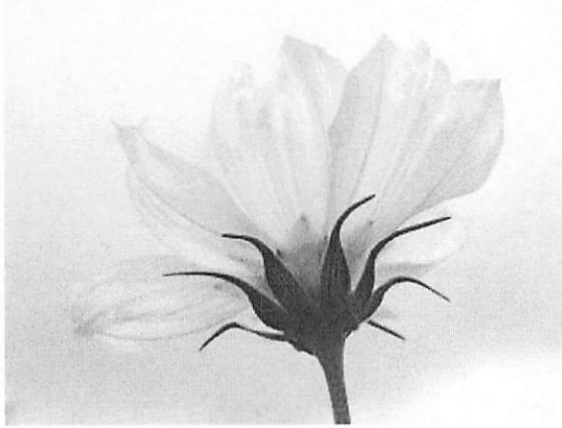


The Sacred Art of Listening

Nourishing Loving Relationships

by Tara Brach



*To listen is to lean in softly
With a willingness to be changed
By what we hear.
– Mark Nepo –*

What happens when there's a listening presence? When we're fully in that listening presence, when there's that pure quality of receptivity, we become presence itself. And whether you call that God or pure awareness or our true nature, the boundary of inner and outer dissolves and we become a luminous field of awakeness. When we're in that open presence we can really respond to the life that's here. We fall in love.

This state of listening is the precursor or the prerequisite to loving relatedness. The more you understand the state of listening – of being able to have the sounds of rain wash through you, of receiving the sound and tone of another's voice – the more you know about nurturing a loving relationship.

In a way it's an extremely vulnerable position. As soon as you stop planning what you're going to say or managing what the other person's saying, all of a sudden, there's no control. You're open to your own sadness, your own anger and discomfort. Listening means putting down control. It's not a small thing to do.

We spend most of our moments when someone is speaking, planning what we're going to say,

evaluating it, trying to come up with our presentation of our self, or controlling the situation.

Pure listening is a letting go of control. It's not easy and takes training. And yet it's only when we can let go of that controlling that we open up to the real purity of loving. We can't see or understand someone in the moments that we are trying to control what they are saying or trying to impress them with what we are saying. There's no space for that person to just unfold and be who they are. Listening and unconditionally receiving what another expresses, is an expression of love.

The bottom line is when we are listened to, we feel connected. When we're not listened to, we feel separate. So whether it's the communicating between different tribes or religions, ethnicities, racial groups or different generations, we need to listen. The more we understand, the less we fear; the less we fear, the more we trust and the more we trust, the more love can flow.

Isn't it true that to get to know the beauty and majesty of a tree

You have to be quiet and rest in the shade of the tree?

Don't you have to stand under the tree?

To understand anyone, you need to stand under them for a little while

What does that mean?

It means you have to listen to them and be quiet and take in who they are

As if from under, as if from inside out.

Tara Brach is senior teacher and founder of the Insight Meditation Community of Washington. She is author of "Radical Acceptance: Embracing Your Life With the Heart of a Buddha" (2003) and "True Refuge - Finding Peace and Freedom in Your Own Awakened Heart" (2013)

The Most Frequently Asked Question

by Sylvia Boorstein

*Does spiritual practice mean we can never get angry?
No, says Sylvia Boorstein, it's all how you work with it.*



"Angry People." Illustration by [Alvaro Tapia](#)

In October 1989, the Dalai Lama sat alone on stage at the largest auditorium on the campus of the University of California at Irvine and answered questions from an audience of more than 6,000 people. It felt like a relaxed conversation in a very large living room. The huge crowd was amazingly quiet, listening intently as he responded carefully to each question. Then someone asked, "Do you ever get angry?"

The Dalai Lama laughed his impish, delighted laugh and said, "Of course! Things happen that I don't want to happen and anger arises. But, it's not a problem."

It seems to me that the most imperishable myth about spiritual practice, especially meditation practice, is that it promises an end to anger once and for all. It doesn't. When something happens that we don't want to happen, anger arises. It is the way of the human nervous system. Perhaps it's one way, through eons of evolution, that human beings have survived. When we feel threatened in any way, anger triggers the adrenaline we need to protect ourselves. The potential of the adult human mind, however, is to recognize anger, locate the fear that gave rise to it, and respond wisely, remedying the situation without complicating it. Anger does not need to be a problem.

