

COURAGEOUS COMMUNICATION
a Nonviolent Communicaton Curriculum for the
Maine Coastal Regional Reentry Center

by

Peggy Smith, *CNVC* certified *NVC* Trainer

OpenCommunication.org



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

Dedication

This document is dedicated to all the men I have had the pleasure of meeting during my time at Maine Coastal Regional Reentry Center.

In particular, Alton Lane, who by Session 3 had embraced *NEEDS*-based consciousness, and now dedicates himself to the journey of the peaceful warrior.

And to my children - Mark, Missy, April and Gemma Laser. Each in their own way inspires me to love and keep my heart open to all that is.

Acknowledgments

With unending gratitude to my two root teachers:

Thich Nhat Hanh, who guided me to my heart's strength
Marshall B. Rosenberg, who shared with me how to let my heart find voice

A special thank you to Bonnie Fraser and Liv Larsson for their generosity and companionship, even though we have never met. I have great respect for their *NVC* curriculums.

Whatever *NVC* skills I have, I owe to my varied *NVC* teachers – I endeavor to do their work justice and hold them dearly as friends along the path: Marshall B. Rosenberg, Gina Cenciose, Wes Taylor, Gregg Kendrick, Miki Kashtan, Sura Hart, Robert Gonzales, Susan Skye, Towe Widstrand, Dominic Barter, Rita Herzog.

This document, and the web presence of the Maine *NVC* Network, would not exist without the dedication, love and skill of Betsy Terrell. Betsy is a constant, talented *NVC* companion whose encouragement, editing skills and web talents make it possible to share this work with the wider community. My life is so much the richer for her varied contributions.

Contents

Introduction: Background and Recommendations	<u>4</u>
Session 1: Introduction to <i>NVC</i>	<u>7</u>
Session 2: Exploring the Connection between <i>Feelings</i> and <i>NEEDS</i>	<u>13</u>
Session 3: Deepening the Connection between <i>Feelings</i> and <i>NEEDS</i>	<u>16</u>
Session 4: Revisiting the 4 Chairs	<u>18</u>
Session 5: Three Pieces of the Puzzle	<u>21</u>
Session 6: Exploring Empathy	<u>23</u>
Session 7: <i>Feelings</i> & <i>NEEDS</i> Poker	<u>25</u>
Session 8: <i>Requests</i>	<u>27</u>
Session 9: Using <i>NVC</i> to Influence My Life	<u>29</u>
Session 10: Wrapping Up	<u>30</u>
Resources	<u>32</u>

List of Handouts

All handouts were created by Peggy Smith, unless otherwise noted on the handout

The 4 Chairs

Choosing My Thinking

Feelings and *NEEDS* Lists

Something Kind I Did

Something I Like / Don't Like

NEEDS Sort

Changing Our Judgments

Important Relationships

Empathy

Requests

Who Am I?

Strategies to Nurture *NEEDS*

Something I Did That Hurt Another

Requests That Matter

Maine Coastal Regional Reentry Center NVC Curriculum :

Courageous Communication

Introduction

Note: This curriculum is intended for use by teachers and facilitators already fluent in NVC. The curriculum is organized into ten sessions, including the session overview and instructions and all handouts to be used during each session. Feelings and NEEDS cards, used frequently, can be downloaded for free, and printed (see Resources for source). Throughout the text, I have used plural pronouns as a strategy for gender neutrality.

Background

The Maine Coastal Regional Reentry Center (MCRRC) in Belfast, Maine, USA, is a residential reentry center designed to give incarcerated men the skills and experience they need to live successfully as positive citizens and employees after they transition back into their home communities. The men are provided a variety of treatment, educational and vocational opportunities focused upon reducing recidivism. It is a joint venture between the Sheriff's Department and Volunteers of America. The Reentry Center serves Hancock, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Waldo and Washington counties. The facility can house up to 32 adult males, all of whom are required to meet certain criteria to qualify. These qualifications include being within eighteen months of release and being at a moderate to high risk of recidivism.

When the program began in 2010, a local NVC enthusiast, Michael Shell, suggested to the program director that NVC be added to the weekly educational offerings. Michael pioneered the program for about six months. I agreed to take over when he left the area. Over the years I have crafted the curriculum that is shared in this document.

