

Nonviolent Communication Toolkit

4 Simple Steps for Transforming Your Relationships

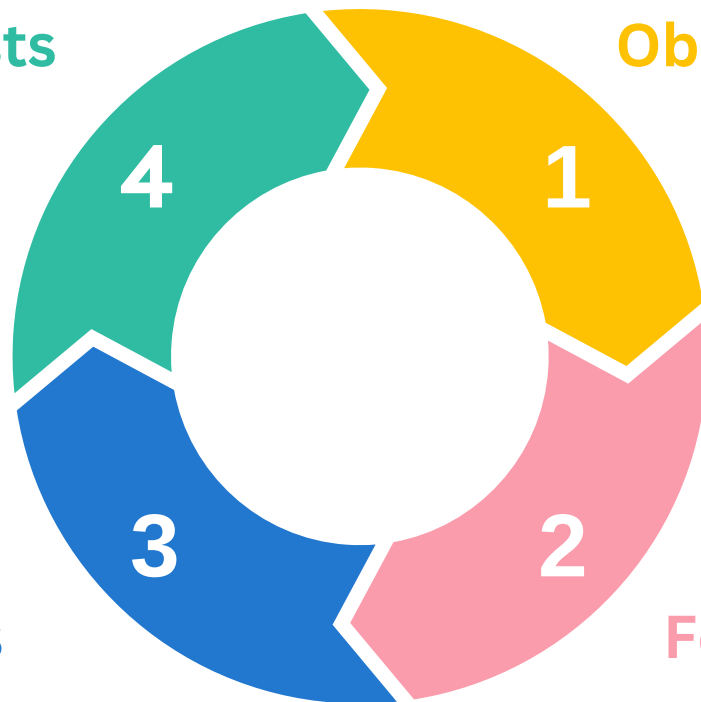
Transform **Rea****Ctivity** into **C**reativity

Requests

Observations

Needs

Feelings



by Filippa Araki
certified trainer

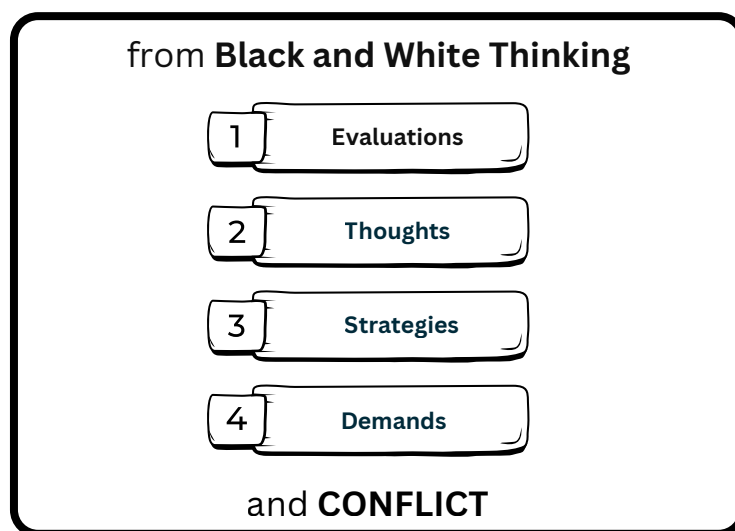
What is Nonviolent Communication?



Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is a powerful communication framework developed by psychologist, Marshall B. Rosenberg. It promotes understanding, empathy, and effective conflict resolution through compassionate connection and clear communication.

Why Nonviolent Communication?

NVC is useful because it helps transform relationships by reducing misunderstandings and defensiveness. It encourages honest and open dialogue, making it easier to navigate conflicts and build deeper, more meaningful connections. With practice, NVC empowers you to communicate effectively and create more fulfilling, harmonious relationships.



Most of us have been raised to think and communicate in ways that cause disconnection and conflict. We say things that upset others. We make judgments, assumptions and interpretations. We also try to fix other people, when really all they want and need is to be heard and accompanied. We think we have to demand things of others to get stuff done. But nobody likes to be coerced. There is another way!

