

OFNR Communication Components

For experiencing empathic connection (from the work of Nonviolent Communication NVC)

Observation vs. Evaluation/Judgment (language of mind)

Observation is awareness of what we perceive with our senses – sight, sound, touch, taste, smell – and also of our thoughts and evaluations. In language, we can describe purely what we are observing (i.e. words we hear, actions we see from our subjective frame of reference) separate from any words that evaluate (e.g. liking or disliking, agreement or disagreement). Often our evaluation takes the form of moralistic judgment about who/what is right-wrong, good-bad, should-shouldn't, appropriate-inappropriate, etc. Thoughts are a cognitive expression of human needs.

Feeling vs. Thinking/“Faux Feelings” (language of body)

Feeling is compassionate presence with internal, bodily experience of sensations and emotions, vs. thinking, such as “I feel like you don't respect me,” or “I feel that you're not listening.” Words commonly used for feelings often mix up thought and feeling (“faux feeling” language, e.g. “I feel judged, disrespected and unappreciated.”) Feelings reflect the quality of our thinking. Feeling and accepting our feelings connects us with our body and helps us process and integrate emotions. Feelings are a bodily expression of human needs.

Need vs. Wants/“Strategies” (language of the universal)

Needs are what all humans universally need to survive and thrive (e.g. safety, love, freedom). Needs are not specific to a particular person, thing, action, place, or time. All living beings in every moment are attempting to meet needs that we all share. Needs connect us with the universal, wholeness and interconnectedness of life.

Relationship of thoughts and feelings to needs, and levels of empowerment: Thoughts and evaluations express needs, e.g. “You're so selfish,” might be expressing a need for consideration. We commonly see our feelings as caused by other's actions, e.g. “I feel angry because you ...”. A deeper understanding is seeing our feelings caused by our thinking, e.g. “I feel angry because I'm thinking that ...”. More deeply and powerfully, we can see our feelings ultimately caused by our needs, e.g. “I feel angry because of the need for respect.”

Request vs. Demand (language of giving and receiving)

Requests flow from connection with universal needs, and invite the freedom to say “no.” It is wanting the response to come from true willingness, from the heart and the desire to contribute, from compassionate giving and receiving, rather than fear of punishment, guilt, shame, obligation, reward, etc.

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