Our NVC class structure is two hours a week for ten weeks. This has become a required course within the center's educational offerings. After three years, I changed the course title from Nonviolent Communication to Courageous Communication. The men sometimes resisted taking a course in nonviolent communication, because they said they were not violent, or they were not convicted for violent offenses. I was inspired by the work of Daryne Rockett, a clinical social worker at a Maine Veterans' Center who incorporates NVC and Mindfulness and calls her classes Courageous Communication. Indeed, it takes immense courage to take responsibility for our lives and to make choices that change engrained habits. We believe the NVC journey is indeed a journey of courage and freedom.

Three Important Preparations

This curriculum is intended to support to experienced NVC practitioners who would like to enrich work they are already doing with incarcerated people, or who want support/inspiration in starting such a program. This curriculum assumes the user has already done a good amount of integrating of needs-based consciousness

into their personal life.

In addition, I HIGHLY recommend that anyone using this material do the work presented in Liv Larsson's book, Anger, Guilt & Shame: Reclaiming Power and Choice as part of their own personal growth. When we work with a vulnerable population, it is important that we have explored our own relationship to such intense emotions. This will support us as we work with people who are themselves in deep pain, and help us respond empathically and authentically to issues as they become alive within the class setting.

Finally, please be sure to set up an empathy support system for yourself so that you can be nourished as you do this challenging and rewarding work.

Putting It into Action

During the five plus years that I have offered Nonviolent Communication classes at the Reentry Center, I've concluded that the most important way to demonstrate the power of needs-based consciousness is to follow the energy in the room. While I strive to do that in all my teaching, it is especially important when I work with incarcerated people. This is because people embedded in overt authoritarian structures have little opportunity to experience the consideration and nurturing of the following *NEEDS*: to be heard, to matter, acceptance, tenderness, understanding, support, honesty, honoring agreements, authenticity, empathy, choice, to be seen for one's true intentions, acknowledgment, power with, recognition, consideration, integrity, trust, fun and expression.

My primary strategy to nurture these *NEEDS* in the course of our sessions is to use the opening check-in to listen for something "really alive" for an individual or the group. So, while I come with a curriculum for the day, from Session 3 onward I consider that secondary to processing a real situation that may be expressed during check-in by one or more group members.

For instance, on one occasion a member shared that they were upset because the day before they had been informed that their custody rights had been terminated. Another day someone shared that some of their cigarettes were missing. Another time someone shared that during a weekend pass they had started a new love relationship. Another time the whole group was upset because of an interaction with a staff member at morning meeting.

After the whole check-in is complete, I cycle back to the person(s) who raised a hot topic and ask their permission to use it (or not) for a group learning. If permission is given, I demonstrate on the chalkboard the first three elements of *NVC* thinking (*Observation, Feelings, NEEDS*).

I ask them to state clearly the *Observation*. If they have trouble making a clear statement we work together to come up with something that resonates for them and is free from judgment and blame.

Then I ask them to share how they are *Feeling* at this moment - either words or describing physical sensations in their body. Sometimes judgments come out (betrayed, belittled, etc) and I can coach them right then with the translation sentence: "When you are telling yourself you are _____, bring your attention into

your body and notice how you are feeling. What word do you have for that?"

Sometimes I will include the judgmental *Feelings* in the midst of authentic *Feelings* – depending on how attached the participant is to the word describing their body sensations. It may be too tender a time to make it a teaching moment; or, as often happens, modeling/coaching is enough for people to experience the difference.

If someone is so triggered, or not yet used to expressing *Feelings*, I ask the whole group to suggest how they might be feeling. Then I have the person whose issue it is go through the list and pick out what actually best describes their inner reality in that moment.

Then the whole group gets involved with guessing possible *NEEDS*. As the group brainstorms what the *NEEDS* might be, I record them for all to see. When there are no more guesses, the original person decides which ones are actually "up" for them in that moment. Often there are many, many *NEEDS*. Then I ask them to pick the three or four that are most important in that moment.

Next I ask them how they are doing now - having been through the process. There has almost always been some sort of shift that produces a decrease in stress and tension. Usually there is a sense of release and relief. "I feel better," is often expressed.

