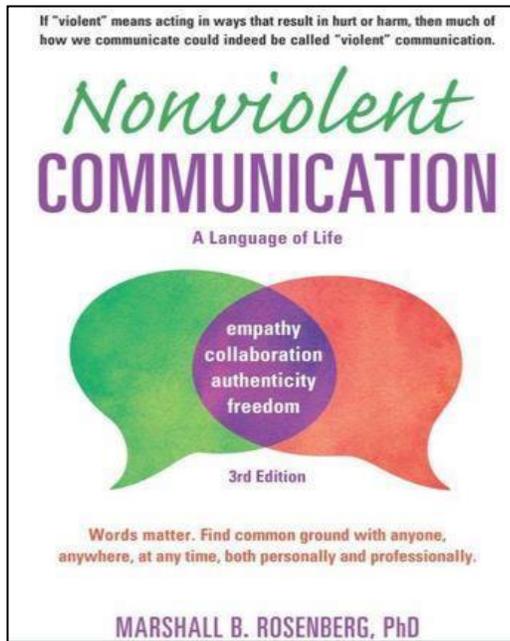


Nonviolent Communication



Why do we need to learn about nonviolent communication (NVC)?

- Our culture of intolerance – “masters of mankind” ensure that citizens are violently divided and fighting amongst themselves.
- Feelings that affect communication- impatience, frustration, fear, emotional instability - may arise because of that culture.
- Communication is the primary tool for arriving at group decisions.
- NVC results in more productive outcomes in group decisions and prevents the negative outcomes often found in group communications.
- Nonviolence is a pillar of the Green Party, and NVC is necessary in effectively achieving grassroots democracy. It allows greater participation by members who otherwise may not participate.

Goal: avoid escalation of conflict and help work toward common goals.

What is NVC?

- Short definition: Communication that reflects empathy and respect for the worth of the listener.
- A **violent comment** in contrast is one that vehemently expresses a person’s feelings and opinions (forceful or intense in expression, emotion, or conviction).

How do we engage in discussions using NVC?

- View discussions as a people process rather than a language process.
- The obvious: no name-calling, profanity or vulgarity. Be professional and calm.
- Use language that is nonjudgmental and avoids provoking defensiveness. Respect for the worth of the other person is shown when there is no attempt to control the other person, change their perspective, or cast moral judgment on them.
- Identify with the reader’s problems, share their feelings, and accept their emotional reactions at face value. Combining understanding and

empathy with no effort to change the other person is supportive behavior at a high level.

Using NVC in preventing defensive behavior

- Defensive behavior occurs when an individual perceives threat or anticipates threat in the group. The result is the person devotes an appreciable portion of energy to defending themselves instead of discussing the topic at hand.
- Comments used to control the reader evoke resistance. A bombardment of persuasive “messages” breeds cynical and paranoid responses.
- Choose words carefully and avoid inflammatory or controversial terms that may have negative connotations.

How do you apply NVC to your group discussions?

- Educate members of your group on the advantages of using NVC
- Use a group consensus model that includes principles of NVC.
- Adopt procedures and guidelines that incorporate NVC, and provide enforcement procedures through use of moderators for online discussions, and peacekeepers for regular meetings.

Dealing with Difficult People

Difficult persons in group communications are unavoidable. There are difficult people in all organizations – even those that are united for good and progressive causes. It is not possible to eliminate all communication problems caused by difficult people

Cowboy Words of Wisdom:

Life is simpler when you plow around the stump. Words that soak into your ears are whispered, not yelled. Forgive your enemies. It messes with their minds. Don't corner something meaner than you. Remember, silence is sometimes the best answer

Responding to someone in an emotional or aggressive state:

- **Remember, silence is sometimes the best answer**
- Try to understand what is driving the other person's behavior. Try to see the situation from the other person's perspective.
- Empathize
- Acknowledge what they are saying and move them toward problem-solving by asking questions.
- Do not respond to ad hominem attacks or personal criticism. This will only escalate the behavior. The goal is to avoid escalation of conflict.
- Do not criticize the person's behavior. It implies they have no right to have the emotions and feelings they expressed.
- If all else fails, ask “How do you want this discussion to end”?
- Avoid terms like: chill out – simmer down – let it go -whatever -what's your problem.
- Emphasize similarities and find common ground. Use communication that focuses on finding a solution that takes into consideration the point of view of both persons.
- Do not meet anger with anger. Stay calm and professional. This helps to diminish levels of emotion.
- Use “I” language: Explain how the other person's words impact you without criticism.
- Provide an explanation of why you have taken a particular position.
- Act respectful even if the other person doesn't Do not allow the actions of another bring you to their level.
- Avoid evaluative language – usually “you” language (e.g. “Your thoughts are disorganized.” or “You are not making sense.”)
- Do not make assumptions about the other person's motives. Motives are invisible and we can't see them.

