

# Non-Violent Communication Practice Group Exercises

Facilitator: Edmund Mulligan, [edmund@edmundmulligan.name](mailto:edmund@edmundmulligan.name)

9-Feb-2022, 7pm-9pm UK time

## 1 Autonomy (15 mins)

In a breakout group spend 5 minutes discussing things you have to do but don't want to. The aim is to generate lots of ideas, not to analyze them deeply. After the 5 mins are up, each person chooses their top thing. Each person then gets 2 minutes to share their thing and decide, with the help of the group, what the underlying need is. They then say out loud, "I have to do *whatever it is*" followed by "I choose to do *whatever*, because I need *reason*". What does it feel like to say each of the sentences? If there is any time left then people can choose other things they have to do and repeat the exercise.

## 2 Self Judgements (15 mins)

In a breakout room, each person says something judgmental about themselves (jackal ears pointing inwards). The group then comes up with a way to express it more compassionately. The person nominates someone in the group to say the first statement to them, (jackal ears pointing outwards) follows by the more compassionate version (giraffe ears pointing outwards). Notice how it feels to hear the two different versions. The person then says the compassionate version to themselves (giraffe ears pointing inwards). Go round the group in turn until you run out of time but don't rush — take time to feel the difference between hearing the two versions, and everyone needs to take at least one turn.

## 3 Strengths and Edges (45 minutes?)

Think of a situation you were in where NVC was or would have been helpful. You may have used some NVC skills or you may have not used them but wished you had. You may have got the outcome you wanted or you may not. You may have used your skills well or you may have fumbled. Take

## Non-Violent Communication Practice Group Exercises

---

a few moments to bring that situation to mind and remember what it felt like.

Now draw two columns, label the first Strengths and the second Edges. For each skill that follows, ask yourself whether you used it effectively or not. Note that we are looking for your embodied experience, this is not particularly an intellectual exercise to answer with your head. Once you have a feel for your answer, you do one of three things. If you used the skill effectively, list it under Strengths. If you tried to use it but it didn't work for you or you didn't try to use it but wanted to, list it under Edges. If you don't have a strong feeling either way then do not write it down in either column.

1. *Presence*
2. *Observing*
3. *Feelings Awareness*
4. *Self Acceptance*
5. *Owning your own feelings* Living from knowledge that I alone caused my emotions, they were not caused by others.
6. *Needs consciousness*
7. *Recovering from reactivity*
8. *Requesting* Willingness to ask for what you want without expecting a particular response.
9. *Mourning* Transforming the suffering of loss, letting go of the resistance to what is and allowing your experience to unfold.
10. *Empathy*
11. *Dissolving enemy images*
12. *Discernment* Clarity, insight and wisdom in making life serving distinction and choices. Recognizing one has choice.
13. *Living interdependently* Living from the knowledge that every individual is related to every other individual. Every part of a system affects every other part.
14. *Honest self expression*
15. *Facilitating connection* Facilitating empathy and honesty in dialogue with an intent to create connection.

16. *Patience* Remaining present when one feels under stress. An ability to be with ones own reactions without acting out of them.
17. *Responding to others' reactivity* Responding rather than reacting to others who are caught up in intense emotions.
18. *Openness to feedback*
19. *Beneficial regret* Acknowledging and learning from ones missed opportunities to meet needs without guilt, shame or self-punishment.
20. *Flexibility in relating* Openness and versatility in interacting with others as opposed to formulaic or habituated responses.
21. *Transforming conflict into connection*
22. *Gratitude* Finding value in, and enjoying, what is.
23. *Open hearted flow of giving and receiving* Transforming scarcely thinking into thriving creatively. Joyfully contributing and receiving.
24. *Cultivating vitality* Tuning into oneself to support balanced self care, cultivating the energy to serve life.
25. *Sharing power* Transforming domination and submission into connection.
26. *Transcending roles* Awareness that we are not the roles we play, having choice about what roles we adopt while responding to the roles others adopt.
27. *Awareness of response-ability* Freely choosing ones responses to what shows up in life. Owning ones part in what happens and not owning others' parts and acknowledging that ones actions do influence others.

Finally if you have any strengths that were not listed then add them to the strengths column.

Now in breakout groups, look at your strengths and celebrate what you were able to access in that situation. Be aware that some people are really hard on themselves when grading their strengths and edges. Also be aware that both strengths and edges are contextual — you may exhibit them more or less in different situations.

#### **4 Using strengths to navigate edges (15 mins)**

In breakout groups, when it is your turn pick one of your strengths. Think of a situation where you experience one of your edges. Then use the group to come up with a strategy you can use to try to negotiate your edge.

## **5 Strengths and edges homework**

When you are in bed imagine some situations where you experience an edge and come up with some strategies of how to use your strengths to navigate the edges. You can either do this before you get up in the morning to prepare yourself for the day, or before you go to sleep to prime your brain to make connections between strengths and edges while you sleep.

## **6 Role play a difficult conversation (if there is time)**

In a breakout group, each person takes turn to nominate someone in the group to be the respondent. The others are observers. Person briefly describes a situation involving the respondent. This can be real or made up, but possibly more insightful if it is a real situation that has happened or is going to happen. Possibly less risky if it is made up. The person says what they are feeling in that situation and what their unmet need is. The rest of the group can help clarifying the feelings and needs. The person and respondent then role play the conversation. Observers can “press pause” at any time and ask the person if they are expressing a thought or feeling, to ask what the underlying need is, or invite them to rephrase the request. The focus is on helping the person to be clear about their needs, feelings and requests. NOT the acting ability of the respondent.