

Introduction to Nonviolent Communication

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Nonviolence + Communication

- Traces its origins to the long-standing tradition of Nonviolence: e.g., Gandhi & The Civil Rights movement.
- Translates from Sanskrit:
 - ‘Ahimsa’ = non-harm, even towards those who harm us.
 - ‘Satyagraha’ = soul force, truth force - holding on to truth without compromising love.
- Invites 3 levels of integration - Thought, Word & Action
- Can be developed through the practice of NVC

"We may never be strong enough to be entirely nonviolent in thought, word and deed. But we must keep nonviolence as our goal and make strong progress towards it."

- Gandhi

How our language contributes to harm

We learn to communicate in a way that supports distrust:

- **Diagnosis** - judgments, analysis, criticism, comparisons:
“What’s right/wrong with whom?” “He is a narcissist.” “They are not capable of caring.”
- **Denial of responsibility** - attributing the cause of one’s feelings or actions to someone else or to circumstances:
“It’s your fault.” “I had no choice.”
- **Demands** - Shoulds, have to’s, must, need to:
“You need to do what’s right.” “You should apologize.”
- **Deserve Thinking** - followed by punishments and rewards
“If you do as I say I will let you stay.”
- **Disowning our perception** - presenting our beliefs/thoughts/interpretations as the truth
“Vaccines are dangerous.” “Vaccines are safe.”

Reclaiming trust with NVC

The Assumption of Innocence

Assuming trust that everything human beings are doing or saying is an attempt to meet their human needs, no different than our own.

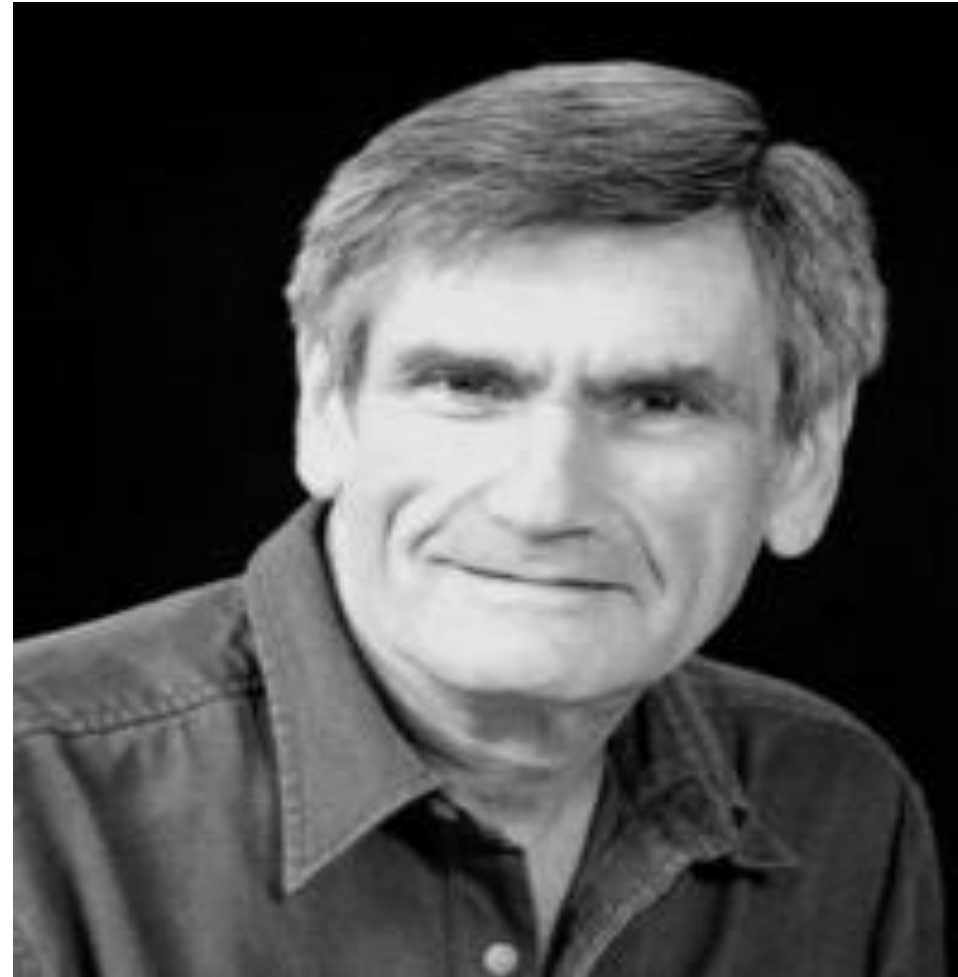
*"If you treat a man as he appears to be you make him worse.
But if you treat a man as if he already were what he potentially
could be, you make him what he can be."*

- Goethe



Viktor Frankl (1977): “The Unheard Cry for Meaning”
Massey Hall, Toronto, Canada

Video clip:
*Viktor Frankl & Man's Search for
Meaning*
Volodymyr | <https://youtu.be/UgVA6nXCj1U?t=80>



“Every criticism, judgment, diagnosis, and expression of anger is the tragic expression of an unmet need.”

