

= Nonviolent Communication =

Nonviolent communication (abbreviated NVC , also called compassionate communication or collaborative communication) is a communication process developed by Marshall Rosenberg beginning in the 1960s . It focuses on three aspects of communication : self @-@ empathy (defined as a deep and compassionate awareness of one 's own inner experience) , empathy (understanding and sharing an emotion expressed by another) , and honest self @-@ expression (defined as expressing oneself authentically in a way that is likely to inspire compassion in others) .

Nonviolent communication is based on the idea that all human beings have the capacity for compassion and only resort to violence or behavior that harms others when they don 't recognize more effective strategies for meeting needs . Habits of thinking and speaking that lead to the use of violence (psychological and physical) are learned through culture . NVC theory supposes all human behavior stems from attempts to meet universal human needs and that these needs are never in conflict . Rather , conflict arises when strategies for meeting needs clash . NVC proposes that if people can identify their needs , the needs of others , and the feelings that surround these needs , harmony can be achieved .

While NVC is ostensibly taught as a process of communication designed to improve compassionate connection to others , it has also been interpreted as a spiritual practice , a set of values , a parenting technique , an educational method and a worldview .

= Applications =

NVC has been applied in organizational and business settings , in parenting , in education , in mediation , in psychotherapy , in healthcare , in addressing eating issues , in prisons , and as a basis for a children 's book , among other contexts .

Rosenberg says he has used Nonviolent Communication in peace programs in conflict zones including Rwanda , Burundi , Nigeria , Malaysia , Indonesia , Sri Lanka , Colombia , Serbia , Croatia , Ireland , and the Middle East including the Occupied Palestinian Territories .

= History and development =

According to a biography of Rosenberg on the Center for Nonviolent Communication (CNVC) website , Nonviolent Communication training evolved from his search for a way to rapidly disseminate peacemaking skills . CNVC says that NVC emerged from work he was doing with civil rights activists in the early 1960s , and that during this period he also mediated between rioting students and college administrators , and worked to peacefully desegregate public schools in long @-@ segregated regions .

An MA thesis by Marion Little (2008) says that the roots of the NVC model developed in the late 1960s , when Rosenberg was working on racial integration in schools and organizations in the Southern United States . The earliest version of the model (observations , feelings , and action @-@ oriented wants) was part of a training manual Rosenberg prepared in 1972 . The model had evolved to its present form (observations , feelings , needs and requests) by 1992 . The dialog between Rosenberg and NVC colleagues and trainers continued to influence the model , which by the late 2000s placed more importance on self @-@ empathy as a key to the model 's effectiveness . Another shift in emphasis , since 2000 , has been the reference to the model as a process . The focus is thus less on the " steps " themselves and more on the practitioner 's intentions in speaking (" is the intent to get others to do what one wants , or to foster more meaningful relationships and mutual satisfaction ? ") in listening (" is the intent to prepare for what one has to say , or to extend heartfelt , respectful attentiveness to another ? ") and the quality of connection experienced with others .

Also according to Little 's thesis , Rosenberg 's work with Carl Rogers on research to investigate the components of a helping relationship was central to the development of NVC . Rogers emphasized :
1) experiential learning , 2) " frankness about one 's emotional state , " 3) the satisfaction of

hearing others " in a way that resonates for them , " 4) the enriching and encouraging experience of " creative , active , sensitive , accurate , empathic listening , " 5) the " deep value of congruence between one ? s own inner experience , one ? s conscious awareness , and one ? s communication , " and , subsequently , 6) the enlivening experience of unconditionally receiving love or appreciation and extending the same .

Little says Rosenberg was Influenced by Erich Fromm , George Albee , and George Miller to adopt a community focus in his work , moving away from clinical psychological practice . The central ideas influencing this shift by Rosenberg were that : (1) individual mental health depends on the social structure of a community (Fromm) , (2) therapists alone are unable to meet the psychological needs of a community (Albee) , and (3) knowledge about human behavior will increase if psychology is freely given to the community (Miller) .

