Power, Love and Empathy for Advocacy

An Introduction to Nonviolent Communication

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Sunday, Mar 23, 2014, 3:15 & 4:15 pm

"Judge not, that ye be not judged." Matthew 7:1-3, Christian Bible (KJV)
"There is a field beyond right and wrong, [left and right??], I will meet you there." –Rumi

ABOUT NVC NVC was developed by psychologist-mediator Marshall Rosenberg in the 60s-70s, based on the work of Mahatma Gandhi, Carl Rogers, Martin Luther King, Jr., Paolo Friere, Walter Wink, and other liberative, egalitarian, healing & spiritual traditions.

SEVEN BASIC ASSUMPTIONS (adapted from www.BayNVC.org)

1. Needs Consciousness: All human beings have the same basic, deep needs (longings/values/life-energy.) All actions are attempts to meet these same universal needs--even those of folks who attack, challenge or annoy us.

2. Interdependence/Compassion are Natural: We are born social--with connection and choice, we want to give. Many needs cannot be met alone, such as for safety, mattering, or belonging.

3. Everyone’s Needs Matter: When anyone’s needs are disregarded, we are all at risk. And everyone’s needs can be met with co-operation and creativity. There are enough resources to meet the basic needs of everyone—beware of scarcity thinking. (Which serves what—beyond sustainability?)

4. Beyond the Right/Wrong Domination Paradigm: Instead of the violence of labels and judgments and “Power-Over” systems and roles, we can choose Power-With others, lived as respect, the dignity of choice and connection.

5. Beware of Habits of Disconnection (Power-Over) (NB: Activists!): 1) Demands (instead of choices/requests); 2) Diagnosing/judging others (instead of concrete observations/facts we can meet on; 3) Denial of Responsibility with “shoulds” and “have tos” (instead of self-responsibility); 4) Deserving or comparisons (instead of believing we ALL matter).

6. Our Feelings/Body Wisdom Help Indicate When Needs are Met or Not. When our needs are met, we tend to feel relaxed, open, joyous; when needs are not met, we experience fear, anger, impatience, confusion, grief etc. These are powerful guides to connecting to what Life/Spirit is needing/longing for.

7. How We Listen May Be More Important than What We Say: We can choose to hear and react to labels, blame, criticism and anger OR hear and support and build on the feelings & life energy/needs that most matter--hence, the power of empathy for advocacy.
FOUR NVC SKILLS FOR ADVOCACY (101)

1. BRIDGE-BUILDING w/HUMAN NEEDS: Try to empathize/stay connected to the humanizing feelings and universal needs (i.e. core values longings or life-energies) that both we and even our opponents, or “enemies”, have and share.

Exercise#1: Brainstorm: the world we want is based on what values/needs?

Worksheet: Take five minutes to fill out the EAD/Advocacy worksheet—we will demonstrate and then practice/work through the steps with a neighbor.

Exercise #2: Pair with a neighbor. “A” share your nightmare of what a legislator might argue tomorrow. Take 30-60 seconds to express that to B. B, take a breath, reflect back generally what you heard A say and guess empathically what A is feeling or needing, what matters most. (NB “wrong” guesses help them find their need too.) Focus on the need. Switch so B shares what would be difficult to hear, and A reflects/guesses the wanting/needs. Shifts?

2. BRIDGE-BUILDING w/CONCRETE OBSERVATIONS: Check that your observations are concrete enough to be video-able (inc. stats, historical facts, etc.) so that they are not “loaded” with your evaluations or interpretations—toward common ground. Also include truthful, personal stories geared toward specific pending legislation/actions.

Exercise #3: Share one or two observations with neighbor who is on alert for any interpretations/stories that have crept into your objectivity. Adjust toward building common ground. Switch roles.

3. BRIDGE-BUILDING w/DOABLE REQUESTS: Make a few doable, timely, positive (“you can’t do a don’t”) requests that move both relationships and work for justice along (avoid demands—we all crave the dignity of choice or vague wishes).

Exercise #4: On your own, imagine making a request for connection: Ex. “Would you be willing to let me know how what I’ve said lands with you?” Then, imagine a request for action: Would you be willing to…. [ex. vote for this legislation or let me know your decision?]

4. DEPTH-BUILDING w/SELF-RESPONSIBILITY/SELF-EMPATHY: 1) Own your feelings (and judgments/stories) as about your deepest needs/values, not the value of others. 2) Stay self-connected to the positive life energy in your deepest, truest, most authentic feelings and needs. Celebrate your caring!

Exercise #5: Take a breath, reconnect to the life energy in the need you MOST want to meet in your advocacy work, where does it live in you? Touch/treasure it.

HARVEST: Needs met? Not met, yet? Requests of self/others you might make?

NEXT STEPS? For more information: www.cnvc.org or www.nvctraining.org
Our local DC community/newsletter: www.CapitalNVC.org
www.thesustainableactivist.org         louisaldavis@verizon.net         703/860-1203
1. **SELF-EMPATHY:** Take a moment to “meet”—connect and feel into the power and energy of the need(s) that motivate you to take action.

2. **IMAGINE** a meeting with a legislator (or NRA member?) and a difficult-to-hear statement/question (your worst nightmare) about your issue/position:

3. **OBSERVATIONS** What concrete positive legislative action do you want to advocate for? What concrete, positive (video-able) statistics, true stories or concerns can you speak of most authentically?

   What thoughts or judgments (“stories”) do you have about the other person or the situation?

   What thoughts or judgments do you have about yourself--your words, actions, choices?

3. **FEELINGS/NEEDS** (STAR: Stop, Take a Breath and Relax?) Use chart below:
   - **Self-empathy:** As you consider difficult message/judgments, what feelings come up? What might be other unmet needs that give rise to these feelings?
   - **Empathy:** Now turn your attention to the other person, the one who spoke/might speak the words that are difficult for you. Make an open-hearted guess:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judgments/Blaming (aka the Jackal Show)</th>
<th>Feelings/Needs (aka Giraffe Ears)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Myself (self-emp.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Person (empathy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **REQUESTS** (All the NVC Basics together now!)

   **Expression:** When I observe________________________________________________,
   I feel_________________,
   because I so value____________________,
   Connecting request of other: (ex. Would you be willing to tell me what makes most or least sense to you?): Would you be willing to________________________________

   Action request of other: (ex. Would you be willing to vote, consider reading, letting me know...?) Would you be willing to________________________________

   Request of self: (ex. I want to be willing to hear no with curiosity and stay connected to my needs—will I?) I will try to________________________________