

NVC AT WORK:
CREATING A CULTURE OF COLLABORATIVE COMMUNICATION

PRELIMINARY AGREEMENTS:

PRACTICE AGREEMENT: ACKNOWLEDGE COMMITMENT TO NVC

"I'm interested in something called Nonviolent Communication. To me, NVC is _____."

"I'd like to start using this more at work because _____."

"So, I'm going to start saying things in ways that are a little different from before. If at any time you feel uncomfortable or you don't like how I'm communicating, I'd really like to hear your reflection in that moment so that we can address it. Are you willing to tell me when you don't like the way I'm talking with you?"

What definition of NVC would you share with a colleague?

What would be your intentions for using NVC in a workplace setting?

Is there another request you would like to make of a colleague when you acknowledge your commitment to utilizing NVC in the workplace?

ACCOUNTABILITY AGREEMENT:

While we are attempting to incorporate NVC into our life, it is likely that in heated moments we will be triggered back into our habitual patterns. We can make an accountability agreement to ask for a colleague to support our learning and growth with NVC in the workplace. If this colleague notices that we are acting in a way that they interpret as out of alignment with how we have stated we want to act, they can call us out on it in a previously agreed-upon way.

How would you want a colleague to check in with you when they interpret your communication to be out of alignment with your commitment to NVC at work?

DAILY PRACTICES:

RESPOND TO TRIGGERS WITH SELF-EMPATHY:

CONNECT "INITIAL FEELINGS" TO UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND NEEDS

When we are triggered, we often have palpable "initial feelings" – these are feelings that often implicate the other and contain implicit evaluations. They are often the feeling words we use after the sentence "They made me feel ____." e.g., "He makes me feel unappreciated." "She made me feel taken for granted."

Instead of discrediting these initial feelings, we can use them as a point of departure in our self-empathy process. The process is characterized by identifying our initial feelings and then connecting these to the underlying feelings and needs.

DISCUSS NEEDS BEFORE EXPLORING STRATEGIES

In the workplace, when there is an expectation to perform and be proactive, we often jump straight to discussing strategies and neglect to spend any effort on connecting with the needs motivating those strategies. While this pattern of behavior is built on the assumption that someone "should know" what we're talking about or "gets" what's underneath, it's often the case that we haven't even taken the time to connect with the needs motivating *our own* actions/behavior--how would the other person know what's going on?

Needs awareness engenders an atmosphere where the priority is getting clarity on everyone's needs and arriving at an openness to finding what will work for everyone (what will meet everybody's needs). When we get clear on core needs, we can propose multiple strategies--sometimes simultaneously--to meet those needs. We can also appreciate them as enduring. If we are engaged instead simply on the level of agreeing with a particular strategy, our cooperation is, at best, singular. The underlying need may remain unknown and we are not in touch with the full significance of our contribution.

Discussing needs before exploring strategies establishes the groundwork for understanding and collaboration.

GIVE FEEDBACK WITH CLARITY ON NEEDS AND REQUEST(S)

- People crave specific feedback that informs them of the specific actions they can take to meet the needs of the person sharing the evaluation.
- Using the distinctions of NVC to give observation- and needs-based feedback in close proximity to the triggering event helps prevent the calcification of enemy images (static judgements).

Feedback process:

1. Self-empathy: What is my intention with giving this feedback?
2. Specific observation
3. Specific needs met or not met
4. Clear request

MAKE CLEAR REQUESTS AND HELP OTHERS MAKE CLEAR REQUESTS

empathetic connection:

Often takes the form of the speaker venting. There is an 'implicit' request to the listener for verbal or non-verbal acknowledgement that the feelings and needs behind the speaker's words have been understood.

emotional honesty:

- "Can you tell me how you feel having heard what I just said?"
- "Would you like to know how I'm feeling having heard what you just said?"

understanding:

- "It's important that I communicate myself clearly right now, would you be open to reflecting back to me your understanding of what I just said?"
- "It sounds like it's important to you that this gets across clearly. Would you like me to reflect what I'm hearing you say right now so that you hear what I'm understanding?"

action:

Specific, doable, positive action that we hope would fulfill our needs