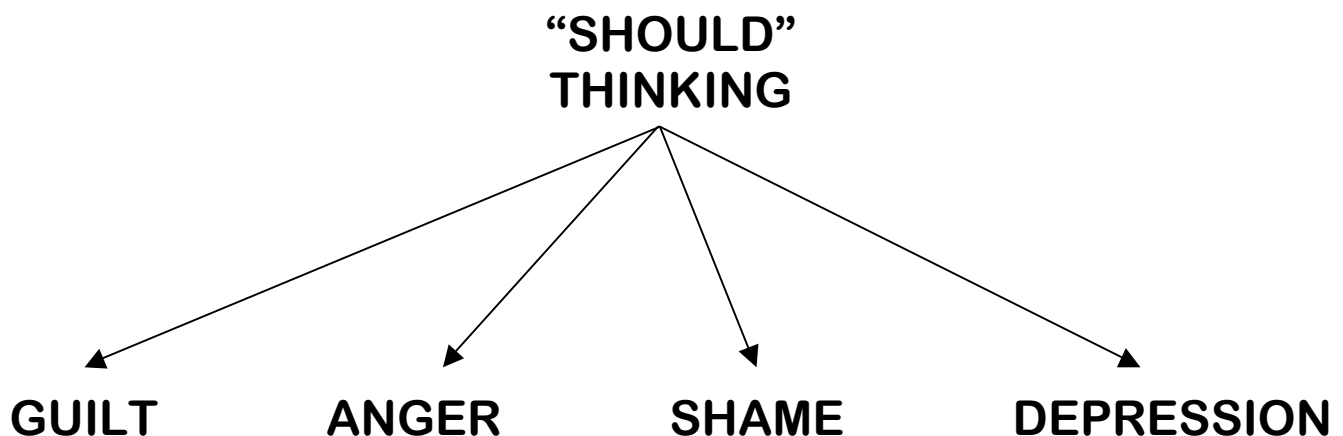
# Alienating Language

***Alienating or controlling language is language use that makes it difficult for us to remain connected to our compassionate nature. When we are communicating using alienating language, honesty means blaming and telling others what is wrong with them or telling ourselves that there is something wrong with us. We hear criticism, judgment, analysis and diagnosis. Consequently, we invest our energy into condemning ourselves or others and defending ourselves through counter-attack.***

- Words that imply wrongness (designed for the game Who's right ), usually comparative, diagnostic and judgmental also including words that label others. Such words are static and have a dehumanizing effect.  
e.g. should, ought, good, bad, right, wrong, always, never, appropriate, inappropriate, controlling, stupid, loser, racist, alcoholic.
- Words that minimize choice and respect for other's autonomy (demands)  
e.g. you must, you have to - these words usually guarantee resistance and provoke rebellious or submissive responses.
- Words that deny one's responsibility for actions taken  
e.g. I had to, the boss said so, it's company policy, just following orders, that's just the way it is, I had no choice, it's not possible.
- Words associated with the concept that certain actions merit reward/punishment  
e.g. he/she "deserves" . . .

## Guilt, Anger, Shame and Depression

*Symptoms of alienating language often appear as feelings of anger, guilt, shame and depression. Whenever we experience any of these, it helps to explore the thinking which is stimulating our discomfort. These feelings signal to us that we are not fully in touch with our needs and that we are thinking in terms of "should" . . . what others "should" do or what we "should" do.*



# Ways of Responding

Every moment offers us the opportunity to **choose** about how we will respond in any given situation. At times, it is difficult for us to recognize that we have choice, especially in situations where we are triggered and automatically respond in habitual and unconscious ways. We are more likely to be reactive when we don't take the time to look inside ourselves and others to learn what is really happening.

Nonviolent Communication helps us to become **conscious of our choices** and clearly see how certain choices either meet or do not meet needs, both ours and others.

These are the choices available to us in challenging situations:

- 1) Blame the other person (often associated with feelings of anger)
- 2) Blame ourselves (often associated with feelings of guilt, shame, and depression)
- 3) Reveal what's going on in us (our feelings and needs)
- 4) Search for what is going on in the other person (their feelings and needs)

## Example:

Stimulus - "I don't appreciate your tone of voice. It's quite disrespectful."

