

OFNR Communication Components

For experiencing empathic connection (from the work of Nonviolent Communication NVC)

Observation vs. Evaluation/Judgment

Observation is awareness of what we perceive with our senses – sight, sound, touch, taste, smell – and also of our thoughts (images, words, concepts, evaluations). In language, we can describe purely what we are observing (i.e. words we hear, actions we see from our subjective frame of reference) separate from words that evaluate (e.g. liking or disliking, agreement or disagreement). Often our evaluation takes the form of moralistic judgment about who/what is right-wrong, good-bad, should-shouldn't, appropriate-inappropriate, etc., which is then associated with blame, punishment, reward.

Feeling vs. Thinking/"Faux Feelings"

Feeling is awareness of inner bodily experience of sensations and emotions, versus thinking, such as "I feel like you don't respect me," or "I feel that you're not listening." Words commonly used for feelings often mix up thought and feeling ("faux feeling" language, e.g. "I feel judged, disrespected and unappreciated.") Feelings relate to our perceptions of the world and the quality of our thinking. Feeling presence in our body and compassionately accepting our feelings creates inner connection and helps us process/integrate emotions.

Need vs. Wants/"Strategies"

The Need level expands awareness from our separate, individual mind-body experience to oneness with the universal, wholeness and interconnectedness of life. Needs are what all humans universally need to survive and thrive (e.g. safety, love, freedom). Needs are not specific to a particular person, thing, action, place, or time. All life, in every moment, is meeting needs we all share.

Relationship of thoughts and feelings to needs: Thoughts and evaluations express needs, e.g. "You're so selfish," might be expressing a need for consideration. We commonly see our feelings as caused by other's actions, e.g. "I feel angry because you ...". A deeper understanding is seeing our feelings caused by our thinking, e.g. "I feel angry because I'm thinking that" More deeply and powerfully, we can see our feelings ultimately caused by our needs, e.g. "I feel angry because of the need for respect."

Request vs. Demand

Requests flow from connection with universal needs, and invite the freedom to say "no." It is wanting the response to come from true willingness, from the heart and the desire to contribute, from compassionate giving and receiving, rather than fear of punishment, guilt, shame, obligation, reward, etc.

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