It's understandable that the myth persists. The dharma centers I know are generally quiet. They have a culture of temperate response. I even teach smiling as a practice. It's a gesture that inclines the mind in the direction of ease, and when smiling is difficult, it

alerts the practitioner to the presence of the distress in the mind. I also teach a lot about cultivating the compassionate response of the heart that is our fundamental nature, but still, when things don't go the way I want them to, anger arises.

Here are questions I often hear asked about anger:

Q. Does cultivating compassion really mean I can never express my anger again?

A. Cultivating compassion doesn't ever mean you can't express anger. An unexpressed anger creates a breach in relationships that no amount of smiling can cross. It's a secret. A lie. The compassionate response is one that keeps connections alive. It requires telling the truth. And telling the truth can be difficult, especially when the mind is stirred up by anger.

The Vinaya, the compendium of monks' rules in the Pali canon, lists five "Reflections before Admonishing." Is now a good time to speak? Am I telling the whole truth? Is my voice gentle, not harsh? Am I motivated by kindness? Am I motivated by a desire to be helpful?

I keep a framed card with those five reflections on a table in my study and people often borrow it. I enjoy thinking of the Buddha as a psychotherapist offering advice that is timeless in its relevance.

Q. Surely holding in the anger can't be good for you. I've worked many years in therapy to get in touch with my anger. What should I do now?

A. Getting in touch with one's anger, if that was formerly a frightening thing to do, is surely a success. It means that we are less hidden to ourselves, more present, more aware of information that could help us respond in ways that could end our suffering. We have the capacity, as adults, to hold in the impulsive, reflexive, often destructive expression of anger and choose instead a clear, useful communication.

Q. What will happen to my passion?

A. My experience of angry explosions or smoldering grudges is that they confuse and fatigue my mind and

diffuse passion. I think passion comes from seeing clearly. The Buddha taught that choosing wisely in the midst of challenge leads to “clear comprehension of purpose.” I take that to mean lively response powered by resolve. The bodhisattva vow to end suffering in all beings is the most passionate pledge I can imagine.

My reading of the Dalai Lama’s answer about anger not being a problem was that he always managed a wise response. I usually do, and when I don’t, I apologize for not presenting my needs in a more useful form. The first verse of the sixth-century Buddhist commentator Shantideva’s *Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life* says that wholesome deeds amassed over eons are erased in one moment of anger. Students sometimes ask, “Do you really believe that?” I say, “I don’t know. It’s certainly

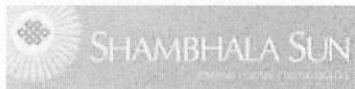
inspiring. I pay special attention when I respond angrily so I can discover what frightened me. I feel dismay about the suffering I caused myself and the other person. Since my practice is habituating my heart to kindness, moments of lapse inspire me.”

The morning after the Dalai Lama’s question and answer session in Irvine, the newspapers announced that he had been awarded that year’s Nobel Peace Prize.



Sylvia Boorstein is a psychologist and leading teacher of Insight Meditation. Her many best-selling books include *Pay Attention, for Goodness' Sake* and *Happiness Is An Inside Job*.

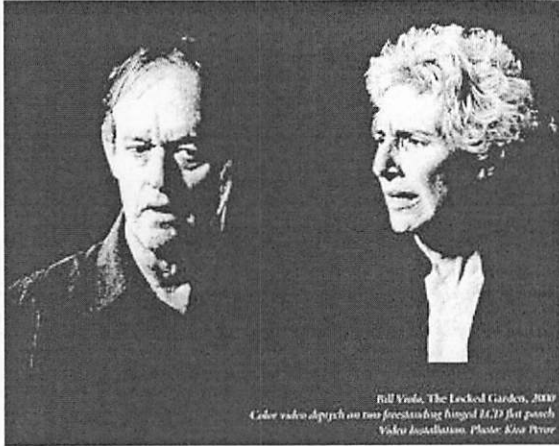
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source: <http://www.lionsroar.com/the-most-frequently-asked-question/>



March 2005

The Answer to Anger & Aggression is Patience

by Pema Chödrön



Full Yoga: The Lebed Garden, 2019
 L'ador radu d'après un rano freestanding Anged 16.3D Jet parth
 Yaku Anshattam. Photo: Ake Pire

We can suppress anger and aggression or act it out, either way making things worse for ourselves and others. Or we can practice patience: wait, experience the anger and investigate its nature. Pema Chödrön takes us step by step through this powerful practice.