According to Little , Rosenberg ? s early work with children with learning disabilities shows his interest in psycholinguistics and the power of language , as well as his emphasis on collaboration . In its initial development , the NVC model re @-@ structured the pupil @-@ teacher relationship to give students greater responsibility for , and decision @-@ making related to , their own learning . The model has evolved over the years to incorporate institutional power relationships (i.e. , police @-@ citizen , boss @-@ employee) and informal ones (i.e. man @-@ woman , rich @-@ poor , adult @-@ youth , parent @-@ child) . The ultimate aim is to develop societal relationships based on a restorative , " partnership " paradigm and mutual respect , rather than a retributive , fear @-@ based , " domination " paradigm .

Little also says Rosenberg identified Mahatma Gandhi as an inspiration for the NVC model , and that Rosenberg ? s goal was to develop a practical process for interaction rooted in the philosophy of Ahimsa , which Little translates as " the overflowing love that arises when all ill @-@ will , anger , and hate have subsided from the heart . "

In order to show the differences between communication styles , Rosenberg started to use two animals . The violent communication is represented by the carnivorous Jackal as a symbol of aggression and especially dominance . The herbivorous Giraffe on the other hand , represents his NVC strategy . The Giraffe was chosen as symbol for NVC as its long neck is supposed to show the clear @-@ sighted speaker , being aware of his fellow speakers ' reactions , and simply because the Giraffe is the land @-@ living mammal with the biggest heart , representing the compassionate side of NVC . In his courses he tends to use these animals in order to make the differences in communication clearer to the audience .

= = NVC theory = =

= = Overview = = =

Nonviolent Communication holds that most conflicts between individuals or groups arise from miscommunication about their human needs , due to coercive or manipulative language that aims to induce fear , guilt , shame , etc . These " violent " modes of communication , when used during a conflict , divert the attention of the participants away from clarifying their needs , their feelings , their perceptions , and their requests , thus perpetuating the conflict .

Marshall Rosenberg , the founder of Nonviolent Communication , published numerous training materials to help in efforts to bring about radical social change . He was concerned with transforming the " gangs and domination structures " through the method he called " ask , ask , ask " . He suggested social change activists could focus on gaining access to those in power in order to " ask , ask , ask " for changes that will make life better for all including the powerful . He wrote about the need for the protective use of force , distinguishing it from the punitive use of force .

= = Theories = = =

Two NVC trainers characterize the assumptions underlying NVC as follows :

All human beings share the same needs
Our world offers sufficient resources for meeting everyone 's basic needs
All actions are attempts to meet needs
Feelings point to needs being met or unmet
All human beings have the capacity for compassion
Human beings enjoy giving
Human beings meet needs through interdependent relationships
Human beings change
Choice is internal
The most direct path to peace is through self @-@ connection

= = = Intentions = = =

The trainers also say that practicing NVC involves having the following intentions :

Open @-@ Hearted Living
Self @-@ compassion
Expressing from the heart
Receiving with compassion
Prioritizing connection
Moving beyond " right " and " wrong " to using needs @-@ based assessments
Choice , Responsibility , Peace
Taking responsibility for our feelings
Taking responsibility for our actions
Living in peace with unmet needs
Increasing capacity for meeting needs
Increasing capacity for meeting the present moment
Sharing Power (Partnership)
Caring equally for everyone ' s needs
Using force minimally and to protect rather than to educate , punish , or get what we want without agreement

= = = Communication that blocks compassion = = =

Rosenberg says that certain ways of communicating tend to alienate people from the experience of compassion : (ch.2)

Moralistic judgments implying wrongness or badness on the part of people who don 't act in harmony with our values . Blame , insults , put @-@ downs , labels , criticisms , comparisons , and diagnoses are all said to be forms of judgment . (Moralistic judgments are not to be confused with value judgments as to the qualities we value .) The use of moralistic judgments is characterized as an impersonal way of expressing oneself that does not require one to reveal what is going on inside of oneself . This way of speaking is said to have the result that " Our attention is focused on classifying , analyzing , and determining levels of wrongness rather than on what we and others need and are not getting . "

Demands that implicitly or explicitly threaten listeners with blame or punishment if they fail to comply .