Response:

- 1) **Blame the other person:** I'm not being disrespectful. I'm simply saying that your making a decision without first consulting me was out of line.
- 2) **Blame ourselves:** You're right. You don't deserve to be treated so harshly.
- 3) **Reveal our feelings and needs:** When I hear you say that, I'm somewhat confused because I really value mutual respect in our exchanges. Can you help me out by letting me know what I can say or do right now that might provide you with reassurance that my intention is in fact to dialogue respectfully?
- 4) **Search for the other person's feelings and needs:** I'm wondering if you're annoyed right now because you need respect and also because you'd like some understanding for how frustrated you feel?

## Exercise: Self Awareness

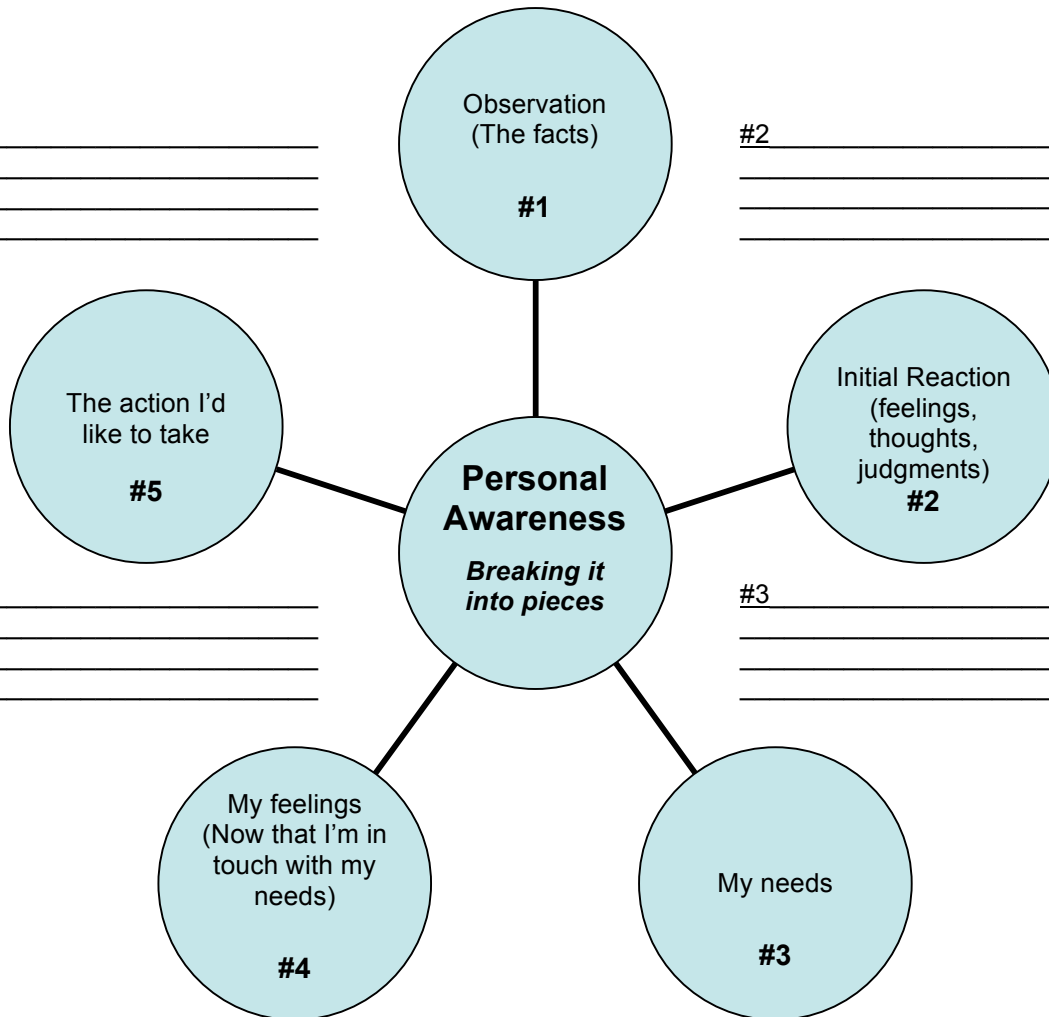
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### Instructions:

Think of a difficult topic you'd like to address with someone. Using the diagram above starting with circle #1, go around the circle taking notes at each step. Using this process helps us to slow down, gain greater **understanding** of our internal workings, connect with our **feelings** and **needs**, and develop **clarity** around our **intention**. Once we have completed all the steps, we can initiate our dialogue with greater awareness and increase our chances of having a productive dialogue with others.