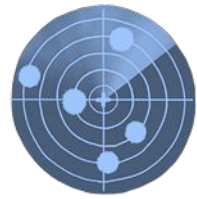
— Marshall Rosenberg



4-Step Communication Process

The Goal:

restore trust and work for the positive peace that can build Beloved Community



O - **Observations** vs. Evaluation / Interpretation



F - **Feelings** vs. Thoughts



N - **Needs** vs. Strategies



R - **Requests** vs. Demands

Identifying and expressing feelings

- We are trained to hide our feelings (vulnerability).
- We may have very limited emotional vocabulary.
- As a result, we may lose connection with self and others.

Opinions vs. feelings

We express an opinion vs. a feeling when we include:

- That, like, as if (e.g., *“I feel that you should know better.”*)
- I, you, he, she, it (e.g., *“I feel it is useless.”*)
- Names or nouns referring to people (e.g., *“I feel my boss has been manipulative.”*)

Self-Judgments vs. Feelings

We describe what we think we are vs. our feelings:

“I feel inadequate as a teacher.”

VS.

“I feel disappointed / impatient / frustrated with myself as a teacher.”

Judgments of Others vs. feelings

We describe what we think others are vs. our feelings:

“I feel ignored / misunderstood by my partner.”

VS.

“I feel sad / lonely / hurt.”

Building a vocabulary of feelings

Be specific: “I feel good” vs. “I feel excited, relieved, happy.”

when needs are met...

when needs are unmet...

PLAYFUL

Alive
Adventurous
Energetic
Exuberant
Impish
Lively

LOVING

Friendly
Open
Passionate
Tender
Trusting
Warm

CONFUSED

Hesitant
Perplexed
Restless
Skeptical
Troubled
Uneasy
Unsteady

TIRED

Apathetic
Bored
Exhausted
Lethargic
Passive
Weary

SAD

Depressed
Despairing
Helpless
Lonely
Miserable
Troubled

PEACEFUL

Calm
Content
Expansive
Relaxed
Relieved
Serene

INTERESTED

Curious
Eager
Enthusiastic
Fascinated
Intrigued
Involved

SCARED

Anxious
Fearful
Insecure
Jealous
Nervous
Terrified
Worried

MAD

Agitated
Angry
Outraged
Furious
Grouchy
Impatient

GLAD

Delighted
Ecstatic
Grateful
Hopeful
Inspired
Jazzed
Proud

Practice: Feelings vs. Thoughts

Complete the chart by identifying the feeling embedded in the thought.

THOUGHT	FEELING
Abandoned	
Abused	
Attacked	
Betrayed	
Blamed	
Bullied	
Disrespected	
Ignored	

The root cause of our feelings

- Our experience is caused internally by the meaning we assign to what happens - our interpretations.
- All judgements, criticisms and interpretations point to what matters to us in each given moment - our universal human needs.

“You never understand me.” → need for understanding

“You love your work more than you love me.” → need to matter

Responsibility = Power

- Self responsibility brings back the power to our hands - our experience is not at the mercy of other people or external forces.
- When we express our needs indirectly others are likely to hear blame and become defensive.

“I feel because you did / you are.”

VS.

“I feel because I need.”

Constrained Capacity

- Our capacity is constrained by the circumstances of our life and our position in society.
- Self responsibility requires inner work.
- Access to external resources is a privilege. Less access to external resources can lead to less internal resources.
- People with less access to resources (internal & external) absorb more impact - dealing with more trauma.
- When we ask people to focus on self-responsibility at the moment when they are gathering the courage to reveal their experience rather than hiding it, we may end up contributing to more trauma.

Needs-based Consciousness

- All our choices are motivated by our needs. Exit right/wrong thinking.
- Needs are universal (shared-humanity & interdependence)
- The ways by which we choose to meet our needs (strategies) are diverse.
- Conflict happens at the level of strategies, not needs.

