

Activities



Below are a few activities to try out to practise the methods of NVC. The following page also has suggestions on reviewing the activities.

Activity 1: Identifying Feelings

In each of the following statements, do you regard the speaker to be expressing his or her feelings? If not, please edit the sentence until it does.

‘I feel dismissed when no one at work responds to my suggestions’.

‘It feels completely incomprehensible how you can do such a thing.’

‘I’d be furious too if that had happened to me.’

‘You’re wearing me out.’

‘I feel independent, now that I have my own car and paycheck.’

'I feel I am being unkind to others.'

'I feel you're annoying me on purpose.'

Activity 2: What is my need here?

Consider the question, 'What might my need be if I had the following thought in my head during a meeting?' Have a go at translating each statement into a possible feeling and need.

"She's irresponsible. We all agreed to let someone know if we weren't going to show up."

"Everyone else here knows more NVC than I do."

"He always takes more time than everyone else."

"People needing therapy ought to get professional help. We can't handle that level of dysfunctionality here!"

"This is boring."

"There should be a rule against using offensive sexist language in a group like this."

"There he goes again...someone should just shut him up!"

"This group of people is so cold and rigid."

Activity 3: Exploring Feelings and Needs

Take a blank side of paper and at the top, write down something somebody said to you that you didn't like hearing.

Write down how you're feeling when you think about what they said.

Write down what you were needing and not getting the moment you heard the words.

Then, write down what you imagine the other person was feeling when you heard what they said.

After identifying their feelings, write down what you imagine the other person was needing and not getting in the moment you heard their words. Check in with yourself and see if you notice a shift in how you feel about what was said to you or how you feel toward the person that said it.

Finally, explore what actions you might both take in order to better meet the needs you identified.

Activity 4: Empathy Exercises

You can use the following scenarios to practice empathic listening and expressing empathy.

A) Someone at work says to you: "I couldn't sleep until 3 a.m. last night, thinking about our presentation today. So this morning I figured I'd better drink lots of coffee to keep me awake and alert... but now my head is killing me! Why do I always get hit with headaches when something important needs to be done?!"

Give a reply that demonstrates intellectual understanding of the situation by addressing the speaker's question (last sentence.) Give a reply that demonstrates sympathy rather than empathy. Give a reply that offers advice. Give a reply verbalising empathy.

B) At a meeting, while you are in the middle of a sentence, someone turns to you suddenly and says, 'don't you ever let someone else have a chance to talk?' Respond to this person with empathy by:

Sensing and reflecting back what the person might be observing. Sensing and reflecting back what the person might be feeling and needing. Sensing and reflecting back what the person might be requesting.

C) Recall an experience you had of 'listening to someone with your whole being.'

D) What are some conditions either internal (inside yourself) or external that support your ability to be empathic? What are conditions that work against it?

Activity 5: Observation or Evaluation?

Please note - these are not examples of NVC, but only of the observation component.

"They have clear-cut over 90% of this territory, and are still continuing."

"All the people in my practice group say that one of the best ways to learn NVC is simply to practice, practice, practice."

"I heard you say you passed all your courses but this report card shows two F's."

"This is the fourth time I'm this week that you stated you disagree with something I'm saying."

If both parties (e.g. parent and teenager in a family) are in clear agreement regarding what constitutes 'first getting permission' then I would consider the speaking to be making an observation free of evaluation.

Activity 6: Making Requests - Incorporating All Four Components Into NVC

"When I see your dog leaving turds on the lawn, I feel upset. We have kids who play here and I want the yard to be a safe, clean space for them. Would you be willing to use this plastic bag to remove the turds?"

“When I hear you addressing me like that, I feel agitated because I need cooperation and a peaceful resolution of our differences. Are you willing to tell me what you are feeling and needing right now instead of what you think I am?”

“When I hear you have put your money in mutual funds, I feel dejected because I'd like to see us put our resources into what we value, rather than to support guns, tobacco and sweatshops. Would you be willing to tell me what you were feeling when you hear me say this?”

“I am worried about the calories in this soup because I really need to take care of my health. Would you be willing to give me a bowl of noodles instead?”

“When I read this report you wrote, I feel troubled, because I value teamwork and I need some reassurance that we are on the same page. Would you be willing to make an appointment so we can discuss how we each see the priorities for this job?”

Activity 7: Observation or Evaluation?

For the following statements, do you regard the speaker to be making an observation free of evaluation? If not, please give an example of an evaluation-free statement that matches the situation.

“They are destroying the environment.”

“One of the best ways to learn NVC is simply to practice, practice, practice.”

“You lied to me about your grades.”

“You are arguing with me for the fourth time this week.”

“You drove the car without first getting my permission.”

Please see the end of the guide for sample responses.

Activity 8: Making Requests - Incorporating All Four Components Into NVC

Imagine situations where someone utters the following statements. In each case, translate the statement using all four components of NVC, paying special attention that the request is positive, concrete, and immediately doable.

“Your dog just made a mess on my lawn.” (Translate to: “When I see your dog...[observation] I feel... [feeling], because I need [need], and would you be willing to...[request]?”)

“Yelling obscenities isn't going to get you what you want.” “By putting your money in mutual funds, you're just supporting guns and tobacco and sweatshops and all the things we're trying to change in this world.”

“This soup is much too calorific.”

“At this company, we require teamwork. If that's not a priority for you, you'd better be looking for another job.”

“But you told me two weeks ago that it would be fine if I were to take a long weekend this month.”

Suggested practice: NVC Journaling

To support your NVC learning and practice, you can journal the incidents that happen each day.

Write down what happened (practising using observational language).

Then write down your judgments of the other person and yourself.

Translate your judgements into feelings and needs as you do this.

Then write down what the other person's feelings and needs might be.

Finally, consider what actions you could take to meet the needs you identified.
