

# Principles and Practices of Nonviolent Communication

*For access to more self-awareness and skillful connection with others, it is helpful to be able to distinguish between:*

1. **Observations** and Evaluation
2. **Feelings** and Thoughts
3. **Needs** and Strategies
4. **Requests** and Demands

## 1. **Observation** versus **Evaluation:**

Awareness of observable data vs judgment, diagnosis, moralistic interpretation  
right/wrong, good/bad

## 2. **Feeling** versus **Thought:**

Emotion, body sensation vs beliefs, opinions, images,  
e.g. excitement, joy, fear interpretations: “I feel that...”  
“I feel like you...,” “I feel rejected,”  
“You/I should...”

## 3. **Need** versus **Strategy:**

“Universal values” vs Ways of fulfilling needs  
Independent of externals Specific to people, places, things, time  
An inner experience Specific actions, solutions, behaviors  
Characteristic of all humans

## 4. **Request** versus **Demand:**

Given freely/ Choice/ vs Coercion/Lack of choice  
Power “with” Power “over”  
Clear, precise, doable Vague wants  
Present action Guilt, obligation, duty  
Language:  
“Are you willing?” “Would you?” vs Use of fear, shame; have to, should

## **Two types of requests:**

### Connecting/Process requests:

*For reflection,*

“Would you tell me what you heard me say?”

*For response,*

“How do you feel hearing what I say?”

### Action/Solution requests:

“Would you be willing to...(strategy to meet my and/or your needs)?”

*Based on the work of Marshall Rosenberg ([www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org)) and Bay NVC ([www.baynvc.org](http://www.baynvc.org))*

***"Out beyond ideas of wrong doing and right doing,  
there is a field, I will meet you there" ~ Rumi***

The 4 skills listed above are the essential components of Nonviolent Communication – a set of principles and practices created by Marshall Rosenberg during the 1960's when he mediated between conflicting parties during the civil rights movement. These skills emphasize personal responsibility for our actions and the choices we can make to respond rather than react to others. This in turn supports relationships grounded in cooperation and collaboration.

**Basic assumptions:**

Feelings and needs are universal in nature; all human beings have them  
Difficulties arise when we confuse the 4 components, and stop seeing the other person (or ourselves) with compassion and clarity

Just as leaves reach for the sun, everything that people do is reaching to meet universal, life-serving needs.

No matter what a person is expressing, it is their attempt to enrich their life. All attacks, criticism, blaming are an individual's tragic expression of their attempt to meet life-serving needs.

What others do stimulates, but does not cause, our feelings. The source of our feelings is our internal experience related to our needs.

For example:

When our needs are met/fulfilled we may feel:

glad, peaceful, tender, rested, grateful, calm

When our needs are not met we may feel:

sad, afraid, angry, confused, tired, uneasy

**Our own natural compassion is energized, and our natural desire to contribute to another's well being becomes strengthened:**

When our own needs are seen empathically – by ourselves and others

When we feel heard – by ourselves and others

When we are able to hear/recognize the other's needs empathically

**The inability to connect with ourselves or another's needs is usually prevented by one of four things:**

Lack of resources of time or energy

Lack of self-awareness of one's own feelings/needs

Attachment to outcome

A reactive or defensive mode