Denial of responsibility via language that obscures awareness of personal responsibility . It is said that we deny responsibility for our actions when we attribute their cause to : vague impersonal forces (" I had to ") ; our condition , diagnosis , personal or psychological history ; the actions of others ; the dictates of authority ; group pressure ; institutional policy , rules , and regulations ; gender roles , social roles , or age roles ; or uncontrollable impulses .

Making comparisons between people .

A premise of deserving , that certain actions merit reward while others merit punishment .

== Four components ==

Rosenberg invites NVC practitioners to focus attention on four components :

Observation : the facts (what we are seeing , hearing , or touching) as distinct from our evaluation of meaning and significance . NVC discourages static generalizations . It is said that " When we combine observation with evaluation others are apt to hear criticism and resist what we are saying . " Instead , a focus on observations specific to time and context is recommended . (ch.3)

Feelings : emotions or sensations , free of thought and story . These are to be distinguished from thoughts (e.g. , " I feel I didn 't get a fair deal ") and from words colloquially used as feelings but which convey what we think we are (e.g. , " inadequate ") , how we think others are evaluating us (e.g. , " unimportant ") , or what we think others are doing to us (e.g. , " misunderstood " , " ignored ") . Feelings are said to reflect whether we are experiencing our needs as met or unmet . Identifying feelings is said to allow us to more easily connect with one another , and " Allowing ourselves to be vulnerable by expressing our feelings can help resolve conflicts . " (ch.4)

Needs : universal human needs , as distinct from particular strategies for meeting needs . It is posited that " Everything we do is in service of our needs . "

Request : request for a specific action , free of demand . Requests are distinguished from demands in that one is open to hearing a response of " no " without this triggering an attempt to force the matter . If one makes a request and receives a " no " it is recommended not that one give up , but that one empathize with what is preventing the other person from saying " yes , " before deciding how to continue the conversation . It is recommended that requests use clear , positive , concrete action language . (ch.6)

== Modes ==

There are three primary modes of application of NVC :

Self @-@ empathy involves compassionately connecting with what is going on inside us . This may involve , without blame , noticing the thoughts and judgments we are having , noticing our feelings , and most critically , connecting to the needs that are affecting us . (ch.4)

Receiving empathically , in NVC , involves " connection with what 's alive in the other person and what would make life wonderful for them ... It 's not an understanding of the head where we just mentally understand what another person says ... Empathic connection is an understanding of the heart in which we see the beauty in the other person , the divine energy in the other person , the life that 's alive in them ... It doesn 't mean we have to feel the same feelings as the other person . That 's sympathy , when we feel sad that another person is upset . It doesn 't mean we have the same feelings ; it means we are with the other person ... If you 're mentally trying to understand the other person , you 're not present with them . " (ch.5) Empathy involves " emptying the mind and listening with our whole being . " NVC suggests that however the other person expresses themselves , we focus on listening for the underlying observations , feelings , needs , and requests . It is suggested that it can be useful to reflect a paraphrase of what another person has said , highlighting the NVC components implicit in their message , such as the feelings and needs you guess they may be expressing . (ch.7)

Expressing honestly , in NVC , is likely to involve expressing an observation , feeling , need , and request . An observation may be omitted if the context of the conversation is clear . A feeling might be omitted if there is sufficient connection already , or the context is one where naming a feeling isn 't likely to contribute to connection . It is said that naming a need in addition to a feeling makes it less likely that people will think you are making them responsible for your feeling . Similarly , it is said that making a request in addition to naming a need makes it less likely that people will infer a vague demand that they address your need . The components are thought to work together synergistically . According to NVC trainer Bob Wentworth , " an observation sets the context , feelings support connection and getting out of our heads , needs support connection and identify what is important , and a request clarifies what sort of response you might enjoy . Using these components together minimizes the chances of people getting lost in potentially disconnecting

speculation about what you want from them and why . "

= = Research = =

NVC lacks significant " longitudinal analytical research , " and few studies have evaluated the effectiveness of NVC training programs . To date , there has been little discussion of NVC in academic contexts . Most evidence for the effectiveness of NVC has been anecdotal or based on theoretical support .