Note: If, at step #4, you are still experiencing "anger" as a feeling, repeat step #3 to explore needs in greater depth. When people are *fully* in touch with needs, anger invariably shifts to pure feelings such as fear, discouragement, despair etc. and energy is released to effectively address the needs.

## Exercise: Expressing Honesty

1. **Observation:** Recall a conflict involving another person. Write down the specific words or actions of the other person that were a stimulus for you.
  
2. **Feelings:** How do you feel about it when you reflect on the incident?
  
3. **Needs:** What needs of yours were not met?
  
4. **Request:** What you would like to request in order to meet your needs?
  
5. Construct 2 or 3 phrases that you could express directly to the person in question that capture the elements listed above:



## Exercise: Listening Empathically

1. Write down a real or imagined message directed at you or someone else that you interpret as containing blame or criticism. (eg: *You're such a controlling person!*)

2. **Feelings:** What do you believe this person might be feeling?

3. **Needs:** What do you believe this person's unmet needs might be?

4. **Putting it together:** Imagine you are now talking directly to the person. Using the template below and the information you've gathered above, provide an empathic response.

*Are you feeling . . . . (their feelings) because you need . . . . (their need) ?*

### IMPORTANT TIPS:

- There is no "I" in empathy. Speak only in terms of the **other person's** feelings and needs.
- When people are most in need of empathy, they will often speak and behave in ways that will make it the most difficult for others to empathize with them. It's therefore crucial that we monitor how we are interpreting their words. If we remain focused on the person's needs, we will not hear blame or criticism which will make it much easier to empathize with them.
- Our reason for empathizing with another person should be based on our own desire to connect with them. We don't empathize as a strategy for getting what we want.

# Needs List

## **Autonomy**

Choice, Empowerment,  
Freedom, Independence,  
Space, Spontaneity

## **Connection**

Acceptance, Affection,  
Appreciation, Belonging,  
Closeness, Communication,  
Community,  
Companionship,  
Compassion, Consideration,  
Consistency, Cooperation,  
Empathy, Inclusion,  
Intimacy, Love, Mutuality,  
Nurturing, Openness,  
Respect/Self-respect,  
Safety, Security, Stability,  
Support, To know and be

known, To see and be seen,  
To understand and be  
understood, Trust,  
Understanding, Warmth

## **Harmony**

Beauty, Communion, Ease,  
Equality, Equanimity,  
Inspiration, Order, Peace,  
Serenity

## **Honesty**

Authenticity, Clarity,  
Integrity, Presence, Self-  
expression

## **Meaning**

Awareness, Celebration,

Consciousness,  
Contribution, Creativity,  
Discovery, Effectiveness,  
Efficacy, Growth, Hope,  
Learning, Mattering,  
Mourning, Participation,  
Purpose, Self-expression,  
Stimulation,

## **Play**

Joy, Humour, Stimulation

## **Physical Well-Being**

Air, Food,  
Movement/Exercise,  
Rest/Sleep, Sexual  
expression, Safety, Shelter,  
Sustenance, Touch, Water

# Feelings When Needs Are Being Met

## **Confident**

Empowered, Open, Proud,  
Safe, Secure

## **Connected**

Affectionate,  
Compassionate, Friendly,  
Loving, Open,  
Openhearted, Sympathetic,  
Tender, Vulnerable, Warm

## **Engaged**

Absorbed, Alert, Curious,  
Engrossed, Enchanted,  
Entranced, Fascinated,  
Interested, Intrigued,  
Involved, Spellbound,  
Stimulated

## **Excited**

Amazed, Animated,  
Ardent, Aroused,  
Astonished, Dazzled,

Eager, Energetic,  
Enthusiastic, Giddy,  
Invigorated, Lively,  
Passionate, Surprised,  
Vibrant