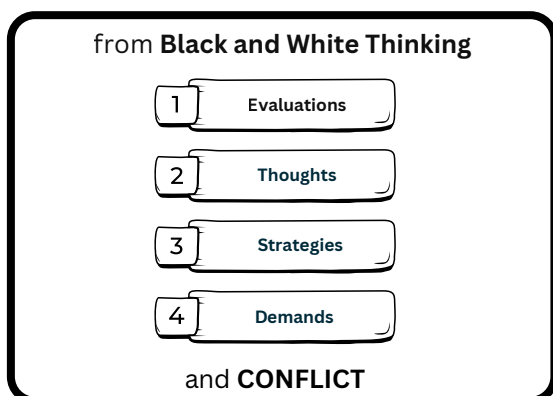
Nonviolent Communication (NVC) gives us 4 simple steps that we can use as an underlying structure or framework in how we communicate. With these 4 steps, I can make clear observations without any evaluation, express my feelings honestly without blame, be clear about what I need and make clear, positive and actionable requests to meet my needs. With these 4 steps, I can also listen to others differently, no matter how they're communicating.



NVC helps you cut through misunderstandings and defensiveness, making your conversations smoother and more meaningful. By focusing on what's really happening (without judging), sharing your feelings and needs, and making clear requests, NVC helps you connect better with others and create a more fulfilling life.

How does it work?

Compare the examples on the left with the examples on the right.



1	You've left the kitchen in a mess again!
2	You're so lazy! You're such a slob.
3	Why don't you clean up as you go?
4	Clean it up right now!



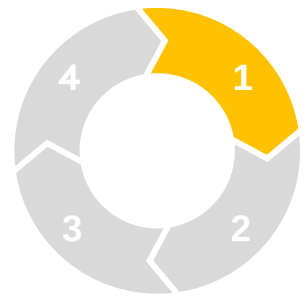
1	I see there are dishes in the sink and food scraps on the bench.
2	I'm feeling frustrated.
3	I need order and cleanliness.
4	Would you be willing to spend 20 minutes now to wash the dishes and clean the bench?

Communicating from our reactivity just increases the conflict and disconnection. The other person is likely to be defensive and reactive or dismissive. Communicating our needs with empathy and honesty may take more words, but is more likely to result in cooperation and collaborative behaviour.

1	You still haven't finished the report.
2	You need to be more focused at work.
3	Put your other projects aside.
4	Get it done by 1pm.

1	Your email said the report isn't finished yet and it's due at 1pm.
2	Are you feeling overwhelmed?
3	Do you need support?
4	Would you like to ask Tom if he can spend a couple of hours to help you finish it off?

The four steps can also be used for both honest expression as in the first example above and for empathising as in the second example. Get clear about the needs and then make clear doable requests or suggestions for meeting the needs.



STEP 1: OBSERVATION

In this step, we discern between OBSERVATION and EVALUATION. We aim to see as clearly as possible what is happening without:

- evaluating
- interpreting
- assuming
- judging
- criticising
- labelling
- moralising
- analysing

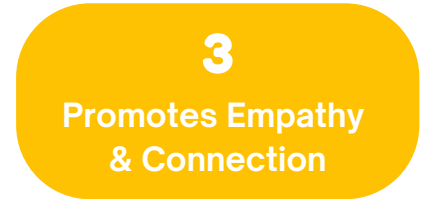
3 Reasons Why:



Observations are neutral and more factual. They lead to clearer communication and minimise misunderstandings and defensiveness.



Focusing on facts rather than judgments keeps conversations productive and solution-focused, making it easier to address real issues and resolve conflicts.



By avoiding evaluations, we create a safe space for open dialogue, fostering understanding and deeper connections in our relationships.

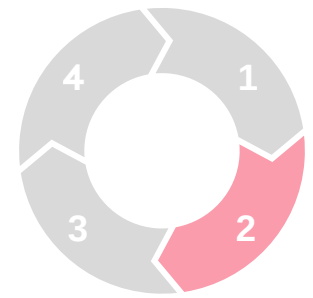
This step is good for a beginning place to try to find some shared reality and some agreement on what happened. We don't want to get stuck here. It's just a starting place.

