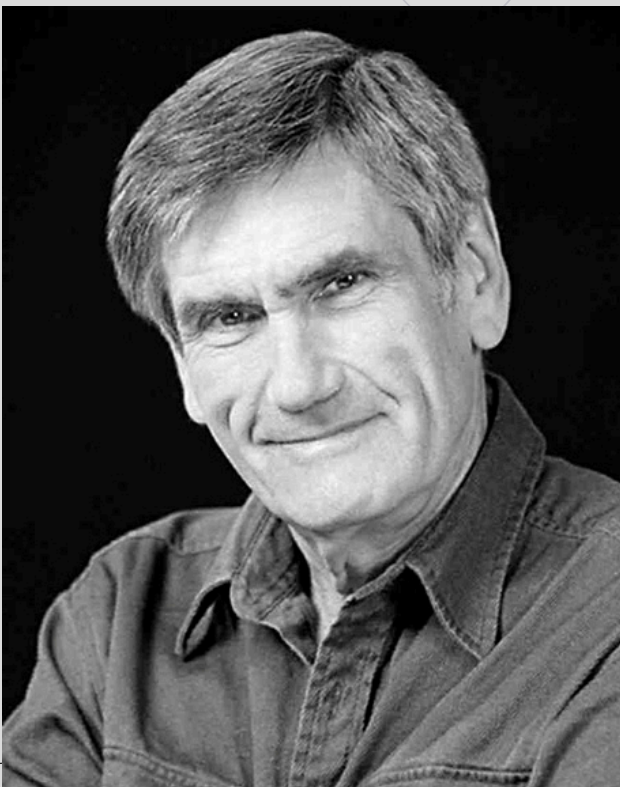


# NonViolent Communication: An Overview

Dr Marshall Rosenberg



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# Introduction



Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is a communication approach developed by psychologist Marshall Rosenberg in the 1960s designed to foster empathy, reduce conflict, and improve the quality of interactions by focusing on expressing needs and feelings in a constructive, honest and respectful way.

NVC offers practical tools for fostering empathy, clarity, and connection in interactions with others. The goal of NVC is to create compassionate connections and understanding, leading to cooperation and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

By focusing on honest expression and focused listening, it enhances personal well-being and contributes to more harmonious relationships and communities.

## Key Principles of NVC

- **Empathy:** Understanding and acknowledging the feelings and needs of both yourself and others.
- **Honesty:** Expressing yourself authentically and constructively without blame or criticism.
- **Mutual Respect:** NVC emphasises listening and responding in ways that respect everyone's needs.
- **Non-judgment:** Transforming our moral judgments about others' actions by focusing on the impact of specific behaviours on the connection between us.

# Core Components of NVC



## 1. Observations Instead of Interpretations

Focus is on specific, objective behaviours or situations that are affecting you, without adding your interpretations or judgments. This transforms blame into a conversation about an event we can both agree on, which prevents defensiveness. By sharing what is observable, you make it easier for the other person to understand your perspective.

## 2. Expressing Feelings

Identify and express your emotions in response to the situation by naming what is happening for you internally. This allows you to take ownership of your feelings. Expressing your emotions clearly helps the other person understand the impact of their actions without feeling attacked.

## 3. Identifying Needs

Understand and communicate the needs or values that are important to you and are connected to how you feel now. All feelings arise from unmet or met needs. By articulating your needs, you help the other person see why you're feeling the way you do, fostering mutual understanding.

## 4. Making Requests

Ask for specific actions that would help meet your needs. These requests are a powerful way to create the relationships that care for everyone's needs, especially when actionable, positive, clear, and not demands. By making a request instead of a demand, you give the other person the opportunity to respond willingly rather than out of obligation or resentment. This encourages cooperation and mutual problem-solving.

# The Benefits of NVC

## 1. Improved Relationships

- Encourages active listening and understanding of others' emotions and needs and clear, open, empathetic and respectful communication thereby fostering better connection between individuals.
- Builds trust and intimacy, enhances teamwork and strengthens personal and professional relationships.
- Understanding children's behaviour enhances parent/child relationships, reduces conflict and increases cooperation and harmony in the home.

## 2. Conflict Resolution

- Provides tools to address disagreements constructively.
- Focuses on shared human needs rather than blame or judgement reducing tensions and minimising misunderstandings leading to more cooperative and productive solutions in disagreements.
- Shifts communication from adversarial to collaborative, making it easier to find win-win solutions.

## 3. Supports Personal Growth and Emotional Intelligence

- Practising NVC fosters self-reflection and helps individuals identify and express their emotions and needs clearly leading to improved self-awareness, reduced stress and growth in empathy, patience and understanding.
- Encourages emotional resilience and regulation building enabling improved management of emotional responses.
- Empowers individuals to advocate for their needs respectfully.

## 4. Empowered Communication

- NVC empowers individuals to communicate their needs without fear of conflict or judgement helping individuals to navigate difficult conversations and maintain personal boundaries.
- Reduces aggressive and defensive reactions in conversations.
- Enhances productivity by reducing errors and increasing efficiency.

## 5. Promotes Social Change

- Contributes to cultural transformation and a more compassionate and understanding society.
- In larger social or political contexts, NVC has been used as a tool for peaceful activism and mediation, helping communities address systemic issues non-violently and collaboratively.

# How NVC Differs from Regular Communication

## **Avoids Blame or Criticism**

NVC avoids using language that blames or criticises others.

## **Focuses on Needs, Not Solutions**

NVC emphasises identifying the needs behind a conflict rather than jumping straight to solutions. Once both sides' needs are understood, solutions often arise naturally and collaboratively.

## **Non-Coercive Requests**

NVC promotes non-coercive language. Requests are made with the understanding that others may decline, and any agreement should come from genuine willingness rather than fear or guilt.

## Giraffe V Jackal Language

Marshall Rosenberg used giraffe and jackal imagery to differentiate between language that connects and language that separates, language that harms and language that heals.

**The giraffe** has the largest heart of any land animal so giraffe Language symbolises compassionate, empathic communication, speaking from the heart without blame or judgement e.g

"Seeing the kitchen hasn't been cleaned since dinner, I'm overwhelmed and would love some support with keeping the house clean. Could we find a way to share the chores?"

**The jackal** represents more aggressive, defensive or manipulative forms of communication, the language of good and bad, right and wrong, seeking to control and coming from a place of anger fear or frustration e.g

"You're so lazy! You never help with anything around the house. I always have to clean up after you."

The goal of NVC is to shift from using Jackal language to Giraffe language to improve relationships, resolve conflicts peacefully, and foster understanding