Juncadella produced a systematic review of research related to the impact of NVC on the development of empathy . She found 13 studies which met her inclusion criteria (three were published in peer reviewed journals ; ten were unpublished theses or researcher reports) . Eleven of these suggested an increase in empathy subsequent to the application of NVC (five of these with evidence of statistical significance) and two did not . Juncadella notes several shortcomings of her review . None of the studies she included were randomized and only three used validated instruments . As a result she used a narrative synthesis review format , which , " lacks precision , " but allows the summarization of studies of different types , sizes , outcome measures and aims . She suggests the primary limitation of her review is that a number of relevant studies exist that could not be included due to lack of availability . She suggests these might have significantly altered her results . Finally , she includes the following caveat : " I must mention the inevitable subjectivity bias present throughout the whole review . In spite of the efforts made towards ? disciplined subjectivity ? ... my decisions show a degree of uncertainty and inaccuracy born via the tension between the weak evidence of the studies and my own convictions about the NVC model . " Her overall assessment of the current research on NVC 's efficacy in promoting the development of empathy is that the results are promising , but " would need to be confirmed with further studies bearing stronger designs and more appropriate measures . " She notes that a major shortcoming of the existing research is the " mismatch between the constructs of the model and the validated empathy measures " and suggests that improved instruments need to be developed to adequately test NVC .

As of 2013 , eight Master 's theses and Doctoral dissertations are known to have tested the model on sample sizes of 108 or smaller and generally have found the model to be effective .

Allan Rohlfs , who first met Rosenberg in 1972 and was a founder of the Center for Nonviolent Communication , explains the paucity of academic literature as follows :

Virtually all conflict resolution programs have an academic setting as their foundation and therefore have empirical studies by graduate students assessing their efficacy . NVC is remarkable for its roots . Marshall Rosenberg , Ph.D. (clinical psychology , U of Wisconsin) comes from a full time private practice in clinical psychology and consultation , never an academic post . NVC , his creation , is entirely a grassroots organization and never had until recently any foundation nor grant monies , on the contrary funded 100 % from trainings which were offered in public workshops around the world Empirical data is now coming slowly as independent researchers find their own funding to conduct and publish empirical studies with peer review .

Richard Bowers ? thesis (2012) , updated to book form by Bowers and Moffett (2012) , asserts that NVC has been absent from academic programs due to a lack of research into the theoretical basis for the model and lack of research on the reliability of positive results . Bowers ? thesis meets the first objection through an analysis of existing theories which provide solid support for each element of the NVC (mediation) model . Without this theoretical understanding , it would not be clear what aspects of the NVC model make it work or even if it can be effectively applied by anyone other than Marshall Rosenberg . This theoretical analysis can provide a foundation for further empirical research on the effectiveness and reliability of the model .

NVC has reportedly been an element of a bundle of interventions that produced dramatic changes in forensic psychiatric nursing settings in which a high level of violence is the norm . NVC was adopted , in combination with other interventions , in an effort to reduce violence . The interventions were said to reduce key violence indicators by 90 percent over a three @-@ year period in a medium security unit , and by around 50 percent in a single year in a maximum security unit .

A 2014 study examined the effects of combined NVC and mindfulness training on 885 male

inmates of the Monroe Correctional Complex in Monroe , Washington . The training was found to reduce recidivism from 37 % to 21 % , and the training was estimated as having saved the state \$ 5 million per year in reduced incarceration costs . The training was found to increase equanimity , decrease anger , and lead to abilities to take responsibility for one 's feelings , express empathy , and to make requests without imposing demands .

