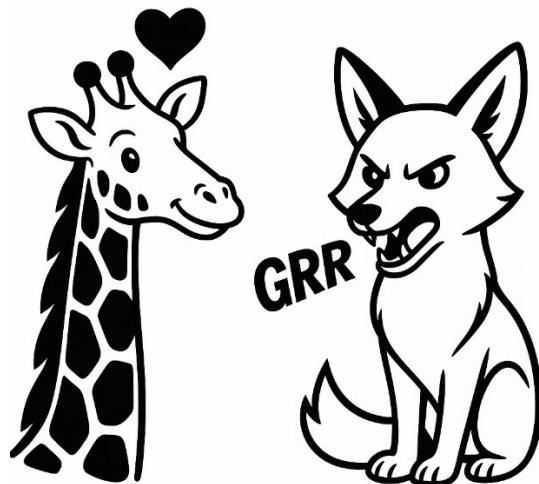


Higgins' Nonviolent Communication — Summary

By Marshall B. Rosenberg, PhD

Themes of the Book

- All human behavior is an attempt to meet basic universal needs.
- Compassion arises when we connect with these needs — in ourselves and others.
- Conflict dissolves when people feel heard, understood, and respected.
- NVC is both a compassionate communication framework and a consciousness: a shift *from coercion and judgment to empathy and honesty*.
- The ultimate goal is to create a quality of connection where everyone's needs matter.
- Compassionate Communication can enhance personal connections, peace, and wellbeing.



The Giraffe represents:

- Symbol of Heartfelt Communication: The giraffe is chosen as the symbol of compassionate heartfelt communication because it has the largest heart of any land mammal, representing empathy and genuine deep connection. Additionally, due to its long neck, it has had to work very hard to connect the Wise Balanced Mind (head / thoughts) to the heart of feelings, emotions, love to move towards its mouth to speak the language of the heart/mind connection.
- Language of Loving Compassion for All Life: Represents a way of compassionate communicating that is centered on understanding and connecting with the feelings and needs of oneself and others. The giraffe seeks clarity, connection, and mutually beneficial solutions that often result in harmony and deep understanding and appreciation of oneself and others, cooperating instead of competing or arguing / fighting.
- Empathetic, Attentive Listening: The giraffe listens with full presence, trying to understand the underlying feelings and needs with acceptance, unconditional positive regard, understanding, compassion, without judgment or evaluation.

- Prosperity & Abundance Mindset: Operates from a mindset of abundance, generosity, sharing in prosperity, believing that everyone's needs can be met.

The Jackal represents:

- Authentic, Honest Expression: When speaking, the giraffe expresses its true (sometimes underlying) feelings and needs (sometimes underlying or core needs often subconsciously forgotten) openly without blame, demand, or criticism.
- Symbol of Defense Mechanisms, Aggressive or Passive Aggressive, Life-Disconnected Communication: Represents a more habitual way of thinking and communicating that often leads to blame, judgment, and misunderstanding.
- Language of Intellectualizing, Rationalizing Mind / Head: The jackal tends to analyze, categorize, criticize, or compare, which can result in defensive reactions or disconnection.
- Reactive Listening: The jackal often hears criticism and demands, even if none were intended. It may react defensively or aggressively.
- Fearful, Greedy, Scarcity, Loss Mindset: Operates from a mindset of scarcity, seeing situations as zero-sum where one's gain is another's loss.
- Demanding Expression: When speaking, the jackal often expresses its viewpoints through judgments, blame, demands, or evaluations.

The GIRAFFE is noted as the compassionate communicator who speaks from the head and heart as the mammal with a very large heart and a very long way to travel between head and heart due to long neck, giraffe has worked hard to learn compassionate heartfelt wise communication. Giraffe gives self-empathy, other empathy, and then expresses 1) nonjudgmental observations, 2) personal feelings or emotions, 3) underlying universal needs we all have, and then 4) can make a genuine reasonable request or meaningful connection-building comment. The 4-part NVC is asserting with an "I" statement: my observations, feelings, needs, and requests for change and/or connection.

The JACKAL is noted to bark and growl as he has not learned compassionate communication yet. From fear and defensiveness, he has resorted to aggression and/or hostile means to get his needs met in the past. Jackal can and is able to learn to speak Giraffe - once he feels safe and heard and understood through empathy and compassion. All his behavior is actually just a way to be heard and try to get basic needs met. Jackal is not bad - just misunderstood and needing patience and empathy to be taught compassionate communication. He has yet to learn that his needs can be met through a new language of the heart.

Nonviolent Communication — Chapter-by-Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 — Giving From the Heart

Focus: The purpose and spirit of Nonviolent Communication (NVC).

Key themes:

NVC is a "language of life" based on compassion and mutual giving.

Human beings naturally enjoy giving when it comes from empathy, not obligation or

guilt.

