

Respect in the School Starts With Respect for Yourself

by Justine Mol

Do you also sometimes sigh: 'I am really fed up with it. I am getting so tired from the conflicts, the aggression amongst the pupils, searching for measures against it, the lack of motivation and all those things I have to do besides teaching. Can work not be different?'

Sure! Work can be different. Marshall Rosenberg, an American psychologist and mediator, gives you concrete tools to change things by way of Nonviolent Communication. He suggests that you shift your attention from judging and finding solutions, such as more rules and punishment, towards feelings and needs.

An example

Your colleague 'borrows' your videotapes and doesn't put them back. Now you can become angry with him and start a discussion about guilt and responsibility. It won't bring your tapes back and your colleague will get annoyed. Or you can realize that you wish that others would handle you and your stuff with respect. That you feel nervous and tense when your things are not where you expect them to be. You have a need for peace and order. When these needs are fulfilled, your teaching is more successful. Then ask yourself if you can be open to consider what inspires your colleague to 'borrow' your videotapes in this way. Then you can start a conversation. You can meet each other and maybe you will find a solution you are both happy with. This asks for a shift of 180 degrees. Are you opposed to something, standing up for your rights, or for being right? Or do you look for clarity and the fulfilment of everyone's needs? Then you can see each confrontation as an opportunity to learn something. You will never manage to change anyone but yourself anyway.

Of course you can ask someone to contribute to your happiness, but if he or she says no (or says yes and does not follow through) you can negotiate another agreement. In this way you change demanding and forcing change into requesting and finding consensus.

At first this way of communicating will require extra time and energy, but soon quarrelling, keeping order, and all sorts of problems will be replaced by 'non-violent' conversations.

This pleasant, respectful, and energetic way of creating a healthy school climate can be used in any type of school.

Justine Mol is a trainer and coach in Disarming Communication in the field of education in the Netherlands. She loves working with parents, teachers and other educators. It is her vision that we can only create a world without violence when we start raising our children in a different way. To her we can only do that if we, adults, first disarm ourselves and connect with our hearts. You can contact her by e-mail info@justinemol.nl Her website www.justinemol.nl is in Dutch and will have an English version in the near future.