Then I sometimes ask for some sort of *Request*. "If you could tell anyone about this who would it be?" is often a starting point for introducing *Requests*. Or, "If you could ask someone for anything related to this situation, who would it be and what would you ask?" We then connect that this exercise is a primary way of experiencing "Chair #3" thinking. (See session #1 for explanation of the "4 Chairs.")

If we are further along in our sessions, I may then run through the elements (*Observation, Feelings, NEEDS*) from the other person's perspective. We then connect that this is a way to experience "Chair #4" thinking.

Depending on the situation, this process could take an hour. It is an inclusive way to teach the aspects of *NVC* in an organic, flowing, and meaningful way that touches everyone in the room who chooses to participate.

Both sections of our class (before and after break) are sometimes taken up in this way. I consider these the most valuable sessions because the participants directly experience my valuing of them as human beings who are "worthy" of being heard, considered, respected, valued and taken seriously. Often at the end of our ten classes I receive the feedback that they so appreciate being listened to and experiencing that they matter – this is an essential component of cultivating *NEEDS*-based consciousness in this sort of setting.

What follows is an outline of the ten basic sessions that are the foundation of the work at MCRRC. Any particular group may or may not get through the whole curriculum. Each series is based on the capacity of the participants and their particular learning curve. As stated above, processing a charged topic is an important detour from these lessons. I suggest you use the first three lessons in order. After that, the content of lessons can vary depending on the skills and issues of the people you are working with. Be creative and allow your own inspiration to guide you.

Session 1: Introduction to NVC

Suggested materials: chalk (if chalkboard is available) or dry erase board and markers, or flip-chart with markers; folders: each participant is given a folder to keep all their handouts and exercises in; handout: The 4 Chairs; NEEDS Cards: 1 deck for each participant; Speaking Peace In A World Of Conflict, enough copies for all participants; four chairs set up in the front of the room

Introduce myself and the class guidelines

(The ones I use are given here as examples; adapt to your circumstances.)

- One person speaks at a time.
- Everyone is responsible for signing themselves in if they want credit.
- What I share with the facility staff:
 1. the daily attendance
 2. if they arrive late or leave early
 3. the topic of the day.

I DO NOT share what individuals say.

Introduce the Course Content

This class is called Courageous Communication because it takes a lot of courage to change our habits. The material this class will cover was developed by a psychologist, Marshall Rosenberg. He called it Nonviolent Communication. Marshall grew up in Detroit in a family that had little financial wealth. He learned early that life could be dangerous depending on what you looked like or what your name was. He was regularly beaten up because of his last name. He saw others being hurt because of the color of their skin. He became curious about the capacity of humans to be both violent and compassionate. He wanted to understand these capacities and what motivated violence and compassion.

When he was a child his grandmother became quite ill and moved in with his family. She was bedridden and needed help eating and bathing. Marshall had two uncles who took turns coming to the home to feed and bathe their mother. What he noticed was that these two men, each doing the same thing, feeding and bathing their mother, had very different reactions. One uncle seemed cheerful and happy feeding and bathing his mother. The other uncle tended to be grumpy and irritated while feeding and bathing his mother. Marshall became curious about this.

He was the first person in his family to go to college. Then he became a psychologist and continued to explore his interest in violence and compassion. He came to believe that our reactions to life were less about what was happening outside of us, and more to do with what was happening within us. Marshall came to call these inner motivators Universal Human *NEEDS*.

NVC as a Compass on the Continuum of Connection

To demonstrate our choices when working with any issue I stand in front of the group and move as I speak:

Imagine a continuum of human connection. On this end, (I move to my far right) is extreme rage and destruction: war, genocide,

extreme violence.

On the other end, (I move to my far left) is authentic peace, cooperation and harmony. I say "authentic" because I'm not talking about the fake kind that we learn in order to get by, when I "act nice" or say "please" and "thank you" while inside I'm mad or irritated. I'm talking about when I'm both authentic AND experiencing harmony and connection with others.

Next, I move back and forth along the continuum while I describe certain events that encourage me to face either toward the violence end or the harmony end. Make up your own examples; here is one I might use:

I may have just spent a few hours visiting with an old friend and be feeling relaxed and happy. (I stand in the middle and face the harmony end) Then while I'm driving home someone cuts me off and gives me the finger. At that moment I often find myself turning instantly in my mind toward the violence end. Yet I can use *NVC* to reorient myself toward the authentic harmony end using the skills of *NVC* (making appropriate movements to match my words). So Courageous Communication provides me with the skills to turn toward the connecting end within my own thinking, if I choose to, and if I practice doing this often enough.