NVC has also been reported as effective in reducing domestic violence . Male participants who graduated from an NVC @-@ based batterer intervention program in California had zero percent recidivism within 5 years , according to the relevant District Attorneys ' offices . The news report contrasted this with a recidivism rate of 40 percent within 5 years as reported by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project for graduates of their batterer intervention program based on the Duluth Model , said to previously offer the lowest known domestic violence recidivism rate .

Some recent research appears to validate the existence of universal human needs .

Bowers and Moffett provide a thoughtful study of the important role of empathy and human needs in mediation through the development of a theoretical model to explain the effectiveness of NVC mediation . The authors present theories of human needs and the basis for a common core of needs . They discuss theories that explain the importance of understanding human needs in the context of conflict resolution . They clearly distinguish core human needs from interests (strategies) and how focusing on needs is a paradigm shift in the field of conflict resolution . Further , Bowers and Moffett present theories of empathy from the pioneering work of Carl Rogers , Heinz Kohut , and others . Empathy is distinguished from sympathy and active listening , pointing out how the word empathy is often confused in the literature by using it interchangeably with these other two terms . They also examine stage theories of the development of empathy as well as constructive @-@ developmental theories related to empathy .

= = Relationship to spirituality = =

As Theresa Latini notes , " Rosenberg understands NVC to be a fundamentally spiritual practice . " Marshall Rosenberg has , in fact , described the influence of his spiritual life on the development and practice of NVC :

" I think it is important that people see that spirituality is at the base of Nonviolent Communication , and that they learn the mechanics of the process with that in mind . It ? s really a spiritual practice that I am trying to show as a way of life . Even though we don ? t mention this , people get seduced by the practice . Even if they practice this as a mechanical technique , they start to experience things between themselves and other people they weren ? t able to experience before . So eventually they come to the spirituality of the process . They begin to see that it ? s more than a communication process and realize it ? s really an attempt to manifest a certain spirituality . "

Rosenberg further states that he developed NVC as a way to " get conscious of " what he calls the " Beloved Divine Energy " .

Some Christians have found NVC to be complementary to their Christian faith . Many people have found Nonviolent Communication to be very complementary to Buddhism , both in theory and in manifesting Buddhist ideals in practice .

= = Relationship to other models = =

Marion Little examines theoretical frameworks related to NVC . The influential interest @-@ based model for conflict resolution , negotiation , and mediation developed by Fisher , Ury , and Patton at the Harvard Negotiation Project in the 1980s appears to have some conceptual overlap with NVC , although neither model references the other . Little suggests The Gordon Model for Effective Relationships (1970) as a likely precursor to both NVC and interest @-@ based negotiation , based on conceptual similarities , if not any direct evidence of a connection . Like Rosenberg , Gordon had worked with Carl Rogers , so the models ' similarities may reflect common influences .

Suzanne Jones sees a substantive difference between active listening as originated by Gordon and empathic listening as recommended by Rosenberg , insofar as active listening involves a specific

step of reflecting what a speaker said to let them know you are listening , whereas empathic listening involves an ongoing process of listening with both heart and mind and being fully present to the other 's experience , with an aim of comprehending and empathizing with the needs of the other , the meaning of the experience for that person .

Gert Danielsen and Havva Kök both note an overlap between the premises of NVC and those of Human Needs Theory (HNT) , an academic model for understanding the sources of conflict and designing conflict resolution processes , with the idea that " Violence occurs when certain individuals or groups do not see any other way to meet their need , or when they need understanding , respect and consideration for their needs . "

Chapman Flack sees an overlap between what Rosenberg advocates and critical thinking , especially Bertrand Russell 's formulation uniting kindness and clear thinking .

Martha Lasley sees similarities with the Focused Conversation Method developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) , with NVC 's observations , feelings , needs , and requests components relating to FCM 's objective , reflective , interpretive , and decisional stages .

= = Responses = =

There is little published critique of NVC . Some researchers have noted that NVC lacks an evidence base beyond the copious anecdotal claims of effectiveness and similarly lacks discussion in the literature of the theoretical basis of the model .