The clearer and more neutral we can be at this stage, the more likely we are to be heard in what we want to say.

EXAMPLES

	WORK	HOME	RELATIONSHIP
Evaluation	You haven't been productive.	You never help around the house.	You don't care about me.
Observation	In the last week, you missed two deadlines and did not complete your project report.	This week, I noticed that I did the dishes and took out the rubbish every day.	Yesterday, when I was sharing about my day, you were looking at your phone and didn't respond.

Apply this step to a recent situation where you felt stuck or conflicted. Describe what happened objectively, focusing on observable facts that are free of judgment. Notice any evaluations and rewrite your description to separate Observation from Evaluation. This practice will help you see situations more clearly and communicate more effectively.

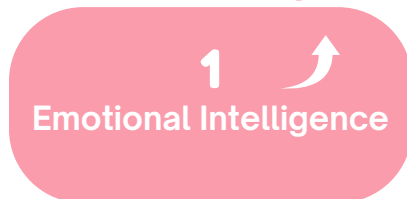


STEP 2: FEELINGS

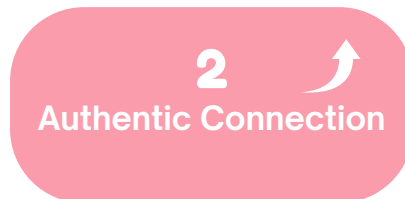
In this step, we discern between FEELINGS and THOUGHTS. We connect with our genuine emotions without:

- overthinking
- rationalising
- judging
- analysing
- interpreting
- blaming
- criticising
- assuming

3 Reasons Why:



Understanding our true emotions enables us to become more in tune with ourselves, leading to greater self-awareness and emotional intelligence.



By expressing genuine feelings rather than thoughts or judgments, we foster more open and honest dialogue. This builds trust and deepens relationships.



Acknowledging and communicating our real feelings, rather than masking them with thoughts or assumptions, helps us to process and heal from emotional pain more effectively.

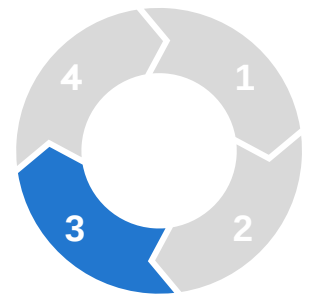
This step focuses on connecting with our true emotions, separate from our thoughts. This helps to build empathy and understanding. We try not to overthink or analyse; the goal is to acknowledge and embrace our feelings.

By accurately identifying and expressing our feelings, we foster authentic communication and deeper connections, paving the way for more empathy and understanding.

EXAMPLES

	WORK	HOME	RELATIONSHIP
Thought	That's disrespectful.	I'm feeling unappreciated.	You don't spend any time with me.
Feelings	I'm feeling angry and frustrated.	I'm feeling overwhelmed and resentful.	I'm feeling sad and lonely.

Apply this step to a recent emotional challenge or conflict. Take the time to connect with feelings of anger, fear and sadness. Note any thoughts and interpretations. Consider what feelings might be underneath the thoughts. The skill is to distinguish clearly between our thoughts and our feelings. If the thought is about what someone is doing to you, see if you can connect with the primary feelings underneath that. The more you increase your literacy of feeling words, the more your emotional intelligence grows.

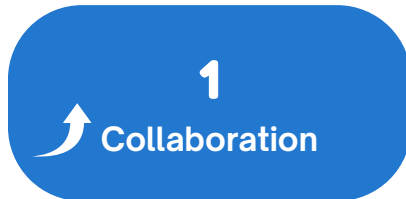


STEP 3: NEEDS

In this step, we discern between NEEDS and STRATEGIES. We focus on identifying our core needs without:

- jumping straight to solutions
- demanding specific outcomes
- guilt-tripping
- manipulating
- controlling
- complaining

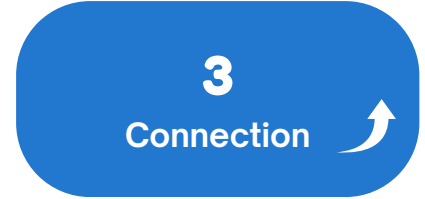
3 Reasons Why:



Focus on needs before strategies to better understand each other's desires and motivations. This fosters a collaborative atmosphere and supports win-win solutions.