Introduces the four components of NVC:

Observation

Feeling

Need

Request

Distinguishes “jackal language” (judgment, blame) from “giraffe language” (needs-based, compassionate).

Representative quote:

“What I want in my life is compassion, a flow between myself and others based on a mutual giving from the heart.”

Chapter 2 — Communication That Blocks Compassion

Focus: The habits of speech and thinking that disconnect us.

Key themes:

Moralistic judgments (right/wrong, good/bad) block connection.

Comparisons create shame, envy, and dissatisfaction.

Denial of responsibility (“I had to,” “They made me...”) hides our choices.

“Life-alienating communication” includes criticism, labeling, diagnosis, and deserving language.

Quote:

“Judgments of others are alienated expressions of our own unmet needs.”

Chapter 3 — Observing Without Evaluating

Focus: The difference between factual observation and judgment.

Key themes:

Observations describe what we can see or hear.

Evaluations, even subtle ones, trigger defensiveness.

Clear observations create the foundation for honest communication.

Example:

Observation: “You arrived 20 minutes after the agreed time.”

Evaluation: “You’re always late.”

Chapter 4 — Identifying and Expressing Feelings

Focus: Connecting with and naming one’s emotions.

Key themes:

Distinguishing real feelings from thoughts disguised as feelings (“I feel ignored”).

Expanding emotional vocabulary to express oneself accurately.

Feelings point toward our needs — they are signals.

Quote:

“Feelings are indicators of our needs.”

Chapter 5 — Taking Responsibility for Our Feelings

Focus: Our emotions arise from our own needs, not from others’ actions.

Key themes:

Others’ actions may *stimulate* feelings, but they do not *cause* them.

Feelings stem from whether our needs are met or unmet.

Four ways to respond to negative messages:

Blame self

Blame other

Sense own feelings/needs

Sense other's feelings/needs

The developmental path: emotional slavery → obnoxiousness → emotional liberation.

Quote: *"What others say and do may be the stimulus, but never the cause, of our feelings."*

Chapter 6 — Requesting That Which Would Enrich Life

Focus: Making clear, compassionate, doable requests.

Key themes:

Requests must be stated in positive action language ("what you *do* want").

A request becomes a demand when we react negatively to a refusal.

Clarity removes guessing and prevents resentment.

Check for understanding ("Could you tell me what you heard me say?").

Chapter 7 — Receiving Empathically

Focus: Listening deeply to others.

Key themes:

Empathy requires presence, not fixing or advising.

Listen for the other person's feelings and needs, even if they speak in blame or criticism.

Reflect back what you hear to ensure understanding.

Empathy restores connection, even in tense conversations.

Quote: *"Empathy calls upon us to empty our mind and listen to others with our whole being."*

Chapter 8 — The Power of Empathy

Focus: Empathy as a transformative force.

Key themes:

Empathy helps dissolve anger, shame, and misunderstanding.

People often need empathy before they can hear advice or engage in problem-solving.

Empathy for silence, reluctance, or "no" deepens trust.

Several real-life examples show empathy defusing conflict.

Chapter 9 — Connecting Compassionately With Ourselves

Focus: Self-empathy and self-forgiveness.

Key themes:

Transforming inner criticism by uncovering unmet needs.

Mourning choices that did not meet our needs — without self-blame.

Choosing actions based on joy rather than obligation ("Don't do anything that isn't play!").

Self-empathy increases ability to offer authentic empathy to others.

Chapter 10 — Expressing Anger Fully

Focus: Understanding anger as a signal of unmet needs.

Key themes:

Anger arises from judgmental thinking, not from external triggers.

Steps for expressing anger constructively:

Pause and breathe

Identify thoughts and judgments

Connect with underlying needs

Express those needs clearly, without blame

Taking time to return to empathy when in conflict.

Quote: *“The cause of anger lies in our thinking—in thoughts of blame and judgment.”*

Chapter 11 — Conflict Resolution and Mediation

(In some editions this material is woven into other chapters.)

Focus: Using NVC to resolve conflicts and support mediation.

Key themes:

The goal is mutual understanding and meeting everyone’s needs.

Identify feelings and needs for each party.

Create strategies that honor all needs rather than compromise or coercion.

Mediators model empathy and clarity.

Chapter 12 — The Protective Use of Force

Focus: Understanding when force can be used without violence.

Key themes:

Violence aims to punish; protective force aims to prevent harm.

Used only when dialogue is impossible or immediate safety is at risk.

Guided by awareness of needs, not judgments about people being “bad.”

Chapter 13 — Liberating Ourselves and Counseling Others

Focus: Applying NVC in personal growth and helping relationships.

Key themes:

Understanding habitual patterns and conditioning.

Helping others connect feelings → needs → requests.

