



NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION KEY CONCEPTS

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FOREWORD

Ultimately learning Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is not so much about understanding the components of a model, but about integrating an awareness, and embodying it. Just like we can read all about swimming, whilst having no idea what that's like until we get in the water. NVC is a way of life.

This e-book is intended as a useful reference for all those beginning to grapple with the key concepts of NVC or looking for ways to explain it.

For those wanting to put it into practice, I hope you'll join us in one of our courses, workshops, retreats or coaching sessions. Dip in! :)

Sarah

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01



THE NVC MODEL: PARTS & COMPONENTS

The intention of the Nonviolent Communication (NVC) model is to bring about connection, with each other and ourselves.

As we communicate, there is a constant exchange backwards and forwards, exploring what's going on for me and what's going on for you. I honestly share how I am feeling and what I need without criticizing or blaming anyone and then empathically listen to how another person is feeling and what they need, without judgment or criticism.

This leads to a connected dialogue in which we discover what is present and how we can enrich each other's lives. This backwards and forwards flow of communication is also referred to as the Giraffe Dance and is frequently represented by a figure of eight.



CONNECTING VS ALIENATING LANGUAGE



Connecting Language

Connecting language is dynamic and supports the search for common ground. When using connecting language you increase the likelihood of collaboration based on mutual respect. Both of our needs are taken equally into consideration. You will also contribute to building and strengthening relationships which inevitably contributes to synergy with people around you.

Connecting language supports us to connect to ourselves, becoming aware of our inner world of feelings, needs, of how life is showing up in us.

This is also referred to in Nonviolent Communication circles as *giraffe language*. The giraffe is the land mammal with the biggest heart. With its long neck it can see what's behind the insults, judgment and blaming.



Reactive/Alienating Language

Reactive or alienating language is static and often results in taking a position and defending that position or attacking the position of another.

This is the language of blame, judgment, labels, comparison, evaluation, interpretation, demand, and thinking in terms of punishment and reward. These are expressions that are focused on what's right and what's wrong rather than attempting to find common ground.

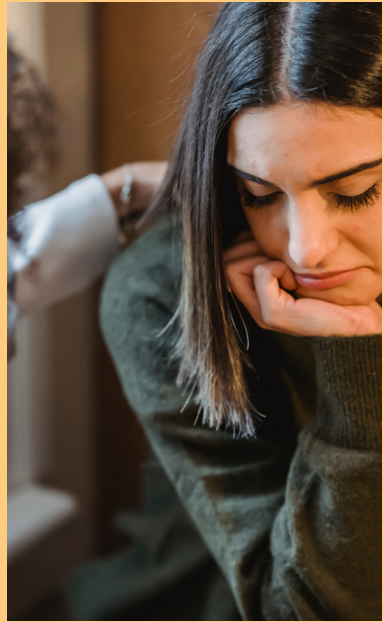
In this scenario either only my needs matter or only your needs matter.

Becoming aware of this type of thinking can be very helpful to identify how you feel about a situation and what's important to you rather than what you think about a situation and how you believe others should behave. This is referred to as *jackal language*.

3 FORMS OF CONNECTION

In the NVC model, there are three possible forms of connection:

1. **Self-empathy**, an inner dialogue connecting to my own feelings and needs in response to a stimulus. I become aware of what might have triggered different sensations in my body, giving me clues about needs that have or have not been met. I might listen to some of my judging and blaming first, to uncover which feelings and deep longings/needs lie underneath these. This inner dialogue leads to clarity around requests I might make to myself or others to meet my needs. Acknowledging and being present to my own feelings and needs within also makes space to be present to others.



2. **Honest self-expression** with one or more others, sharing my truth as it lives in me, aware of my feelings and needs and requesting that which will contribute to meeting my needs.

3. To **listen empathically** to someone else's feelings and needs, connecting to what is going on for them. As they speak, I get out of my headspace, clearing any thoughts, analysis, or input into what they're sharing and rather offering space/stillness for them to share their inner experience. I become open and present to what's arising for the other person with full acceptance, offering a safe space for them to be heard. Depending on what feels right, I might remain silent, or reflect back to them what I am hearing them say.



