

Tips on Starting a Practice Group

THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR AN ENJOYABLE PRACTICE GROUP

Practice groups can support people with varied learning needs, regardless of the learning level of participants. When forming a practice group, it's important to consider how your specific group structure and format meets as many needs as possible. Consider the following needs when forming your group to help ensure maximum enjoyment:

- **Integrity** - It is our hope that practice group decision making, group process/format, group structure and learning will align with the principles of NVC as much as possible.
- **Clarity & Support** - It is our hope to support group participants by providing clarity on NVC principles when needed, support on determining your group structure, purpose, and format, and clarity regarding the purpose and importance of practice groups in general.
- **Safety & Trust** - People often choose to share or withhold information in practice groups that can be considered private. It is our hope that all groups will openly support and be inclusive to all people's preferences in this area.
- **Consistency** - Many people enjoy groups more when the schedule is consistent and the group begins/ends at the times indicated. It is our hope that group hosts and/or facilitators will provide a consistent meeting time and space.

SAMPLE GROUP STRUCTURES

Practice groups vary in size, structure, format, and duration to meet varying learning needs of participants. Below is a list of different group structures, listed in terms of increasing facilitator effort, skill, and comfort with NVC. In reality, most groups are a combination of these structures. While each group type includes a suggestion for the number of times the group meets, groups choose to meet as few or as many times as the group wants. Groups often meet weekly or bi-weekly for a set period of time. All groups are recommended to be limited to between 5-12 people (starting at no more than 15, as there will likely be attrition).

1. **Hosting a Video Viewing:** Invite people over to watch one of Marshall Rosenberg's videos, or to listen to an audiocassette. Discuss or share insights, reactions and ideas afterwards.
Recommended meeting times: 1 to 8 meetings, depending on tape length.
2. **Video Practice:** Watch the videotape "The Basics of Nonviolent Communication" with Marshall Rosenberg. Stop the tape periodically and engage the group in written or verbal activities that coincide with the tape. Share and discuss the activities as a group.
Recommended duration: 1 to 6 meetings, depending on tape length
3. **Reading & Practice Group:** Use the NVC Workbook or Lucy Leu's Practice Group Workbook in conjunction with Marshall Rosenberg's book, Introduction to Nonviolent Communication, to guide a reading and discussion practice group aimed at deepening your understanding of NVC principles. Workbook exercises correspond chapter by chapter with Marshall's book. Groups can do one chapter per meeting, or choose to spend several weeks on a given chapter.
Recommended duration: NVC Companion Workbook by Lucy Leu - 14 to 21 meetings
4. **Empathy Group:** Empathy groups focus on giving and receiving empathy, and are considered a format for obtaining the empathy you need and a space for practicing your own empathy skills. Group

participants take turns with one person speaking and others providing empathy. Participants then follow up by providing feedback on the empathy that was given.

Recommended meeting times: 1 to 4 meetings or ongoing

5. **Role Play Practice Group:** Group members meet and roleplay situations from their lives as a space for practicing the principles and process of NVC. Typically two group members will participate at a given time while others observe. The idea is that the more we practice NVC in the context of real situations, the more present it will be in our heart/mind. When a group begins to mature, the group may choose to use situations that occurred between group members as well. Intermediate to Advanced Familiarity with NVC is requested for role play practice group facilitators and hosts.
Recommended meeting times: 1 to 4 meetings or ongoing

HOST OR FACILITATE A PRACTICE GROUP

Hosting or facilitating a practice group is a great way to meet a variety of needs for yourself and others:

- Make a significant contribution to others who are eager to learn
- Help to create the kind of world where people act from, and are connected to their deepest values
- Develop a supportive community and meaningful connections
- Create a deeper, more enriching learning experience for yourself

Practice Group Hosts establish group meeting times/dates/locations, and provide this information to their area's practice group coordinator. If you would enjoy hosting a group but would like someone else to facilitate, ask the practice group coordinator and/or ask people who enjoy teaching NVC in your area. Collaborate with the group facilitator to determine the structure and focus of group.

Practice Group Facilitators establish group structure and facilitate group practice activities. Some groups have more than one facilitator, or determine facilitator tasks then share the role by creating a rotating facilitator schedule.

Guest Mentors with NVC experience can be invited by the group to lead a specific activity or part of the meeting.