

The essence of NVC is in our consciousness of the four components, not in the actual words that are exchanged.

Applying NVC in Our Lives and the World

When we use NVC in our interactions—with ourselves, with another person, or in a group—we become grounded in our natural state of compassion. It is therefore an approach that can be effectively applied at all levels of communication and in diverse situations:

- intimate relationships
- families
- schools
- organizations and institutions
- therapy and counseling relationships
- diplomatic and business negotiations
- disputes and conflicts of any nature

Some people use NVC to create greater depth and caring in their intimate relationships:

When I learned how I can receive (hear), as well as give (express), through using NVC, I went beyond feeling attacked and 'doormatish' to really listening to words and extracting their underlying feelings. I discovered a very hurting man to whom I had been married for twenty-eight years. He had asked me for a divorce the weekend before the [NVC] workshop. To make a long story short, we are here today—together, and I appreciate the contribution [NVC has] made to our happy ending. . . . I learned to listen for feelings, to express my needs, to accept answers that I didn't always want to hear. He is not here to make me happy, nor am I here to create happiness for him. We have both learned to grow, to accept, and to love, so that we can each be fulfilled.

—a workshop participant in San Diego, California

Others use it to build more effective relationships at work:

I have been using NVC in my special education classroom for about one year. It can work even with children who have language delays, learning difficulties, and behavior problems. One student in our classroom spits, swears, screams, and stabs other students with pencils when they get near his desk. I cue him with, 'Please say that another way. Use your giraffe talk.' [Giraffe puppets are used in some workshops as a teaching aid to demonstrate NVC.] He immediately stands up straight, looks at the person toward whom his anger is directed, and says calmly, 'Would you please move away from my desk? I feel angry when you stand so close to me.' The other students might respond with something like, 'Sorry! I forgot it bothers you.'

I began to think about my frustration with this child and to try to discover what I needed from him (besides harmony and order). I realized how much time I had put into lesson planning and how my needs for creativity and contribution were being short-circuited in order to manage behavior. Also, I felt I was not meeting the educational needs of the other students. When he was acting out in class, I began to say, 'I need you to share my attention.' It might take a hundred cues a day, but he got the message and would usually get involved in the lesson.

—a teacher in Chicago, Illinois