The Buddhist teachings tell us that patience is the antidote to anger and aggression. When we feel aggression in all its many forms—resentment, bitterness, being very critical, complaining and so forth—we can apply the different practices we've been given and all the good advice we've heard and given to other people. But those often don't seem to help us. That's why this teaching about patience caught my interest a few years ago, because it's so hard to know what to do when one feels anger and aggression.

I thought, if patience is the antidote to aggression, maybe I'll just try that. In the process I learned a lot about what patience is and about what it isn't. I would like to share with you what I've learned, to encourage you to find out for yourself how patience works with aggression.

To begin with, I learned about patience and the cessation of suffering. It's said that patience is a way to de-escalate aggression. I'm thinking here of aggression as synonymous with pain. When we're feeling aggressive—and in some sense this would

apply to any strong feeling—there's an enormous pregnant quality that pulls us in the direction of wanting to get some resolution. It hurts so much to feel the aggression that we want it to be resolved.

So what do we usually do? We do exactly what is going to escalate the aggression and the suffering. We strike out; we hit back. Something hurts our feelings, and initially there is some softness there—if you're fast, you can catch it—but usually you don't even realize there is any softness. You find yourself in the middle of a hot, noisy, pulsating, wanting-to-just-get-even-with-someone state of mind: it has a very hard quality to it. With your words or your actions, in order to escape the pain of aggression, you create more aggression and pain.

At that point, patience means getting smart: you stop and wait. You also have to shut up, because if you say anything it's going to come out aggressive, even if you say, "I love you."

Once, when I was very angry at a colleague of mine, I called him on the telephone. I can't even remember now what I was angry about, but at the time I couldn't sleep because I was so furious. I tried meditating with my anger and working with it and doing practices with it, but nothing helped, so I just got up in the middle of the night and called him. When he answered the phone, all I said was, "Hi, Yeshe." But he immediately asked, "Did I do something wrong?" I thought I would very sweetly cover over what I was really feeling and say something pleasant about all the bad things he had done, whatever they were. But just by the tone of my greeting to him, he knew. That's what it's like with aggression: you can't speak because everyone will feel the vibes. No matter what is coming out of your mouth, it's like you're sitting on top of a keg of dynamite and it's vibrating.

Patience has a lot to do with getting smart at that point and just waiting: not speaking or doing anything. On the other hand, it also means being completely and totally honest with yourself about the fact that you're furious. You're not suppressing anything—patience has nothing to do with

suppression. In fact, it has everything to do with a gentle, honest relationship with yourself. If you wait and don't feed your discursive thought, you can be honest about the fact that you're angry. But at the same time you can continue to let go of the internal dialogue. In that dialogue you are blaming and criticizing, and then probably feeling guilty and beating yourself up for doing that. It's torturous, because you feel bad about being so angry at the same time that you really are extremely angry, and you can't drop it. It's painful to experience such awful confusion. Still, you just wait and remain patient with your confusion and the pain that comes with it.

Patience has a quality of enormous honesty in it, but it also has a quality of not escalating things, allowing a lot of space for the other person to speak, for the other person to express themselves, while you don't react, even though inside you are reacting. You let the words go and just be there.

This suggests the fearlessness that goes with patience. If you practice the kind of patience that leads to the de-escalation of aggression and the cessation of suffering, you will be cultivating enormous courage. You will really get to know anger and how it breeds violent words and actions. You will see the whole thing without acting it out. When you practice patience, you're not repressing anger, you're just sitting there with it—going cold turkey with the aggression. As a result, you really get to know the energy of anger and you also get to know where it leads, even without going there. You've expressed your anger so many times, you know where it will lead. The desire to say something mean, to gossip or slander, to complain—to just somehow get rid of that aggression—is like a tidal wave. But you realize that such actions don't get rid of the aggression; they escalate it. So instead you're patient, patient with yourself.

