

EMPOWERED COMMUNICATION GUIDE



MY LA THERAPY

Mastering Empowered Communication with NVC

Most of us have been taught to communicate passively, critically, or manipulatively--and that's so normal to us that we don't even realize we're doing it. That is, until we find ourselves feeling powerless to get our needs met, repeating the same conflicts with those we love, and feeling alone or trapped in our relationships.

The NVC framework provides a systematic approach, not only to healing our communication with others, but also to healing our relationship with ourselves by teaching us to be present to our own needs, feelings, and requests without blaming others or internalizing shame.

This is a lot harder and a lot deeper than it sounds.

Deep down, poor communication often stems from *anxiety*. Half the time, we're not even aware of our anxiety because we're so used to it. And anxiety prevents us from being aware enough of our own needs, feelings, and requests to communicate them clearly, directly, and without blame or shame.

Half the time, we have no idea that what we are attempting to communicate is *not at all* what we are actually saying.

So we *feel* like we've expressed our needs a hundred and one times, but in actuality we've done so in ways that were passive, unclear, or blame-based. And that usually means we don't get our needs met and this can breed resentment, feelings of victimhood, and shame. What's even worse is this usually leads to a self-reinforcing snowball of critical, passive-aggressive, or unclear communication between ourselves and others.

When left unaddressed, this feedback loop can affect every area of our lives from work, to relationships, to our general sense of self-efficacy and self-worth. Because when we don't know how to get our needs met, we sometimes start to think our needs don't matter, and then we draw the mistaken and painful conclusion that we don't matter.

But that's where NVC comes on the scene to break this vicious cycle and create a *new* positive feedback loop of clarity, empathy, and mutual responsibility. Not only does this improve our communication skills, but it improves our self-awareness, emotional IQ, and relational connections. Then this becomes the new self-reinforcing cycle in a new direction.

NVC teaches us to take full ownership of our needs, values, and feelings and to make clear, actionable requests. Using NVC we learn to remove criticism, judgment, and blame from our communication entirely. This is a minor miracle in a culture where criticism and control seem to undergird a majority of our communication.

What's even more incredible is that as we remove shame and blame from others, we begin to heal our own self-judgment at the same time. This is deeper work that cuts to the heart of so much of the unconscious problems that call the shots behind the scenes in our lives.

I highly recommend Marshall Rosenberg's groundbreaking book, "Nonviolent Communication." Buy it by clicking [here](#).

For the TL;DR, or those who want a succinct "cheat sheet" to help reinforce and practice the principles, here you go!

Use this as a reference any time you need help identifying your needs and feelings or any time you're noticing you're feeling disempowered, shameful, or resentful in relationship to others.

Nonviolent Communication has been absolutely life-changing for me because it goes beyond the surface and gets to the root causes of communication issues, healing ourselves and our relationships in one fell swoop.

Enjoy the power and transformation available to you by engaging deeply with this approach and practicing the principles.

Brooke Sprowl



FOUR PRINCIPLES OF NVC

1. Observations
2. Feelings
3. Needs
4. Requests

OBSERVATIONS

Observations are descriptions of facts as reported by our physical senses or our inner senses. Examples of facts that come from our physical senses (5 senses) are an exact quote you heard someone say or a neutral description of a specific event you witnessed. Inner senses also include our inner voice, vision, and thoughts.

Neutral observations are characterized by:

- Direct, sensory experience
- Specific to time and context
- Free of judgement, criticism, blame, shame, or analysis
- We communicate our experience in neutral, fact based language, focusing on physical sensations and direct experience

Examples of an observation:

- I saw you come into work after 9am three times this week.
 - This is a direct, sensory report, is specific to time and context, and does not use any judgement, criticism, or evaluation.

KEY DISTINCTION: OBSERVATIONS VS. EVALUATIONS

Observations are neutral statements of what you actually/objectively see or hear; objective facts without subjective filters. Observations are distinct from evaluations.

VS.

Evaluations are the opposite of observations. Evaluations are moral or value judgements of good and bad, right and wrong, and appropriate and inappropriate, that are subjective to each person and often elicit shame and blame when we frame the world in this way.

Evaluations include communication that demonstrates implicit or explicit shame, judgments, labels, blame, analysis, and interpretations.

Examples of an evaluation:

If you were to say, “You come in late a lot and that’s very unprofessional” that would not be considered an observation, but is rather an evaluation. “A lot” is not specific and “unprofessional” is an evaluation, rather than neutral observation.

FEELINGS

Feelings are composed of emotions and physical sensations.

Physical sensations and emotions are how our bodies alert us to the state of our needs.

Feelings include:

- Core emotions such as anger, sadness, happiness, and fear, which are universal across all cultures and people.
- Physical sensations such as heart fluttering, tight jaw, pit in the stomach.

Example of a feeling statement: “I feel sad.”

Example of physical sensation statement: “I feel tight in my chest.”

