

***simple practices  
for complex  
times***



# simple practices for complex times

by Carol Wolfley

*Developed with support from members of the  
Connection Action Project  
Integrating spirituality,  
social action and empathic communication*

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***This booklet was written in appreciation of the millions of individuals and communities helping to create a caring, sustainable world where the value of all beings is honored.***

***Inspired by Marshall Rosenberg's "Nonviolent Communication," and with special thanks to Bay NVC for their teachings, it includes principles and practices to help us connect with ourselves, others, and life around us. It further shares some ways of communicating in the midst of challenging, unfamiliar situations, and possibilities for celebrating the wonders of connection.***

# Observation

Distinguish between facts and judgments.

FOR EXAMPLE

***Your information about that is different from mine.***

***He said "I'm going to lead all of the meetings."***

***I don't know the answer right now.***

INSTEAD OF

***You're wrong.***

***He's bossy.***

***I'm so stupid.***

# Connect with your body

Before you speak or act, it may help to connect with your physical self.

*Breathe deeply and slowly.*

*Relax your muscles.*

*Notice your body and any sensations that come to your attention.*

*Ask yourself what your body is needing.*

FOR EXAMPLE

*If you are in shock, you may want to seek warmth and comfort.*

# Explore feelings

As you focus your attention on yourself or another person notice or guess what feelings are present.

**joyful, delighted, happy, grateful, hopeful,  
loving, compassionate, surprised, curious,  
peaceful**

**sad, angry, upset, afraid, impatient,  
frustrated, resentful, disappointed,  
despairing, baffled, in shock, mournful**

*Are you feeling \_\_\_?*

# Explore needs

Get curious. Guess the essence or quality of what's most important for others and yourself.

**clarity, creativity, choice, shared reality,  
shared values, predictability, familiarity,  
peace, beauty, balance**

**hope, love, trust, acceptance, connection,  
communication, consideration, contribution**

**well-being, wholeness, safety,  
rest, ease, order, care, fun**

*Are you wanting \_\_\_?*

*Am I wanting \_\_\_?*

# Risk making a request

**Be specific. Ask for what you want, rather than what you don't want.**

FOR EXAMPLE

***I'm concerned about your well-being. Would you be willing to call me tomorrow?***

***For clarity, please raise your hand if you agree with her proposal.***

***Would you be willing to speak more quietly?***

INSTEAD OF

***You haven't called or stayed in contact.***

***What do you think?***

***Stop shouting!***



# Request connection

Use requests that help you to connect with the other person.

***There's something I'd like to talk with you about. Do you have five minutes right now?***

***I'm wondering if you are willing to hear what's going on for me about this.***

***I'm guessing this situation may be uncomfortable for you; is that right?***

***I'm feeling vulnerable about having shared that. Will you tell me how it was for you to hear it?***

# Reflect what you've heard

Check to make sure you understand what the speaker is trying to say.

***Can I tell you what I heard you say, so I can be sure I got it?***

***I would like to be clear. Did you say that you want to go on Wednesday, but not on Friday?***

Said while someone is talking more than you are comfortable with:

***Excuse me. I'd like to check to see whether I understand what you've said so far.***

## **When you say “no” to a request...**

Share the need you are hoping to meet by your choice.

*I'm sad that I won't see you. I hope to connect with my family today.*

*I'm not ready to support your candidate. I plan to get more information to reach a decision.*

When someone tells you “no”, explore what's going on for them.

*Are you staying home because you need to rest today?*

## Be brief

To maximize your listener's attention, it may help to speak with fewer words.

***I'm noticing \_\_. I feel \_\_. I need \_\_.***

(All said with no more than 40 words before making a request.)

You can also ask others to use fewer words to help you to stay focused and to share time consciously.

***Would you be willing to summarize it in one or two sentences so that I'm more likely to get it?***

***Let's each share for no more than two minutes so we can all be heard.***

# Welcome diverse perspectives

Exploring inclusion, mutual understanding and trust may involve considerations related to race, income level, gender, age, religion, national origin and perceived ability.

***I want to understand what happened. Will you please tell us what you observed?***

***I'd love for each person to share what needs are alive for you today so that we can get to know each other better.***

***I want to hear your suggestions about how we can address this issue together. Will you share them please?***

# Be open

*Challenge your beliefs about the world, other people, and yourself.*

*Consider the possibility that life can be different from the way you see it now.*

*Be an empowering resource for others as you realize your vision of change.*

# Share your heart

Notice what's alive for you in the present moment and share from your heart.

Take time to celebrate and to mourn.

*I'm grateful that we are taking this time to meet.*

*I'm sad that you're leaving.*

*I am deeply touched by what you said.*

***Wishing you insight, connection  
and aliveness in all of your  
relationships.***

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