4 ELEMENTS OF NVC

Observations

These are the facts, clear descriptions of what I hear, see, smell, taste, feel with my senses without interpreting them, judging or evaluating what's happened.

What would a camera have captured? This is the starting point so we can establish common ground around what happened and each take responsibility for the feelings that arose in us when this occurred.

Feelings

These are sensations that I experience in the body (emotions). Feelings function as signals that a situation is or is not serving me, that there are needs either met or unmet.

Feelings are not to be confused with words that sound like feelings but are in truth interpretations or thoughts about how I feel.

I.e. I feel misunderstood, I feel rejected, or I feel abandoned. Although the word feel precedes them, they describe a belief or interpretation of a situation.

When I have the thought that you are rejecting me, I might be feeling hurt, angry, scared and perhaps long for reassurance, connection and reciprocity.

Needs

Needs are also referred to as yearnings or longings. They are universal as everyone has needs and everything we say or do is an attempt to have these needs fulfilled.

Needs are a manifestation of life energy moving through me. Needs are what propel me forward from moment to moment.

We are never in conflict on the level of needs, but rather about which strategies we employ to meet those needs. Once we have clarity on what need it is that we're trying to meet, a multitude of strategies/requests becomes possible as an opportunity to contribute to our wellbeing.

Developing the ability to identify our needs and the intention to be present to and embody the energy of our needs is one of the key abilities we develop in NVC.

Requests

Once we've become aware of the longing or need in us, we can make a request of ourselves or others to support us in meeting that need.

REQUESTS

A request is different to a demand in that we are willing to try out alternative strategies to help meet our needs. I am willing to hear a no as an answer and to find out what would work for everyone. Our intention is for others to do things to that contribute to our wellbeing because they want to, and not because they have to.

Requests need to be doable, formulated as specifically as possible, and in positive language (what is it that we do want?).

There are three types of requests to be aware of that would support connection and shared decision-making.



Three kinds of NVC requests

A connecting request - asks input to experience connection with the other person, to find out what's going on for them (What are they feeling or needing?)

A request for clarity - to get clear what the other person meant, to check that my message was received in the way that I intended it, to check that we understood each other or ask for more information.

An action request - suggests a possible strategy/concrete action that would meet my needs. Exploring whether other(s) would be willing to take a particular action to meet my/our needs.



When we hear a difficult-to-receive-message, there are four choices of responses we might have:

1) **Jackal ears in** - This is the voice of shame or guilt, as I tell myself that there's something wrong with me or my behaviour. It is when I believe any judging and blaming to be true. "It's my fault" "I'm sorry".

2) **Jackal ears out** - This is the voice of blame. It is when I attack or get defensive and tell someone it's their fault. In this position I tell others what they should be or how they should do things differently.

3) **Giraffe ears in** - This is the voice of self-empathy. I connect to my feelings and needs/values, getting insight into what's going on for me in this moment.

4) **Giraffe ears out** - This is the position of empathy. I connect to the feelings and needs that the other might have as they are delivering this difficult-to-receive message.





C H A P T E R

02



NVC PROCESSES

Below follows a list of twelve different NVC Processes

1. Hearing another's anger (blame, criticism)

Listening to another's anger with giraffe ears, we take a moment for self-empathy. Then, we listen for the underlying feelings and needs behind what they are saying. A message of blame and criticism becomes an opportunity to connect to what's really important for the other. What is it they are so longing for and are scared might not happen?

2. Expressing "no"

When I express a no, I am not willing to agree to a particular strategy as it would not meet my needs. I am in fact saying yes to other needs which I am looking to meet. What am I saying yes to?

3. Hearing "no"

When someone responds to one of my requests with a no, they are saying yes to something else. We might find a different strategy that would meet both of our needs. If I am not willing to hear the no, then my request was a demand!

4. Self-empathy

Self-empathy is synonymous with self-connection. It is the movement of bringing your awareness inside and connecting to parts of yourself that are having an emotional experience. There isn't really a difference between self-empathy in relation to something that happens internally or externally.

When something happens or is said to me that triggers strong emotions for me, I can connect to the feelings that arise in my body and which needs are not met (or met). Taking a moment to acknowledge and experience these is self-empathy. This leads to self-awareness about my pain or my celebration. I explore my inner response to an external stimulus.