KEY DISTINCTION: FEELINGS VS THOUGHTS/PERCEPTIONS

Feelings are different from perceptions, thoughts, or “blame verbs.” Feelings express pure emotions and or bodily sensations, fully owning your own experience, rather than what you think or perceive someone is doing to you.

“**Blame verbs**” are thoughts disguised as feelings that often contain implicit blame. For example, “I feel” insulted, attacked, blamed, unappreciated, disrespected, ignored, or misunderstood are examples of blame verbs. If you can add “by you” to the end of a word (e.g. “I feel insulted by you”), it’s usually a sign that you’re using a blame verb.

Example of blame verbs:

“I feel insulted.”

Example of a thought disguised as a feeling:

Another example of a thought disguised as a feeling is, “I feel like you are being unfair.”

We often start statements with “I feel” but they end with thoughts, blame, and judgments rather than actual feelings and sensations. Mistaking thoughts for feelings prevents us from being present and connected with our inner experience and alienates us from ourselves and others.

NEEDS:

Needs and values are the resources we require to sustain and enrich life. Needs and values are considered to be our universal life energy, that which motivates and sustains us. They are intangible, without reference to specific people, actions, or things.

- Needs are universal.
- Needs transcend culture and conditioning.
- Needs make no reference to how another person is behaving or should behave.
- Values are usually equivalent to needs

Example of a need: “I need alone time right now.” “I need compassion.”

KEY DISTINCTION: NEEDS VS. STRATEGIES

Needs and values are distinct from strategies, blame, “Should Thinking.”

Strategies are specific means we use to attempt to get our needs met. Strategies are usually indirect attempts at control and often backfire in one way or another.

“Should Thinking.” When we use the word “should” that’s also a sign that we’re assigning a judgment to something rather than expressing our needs.

Blame is when we ascribe responsibility to someone else for our feelings, actions, and triggers. NVC teaches us to take full responsibility for our own experience and behavior without blaming others and seeing them as causing how we feel.

REQUESTS

Requests are invitations to contribute to the well-being of yourself and others with specific, actionable questions.

Requests are:

- Concrete questions posed with the intention of fulfilling a need.
- Specific actions stated in the positive (what we do want, rather than what we don’t want).
- Immediately doable.

3 types of Requests:

1. Clarity
2. Feedback
3. Action

Examples of Clarity Requests: “Would you be willing to clarify what you mean by what you just said?” “Would you clarify what your request to me is?”

- **Examples of Connection Requests:** Requests for reflection of what you just expressed, to see if what you said came across to your listener and exploring how the listener feels in response. For example: “Would you be willing to tell me what you’re hearing me say?” And, “How do you feel about what I’ve just said?”
- **Example of Action and Solution Requests:** Request to meet immediate needs: “Would you bring the groceries in from the car? I could use some help.”

KEY DISTINCTION: REQUESTS VS. DEMANDS

When making a request, it is important to be willing to hear a “no”. Ask yourself before you make a request if you are attached to a particular outcome or action, because if you are, your request will likely be a demand or expectation in disguise and may be a veiled way to control or manipulate another person indirectly.

****If your health or physical safety is at risk, that is the exception.****

Requests are distinct from demands that use fear, guilt, shame, manipulation, or reward.

Requests are made in the present, and are doable, concrete, specific, and affirmative actions (a “do want,” rather than a “don’t want”).

- **Demands** include a threat of punishment or the promise of reward linked to a behavior
- **Wishes** tend to be vague, future oriented, and non-specific
- **Examples of Connection Requests:** Requests for reflection of what you just expressed, to see if what you said came across to your listener and exploring how the listener feels in response. For example: “Would you be willing to tell me what you’re hearing me say?” And, “How do you feel about what I’ve just said?”
- **Example of Action and Solution Requests:** Request to meet immediate needs: “Would you bring the groceries in from the car? I could use some help.”

PRINCIPLES IN ACTION:

ONFR can be used in any sequence - each example shows a different order of the OFNR components.

EXAMPLE 1:

Observation: "I hear you say you won't have the report complete until next week..."

Feeling: ...and I'm feeling some frustration and concern.

Needs/values: It's important to me that our team is timely on reports so the production team can be efficient.

Request: Would you please tell me what's preventing you from completing the report, and what our team might do to get it finished by 4pm tomorrow?"

EXAMPLE 2:

Feeling: "I feel irritated..."

Observation: ...when I see you've returned my car with an empty gas tank.

Request: Would you fill it up by tonight?

Needs/values: I want to trust that I can get to work on time tomorrow."

EXAMPLE 3:

Request: “Would you be willing to take me to the airport this afternoon?”

Feeling: I’m feeling somewhat anxious...

Needs/values: ...and I could use some support and help.

Observation: My car hasn’t been running well this week and I can’t get it fixed until after my trip.”

EXAMPLE 4:

Needs/values: “Because sharing responsibility is important to me in our family...