Several researchers have attempted a thorough evaluation of criticisms and weaknesses of NVC and assessed significant challenges in its application . These span a range of potential problems , from the practical to the theoretical , and include concerns gathered from study participants and researchers .

The difficulty of using NVC as well as the dangers of misuse are common concerns . The NVC four step model is seen as problematic for a number of reasons :

- the notion of unbiased observations has been criticized because multiple interpretations of events and behaviors are likely ;

- people may not understand their own feelings and needs and therefore expressing them may be challenging , if not impossible ;

- the model often causes people to feel awkward and requires more trust in others than is typically found in everyday interactions ;

- the process of paraphrasing and attempting to guess the identity of people 's feelings can be off putting for some ;

- the demands of successfully requesting positive actions using appropriate NVC language is daunting and requires a level of investment of time and reflection not typically available in most people 's interactions .

In addition , Bitschnau and Flack find a paradoxical potential for violence in the use of NVC , occasioned by its unskilled use . Bitschnau further suggests that the use of NVC is unlikely to allow everyone to express their feelings and have their needs met in real life as this would require inordinate time , patience and discipline . Those who are skilled in the use of NVC may become prejudiced against those who are not and prefer to converse only among themselves .

Oboth suggests that people might hide their feelings in the process of empathy , subverting the nonviolence of communication .

The massive investment of time and effort in learning to use NVC has been noted by a number of researchers .

Chapman Flack , in reviewing a training video by Rosenberg , finds the presentation of key ideas " spell @-@ binding " and the anecdotes " humbling and inspiring , " notes the " beauty of his work , " and his " adroitly doing fine attentive thinking " when interacting with his audience . Yet Flack wonders what to make of aspects of Rosenberg 's presentation , such as his apparent " dim view of the place for thinking " and his building on Walter Wink 's account of the origins of our way of thinking . To Flack , some elements of what Rosenberg says seem like pat answers at odds with the challenging and complex picture of human nature history , literature and art offer .

Flack notes a distinction between the " strong sense " of nonviolent communication as a virtue that is possible with care and attention , and the " weak sense , " a mimicry of this born of ego and haste . The strong sense offers a language to examine one 's thinking and actions , support understanding , bring one 's best to the community , and honor one 's emotions . In the weak sense , one may take the language as rules and use these to score debating points , label others for political gain , or insist that others express themselves in this way . Though concerned that some of what Rosenberg says could lead to the weak sense , Flack sees evidence confirming that Rosenberg understands the strong sense in practice . Rosenberg 's work with workshop attendees demonstrates " the real thing . " Yet Flack warns that " the temptation of the weak sense will not be absent . " As an antidote , Flack advises , " Be conservative in what you do , be liberal in what you accept from others , " (also known as the robustness principle) and guard against the " metamorphosis of nonviolent communication into subtle violence done in its name . "

Bowling Green State University Professor Ellen Gorsevski , assessing Rosenberg 's book , " Nonviolent Communication : A Language of Compassion " (1999) in the context of geopolitical rhetoric , states that " the relative strength of the individual is vastly overestimated while the key issue of structural violence is almost completely ignored . "

PuddleDancer Press reports that NVC has been endorsed by a variety of public figures .
Sven Hartenstein has created a series of cartoons spoofing NVC .

= = Organizations = =

The Center for Nonviolent Communication (CNVC) , founded by Marshall Rosenberg , has trademarked the terms NVC , Nonviolent Communication and Compassionate Communication , among other terms , for clarity and branding purposes .

CNVC certifies trainers who wish to teach NVC in a manner aligned with CNVC 's understanding of the NVC process . CNVC also offers trainings by certified trainers .

Some trainings in nonviolent communication are offered by trainers sponsored by organizations considered as allied with , but having no formal relationship with , the Center for Nonviolent Communication founded by Marshall Rosenberg . Some of these trainings are announced through CNVC . Numerous NVC organizations have sprung up around the world , many with regional focuses .

= = Articles about NVC = =

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