Developing patience and fearlessness means learning to sit still with the edginess of the energy. It's like sitting on a wild horse, or on a wild tiger that could eat you up. There's a limerick to that effect: "There was a young lady of Niger, who smiled as she rode on a tiger. They came back from the ride with the lady inside and the smile on the face of the tiger." Sitting with your discomfort feels like riding on that tiger, because it's so frightening.

When we examine this process we learn something very interesting: there is no resolution. The resolution that human beings seek comes from a

tremendous misunderstanding. We think we can resolve everything! When we human beings feel powerful energy, we tend to be extremely uncomfortable until things are resolved in some kind of secure and comforting way, either on the side of yes or the side of no. Or the side of right or the side of wrong. Or the side of anything at all that we can hold on to.

But the practice we're doing gives us nothing to hold on to. Actually, the teachings themselves give us nothing to hold on to. In working with patience and fearlessness, we learn to be patient with the fact that we're human beings, that everyone who is born and dies from the beginning of time until the end of time is naturally going to want some kind of resolution to this edgy, moody energy. And there isn't any. The only resolution is temporary and just causes more suffering. We discover that as a matter of fact joy and happiness, peace, harmony and being at home with yourself and your world come from sitting still with the moodiness of the energy until it rises, dwells and passes away. The energy never resolves itself into something solid.

So all the while, we stay in the middle of the energy. The path of touching in on the inherent softness of the genuine heart is to sit still and be patient with that kind of energy. We don't have to criticize ourselves when we fail, even for a moment, because we're just completely typical human beings; the only thing that's unique about us is that we're brave enough to go into these things more deeply and explore beneath our surface reaction of trying to get solid ground under our feet.

Patience is an enormously wonderful and supportive and even magical practice. It's a way of completely changing the fundamental human habit of trying to resolve things by going either to the right or the left, calling things right or calling things wrong. It's the way to develop courage, the way to find out what life is really about.

Patience is also not ignoring. In fact, patience and curiosity go together. You wonder, Who am I? Who am I at the level of my neurotic patterns? Who am I at the level beyond birth and death? If you wish to look into the nature of your own being, you need to be inquisitive. The path is a journey of investigation, beginning to look more deeply at what's going on. The teachings give us a lot of suggestions about what we can look for, and the practices give us a lot of suggestions on how to look. Patience is one

extremely helpful suggestion. Aggression, on the other hand, prevents us from looking: it puts a tight lid on our curiosity. Aggression is an energy that is determined to resolve the situation into a hard, solid, fixed pattern in which somebody wins and somebody loses.

When you begin to investigate, you notice, for one thing, that whenever there is pain of any kind—the pain of aggression, grieving, loss, irritation, resentment, jealousy, indigestion, physical pain—if you really look into that, you can find out for yourself that behind the pain there is always something we are attached to. There is always something we're holding on to.

I say that with such confidence, but you have to find out for yourself whether this is really true. You can read about it: the first thing the Buddha ever taught was the truth that suffering comes from attachment. That's in the books. But when you discover it yourself, it goes a little deeper right away.

As soon as you discover that behind your pain is something you're holding on to, you are at a place that you will frequently experience on the spiritual path. After a while it seems like almost every moment of your life you're there, at a point where you realize you actually have a choice. You have a choice whether to open or close, whether to hold on or let go, whether to harden or soften.

That choice is presented to you again and again and again. For instance, you're feeling pain, you look deeply into it, and you notice that there's something very hard you're holding on to. And then you have a choice: you can let go of it, which basically means you connect with the softness behind all that hardness. Perhaps each one of us has made the discovery that behind all the hardness of resistance, stress, aggression and jealousy, there is enormous softness that we're trying to cover over. Aggression usually begins when someone hurts our feelings. The first response is very soft, but before we even notice what we're doing, we harden. So we can either let go and connect with that softness or we can continue to hold on, which means that the suffering will continue.