Parts of me might also be having an internal dialogue. Perhaps I have a strong inner critic that brings up judgments about myself, having beliefs that I'm clumsy or stupid. Or perhaps there's a part of me that I notice thinks it's better than others. Maybe this brings up some shame. Slowing down and taking time to listen to this internal dialogue and identifying the underlying feelings and needs support me to mourn what I would have enjoyed to have done or said differently and connect to the beauty of what I was longing for.

5. Receiving gratitude

When receiving gratitude, I connect to the feelings and needs met of the other that really contributed to their wellbeing.

6. Expressing gratitude

When expressing gratitude in NVC, we share and celebrate which needs were met by a specific behaviour or event. What is it specifically that they did or said that contributed to my wellbeing?

7. Mourning and learning from our regrets

When I become aware of unmet needs, some sadness or sense of loss might arise.

Feeling this sadness is referred to as mourning in NVC (as opposed to celebrating which is about gratitude for the needs met).

I might be disappointed that I chose to do or say something that didn't lead to meeting needs and mourn that they weren't met. Connecting to the sense of regret supports me to get clarity on how I might do it differently next time.

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8. Expressing an "apology"

When apologizing in NVC, I connect with the other, becoming present to their feelings and needs that weren't met, receiving empathically what was going on for them. By reflecting back their feelings & needs, they can experience understanding and a shared reality. I express regret around my actions or words that didn't support their needs being met.

9. Screaming in Giraffe

This is a powerful expression of my pain, sadness, anger or frustration, which might be explosive and loud. Speaking giraffe is not about being 'gentle' or 'nice'. Rather it is about owning my feelings and expressing my truth as it is, without blame or criticism.

10. Interrupting

When we interrupt a conversation using giraffe, we jump in to re-establish connection with another, or a group, expressing and listening to each other's feelings and needs. In that moment I take responsibility for my feelings and needs and express my desire to connect to what others are feeling and needing.

11. Making conscious choices with awareness of needs

When I can connect to the sensations in my body and notice feelings arising, I can become aware of a need that is or isn't met. With this awareness of what needs are alive for me, I might come up with a range of possible strategies that would support meeting my unmet needs.

12. Resolving an inner conflict through NVC dialogue.

When experiencing inner conflict, I would explore it from different angles, identifying the different needs that are important for me in that context which might not be met. Which needs am I worried won't be met or what's bringing up anger or sadness?

When possible, I call an NVC community member to support me through empathy, role play or a dance floor.

Once I've identified the different needs important to me in that situation, I come up with a strategy/request that would support me to best meet all my needs.

**"SPEAKING
GIRAFFE IS NOT
ABOUT BEING
GENTLE OR NICE."**





C H A P T E R

03



25 KEY DIFFERENTIATIONS

1. Need vs. request

A *need* is a longing/yearning in me. It is a life energy and ultimately a form of love. Needs are the driving force behind the continuation of life and survival of all organisms. Some examples of needs are joy, creativity, safety, acceptance, belonging or growth. Needs are universal and can only be considered needs if they are experienced by all.

A *request* is something I might ask as a strategy to meet my needs. For example, cooking dinner for everyone in my household may meet my needs for contribution, community, nourishment and appreciation. Requests are our preferred strategies to meet our needs.

2. Stimulus vs. cause

Anything that I observe or think can be a stimulus for my feelings. A stimulus is my personal response to an occurrence. My emotions are stimulated by what I see, hear and think, and are not caused by what I see, hear and think.

We cannot say that an occurrence was the *cause* of our feelings. If this was true then six people viewing the same event would have the exact same sensations in our bodies at the same time. Making this distinction supports us to take responsibility for our feelings and needs, rather than making others responsible. It supports us to become empowered.

3. Request vs. demand

A *request* is something that I can ask of myself, someone else or a group of people. It needs to be doable, have a specific timeframe and be formulated in positive action language (i.e. what I do want, rather than what I don't want). It is a question I ask to either get clarity, establish connection & understanding or suggest a strategy that would contribute to meeting my needs. I ask it with an openness to receive a yes or no answer. I trust that if I get a no response, I could explore other strategies and make different requests that would best meet everyone's needs.

I make a *demand* when I ask a question with an expectation, or when I am fixated on a particular outcome. It is when I am not open to getting a no as a response. When demanding, I believe that things must go my way, according to my strategy or there will be consequences.

