

Brief summary of Non Violent Communication by Marshall Rosenberg

Chapter 1 – Giving from the heart

1. Non Violent Communication (NVC) is an approach to listening and speaking that leads us to give from the heart, connecting us with ourselves and with each other that allows our natural compassion to flourish.
2. NVC is founded on language and communication skills that strengthen our ability to remain human, even under trying circumstances.
3. NVC guides us in reframing how we express ourselves and hear others. NVC trains us to observe carefully, and to be able to specify behaviours and conditions that are affecting us.
4. With its emphasis on deep listening NVC fosters respect, attentiveness and empathy and engenders a mutual desire to give from the heart.
5. The four components of NVC are Observations, Feelings, Needs and Requests.
 - a. The concrete actions we observe that affect our well being
 - b. How we feel in relation to what we observe
 - c. The needs, values, desires etc. that create our feelings
 - d. The concrete actions we request in order to enrich our lives.
6. This involves expressing honestly through the four components and receiving empathetically through the four components and is an approach that can be effectively applied in diverse situations – intimate relationships, families, schools, organizations and institutions, disputes and conflicts etc.

Chapter 2 – Communication that blocks compassion

1. Life alienating communication refers to specific forms of communication or language that contribute to our behaving violently towards each other and ourselves
2. One kind of life alienating communication is use of *moralistic judgements* that imply wrongness or badness on the part of people who don't act in harmony with our values Blame, insults,, put downs, labels, criticism, comparisons and diagnoses are all forms of judgement. "You are too selfish", "She is too lazy", "They are prejudiced" etc.
3. Another form of judgement is the *use of comparisons*. Comparing one to some one that embodies physical beauty or one with higher intelligence creates a sort of self-induced misery which blocks compassion both for one self and for others.
4. The third type of self-alienating communication is *denial of responsibility*. Communication is life alienating when it clouds our awareness that we are each responsible for our own thoughts, feelings and actions. "There are some things you have to do, whether you like it or not" illustrates how personal responsibility for our actions can be obscured in speech. Other examples – "I lied to the client because the boss told me to" or "I started smoking because all my friends did"
5. Communicating our *desires as demands* is another form of language that is life alienating and blocks compassion. A demand explicitly or implicitly threatens listeners with blame or punishment if they fail to comply. Thinking on "who deserves what" blocks compassionate communication ("he deserves to be punished")

6. Life alienating communication both stems from and supports hierarchical or domination societies where large populations are controlled by a small number of individuals to the individuals' own benefit – kings, czars, and nobles had this slave like mentality.

Chapter 3 - Observing without evaluating

1. The first component of NVC entails the separation of observation from evaluation. When we combine observation with evaluation, we decrease the likelihood that others will hear our intended message. J Krishnamurthi – “observing without evaluating is the highest form of intelligence.
2. NVC does not mandate that we remain completely objective and refrain from evaluating. It only requires that we maintain separation between our observations and our evaluations.
3. NVC is a process language that discourages static generalizations; instead evaluations are to be based on observations specific to time and context. “You are too generous” is an example of observation with evaluation – “When I see you give all your lunch money to others , I think you are being too generous” is an example of observation separation from evaluation. Similarly – “Harry is a poor soccer player” to “Harry has not scored a goal in the last 30 games”.

Chapter 4 - Identifying and expressing feelings

1. The second component necessary for expressing ourselves is “feelings”.
2. Rollo May “the mature person becomes able to differentiate feelings into as many nuances, strong and passionate experiences, or delicate and sensitive ones as in the different passages of music in a symphony”
3. A common confusion generated by English language is our use of the word “feel” without actually expressing a feeling. “I feel I didn’t get a fair deal” - does not express any feeling – can well be replaced by “I think I didn’t get a fair deal”
4. It is important to distinguish feelings from thought, between what we feel and what we think we are, and between what we feel and how we think others react or behave towards us.
5. By developing a vocabulary of feelings that allows us to clearly and specifically name or identify our emotions we can connect more easily with one another.
6. Allowing ourselves to be vulnerable by expressing our feelings can help resolve conflicts.
7. NVC distinguishes the expression of actual feelings from words and statements that describe thoughts, assessments and interpretations.

Chapter 5 - Taking responsibility for our feelings

1. The third component of NVC is the acknowledgement of the needs behind our feelings. What others say and do may be the stimulus for, but never the cause of, our feelings.
2. When someone communicates negatively, we have four options on how to receive it -
 - a. blame ourselves - *“I should have been more sensitive”*
 - b. blame others - *“You are the most self-centred person I have ever seen”*

- c. sense our own feelings and needs – *“When I hear you that I am the most self-centred person you have ever met, I feel hurt because I need recognition of my efforts to be considerate of your preferences”*
 - d. sense the feelings and needs hidden in the other person’s negative message – *“Are you feeling hurt because you need more consideration for your preferences?”*
3. Judgements, criticisms, diagnoses and interpretations of others are all alienated expressions of our own needs and values. If someone says, “You never understand me” –they are really telling that their need to be understood is not being fulfilled.
4. When we express our needs indirectly through the use of evaluations, interpretations and images, others are likely to hear criticism.
5. When others hear criticism, they tend to invest their energy in self-defence or counter attack. The more directly we can connect our feelings to our needs, the easier it is for others to respond compassionately.
6. In the course of developing emotional responsibility, most of us experience 3 stages –
 - a. emotional slavery – believing ourselves responsible for the feelings of others
 - b. the obnoxious stage – in which we refuse to admit to caring what anyone else feels or needs
 - c. Emotional liberation – we accept the responsibility of our own feelings, but not the feelings while being aware that we can never meet our own needs at the expense of others.