It requires enormous patience even to be curious enough to look, to investigate. And then when you realize you have a choice, and that there's actually something there that you're attached to, it requires great patience to keep going into it. Because you will want to go into denial, to shut down. You're going to say to yourself, "I don't want to see this." You'll be

afraid, because even if you're starting to get close to it, the thought of letting go is usually very frightening. You may feel that you're going to die, or that something is going to die. And you will be right. If you let go, something will die. But it's something that needs to die and you will benefit greatly from its death.

On the other hand, sometimes it's easy to let go. If you make this journey of looking to see if there's something you're holding on to, often it's going to be just a little thing. Once when I was stuck with something huge, Trungpa Rinpoche gave me some advice. He said, "It's too big; you can't let go of it yet, so practice with the little ones. Just start noticing all the little ways you hold when it's actually pretty easy and just get the hang of letting go."

That was extremely good advice. You don't have to do the big one, because usually you can't. It's too threatening. It may even be too harsh to let go right then and there, on the spot. But even with small things, you may—perhaps just intellectually—begin to see that letting go can bring a sense of enormous relief, relaxation and connection with the softness and tenderness of the genuine heart. True joy comes from that.

You can also see that holding on increases the pain, but that doesn't mean you're going to be able to let go, because there's a lot at stake. What's at stake is your whole sense of who you are, your whole identity. You're beginning to move into the territory of egolessness, the insubstantial nature of oneself—and of everything, for that matter. Theoretical, philosophical, distant-sounding teachings can get pretty real when you're beginning to have an inkling of what they're actually talking about.

It takes a lot of patience not to beat up on yourself for being a failure at letting go. But if you apply patience to the fact that you can't let go, somehow that helps you to do it. Patience with the fact that you can't let go helps you to get to the point of letting go gradually—at a very sane and loving speed, at the speed that your basic wisdom allows you to move. It's a big moment even to get to the point where you realize you have a choice. Patience is what you need at that point to just wait and soften, to sit with the restlessness and edginess and discomfort of the energy.

I've come to find that patience has a lot of humor and playfulness in it. It's a misunderstanding to think of it as endurance, as in, "Just grin and bear it."

Endurance involves some kind of repression or trying to live up to somebody else's standards of perfection. Instead, you find you have to be pretty patient with what you see as your own imperfections. Patience is a kind of synonym for loving-kindness, because the speed of loving-kindness can be extremely slow. You are developing patience and loving-kindness for your own imperfections, for your own limitations, for not living up to your own high ideals. There's a slogan someone once came up with that I like: "Lower your standards and relax as it is." That's patience.

One of the Indian Buddhist teacher Atisha's slogans says, "Whichever of the two occurs, be patient." It means that if a painful situation occurs, be patient, and if a pleasant situation occurs, be patient. This is an interesting point in terms of patience and the cessation of suffering, patience and fearlessness, and patience and curiosity. We are actually jumping all the time: whether it's pain or pleasure, we want resolution. So if we're really happy and something is great, we could also be patient then, in terms of not just filling up the space, going a million miles an hour—impulse buying, impulse speaking, impulse acting.

I'd like to stress that one of the things you most have to be patient with is, "Oops, I did it again!" There's a slogan that says, "One at the beginning and one at the end." That means that when you wake up in the morning you make your resolve, and at the end of the day you review, with a caring and gentle attitude, how you have done. Our normal resolve is to say something like, "I am going to be patient today," or some other such set-up (as someone put it, we plan our next failure). Instead of setting yourself up, you can say, "Today, I'm going to try to the best of my ability to be patient." And then in the evening you can look back over the whole day with loving-kindness and not beat yourself up. You're patient with the fact that when you review your day, or even the last forty minutes, you discover, "I've talked and filled up all the space, just like I've done all my life,

as long as I can remember. I was aggressive with the same style of aggression that I've used as long as I can remember. I got carried away with irritation exactly the same way that I have for the last..." If you're twenty years old, it's been twenty years that you've been doing it that way; if you're seventy-five years old, it's seventy-five years that you've been doing it that way. You see this and you say, "Give me a break!"