Demands may be disguised as requests, making them sound optional by adding a please or asking with a soft gentle voice. You can do this and yet still be asking with the intention of getting exactly what you want and not being willing to take no for an answer.

"DEMANDS MAY BE DISGUISED AS REQUESTS..."

4. Feeling vs. feeling mixed with thoughts

A *feeling* is an emotion, based on physical sensations in my body. My feelings point to my needs fulfilled or unfulfilled. Words to describe feelings are sad, joyful, angry, disappointed, curious, anxious...

A *feeling mixed with thoughts* involves an evaluation of my physical sensations. I sometimes refer to these as masked feelings as they're often preceded with "I feel..." or "I feel that..." followed by a thought that holds someone else responsible for my felt experience. Examples of feelings mixed with thoughts are abandoned, abused, rejected, ignored.

When I think that I have been abandoned, I might really be feeling scared, hurt, lonely and need some reassurance, support and companionship.

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5. Observation vs. observation mixed with evaluation

An *observation* is a factual statement describing exactly what happened as perceived by my senses. This is free of any interpretation or judgment I might have of a situation.

E.g. This is the third time this year that Jonas arrived a half hour late for our 12 o'clock meeting.

An *observation mixed with an evaluation* is a description of what happened that includes my own interpretation/perception of the event based on previous experiences. It might be a generalisation and does not accurately reflect what occurred. E.g. Jonas is constantly/always late for our 12 o'clock meetings.

6. Empathy vs. sympathy and other forms of response (fixing, reassuring, storytelling, etc.)

Empathy is when I am present with someone. I am open and witnessing life expressing itself through them, hearing their feelings and needs and giving them space to be fully heard.

I might stay silent, paraphrase or reflect what I'm hearing them say, and stay in connection with what's going on for them right now in this moment.

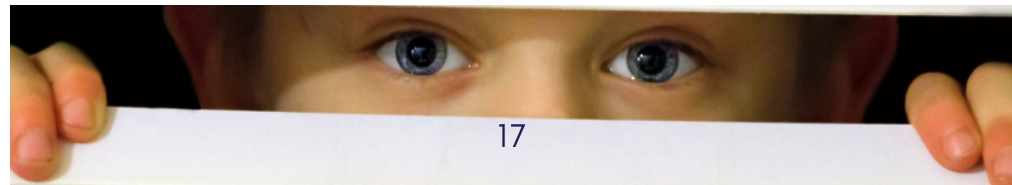
Sympathy is a response to someone's pain which disrupts being present to their experience of life just as it is. Connecting empathically gets disrupted when I begin talking about my life, telling my story, offering advice and taking the focus away from What is going on for them.

Connection is also interrupted when I respond in ways that will cheer them up, I try to reassure them, minimize what they're telling me, or try to move on to another subject.

Similarly, *analysing the situation for the other, correcting or diagnosing what they might need to change or fix things* does not support meeting someone where they are.

While there is nothing inherently wrong with offering advice, it might be unsolicited and might not lead to the connection they're longing for. When I put my attention on fixing and resolving the situation, I don't give the other the opportunity to be heard and get clear for themselves what they're really needing. It might be more empowering if they could connect to what was going on inside themselves and devise their own strategy to resolve their challenges. They would then feel intrinsically motivated to act, based on their own inner wisdom.

When I notice myself offering sympathy instead of empathy, I find it helpful to check which needs of mine I am trying to meet by doing so. Is it that I feel uncomfortable and anxious when I hear their pain? Do I feel helpless and long to contribute to their well-being? Is it that I'm now connecting to my own pain and need some empathy myself? Becoming aware of what's going on for me helps me to become present again with the other or realise whether I have the capacity to empathically receive them in this moment.



7. Power with vs. power over

Power with is when there is collaboration and everyone's needs are taken into consideration. Action is taken from a common ground, with everyone participating as equals, and where everyone's needs matter.

Power over describes a scenario where there is coercion, dictatorship and where decisions are made by one party without taking needs of another party into consideration. This is common in 'domination hierarchies' where those who have been given authority make demands rather than requests. However, a hierarchical structure where there is shared agreement about different roles can also be an example of 'power with'. This is possible when the needs of all people within the structure matter equally.