## **Exhilarated**

Blissful, Ecstatic, Elated,  
Enthralled, Exuberant

## **Grateful**

Appreciative, Moved,  
Thankful, Touched

## **Hopeful**

Expectant, Encouraged,  
Optimistic

## **Inspired**

Amazed, Awed, Radiant,  
Rapturous, Thrilled,  
Wonder

## **Joyful**

Amused, Delighted, Glad,  
Happy, Jubilant, Pleased,  
Tickled

## **Peaceful**

Calm, Clear headed,  
Comfortable, Centered,  
Content, Equanimous,  
Fulfilled, Mellow, Quiet,  
Relaxed, Relieved,  
Satisfied, Serene, Still,  
Tranquil, Trusting

## **Refreshed**

Enlivened, Reinvigorated,  
Rejuvenated, Renewed,  
Rested, Restored, Revived

# Feelings When Needs Are Not Being Met

## **Afraid**

Apprehensive, Dread, Foreboding, Frightened, Mistrustful, Panicked, Petrified, Scared, Suspicious, Terrified, Wary, Worried

## **Angry \***

Enraged, Furious, Incensed, Indignant, Irate, Livid, Outraged, Resentful

## **Annoyed**

Aggravated, Dismayed, Disgruntled, Displeased, Exasperated, Frustrated, Impatient, Irked, Irritated

## **Aversion**

Animosity, Appalled, Contempt, Disgusted, Dislike, Hate\*, Horrified, Hostile, Repulsed

## **Confused**

Ambivalent, Baffled, Bewildered, Dazed, Hesitant, Lost, Mystified, Perplexed, Puzzled, Torn

## **Disconnected**

Alienated, Aloof, Apathetic, Bored, Cold, Detached, Distant, Distracted, Indifferent, Numb, Removed, Uninterested, Withdrawn

## **Disquiet**

Agitated, Alarmed, Discombobulated, Disconcerted, Disturbed, Perturbed, Rattled, Restless, Shocked, Startled, Surprised, Troubled, Turbulent, Turmoil, Uncomfortable, Uneasy, Unnerved, Unsettled, Upset

## **Embarrassed**

Ashamed\*, Chagrined, Flustered, Guilty\*, Mortified, Self-conscious

## **Fatigue**

Beat, Burnt out, Depleted, Exhausted, Lethargic, Listless, Sleepy, Tired, Weary, Worn out

## **Pain**

Agony, Anguished, Bereaved, Devastated, Grief, Heartbroken, Hurt, Lonely, Miserable, Regretful, Remorseful

## **Sad**

Depressed\*, Dejected, Despair, Despondent, Disappointed, Discouraged, Disheartened, Forlorn, Gloomy, Heavy hearted, Hopeless, Melancholy, Unhappy, Wretched

## **Tense**

Anxious, Bitter, Cranky, Distressed, Distraught, Edgy, Fidgety, Frazzled, Irritable, Jittery, Nervous, Overwhelmed, Restless, Stressed out

## **Vulnerable**

Fragile, Guarded, Helpless, Insecure, Leery, Reserved, Sensitive, Shaky

## **Yearning**

Envious, Jealous, Longing, Nostalgic, Pining, Wistful

\* Note that feelings marked with an asterisk are not pure feelings as they include judgmental thoughts. In these cases, we will want to examine our thoughts and identify our needs so that we can make contact with the pure feeling without the judgments.

**IMPORTANT:** The following words are often confused as feelings when, in fact, they are interpretations or assessments of others' actions:

Abandoned, Abused, Attacked, Belittled, Betrayed, Boxed-in, Bullied, Cheated, Coerced, Controlled, Cornered, Criticized, Diminished, Distrusted, Ignored, Insulted, Interrupted, Intimidated, Invalidated, Let down, Manipulated, Misunderstood, Neglected, Overworked, Patronized, Pressured, Provoked, Put down, Rejected, Ripped off, Taken for granted, Threatened, Tricked, Unappreciated, Unheard, Unseen, Unsupported, Unwanted, Used, Victimized, Violated, Wronged