The path of developing loving-kindness and compassion is to be patient with the fact that you're human and that you make these mistakes. That's more important than getting it right. It seems to work only if you're aspiring to give yourself a break, to lighten up, as you practice developing patience and other qualities such as generosity, discipline and insight. As with the rest of the teachings, you can't win and you can't lose. You don't get to just say, "Well, since I am never able to do it, I'm not going to try." You are never able to do it and still you try. And, interestingly enough, that adds up to something; it adds up to loving-kindness for yourself and for others. You look out your eyes and you see yourself wherever you go. You see all these people who are losing it, just like you do. Then, you see all these people who catch themselves and give you the gift of fearlessness. You say, "Oh wow, what a brave one—he or she caught themselves." You begin to appreciate even the slightest gesture of bravery on the part of others because you know it's not easy, and that inspires you tremendously. That's how we can really help each other.

*Pema Chödrön was ordained in 1974 as a nun in the Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism and in 1985 became director of Gampo Abbey, the first Tibetan Buddhist monastery in the West. She has gone on to become one of the West's most prominent teachers of the Mahayana path. Her many popular books include **The Places That Scare You, When Things Fall Apart, and Start Where You Are.***

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES

As we grow up, we typically settle on one of these three strategies as a habitual strategy for dealing with conflict. Which one do you use most often?

DEMAND: Hold firm (fight) *(What I need/want is most important)*
"My way or the highway"
 Frame conflict in terms of own interests; little concern for other party; highly assertive.
 Push until you get your way.
[I satisfy my needs at the expense of others.]

ACCOMMODATE : Be nice (freeze) *(What others need/want is most important)*
"Go along to get along", "Don't make waves"
 Give in, conform to reduce conflict, make peace
 Yield or subordinate own interests to other party
[I satisfy others' needs at the expense of my own.]

WITHDRAW / AVOID : Walk Away (flight) *(Avoiding conflict is most important)*
"I don't care", "I'm not going to play this game"
 Withdraw, avoid, retreat, turn back, walk away
 Ignore, deny, or suppress the problem
[Neither I nor others satisfy their needs.]

The most common strategy for resolving conflict is compromise:

COMPROMISE: Everyone gives a little
"I give some, you give some"
 Moderately demanding/moderately accommodating; "splitting the difference"
 Settle for "half a loaf"; cut both goals in half and glue together; zero-sum game
[We all give up some of our needs in order to satisfy others.]

But, there's another way...

(above the line: common, traditional, non-creative – essentially zero-sum, what others get, I lose and visa-versa)

 (below the line: rare, more difficult, but *much* more powerful - root needs/goals of *everyone* honored)

"BLEND" (Collaborate): Work toward everyone getting core needs met
 Requires mindful awareness and exploration of:
Behavior (body language, tone) / **Feelings** / **Needs** (both yours and others)
 This process is **more circular than linear** and necessarily creative:
 The exact form of the outcome is often non-obvious and sometimes even counter-intuitive.
 Three steps are involved:

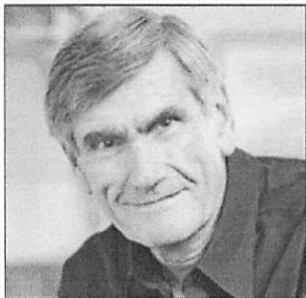
1. Recognition and acceptance of everyone's feelings and perceived needs
2. Discovery and inquiry into everyone's intentions and root goals
3. Mutual exploration of potential solutions satisfying intention and root goals of everyone

[For more about resolving conflicts in this way, see *Non-Violent Communication* by Marshall Rosenberg.]

The Heart of Nonviolent Communication (NVC)

A Brief Introduction to the Concepts of NVC

by Marshall Rosenberg (adapted from *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*)



I believe compassion is our natural state of being — that it's natural to feel joy in giving and receiving from the heart. Accordingly, for most of my life I've been preoccupied with two questions: What happens to disconnect us from our compassionate nature, leading us to behave violently or exploitatively? And conversely, what empowers some to stay connected to our compassionate nature even under the worst circumstances?