8. Choice vs. submission or rebellion

Choice is when a decision is made freely with full awareness of feelings and needs. With this awareness, you are standing in your power and clear on why you are choosing a particular strategy to best meet your needs.

Submission or rebellion are forms of 'power over' (rebellion) and 'power under' (submission). These occur when you give away your power and fear that you must comply with another's requests or demands. You respond reactively, are not aware of your feelings and needs, resist the other's strategies (rebellion), do whatever is asked of you (submission).

9. Protective vs. punitive use of force

Protective use of force is when force is applied to protect something or someone. For example, if I see someone walk onto a road when there's a car coming, there is no time to check in with them whether they would be OK with me grabbing their arm and pulling them back. Protective use of force is about stepping in as an emergency measure, to avoid danger or harm.

Punitive use of force however would be using force or power/authority to punish someone for their action. For example, there would be consequences for the child that ran onto the road in the form of physical punishment and taking away freedoms or privileges. For example, one might pay a staff member less wages for not coming to work at the agreed time. Punitive force is when I use my authority or power over to decide what's best for someone else, taking perceived corrective action based on an idea of what's right or wrong.

10. Shift vs. compromise

A *shift* is when you notice a change of energy within yourself whereby you open up to considering different strategies from a deepfelt connection to your needs and those of other(s). From this felt connection with each other, you may come up with new strategies that would meet everyone's needs. A win-win situation.

A *compromise* happens when you both choose to ignore your needs, and search for a strategy that does not consider all needs. You both lose in some way.



11. Self-empathy vs. acting out, repressing, or wallowing in feelings

Self-empathy is listening to my inner dialogue, being present with all my feelings and needs that arise, accepting them and experiencing them in my body. I might mourn the needs I realise are unmet in that situation. I listen to any judgments and connect to the needs underlying those thoughts. I get clarity around what was so painful for me or what brought up anger, guilt or shame. Allowing space to connect to myself, I stay with what arises and notice any shift or transformation (while not forcing a shift)

Acting out, repressing or wallowing in feelings are responses to a painful situation where needs are met, but in which I do not connect to my feelings and needs. I continue to suffer as I stay stuck in thoughts of judgment, blame, victimhood. Without becoming present to the sensations in my body and acknowledging what life in me was longing for, no transformation can occur.

12. Empathic sensing vs. intellectual guessing

Empathic sensing is becoming fully present to the energy of the feelings and needs of the person we're listening to. I become aware of their body language, tone of voice, sensing subtle vibrations and tuning into what's alive in them. There is an openness in me to whatever is arising in them, and I am curiously listening from the heart. My intention is for connection, and I simply hold space, intuitively going on a journey with them. I don't need to do much which is often referred to as "lazy empathy".

Intellectual guessing is when I listen to someone, wondering what's going on for them in my mind, analysing what they're going through. I could then make some educated guesses as to what I think they might be feeling and needing. I am not compassionately present with them in a connected heartfelt way. I might be more focused on guessing right, wanting to fix the situation by following the NVC formula I've learnt.

13. Idiomatic vs. classical (formal) Giraffe

Idiomatic Giraffe, also referred to as "street giraffe" is when I express myself with NVC consciousness using commonly used or colloquial language.

For example, rather than asking "When you see that some of the children received more gifts than others, are you feeling upset because you're needing equality?" you might say "Are you upset because you had wanted the same for all the children?"

In *classical or formal Giraffe* we use the four steps of the NVC model to build sentences. Practicing this way support us in becoming aware of the distinctions made when learning NVC. A sentence would be formulated with an observation, a feeling, a need and a request. E.g. When I see that some children received more gifts than others, I feel upset, because I need equality. Would you be willing to explore ideas with me at Wednesday's staff meeting to discuss how we distribute the gifts to the children next time?"

14. Self-discipline vs. obedience

Obedience is about complying with rules and guidelines without having any say or connection to what my feelings and needs are. I respond to the demands of others who I perceive to have power over me with a yes. I act out of fear of the consequences if I do not behave a certain way and if I don't follow instructions.