“You have never done anything wrong. You never have. You never will. You’ve done some things, that if you knew then what you are learning now, you would do it differently. And (the fun part is), it will always be this way.”

- Marshall B. Rosenberg

SOME FEELINGS WHEN NEEDS ARE MET

- Affectionate**
 - Loving
 - Friendly, warm
 - Tender
- Confident**
 - Empowered
 - Safe, secure
- Fascinated**
 - Engaged
 - Involved
 - Amazed
- Inspired**
 - Awe
 - Wonder
- Fascinated**
 - Engaged
 - Involved
 - Amazed
- Stimulated**
 - Animated
 - Excited, eager
 - Aroused
- Hopeful**
 - Anticipating
 - Optimistic
- Elated**
 - Ecstatic
 - Exuberant
 - Thrilled
- Energetic**
 - Lively
 - Passionate
 - Exhilarated
- Refreshed**
 - Rejuvenated
 - Restored
- Curious**
 - Alert, Absorbed
 - Interested
- Joy**
 - Happy, glad
 - Jubilant
 - Pleased
- Centered**
 - Trusting
 - Clear
 - Open
- Gratitude**
 - Appreciative
 - Moved, touched
- Amused**
 - Tickled
 - Delighted
- Peace**
 - Calm
 - Relaxed

SOME FEELINGS WHEN NEEDS ARE NOT MET

- Embarrassed**
 - Flustered
 - Self-conscious
- Agitated**
 - Distressed
 - Disturbed
 - Uncomfortable
- Disconnected**
 - Bored
 - Detached
 - Apathetic
- Shame**
- Shocked**
 - Unnerved
 - Unsettled
 - Startled
- Confused**
 - Lost
 - Mystified
 - Torn
- Afraid**
 - Panicky
 - Cautious
 - Freaked out
- Anger**
- Fatigue**
 - Burnt out
 - Tired
 - Exhausted
- Vulnerable**
 - Insecure
 - Shaky
 - Helpless
- Averse**
 - Disgusted
 - Hate/dislike
 - Repulsed
- Guilt**
 - Regret
 - Remorse
- Annoyed**
 - Frustrated
 - Exasperated
 - Cheesed off
- Tense**
 - Stressed
 - Overwhelmed
 - Frazzled
- Depression**
- Sad**
 - Discouraged
 - Hopeless
 - Disheartened
- Pain**
 - Grief
 - Misery
 - Hurt
- Longing**
 - Jealousy
 - Resentment
 - Pining



**I FLOURISH WHEN I NOURISH
THE NEEDS BENEATH MY FEELINGS**

- Love**
 - Affection
 - Compassion
 - Consideration
 - Intimacy
 - Love
 - Nurturing
 - Warmth
 - Companionship
 - Touch
- Connection**
 - Empathy
 - Closeness
 - Communication
 - Presence
- Community**
 - Acceptance
 - Appreciation
 - Belonging
 - Inclusion
 - Cooperation
 - Support
 - Participation
- Peace**
 - Beauty
 - Communion
 - Ease
 - Equality
 - Harmony
 - Inspiration
 - Order
- Play**
 - Joy
 - Humour
 - Laughter
- To Matter**
 - Purpose
 - Contribution
 - Creativity
 - Celebration of life

- Shared Reality**
 - To know and be known
 - To see and be seen
 - To understand
 - Be understood
 - Stability
 - Consistency

- Growth**
 - Awareness
 - Consciousness
 - Discovery
 - Learning

- Honesty**
 - Authenticity
 - Integrity

- Trust**
 - Security
 - Safety

- Autonomy**
 - Choice
 - Freedom
 - Self-expression
 - Independence
 - Space
 - Spontaneity
 - Respect/self-respect
- Physical Well-being**
 - Air, breath
 - Food and water
 - Movement
 - Rest and sleep
 - Sexual expression
 - Safety
 - Comfort, shelter
- Meaning**
 - Challenge
 - Competence
 - Clarity
 - Efficacy
 - Effectiveness
 - Understanding
 - Stimulation
- Healing**
 - Mourning
 - Growth
 - Care



enCOMPASSion



Practice: Connecting with Needs

- What is the stimulus ? (something that I or others did or said)
- What am I telling myself about what happened? (my interpretation)
- What is it that I don't want? – (what am I wanting to avoid, move away from?)
- What is it that I do want? Converting to positive language moves us closer to the heart.
- From strategy to need - identify what's important: if I get what I want what would that give me?
- Opening my heart fully to myself - connecting with the beauty of the need whether it is being met or not. (Imagine a time when this need was fulfilled in my life and notice sensations arising in my body.)
- Is there any request that comes up for myself or another that would be the next step moving towards my need?