While studying the factors that affect our ability to stay compassionate, I was struck by the crucial role that language can play. While we may not consider the way we talk to be "violent," words often lead to hurt and pain toward ourselves or to others. That's because so many of us have been trained to speak in terms of moralistic judgments, evaluations and labels that disconnect us from compassion.

I have since identified a specific approach to communicating — called Nonviolent Communication (NVC) — that leads us to give from the heart, connecting us in a way that allows our natural compassion to flourish.

Reconnecting to Our Natural State

NVC guides us to reframe how we express ourselves and how we hear others. Instead of habitual, automatic reactions, our words become conscious responses based firmly on awareness of what we perceive, feel and want in that moment.

Within the framework of NVC, we're led to express ourselves with honesty and clarity, while simultaneously paying others a respectful and empathic attention. In any exchange, we come to hear our own deeper needs and those of others. NVC trains us to observe carefully, and to specify behaviors and conditions that are affecting us. The form is simple, yet powerfully transformative.

A Way to Focus Attention

There is a story of a man on all fours under a street lamp, searching for something. A policeman passing by asked what he was doing. "Looking for my car keys," replied the man, who appeared slightly drunk. "Did you drop them here?" inquired the officer. "No," answered the man, "I dropped them in the alley." Seeing the policeman's baffled expression, the man hastened to explain, "But the light is much better here."

Like this story, I find that my cultural conditioning leads me to focus attention on places where I am unlikely to get what I want. I developed NVC as a way to train my attention on places that have the potential to yield what I am seeking.

The use of NVC does not require that the persons with whom we are communicating be literate in NVC or even motivated to relate to us compassionately. If we stay motivated solely to give and receive compassionately, and do everything we can to let others know this is our only motive, they will join us in the process, and eventually we will be able to respond compassionately to one another.

I'm not saying that this always happens quickly. I do maintain, however, that compassion inevitably blossoms when we stay true to the principles and process of NVC.

The NVC Process

To arrive at a mutual desire to give from the heart, we focus the light of consciousness on four areas — referred to as the four components of the NVC model:

First, we observe what the others are saying or doing that is either enriching or not enriching our life. The trick is to be able to articulate this observation without introducing any judgment or evaluation.

Next, we state how we feel when we observe this action: are we hurt, scared, joyful, amused, irritated? And thirdly, we say what needs of ours are connected to the feelings we have identified. An awareness of these three components is present when we use NVC to clearly and honestly express how we are.

For example, a mother might express these three pieces to her teenage son by saying, "Felix, when I see two balls of soiled socks under the coffee table and another three next to the TV, I feel irritated because I am needing more order in the rooms that we share in common."

She would follow immediately with the fourth component – a very specific request: "Would you be willing to put your socks in your room or in the washing machine?" This fourth component addresses what we are wanting from the other person that would enrich our lives or make life more wonderful for us.

Thus, part of NVC is to express these four pieces of information very clearly, whether verbally or by other means. The other part of this communication consists of receiving the same four pieces of information from others. We connect with them by first sensing what they are observing, feeling and needing; then we discover what would enrich their lives by receiving the fourth piece — their request.

As we keep our attention focused on the areas mentioned, and help others do likewise, we establish a flow of communication, back and forth, until compassion manifests naturally: what I am observing, feeling, and needing; what I am requesting to enrich my life; what you are observing, feeling and needing; what you are requesting to enrich your life ...

The NVC Process:

- The concrete actions we observe that affect our well-being
- How we feel in relation to what we observe
- The needs, values, desires, etc. that create our feelings
- The concrete actions we request in order to enrich our lives

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 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.

Some people use NVC to create greater depth and caring in their intimate relationships. Others use it to build more effective relationships at work. Still others use this process in the political arena. Worldwide, NVC now serves as a valuable resource for communities facing violent conflicts and severe ethnic, religious or political tensions.

I feel blessed to be able to travel throughout the world teaching people a process of communication that gives them power and joy. Now, with my book, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, I am pleased and excited to be able to share the richness of Nonviolent Communication with you.

Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D., is the author of Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life, Speak Peace in a World of Conflict, Life-Enriching Education, and several booklets. He serves as the founder and director of educational services for the Center for Nonviolent Communication.

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