Self-discipline is about following chosen guidelines while still being connected to why I am doing so (Needs). In the moment, this might not meet all my needs, but I have agreed to adhere to a framework because it meets some greater needs in the long run. For instance, I have chosen to wake up every morning at 5.45 am to meditate for an hour, no matter how tired I am. So, while my need for sleep might not be met when my alarm clock rings, I hold this with care, and I have chosen to get up and meditate anyway to build a robust meditation practice. In the long run having self-discipline supports a range of other needs.

15. Respect for authority vs. fear of authority

Respect for authority is about a reverence in which I recognise the leadership role someone is playing in society and cooperate to meet their requests.

I see them as equal fellow human beings whose needs matter as much as mine, and who are doing the best they can to support meeting as many needs for everyone as possible.

I am not in a power-under situation but accepting that they have been assigned different decision-making responsibilities. This is a description of a power-with-hierarchy.



Fear of authority is different in that I am obedient because I am afraid of the consequences if I don't comply. I am willing to conform to whatever demands might be made of me out of fear. I am not meeting some of my needs since my needs for safety and security have taken priority. This is a submissive, power-under position that I take, where the authority's needs matter most.

16. Life-connected vs. life-alienated

Life-connected refers to an awareness of the living energy of needs within us. Communicating from this energy leads to connection that serves us in making life wonderful.

Life-alienated is when there is no awareness or connection to our life energy and we might be acting out of habit, or emotion without awareness of needs. We follow old patterns and beliefs without making conscious, needs based choices.

17. Appreciation vs. approval, compliments or praise

Appreciation is a heartfelt expression of gratitude for how the other contributed to your life. You might share a specific observation of something that was said or done, which feelings arise, and which need is met. This supports connection and a shared celebration of needs met.

Compliments, approval and praise are another form of judgment, although they sound 'positive' and usually point to needs met for someone. They are not based on connection and sometimes have an ulterior motive such as wanting to see a behaviour repeated. Compliments are still a judgement of the person or their actions, and therefore lead to disconnection.

18. Value judgment vs. moralistic judgment

A *value judgment* is an expression of what is important for me in life and an expression of my needs in a context. For example, "When I see beggars sitting on the side of the road in winter, my heart sinks. I so long to see an equal and just society in which we care for each other's physical wellbeing." I express the needs I really value in life as a longing for what would make life more wonderful.

In contrast a *moralistic judgment* involves an opinion of what's right and wrong. Different people might have differing moralistic judgements and ideas about what is right and wrong. Religion, beliefs, cultural background, family, education can all influence our moralistic judgements. E.g. "Poverty is bad, and governments should take better care of their citizens." "Saying thank you when you receive something is having good manners."

19. "Being Giraffe" vs. "doing Giraffe"

It is possible to learn and begin applying the four steps of NVC, formulating our sentences so it sounds like giraffe/connecting language, and to do so in a way that is not truly coming from the heart.

E.g. We might make a demand of someone formulating it as a request, but when the other says no, there are consequences. (There wasn't a freedom of choice) I would refer to this as "*doing giraffe*".

In contrast, "*being giraffe*" is about heart to heart connection. There is an embodied awareness and open listening. It is an expression of feelings and needs from the heart. Sentences might not even sound like classical NVC. When coming from this self-awareness and responsibility for my feelings and needs, then I am "being giraffe"

20. Giraffe honesty vs. jackal honesty

Giraffe honesty is about expressing what's alive in me. I make a neutral observation of something that happened or was said. I take responsibility for my feelings and needs that have arisen as a result and express them.

Jackal honesty on the other hand is when I express my thoughts, including my judgments, evaluations or interpretations of the situation. In this case I am speaking from a reactive space. I am not taking responsibility, but rather blaming something or someone else as the cause of my suffering.

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21. Natural vs. habitual

Natural behaviour is when we do things with awareness, making a conscious choice to do what we do. Rather than responding to someone out of habit. With NVC we take time to connect to underlying needs and open up to the possibility of multiple strategies.

Habitual behaviour on the other hand is taught. We've found a pattern of behaviour that has worked to meet our needs in the past and we apply the same strategy again and again mindlessly, without being aware whether it's still serving to meet our needs or not.

22. Persisting vs. demanding

Persisting is pursuing a conversation on a matter until you feel satisfied that all needs have been considered for all parties involved and met in the best way possible. This happens in dialogue, with care and empathy for those who might be uncomfortable about having the conversation and continuing to engage with them until all needs have been heard and considered.