Request: ...would you set the table while I get dinner ready?

Feeling: I’m happy...

Observation: ...seeing what you’ve already done this week to help out at home: you fed the dog, washed your clothes, and made your bed each morning. Wow!”

EXAMPLE 5:

Observation: “I’m hearing you say you would like to go out dancing tonight;

Feeling: and I’m feeling so tired and overwhelmed...

Needs/values: ... I’d rather take some downtime and rest.

Request (connecting request): How do you feel hearing me say this?”

NEEDS: CHEAT SHEET

Acceptance	Discovery	Peace
Affection	Ease	Play
Appreciation	Effectiveness	Presence
Authenticity	Efficacy	Purpose
Autonomy	Empathy	Respect
Awareness	Equality	Rest
Beauty	Exercise	Safety
Belonging	Expression	Security
Celebration	Food	Self-expression
Challenge	Freedom	Sexual
Choice	Growth	Shelter
Clarity	Harmony	Sleep
Closeness	Honesty	Space
Communication	Hope	Spontaneity
Communion	Humor	Stability
Community	Inclusion	Stimulation
Companionship	Independence	Support
Compassion	Inspiration	Time Alone
Competence	Integrity	Touch
Connection	Intimacy	To know and be known
Consciousness	Joy	To see and be seen
Consideration	Love	To be understood
Consistency	Meaning	To understand
Contribution	Mutuality	Trust
Cooperation	Nurturing	Warmth
Creativity	Order Participation	Water

FEELINGS CHEAT SHEET

Feelings when your needs are satisfied

absorbed	engrossed	peaceful
affectionate	enlivened	pleased
alert	enthralled	proud
amazed	enthusiastic	quiet
amazed	entranced	radiant
amused	equanimous	rapturous
animated	excited	refreshed
appreciative	exhilarated	rejuvenated
ardent	expectant	relaxed
aroused	exuberant	relieved
astonished	fascinated	renewed
awed	friendly	rested
blissful	fulfilled	restored
calm	giddy	revived
centered	glad	safe
clear headed	grateful	satisfied
comfortable	happy	secure
compassionate	hopeful	serene
confident	inspired	spellbound
content	interested	still
curious	intrigued	stimulated
dazzled	invigorated	surprised
delighted	involved	sympathetic
eager	joyful	tender
ecstatic	jubilant	thankful
elated	lively	thrilled
empowered	loving	tickled
enchanted	mellow	touched
encouraged	moved	tranquil
energetic	open	trusting
engaged	open hearted	vibrant
	optimistic	warm
	passionate	wonder

FEELINGS CHEAT SHEET

Feelings when your needs are not satisfied

afraid	disappointed	guilty	overwhelmed	uncomfortable
aggravated	discombobulated	hate	pain	uneasy
agitated	disconcerted	heartbroken	panicked	unhappy
agony	disconnected	heavy hearted	perplexed	uninterested
alarmed	discouraged	helpless	perturbed	unnerved
alienated	disgruntled	hesitant	petrified	unsettled
aloof	disgusted	hopeless	pinning	upset
ambivalent	disheartened	horrified	puzzled	vulnerable
angry	dislike	hostile	rattled	wary
anguished	dismayed	hurt	regretful	weary
animosity	displeased	impatient	remorseful	wistful
annoyed	disquiet	incensed	removed	withdrawn
anxious	distant	indifferent	repulsed	worn out
apathetic	distracted	indignant	resentful	worried
appalled	distraught	insecure	reserved	wretched
apprehensive	distressed	irate	restless	yearning
ashamed	disturbed	irked	restless	
aversion	dread	irritable	sad	
baffled	edgy	irritated	scared	
beat	embarrassed	jealous	self-conscious	
bereaved	enraged	jittery	sensitive	
bewildered	envious	leery	shaky	
bored	exasperated	lethargic	shocked	
burnt out	exhausted	listless	sleepy	
chagrined	fatigue	livid	startled	
cold	fidgety	lonely	stressed out	
confused	flustered	longing	surprised	
contempt	foreboding	lost	suspicious	
cranky	forlorn	melancholy	tense	
dazed	fragile	miserable	terrified	
dejected	razzled	mistrustful	tired	
depleted	frightened	mortified	torn	
depressed	frustrated	mystified	troubled	
despair	furious	nervous	turbulent	
despondent	gloomy	nostalgic	turmoil	
detached	grief	numb		
devastated	guarded	outraged		

NEXT STEPS...

Our Thought Mastery Guide is just one of many research-proven tools we use to help you overcome your inner roadblocks, find greater peace, and support your self-transformation.

To dive deeper and take your transformation to the next level, book a free call with one of our warm, experienced therapists.

[BOOK A FREE CALL](#)

To book a free call, click the button above or learn more at:

mylatherapy.com

We are here to answer any questions and to empower you to discover new ways of being to create a more purposeful, peaceful, and soulful life.

Brooke Sprawl

