


PART I

THE FOUNDATIONS OF NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION



**This process is all about
compassionate giving
and receiving.²¹**

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WHAT IS NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION?

NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION IN its purity is the most powerful, quickest way I've found to get people to go from life-alienated ways of thinking where they want to hurt each other, to enjoying giving to each other.⁶



GIVING OF OURSELVES means an honest expression of what is alive in us in this moment. . . . And the other way we give of ourselves is through how we receive another person's message. To receive it empathetically, connecting with what's alive in them, making no judgment. Just to hear what is alive in the other person and what they would like. So Nonviolent Communication is just a manifestation of what I understand love to be.⁶



THIS PROCESS IS all about compassionate giving and receiving—what I think we need to know how to do real well, if we want to enjoy being around human beings. We need to know how to connect in a way in which compassionate giving and receiving can take place.²¹

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In our training
we want people not only to
come out with awareness of how
Nonviolent Communication can be
used to transform our inner world,
we want people to see how it can
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GENUINE COOPERATION IS inspired when participants trust that their own needs and values will be respectfully addressed. The Nonviolent Communication process is based on respectful practices that foster genuine cooperation.¹¹



NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION IS really an integration of a certain spirituality with concrete tools for manifesting this spirituality in our daily lives, our relationships, and our political activities.⁸



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NVC IS FOUNDED on language and communication skills that strengthen our ability to remain human, even under trying conditions. It contains nothing new; all that has been integrated into NVC has been known for centuries. The intent is to remind us about what we already know—about how we humans were meant to relate to one another—and to assist us in living in a way that concretely manifests this knowledge.

NVC guides us in reframing how we express ourselves and hear others. Instead of habitual, automatic reactions, our words become conscious responses based firmly on awareness of what we are perceiving, feeling, and wanting. We are led to express ourselves with honesty and clarity, while simultaneously paying others a respectful and empathic attention. In any exchange, we come to hear our own deeper needs and those of others. NVC trains us to observe carefully, and to be able to specify behaviors and conditions that are affecting us. We learn to identify and clearly articulate what we are concretely wanting in any given situation. The form is simple, yet powerfully transformative.⁵

NVC FOCUSES ATTENTION on whether people's needs are being fulfilled, and if not, what can be done to fulfill these needs. It shows us how to express ourselves in ways that increase the likelihood others will willingly contribute to our well-being. It also shows us how to receive the messages of others in ways that increase the likelihood that we will willingly contribute to their well-being.⁹



WHAT WE'RE REALLY aiming for here is to keep our attention connected to life moment by moment. We connect to the life that's going on in us, what our needs are at this moment, and focus our attention on the life that's going on in other people.⁹



PEOPLE CAN CHANGE how they think and communicate. They can treat themselves with much more respect, and they can learn from their limitations without hating themselves. We teach people how to do this. We show people a process that can help them connect with the people they're closest to in a way that can allow them to enjoy deeper intimacy, to give to one another with more enjoyment, and to not get caught up in doing things out of duty, obligation, guilt, shame, and the other things that destroy intimate relationships.¹



NVC HELPS US learn how to create peace within ourselves when there's a conflict between what we do and what we wish we had done. If we're going to be violent to our self, how are we going to contribute to creating a world of peace? Peace begins within us. I'm not saying we have to get totally liberated from all of our inner, violent learning before we look outside of our self to the world, or to see how we can contribute to social change at a broader level. I'm saying we need to do these simultaneously.⁸

IN NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION, we try to keep our attention focused by answering two critical questions: “What’s alive in us?” and “What can we do to make life more wonderful?”

The first question, “What’s alive in me; what’s alive in you?” is a question that all over the planet people ask themselves when they get together: “How are you?”

Sadly, though most people ask the question, very few people really know how to answer it very well because we haven’t been educated in a language of life. We’ve not really been taught to answer the question. We ask it, yes, but we don’t know how to answer it. Nonviolent Communication, as we’ll see, suggests how we can let people know what’s alive in us. It shows us how to connect with what’s alive in other people, even if they don’t have words for saying it.⁶



NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION SHOWS us a way of finding out what’s alive in other people. It also shows us a way of seeing the beauty in the other person at any given moment, regardless of their behavior or language. You’ve seen that it requires connecting with the other person’s feelings and needs at this moment. That’s what’s alive in them. And when we do it, we’re going to hear the other person singing a very beautiful song.⁸



MY NEED IS for safety, fun, and to have distribution of resources, a sustainable life on the planet. NVC is a strategy that serves me to meet these needs.³⁴



AS NVC REPLACES our old patterns of defending, withdrawing, or attacking in the face of judgment and criticism, we come to perceive ourselves and others, as well as our intentions and relationships, in a new light. Resistance, defensiveness, and violent reactions are minimized.³⁴

WE ARE ENORMOUSLY powerful, we human beings. Every moment, we have this possibility to enrich life. And there's nothing, I find, that people throughout the world enjoy doing more than using this power in the service of life.²⁶

ORIGINS, GOAL, AND USE OF NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION

Where Did NVC Come From?

NVC EVOLVED OUT of an intense interest I have in two questions. First, I wanted to better understand what happens to human beings that leads some of us to behave violently and exploitatively. And secondly, I wanted to better understand what kind of education serves us in the attempt to remain compassionate—which I believe is our nature—even when others are behaving violently or exploitatively.

I've found in my exploration into these two questions that three factors are very important in understanding why some of us respond violently—and some of us compassionately—in similar situations. These three are:

1. The language that we have been educated to use.
2. How we have been taught to think and communicate.
3. The specific strategies we learned to influence ourselves and others.⁹



I DECIDED TO do a different kind of research to observe the people I respected the most, who seemed the most compassionate, who seemed to enjoy giving to others. I tried to see: How were they different than the people who seemed to enjoy criticizing, blaming, and attacking others?³¹



NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION EVOLVED from my attempt to get conscious about beloved divine energy and how to connect with it.⁶

NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION REALLY came out of my attempt to understand this concept of love and how to manifest it, how to do it. I came to the conclusion that it was not just something you feel, but it is something we manifest, something we do, something we have. And what is this manifestation? It is giving of ourselves in a certain way.⁶



WHILE STUDYING THE factors that affect our ability to stay compassionate, I was struck by the crucial role of language and our use of words. I have since identified a specific approach to communicating—both speaking and listening—that leads us to give from the heart, connecting us with ourselves and with each other in a way that allows our natural compassion to flourish. I call this approach Nonviolent Communication, using the term *nonviolence* as Gandhi used it—to refer to our natural state of compassion when violence has subsided from the heart. While we may not consider the way we talk to be “violent,” words often lead to hurt and pain, whether for others or ourselves.⁵

What Is the Goal of NVC?

NVC GIVES US tools and understanding to create a more peaceful state of mind.³⁴



NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION IS not designed to help us get people to do what we want them to do. It’s designed to create a connection that will get everybody’s needs met and to get them met through what I call compassionate giving. People do things willingly because they see how it will serve life.²⁷



THE PURPOSE OF this process is to help us connect in a way that makes natural giving possible.³¹

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Remember that
our goal and the goal of
Nonviolent Communication
is not to get what we want,
but to make a human connection
that will result in everyone getting
their needs met. It's as simple,
and as complex, as that.⁴

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