Chapter 6 - Requesting that which would enrich life

1. The fourth component of NVC addresses the question of what we would like to request of each other to enrich each of our lives.
2. When our needs are not being fulfilled, we follow the expression of what we are observing, feeling and needing with a specific request – we ask for actions that might fulfil our needs.
3. We try to avoid vague, abstract or ambiguous phrasing and remember to use positive action language by stating what we are requesting rather than what we are not.
4. Since the message we send is not always the message that is received, we need to learn to find out how our message has been accurately heard – otherwise we may be initiating unproductive conversations that waste considerable amount of time.
5. Often, we are not conscious of what we are requesting when we speak. We talk *to* others or *at* them without knowing how to engage in a dialogue *with* them.
6. Requests are received as demands when listeners believe that they will be blamed or punished if they do not comply. We can help others trust that we are requesting, not demanding, by indicating our desire for them to comply only if they can do so willingly.
7. The clearer we are on what we want back from the other person, the more likely it is our needs are met. To make sure the message we sent is the message that is received, ask the listener to reflect it back.
8. It is important to express appreciation when your listener tries to meet your request for a reflection. Also empathize with the listener who doesn’t want to reflect it back.
9. After we express ourselves vulnerably, we often want to know
 - a. What the listener is feeling
 - b. What the listener is thinking
 - c. Whether the listener would be willing to take a particular action

10. When the other person hears a demand from us, they see two options – either to submit or to rebel.
11. To tell if it is a demand or a request, observe what the speaker does if the request is complied with. It is a demand if the speaker then criticises or judges - it is a request if the speaker shows empathy towards the other person's needs.
12. The objective of NVC is not to change people and their behaviour in order to get our way, it is to establish relationships based on honesty and empathy that will eventually fulfil everyone's needs.

Chapter 7 - Receiving empathically

1. Empathy is respectful understanding of what others are experiencing. Empathy with others occurs only when we shed all preconceived notions ideas and judgements about them.
2. Listen to what people are needing rather than what they are thinking.
3. When asking for information, first express our own needs and feelings.
4. Speakers expressing intensely emotional messages would appreciate our reflecting these back to them.
5. When we stay with empathy, we allow speakers to touch deeper levels of themselves.
6. We know a person has received adequate empathy when we
 - a. Sense a release of tension
 - b. The flow of words come to a halt
7. Paraphrase only if it contributes to greater compassion and understanding.
8. We stay with empathy and allow others the opportunity to fully express themselves before we turn our attention to solutions or requests for relief.
9. It is impossible for us to give something to another if we don't have it ourselves. Likewise, if we find ourselves unable or unwilling to empathize despite our best efforts, it is usually a sign that we are too starved for empathy to be able to offer it to others.
10. We need empathy to give empathy. When we sense ourselves being defensive or unable to empathize, we need to
 - a. Stop, breathe, give ourselves empathy
 - b. Scream non violently
 - c. Take time out

Chapter 8 - The Power of empathy

1. Our offer to offer empathy can allow us to stay vulnerable, defuse potential violence, hear the word 'no' without taking it as a rejection, revive lifeless conversations and even hear feelings and needs expressed through silence.
2. It is harder to empathize with those who appear to possess more power, status or resources.
3. Self-expression becomes easier after we empathize with others, because we will then have touched their humanness and realised the common qualities we share. The more we connect with the feelings and needs behind their words, the less frightening it is to open up to other people.
4. One of the ways to bring a conversation to life is to openly express our desire to be more connected and to request information that would help us establish the connection.

5. When we listen for feelings and needs, we no longer see people as monsters. It may be difficult to empathize with those who are closest to us.
6. Empathize with silence by listening for the feelings and needs behind it.
7. People transcend the paralyzing effects of psychological pain when they have sufficient contact with someone who can hear them empathetically.
8. As listeners, we don't need insights into psychological dynamics or training in psychotherapy. What is essential is our ability to be present to what is really going on within – to the unique feelings and needs a person is experiencing in that very moment.

