

Introducing Non-Violent Communication (NVC)

Nonviolent Communication is a giving and receiving of messages that focuses on these questions...

- What's alive in us?
- What can we do to create connection?
- What can I do to make life more wonderful?

The intention of NVC is to create a quality of connection that promotes giving and receiving from the heart.

Key assumptions of NVC

1. All human beings share the same needs
2. Our world offers sufficient resources for meeting everyone's basic need
3. All actions are attempts to meet needs. A list of needs can be found [here](#).
4. Feelings point to needs being met or unmet. For example we feel ecstatic, joyful, happy and elated when our need for love, cooperation and kindness are met. A list of wider feelings for when needs are met can be found [here](#). However, we may experience other feelings when sad, lonely, upset or agitated when those same needs are unmet. For further examples of these feeling see [here](#).
5. All human beings have the capacity for compassion
6. Human beings enjoy giving
7. Human beings meet needs through interdependent relationships
8. Human beings change
9. Choice is internal
10. The most direct path to peace is through self-connection

Key principles of NVC

- Language is a lens by which we look at the world and therefore we are going to pay keen attention to our words, especially while trying to navigate difficult conversations
- There is a difference between stimulus and cause. While a certain situation or a particular person's behaviour may stimulate painful feelings in us, they are not the cause of our feelings. We are each responsible for our own behaviour and feelings.

- All judgments are tragic expressions of unmet needs and therefore we encourage you to refrain from using words such as “good” or “bad”, or “right” or “wrong” with your students and with each other.
- We do not use punishment or reward to incite behaviour change - instead we focus on inspiring ourselves and each other to engage in behaviours that serve everyone’s needs
- We prioritize connection and understanding instead of jumping into quick solutions because our faith is that once connection is established, creative strategies can emerge

Connecting with the life force in you...

The structure of our education system is such that it entails a lot of 'shoulds' on teachers and students alike. There is a constant pressure on educators to complete the syllabi and also to do it in a particular way. Thus, it is not uncommon for us as educators to expect obedience from our students which is quite contrary to the very purpose of education - 'to make our students think'. It is almost as if we want them to think only when we want them to think and only what we would like them to think.

All human behavior is guided by needs. However, the process of education inherently demands that both the teacher and the pupil somehow give up on what they personally need and want. We have been primarily encouraged to do what is 'right', avoid what is 'wrong', be 'rational', obey what people in authority tell us, follow the rules, or lead our students into following the rules. We have been made to digest a lie – “respecting others means giving up on what I want and taking care of myself means ignoring the needs of others”.

If we believe that the only way to be respectful of others is through denying ourselves, making ourselves somehow go away and not have needs, then we will eventually be either alienated from ourselves, have a scarcity mindset or take a rebellious stance of fulfilling ourselves even if it is at the cost of others. Our needs are our life energy. This energy longs to be nurtured and engaged with. This energy wants to fulfil itself. However, so much of our schooling experience is about telling us to not pay attention to this vibrating, pulsating life energy within us. How will this energy not rebel at some point in time?

Contrary to what most of us have been told – “needs are the root cause of all problems and therefore don’t have needs”, “Needy makes you bleedy” etc, we are inviting you on

this escapade of daring to turn inward and become curious about this powerful life energy that resides in each one of us. The premise of this approach is that everything that everyone does is always an attempt to meet a need. Our needs represent our humanity and therefore they are harmless and common to all human beings – what is in conflict is often our strategies to meet those needs. The assumption is that the more aware we are of your needs, the more choices we will have to fulfil our needs in a way that honours others.

Practice 1: Connecting with your needs

- In the context of social change, reflect on your experience as a teacher working in your school. What are the key elements of what would help you flourish as a teacher who is trying to uphold the values of diversity and equality? What are some of your core needs? Please write this down
- For each of the needs mentioned – identify and list ways in which this need gets met for you and ways in which this need doesn't get met for you.

Practice 2: Differentiating between needs and strategies

- Identify a situation that was challenging for you in your work environment. (For example: a senior male colleague kept interrupting and cutting your statements during the teachers meeting, you witnessed a black upper-class girl student make fun of the white lower-class boy student's shoes). Think in detail about what exactly happened, what choices you had, what decisions you took and how you acted.
- What would the video camera capture you doing? Describe what you actually did (For example: 'I raised my volume and asked my colleague to let me finish my sentence', 'I looked at the black girl for 5 seconds, turned to the black board and started writing')
- Why did you do what you did? What was important for you at that moment? What were you hoping to achieve by doing what you did? What needs were you trying to fulfil through your actions?
- Did your action get you what you needed? How do you feel about the whole situation?
- Were there any needs that were not met through this action? If yes, what were those needs?
- Being aware of what you needed and the impact of your action, would you like to make a new choice and act differently when a similar situation arises again? What would you like to do this time? How do you imagine this new choice would help you get what you want and needed?