How “jackal education” encourages fear, guilt, shame; NVC supports autonomy and compassion.

Chapter 14 — Expressing Appreciation in Nonviolent Communication

Focus: Appreciation as a needs-based expression.

Key themes:

Genuine appreciation contains three parts:

What the person did

How it made you feel

What need it met

Appreciation is not flattery; it is mindful acknowledgment.

Helps strengthen relationships by making needs visible.

Quote: *“Receiving appreciation in NVC lets us stay connected to the beauty of the needs*

that have been met.”

Key Ideas:

- All human behavior is an attempt to meet basic universal needs.
- Compassion arises when we connect with these needs — in ourselves and others.
- Conflict dissolves when people feel heard, understood, and respected.
- NVC is both a communication framework and a consciousness: a shift *from coercion and judgment to empathy and honesty*.
- The ultimate goal is to create a quality of connection where everyone's needs matter.

The Giraffe and the Jackal....



Marshall Rosenberg used two puppets to demonstrate the two types of communication in his book:

References -

[The Center for Nonviolent Communications](#)
[Unlocking Self Understanding with NVC](#)

** From my former NVC mentor Kelly Bryson, MFT, and his excerpts from "Don't Be Nice, Be Real" and his article on "Compassionate Communications: Confessions of a Cling-On":

Here's a North Star for finding the heart of honesty within oneself:

When I observe (or remember, or hear, or smell)
I feel
Because I was (or am) wanting
Would you tell me if you're willing to

This is a way of focusing my thinking and communicating my truth accurately. Notice

that the grammar of the sentence allows for no judgment of the other and requires that the speaker take responsibility for their feelings and needs. They take responsibility for their feelings by declaring that their feelings are being caused by the condition of their needs. They do not say that their feelings are caused by the other person. If their needs are met, good feelings are produced, if not, bad or uncomfortable feelings. They say "When you didn't come over, I was sad because I was wanting some company, could we get together tomorrow?

"If I can't be in touch with you if I'm not in touch with me. I can't see you when I'm looking for myself. So if I seem to pass you blind, please try to keep in mind, It isn't you, it's me I cannot find." by Ruth Bebemeyer

And here's a map which uses the essence of empathy to find and feel the heart of the other:

When you see (or remember, or heard).....

Did you feel.....

Because you were (or are) wanting.....?

And would you like me to tell you if I am willing to.....?

As soon as I turn my attention to what my partner is reacting to, feeling, needing and requesting it's a different world. Instead of being caught in the control of her Cling-on tractor beam about to suck me into the Black Hole of her endless need, I'm being invited into the Secret Garden of a beautiful wonderchild, to play, and to give and receive nurturance. As I develop my skill to listen to and from my heart (my feelings and needs) I no longer see men and women, needy Cling-ons or detached Vulcans; only sweet sentient beings offering to meet my needs or requesting that I meet theirs'. And when their is choice, all needs are beautiful.

"See me beautiful, look for the best in me. That's what I really am and what I want to be. It may be hard to find, and it may take some time, but see me beautiful. See me beautiful, each and every day. Could you take a chance? Could you find a way? To see me shining through, in everything I do, and see me beautiful?" by Red Barber
Here are some other useful files related to NVC including info on a game called GROK to practice NVC skills.

When deciding to commit to something remember an NVC motto that you ask yourself if you say "yes" when to do so brings you the same level of joy as feeding hungry ducklings!

1. QUICK NVC SELF-EXPRESSION PAGE

Use this when you need to express something clearly and calmly.

Observation (What I saw/heard):

→ _____

Feeling (Emotion word only):

→ _____

Need (Universal human need):

→ _____

Request (Clear, doable action):

→ _____

Template:

"When I saw/heard _____, I felt _____ because I need _____. Would you be willing to _____?"

2. EMPATHY MAP (FOR UNDERSTANDING OTHERS)

Tap through these prompts when listening to someone upset. What they observed:

→ _____

What they might feel:

→ _____

What they might need:

→ _____

What they might request:

→ _____

Optional Empathy Guess Phrase:

"Are you feeling _____ because you're needing _____?"

3. ANGER TRANSFORMATION

MINI-WORKSHEET

Use this to de-escalate internally before speaking.

Trigger (What happened):

→ _____

My judgmental thoughts:

→ _____

My underlying needs:

→ _____

A calmer way to express this:

→ _____

My request (if any):

→ _____

4. SELF-EMPATHY POCKET CHECK-IN

Fast grounding tool for stressful moments.

Feeling right now:

→ _____

Need underneath:

→ _____

Kind request of myself:

→ _____

Optional calming script:

"I'm noticing I feel _____ because I'm needing _____. I can offer myself _____."

5. APPRECIATION IN NVC

(SHORT VERSION)

Use for gratitude, relationships, or positive communication.