Empathy - Etymology

From Latin:

Pathos: "suffering" or "experience" or "something that one undergoes," or "something that happens to one"

- Sy(n)m-pathia - for
- Anti-pathia - against
- A-pathia - without
- E(n)m-pathia - in, within

“Understanding someone’s suffering is the best gift you can give another person. Understanding is love’s other name. If you don’t understand, you can’t love.”

- Thích Nhất Hạnh

Empathy

Empathy - A quality of understanding another person's experience that provides warm accompaniment without judgment.

(Accompaniment – the experience of being heard, understood, and mattering)



The power of empathy is that when we can take the perspective of another person, our hearts are likely to be moved and changed.

Inner Obstacles to Empathy

- Needing empathy ourselves.
- Needing self-acceptance.
- Unwillingness to consider the person's strategies.
- "Enemy images"
- Concern about seeming to agree
- Not trusting the other person's authenticity
- Trauma response.
- Challenge to open ourselves to be moved.
- Attachment to an outcome.

“The Chinese philosopher Chuang-Tzu stated that true empathy requires listening with the whole being: The hearing that is only in the ears is one thing. The hearing of the understanding is another. But the hearing of the spirit is not limited to any one faculty, to the ear, or to the mind. Hence it demands the emptiness of all the faculties. And when the faculties are empty, then the whole being listens. There is then a direct grasp of what is right there before you that can never be heard with the ear or understood with the mind.”

- **Marshall B. Rosenberg**, *“Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life”*

What empathy is NOT!

Advice: We assume the speaker needs information. “What you could do is...”

Correct: We try to point out someone’s mistake in interpretation.

Evaluate: We decide if another’s emotional response is appropriate or not. “You are overreacting this is no big deal.”

Interrogate: “Why did you do that? What made you feel this way?”

One Up: “That is horrible but something even worse happened to me...”

Console: “It will be okay. Everything will be okay. You are okay.”

Demand: “If you don’t get control of your emotions, I am leaving.”

Denial of Choice: “Its hard but we all have to do this.”

Diagnose: “Sounds like a counselor would be helpful.”

Educate: “The reason you feel like this is....”

Explain: “There is a logical reason why you are having this experience. It is Because...”

Nod & Smile: You feel uncomfortable and just want to get out of the situation.

Professional Advice: You assume the person needs information. “You need to get some professional help with this.”

Push Away Feelings: “Come on smile. Don’t be (sad, upset, angry etc)”

Sympathy: taking pity. “you poor thing.”

Tell a Story: “The same thing happened to me! This one time...”

Practice: Empathy

Remember:

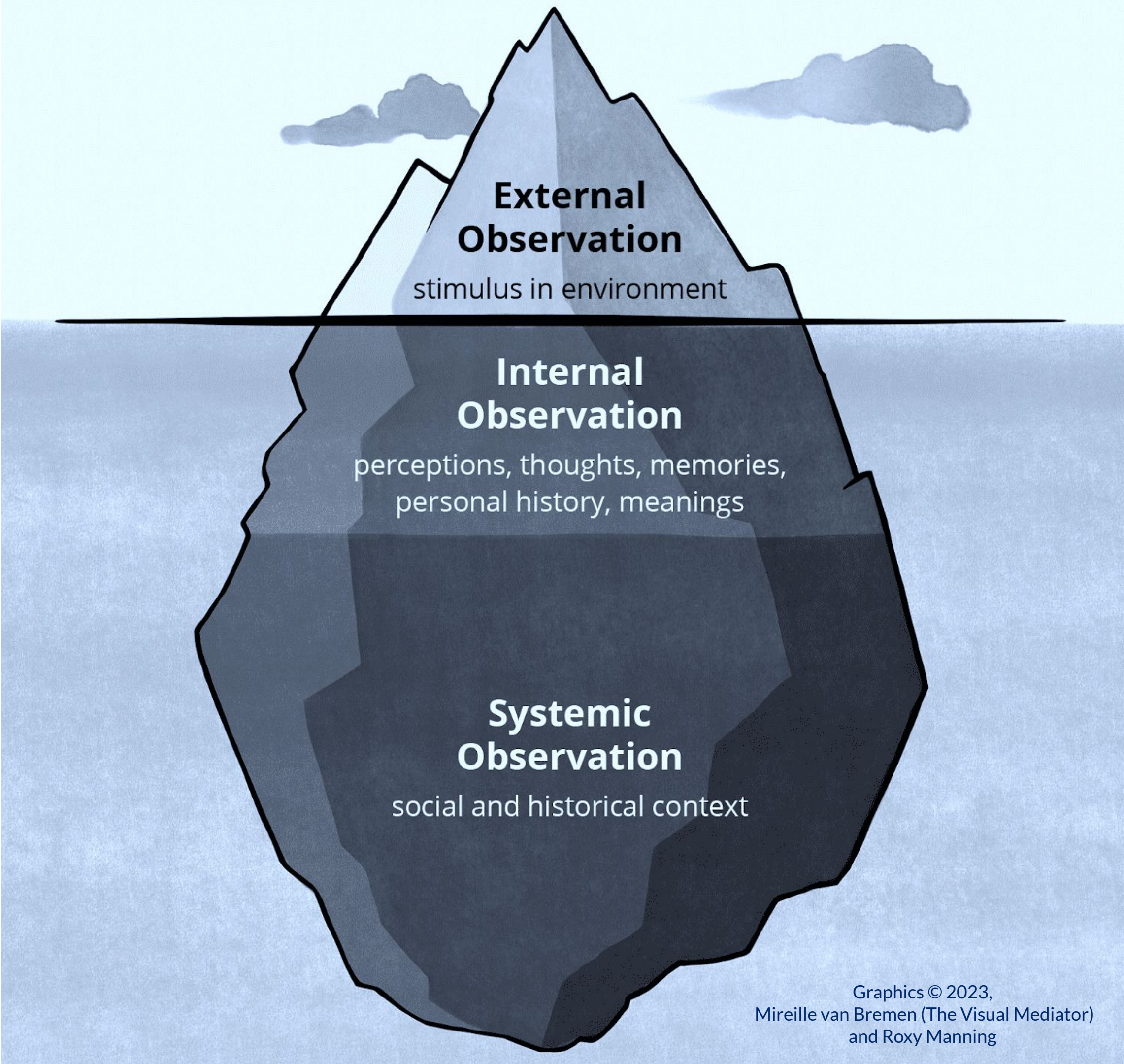
- Make a guess
- Identify the need - what's important for the speaker that you also value
- Focus on what they want, not what they don't want
- Be open to being corrected



“Observing without evaluating is the highest form of human intelligence” ~ J. Krishnamurti



Levels of Observations



Practice: 3 levels of observation

- Identify a situation where you have been stimulated.
- Name the External Observation (video camera).
- Name the Internal Observation - What is the meaning your are assigning to what is happening?
is there an historic individual piece that may be stimulating your thoughts?
- Name the Systemic Observation (without judgment)



Requests

Ask yourself...

What's important to me?
What do I need in this moment?

What might we
do about it?

When you have clarity,
choose between two options:

Connection Request

Ask for help attending to the relationship between us

Solution Request

Ask for help solving the problem I'm dealing with



Types of Connection Requests

Check for openness to dialogue	Are you willing to talk with me about my experience working on this project?
Check if we've been heard	It will help me to know I've been heard for what I'm holding. Would you be willing to summarize the pieces you got?
Check for understanding (empathic connection)	Would you let me know what you understand is important to me about this issue?
Check for impact	I imagine that might be hard to hear. Can you tell me what's coming up for you?
Support connection towards solution	Is there anything that would prevent you from being fully on board with this approach?

Solution Requests

Positive language	Ask for what you want, not what you don't want.
Specificity	What I want the other person to do or say
Relevant	If implemented, is likely to meet the desired needs
Openness to a 'no'	No punishment or negative consequence
Inclusive of all needs	While prioritizing those most impacted.



When to move to solution requests?

- Time pressure
- Little willingness to engage in a conversation.
- You have reached sufficient connection and trust for the purpose at hand.

Practice: saying 'No' with care

Think of a request someone is making of you to which you want to say “no”.

Self connection:

- What needs are you trying to say yes to ?
- What do you imagine are the needs behind the other person's request?

Expression:

1. Check with the other person your understanding of their needs behind their request.
2. Once they confirm, explicitly express your interest in having them meet their needs (they matter)
3. Share the needs you are saying 'yes' to with your 'no'.
4. Connection request: check for impact (specifically if their sense of mattering is being impacted)
5. Action request: propose an alternate strategy that cares for everyone's needs
6. If there is no strategy found: acknowledge and mourn the impact (without guilt or self-judgement)



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