Chapter 9 – Connecting compassionately with ourselves

1. The most crucial application of NVC may be in the way we treat ourselves.
2. When we make mistakes, instead of getting caught up in moralistic self-judgements, we can use the process of NVC mourning and self-forgiveness to show us where we can grow.
3. In our language there is a word with enormous power to create shame and guilt. This violent word, which we commonly use to evaluate ourselves, is so deeply ingrained in our consciousness that many of us would have trouble imagining how to live without it – the word – “should”. “I should have known better” or “I shouldn't have done that”
4. A basic premise of NVC is that whenever we imply that some one is wrong or bad, what we are really saying is that he or she is not acting in harmony with our needs.
5. Our challenge when we are doing something that is not enriching our life is to evaluate ourselves, moment by moment in a way that inspires change both 1.in the direction of where we would like to go and 2. Out of respect and compassion for ourselves, rather than self-hatred, guilt or shame.
6. Mourning in NVC is the process of fully connecting with the unmet needs and the feelings that are generated when we have been less than perfect. It is an experience of regret, but regret that helps us learn from what we have done without hating or blaming ourselves.
7. Self-forgiveness in NVC is connecting with the need we were trying to meet when we took the action that we now regret.
8. We are compassionate with ourselves when we are able to embrace all parts of ourselves and recognize the needs and values expressed by each part.
9. By assessing our behaviours in terms of our own unmet needs, the impetus for change comes not out of shame, guilt, anger or depression, but out of the genuine desire to contribute to our own and others' well-being.
10. We cultivate self-compassion by consciously choosing in daily life to act only in service to our own needs and values than out of duty, for extrinsic rewards, or to avoid guilt, shame or punishment.
11. If we review the joyless acts to which we currently subject ourselves and make the translation from “have to” to “choose to”, we will discover more play and integrity to our lives.

Chapter 10 - Expressing Anger Fully

1. Blaming and punishing others are superficial expressions of anger.
2. The first step to fully expressing anger in NVC is to divorce the other person from any responsibility for our anger.

3. The cause of anger lies in our thinking - in thoughts of blame and judgement.
4. Anger can be valuable if we use it as an alarm clock to wake us up – to realize we have a need that isn't being met and that we are thinking in a way that makes it unlikely to be met.
5. If we wish to fully express anger, the first step is to divorce the other person from any responsibility for our anger. Instead we shine the light of consciousness on our own feelings and needs.
6. By expressing our needs, we are far more likely to get them met than by judging, blaming or punishing others.
7. The four steps to expressing anger are
 - a. Stop and breathe
 - b. Identify our judgemental thoughts
 - c. Connect with our needs
 - d. Express our feelings and unmet needs
8. Some times in between steps c and d, we may choose to empathize with the other person so that he or she will be better able to hear us when we express ourselves in 'd'
9. Anger comes judgements, labels, and thoughts of blame, of what people "should" do and what they "deserve". List the judgements that float most frequently in your head by using the cue "I don't like people who are". This helps you to train yourself to frame your thinking in terms of unmet needs rather than in terms of judgements of other people.

Chapter 11 – The protective use of force

1. In some situations where the principles of NVC do not work, the use of force may be necessary to protect life or individual rights.
2. In situations where there is no opportunity for communication, such as instances of imminent danger, we may need to resort to protective use of force.
3. The intention behind protective use of force is not to prevent injury or injustice, never to punish or to cause individuals to suffer, repent or change.
4. The punitive use of force tends to generate hostility and to reinforce resistance to the very behaviour we are seeking.
5. When we fear punishment, we focus on consequences, not on our own values. Fear of punishment diminishes self-esteem and goodwill.
6. Punishment damages good will and self-esteem and shifts our attention from the intrinsic value of an action to external consequences.
7. Two questions help us see why we are unlikely to get what we want b using punishment to change people's behaviour.
 - a. "What do I want this person to do that is different from what he or she is currently doing?"
 - b. "What do I want this person's reasons to be for doing what I am asking"
8. Blaming and punishing fail to contribute to the motivations we would like to inspire in others.

Chapter 12 – Liberating ourselves and counselling others

1. NVC enhances inner communication by helping us translate negative internal messages into feelings and needs.
2. Our ability to distinguish our own feelings and needs to and to empathize with them can free us from depression.
3. By focussing on what we truly want rather than what is wrong with others or ourselves, NVC gives us the tools and understanding to create a more peaceful state of mind.
4. Stress can be defused by hearing our own feelings and needs and by empathizing with others.
5. By adopting the skills and consciousness of NVC, we can counsel others in encounters that are genuine, open, mutual, rather than resort to professional relationships characterized by emotional distance, diagnosis and hierarchy.

Chapter 13 – Expressing appreciation in Non Violent communication

1. It is important to express appreciation to celebrate – not to get something in return or to manipulate. The beauty of appreciation is spoilt when people begin to notice the lurking intent to get something out of them.
2. The three components of appreciation are
 - a. The actions that have contributed to our well being
 - b. The particular needs of ours that have been fulfilled
 - c. The pleasurable feelings engendered by the fulfilment of those needs.
3. For many of us, it is difficult to receive appreciation gracefully. We fret over whether we deserve it.
4. NVC encourages us to receive appreciation with the same quality of empathy we express when listening to other messages.
5. It is important to receive appreciations without feelings of superiority or false humility.