1. What they did:

→ _____

2. How you felt:

→ _____

3. What need it met:

→ _____

Template:

"When you _____, I felt _____ because it met my need for _____."

6. REPAIRING A CONFLICT

Use after an argument or rupture.

1. What I said/did:

→ _____

2. What they may have felt:

→ _____

3. What they may have needed:

→ _____

4. My intention:

→ _____

5. My request for going forward:

→ _____

6. What I'd appreciate from them:

→ _____

Script Example:

"When I said/did _____, I imagine you felt _____ because you needed

_____.

My intention was _____.

Going forward, could we _____? I would appreciate _____."

7. NVC DAILY PRACTICE

Morning Check-In

• Feeling: _____

• Need Today: _____

• One Request of Myself: _____

Evening Reflection

• What went well today? _____

• Moments of unmet needs? _____

• What would help tomorrow? _____

8. BASIC NEEDS

Here are some commonly shared Basic Needs:

Connection:

Love • Support • Belonging • Understanding • Acceptance • Validation • Compassion • Authenticity

Autonomy:

Choice • Freedom • Personal Space • Privacy • Dignity • Respect • Individuation

Meaning:

Purpose • Growth • Wisdom • Education • Fulfillment • Spirituality • Values • Passion •

Ethics • Goals • Visions

Peace:

Serenity • Tranquility • Calmness • Quiet • Relaxation • Order • Balance • Meditation

Physical:

Rest • Nourishment • Safety • Exercise • Hydration • Health Care • Hygiene • Clean Air •

Sanitation

Play:

Joy • Humor • Fun • Music • Art • Dance • Sports • Creativity • Interactions with nature and pets

LINKS TO LEARN MORE:

- [NVC Giraffe Language Videos with Marshall Rosenberg](#)

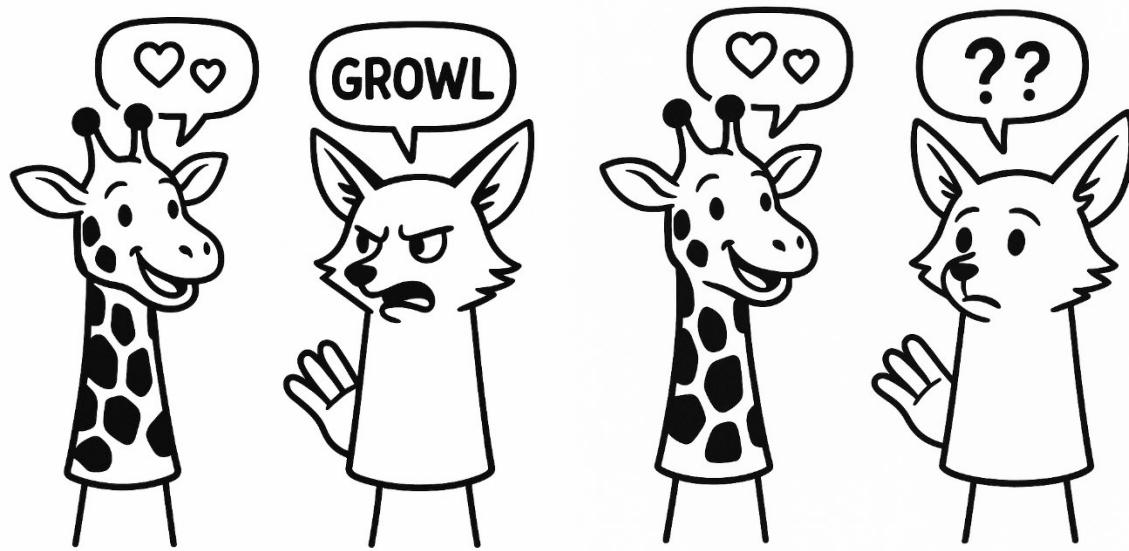
NVC Interactive Exercises and Games:

- [NVC Dance Floors - Interactive Exercise for all ages](#)

- [GROK - a game to practice NVC Giraffe Language / Compassionate Communications](#)

- [NVC for the Next Generation - with interactive tools & games like Grok for the computer and more](#)

DR. HIGGINS' BASIC NVC GIRAFFE & JACKAL PUPPET CARTOON:



LISTENING
WITH EMPATHY

FEELING
HEARD

Do you observe _____,
so you might feel _____
because you need _____?

Well, now that
you put it that
way, yeah, I guess
so.

I learned to connect my head & thoughts with my heart & feelings so I can speak with empathy. I give myself empathy first, get clear on my observations, feelings, needs, & requests or offers. Then, I listen & speak with empathy, trying to connect, as we often have similar needs.

Wow, I learned to get my needs met I had to bark, growl, and threaten others, but I didn't really like doing things that way. I don't know if I could learn your communication style, but I feel heard and understood.