Conversely *demanding* only takes my own needs into consideration and I only see one possibility to meet my needs. Any other parties affected or involved in a decision-making process must comply with my chosen strategy. I don't trust that my needs will be met any other way.

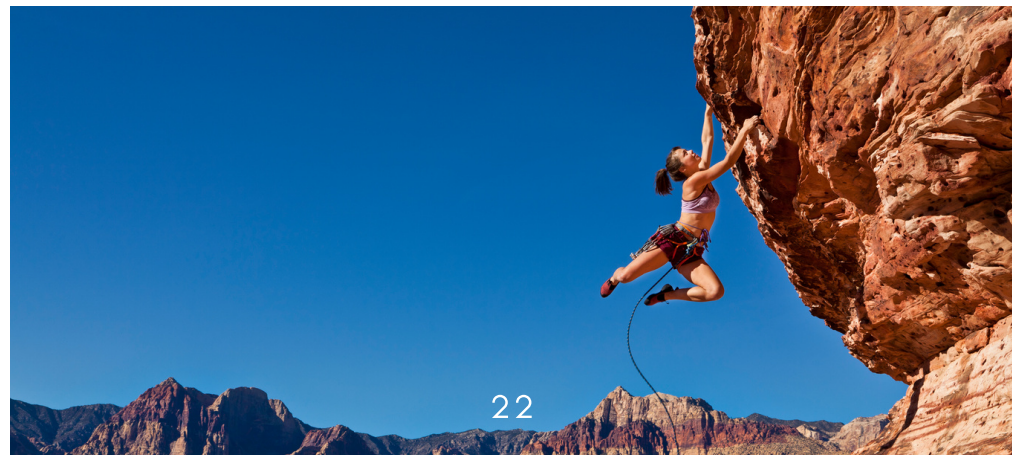
23. Interdependence vs. dependence or independence

Interdependence describes a way of living together that consciously takes everyone's feelings and needs into consideration and in which we find the best possible strategies to meet as many of those as possible for everyone. We work together, taking responsibility for each of our individual needs. This is where the needs of each person matter.

In *independent relationships* we believe that only our own needs matter and we're not willing to take the needs of others into consideration.

In *dependent relationships* we believe that our needs can only be met by other people and we don't take full responsibility for meeting our own needs. We rely on others and have expectations for them to ensure my wellbeing. Independence and dependence can lead to resentment and disconnection in relationships as we are not making conscious choices in finding strategies that will work for ourselves and others.

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24. Vulnerability vs. weakness

Vulnerability is letting my guards down and being willing to reveal parts of myself that are usually hidden, even if this might be scary and risky. My vulnerability has a soft quality. It is an openness where I allow another to see me as I am. To see my wounds, insecurities, fears, shame, guilt, despair, hopelessness as well as my joy, happiness, and celebration. To me there is great strength in being vulnerable. It requires letting go of fear and being prepared to expose yourself. Somehow making yourself vulnerable is a way of disarming yourself. Often this creates a safe space for another to be vulnerable and share from the heart too. Vulnerability is a powerful way to connect and resolve conflict.

Weakness is more of a judgment and an evaluative label of someone's behaviour. Some might see crying for example as a sign of weakness. Expressing sadness this way and showing vulnerability may be scary so criticizing and labelling it as weak could be a fear-based response. Vulnerability takes much courage and a willingness to be with life as it is.

25. Love as an action vs. love as a need and a feeling

All needs are essentially different expressions of a longing for love. Love is the foundation of all our yearning and survival as life forms. *Love as an action* is a strategy that I employ to get my needs met. Perhaps I am buying flowers for my partner as a strategy for demonstrating my love and yet I am really trying to meet my needs for acceptance and security in my relationship or as an expression of my appreciation.

Feeling loving is not the same as love as a need. Love as a feeling is a way of describing the range of sensations in my body when my need for love is met. This may change depending on the context. I might experience a warmth, gentleness, openness in my chest, bubbiness, arousal, tingling etc.

**"THERE IS GREAT
STRENGTH IN
BEING
VULNERABLE"**



COMPASSIONATE SELF

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