Identifying needs reduces defensiveness and opposition, making it easier to empathise. Focus on how both can get their needs met to minimise power struggles and resentment.



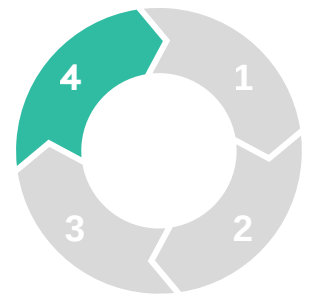
Understand and validate each other's needs to strengthen emotional bonds and trust. Address needs rather than temporary fixes to build long-term relationship satisfaction and resilience.

This step focuses on connecting with our core needs before thinking of strategies. This helps to build collaboration and mutual understanding. Listen to your thoughts and judgments and look for the needs. This fosters cooperative problem-solving and stronger connections and leads to mutual satisfaction and long-term relationship resilience.

EXAMPLES

	WORK	HOME	RELATIONSHIP
Thought / Strategy	That's disrespectful.	I want you to do the dishes now.	You never listen.
Needs	I need respect.	I need support.	I need to be heard.

Apply this step to a recent situation of challenge or conflict. Take a moment to identify your core needs in that situation—what truly matters to you on a fundamental level. Notice any strategies or actions you're considering to address the situation, and then focus on understanding the underlying needs driving those strategies. The skill lies in clearly distinguishing between your needs and the specific actions or solutions you're considering, as well as being able to identify the needs behind thoughts and behaviour. As you get better at identifying and articulating needs, you enhance your emotional intelligence and ability to find solutions that work for everyone involved.



STEP 4: REQUEST

In this step, we discern between REQUESTS and DEMANDS. Requests are strategies to meet needs. In this step, we make clear, positive and actionable requests without:

- demanding
- using coercion
- imposing ultimatums
- threatening consequences
- assuming compliance
- undermining autonomy

3 Reasons Why:

1
Autonomy
& Choice

Respecting autonomy means making requests, not demands. It allows others the freedom to choose how to respond. This fosters mutual respect and cooperation, maintaining healthier relationships without creating resentment or imbalance.

2
Effective
Communication

Effective communication involves making clear, positive, actionable requests. This reduces misunderstandings and conflicts. It supports open dialogue, negotiation, and collaborative problem-solving.

3
Trust &
Cooperation

Expressing needs without imposing demands builds trust, cooperation, empathy and mutual understanding. This approach facilitates collaborative efforts towards mutual goals, promoting sustainable and satisfying outcomes.

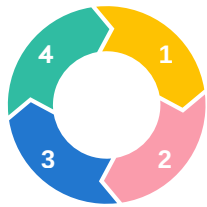
This step focuses on making requests rather than demands. By following our needs with clear requests, we respect each others' autonomy and encourage collaboration. Think of strategies to meet needs and turn them into respectful requests. This fosters open dialogue, builds trust, and strengthens relationships, leading to cooperative problem-solving and fulfilling outcomes for everyone involved.

EXAMPLES

	WORK	HOME	RELATIONSHIP
Demand	Get this report done by 1pm.	Help me tidy up.	Stop yelling at me!
Request	Would you be able to get this report done by 1pm?	Would you be willing to spend 30 minutes helping me tidy up?	Could you please speak to me in a softer tone of voice?

Apply this step to a recent situation of challenge or conflict. Once the needs are clear, you can think of strategies to meet those needs. A request is a strategy to meet a need. Effective requests are clear, positive and actionable. Be clear about what you want and why you want it. Who do you want to do it? How long for? By when? The more clearly we can express our needs and make effective requests without any hint of demand in them, the more likely we are to get what we want. When people feel met with a sense of equality and mutual respect, they are usually more willing to cooperate with us. Aim for win-win outcomes that meet everybody's needs.

