

Four Communication Choices

Integration of two dimensions of communication – Speaker and Listener, Out Loud and Silent

From an empathic conversation perspective, I think of there being four choices for focusing the spotlight of attention. Two of these choices are about speaking or listening, and two choices are about doing this out loud or silently. When speaking about what is going on in us, we can do so out loud or silently. Likewise, when listening to what is going on in the Speaker, we can reflect back out loud to them what we're hearing, or we can wonder and imagine silently. Here is a table to illustrate.

	OUT LOUD	SILENT
SPEAKER	Self-Expression	Self-Empathy
LISTENER	Empathic Reflection	Empathic Listening

Self-Expression: In the flow of a conversation, when a person chooses to be the Speaker and speaks out loud what is going on in them that they would like the Listener to hear.

Empathic Reflection: When a person in a conversation chooses to be the Listener and reflects back out loud to the Speaker what they're hearing the Speaker say.

Empathic Listening: When a person in a conversation chooses to be the Listener and to listen silently to what the Speaker is saying.

Self-Empathy: When a person in a conversation chooses to remain silent and focus their attention on speaking to themselves about what is going on in them and give themselves empathic listening.

When practicing these communication choices with a practice partner, it can be helpful for learning purposes to work with the “classical” NVC structure of OFNR (versus a more “idiomatic,” natural-sounding flow of language).

Self-Expression: “When I see/hear ___ [OBSERVATION], I feel ___ [FEELING] because of a need for ___ [NEED]. Would you be willing to ___ [REQUEST]?”

Empathic Reflection: “Are you feeling ___ [FEELING] because of a need for ___ [NEED]?”

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