Process



Our response to events can vary widely depending on factors such as our state of mind, our mood, our previous experiences, our relationship, our beliefs, and our identity. One event can elicit multiple different reactions as seen in the table below. This example demonstrates that the event itself—the stimulus—did not directly cause our reaction. By recognising that we have control over our responses, we can make more conscious and empowered choices in how we respond.

Observation (Stimulus)	Possible Thoughts	Connect to Feelings	Connect to Needs	Lead to Clear Requests
My friend rings up to cancel our meet up at the last minute.	They're unreliable.	annoyed	Reliability	Next time, could you please let me know at least an hour earlier if you can't make it so I can make other plans?
	Maybe they don't like me.	insecure	Honesty	Is there anything on your mind? If you'd rather not meet up at all, please tell me openly.
	I hope they're OK.	worried	Reassurance	Is everything OK?
	I was looking forward to it.	disappointed	Connection	I'd love to spend some time with you. Could we go for a walk later instead? <i>(or I can find someone else to have connection with)</i>
	I'm not feeling very social anyway.	relieved	Solitude	How about we meet up tomorrow instead?

Think of a lighter example from your life and think of a variety of ways you could react and respond. For example, your colleague walks past you and doesn't greet you. Your partner forgets your anniversary. Your boss gives you extra work to do near the end of the day.

Emotional intelligence is directly correlated to the number of feelings and needs words you know, use and can identify in yourself and others. Below are some of the feelings and needs you might be experiencing. Be mindful of thoughts disguised as feelings, which are more about what we think others are doing to us. Aim to connect with the primary feelings and needs underneath the thoughts. Eg. *I'm feeling disrespected* = *I'm feeling angry. I need respect.*

Feelings

ANGER		FEAR	
soft medium intense	ambivalent annoyed bored calm detached frustrated impatient irritated	apprehensive cautious concerned doubtful envious fearful guarded	
	aggravated angry cold disgusted exasperated indifferent resentful	afraid anxious confused nervous worried startled suspicious wary	
	appalled bitter contemptuous furious hostile irate numb seething vengeful	alarmed driven horrified panicked overwhelmed shocked terrified	
SADNESS		HAPPINESS	
soft medium intense	apathetic disappointed flat listless low regretful withdrawn	amused calm comfortable engaged hopeful inspired open	
	discouraged down drained heavy-hearted empty gloomy	appreciative cheerful confident delighted excited fulfilled glad playful	
	anguish bleak despairing inconsolable frozen gloomy hopeless miserable	blissful ecstatic elated euphoric exhilarated jubilant radiant thrilled	

Needs

INTEGRATION		ACCOUNTABILITY	
Acceptance Acknowledgement Appreciation	Balance Belonging Support	Authenticity Contribution Feedback	Honesty Trust Safety
AUTONOMY		SELF-EXPRESSION	
Choice Collaboration Empowerment	Freedom Independence Spontaneity	Creativity Celebration Challenge	Growth Learning Meaning
RESOURCES		COMMUNICATION	
Air/Food/Water Comfort Health	Safety Shelter	Awareness Clarity Empathy	Respect Connection Understanding

Want more practice in the 4 steps?

Continue learning and practising the 4 steps.

Enroll now in my FREE self-paced online course.



- ✓ Reduce misunderstandings
- ✓ Increase emotional intelligence
- ✓ Identify & articulate needs
- ✓ Make effective requests
- ✓ Navigate conflict more easily
- ✓ Personal & professional growth

A message from Filippa



I am dedicated to helping people get along better and thrive. Through courses, workshops, and coaching, I love sharing the tools that have transformed my own life.

Focusing on building trust and respect, I encourage people to discover their unique gifts, find their purpose, and connect with themselves and others with honesty and kindness.

I have over thirty-five years of intense personal growth and over thirty years' experience of teaching and supporting diverse individuals and groups.

I am a certified trainer in Nonviolent Communication (cnvc.org) as well as a certified trainer and advanced practitioner in Gift Discovery and Use with the Core Gift Institute (coregift.org).

My Core Gift is inspiring people to connect with life's magic and mystery. I do this accompanying them as they find their peaceful centre, get clear about what truly matters to them, and find the courage to shine as their true Self.

[Learn more at CompassionLounge.com](https://CompassionLounge.com)