What is a Universal Human *NEED*?

The *NEEDS* Experiment, or the Cultural Anthropologist Exercise:

Imagine that I have the power to grant you three special powers.

1. You now have an honorary PhD in cultural anthropology, and you know how to do research and interview any group of humans.
2. You also have a special power pack that allows you to travel anywhere on the planet, and anywhere in time. So you can visit any place on earth in either the past, the present or the future.
3. The third power is a universal translator so you can instantly understand all human languages.

I want you to imagine being able to interview any peoples on the earth – now, in the past and even in the future. Ask each group, "What is important for a human to survive AND thrive?"

What would be on everyone's list – what is in common among ALL the groups, no matter where and when they lived on this planet?

Record the responses on a chalkboard (or other format). If someone offers a strategy (car, money, job), write it in a box to the side. When complete, ask the group, "Why do you think I put these over in this box?"

Usually the group will identify that people in the past didn't need these things. We then talk about the difference between a strategy and a *NEED*, and which Universal Human *NEEDS* are nourished by each strategy listed.

The 4 Chairs: Choosing My Thinking

This is the core exercise of our entire program. I review the 4 Chairs at the beginning of each class, until everyone seems to have an understanding of the meaning of each Chair. I then weave the meaning of the Chairs (choices of thinking) into most of the other activities in this series.

Before every session I set up four chairs, facing the participants, at the front of the class: two chairs touching side-by-side, then a space, then another two chairs touching side-by-side.

After recording the Universal *NEEDS* harvested from the *NEEDS* Experiment (above), I let the class know we are going to see how to use these *NEEDS* to understand and work with conflict.

I ask each person to remember a time someone said or did something that annoyed, frustrated, or just plain "pissed them off." (I find that using a phrase like "something that pissed you off" really humanizes me to the group and builds connection. Choose your own wording here.) I request that when each person has settled on one situation, to give me a "thumbs up" signal so I know they are ready to proceed.

I then ask if anyone would be willing to share their situation so I can use it to demonstrate our choices when receiving a challenging message.

There is always someone willing to share. As they share a few sentences about their situation, I get clear who said what to them, and I help them craft the one sentence that will then be the stimulus for responding from each Chair. I let them know that they will now play the role of the person who said the "annoying/ hurtful/ frustrating" thing, and I will play them.

I sit in Chair #1. I explain to the whole group that I will respond out loud in a way that someone might respond within their own mind if they are using Chair #1 thinking. This has little to do with what we might say out loud in a conversation, because we have been conditioned to often hide our true reaction.

I ask the person to say the sentence to me and then I respond out loud with thoughts that blame the other person. After a few sentences I ask the group, "When I'm in Chair #1, whose fault is it?"

The class clearly sees that in Chair #1, I am blaming/judging the other person. Then I sit in Chair #2 and ask the person to say their message again. Again I respond out loud with self-blaming/ self-judging statements. After several sentences I ask the class, "Whose fault is it now?"

They clearly see that I am making it my fault.

I bounce from Chair #1 to Chair #2, back and forth, saying, "We spend so much of our time trying to assess, is this situation your fault or my fault, your fault or my fault?"

"And sometimes I (sitting with a part of me on each chair) manage to be chair-be-dexterous! This means I can make it my fault in part of my mind and your fault in another part of my mind – a VERY highly developed skill of fault finding."

"This is a natural result of growing up in an authoritarian culture that makes things good or bad, right or wrong. We are given the message that if only we can find out whose fault a situation is, then it will make it better."

"Does that work? No."

"Marshall Rosenberg helps us see that we have different ways to respond. First, I have to realize that I am in judgment. That is why there is a space between Chairs #1 and #2 and the other two Chairs. It is important that I actually pause and acknowledge that I'm blaming/judging and decide if I want to do something else – decide if I want to orient myself toward authentic cooperation and connection." (This references the Continuum of Connection that was demonstrated just before this.)

Then I sit in Chair #3 and ask the person to share the same statement again. Now, I take time to truly self-connect in this moment. I usually close my eyes and share out loud my internal connection to any sensations that come alive in my body and the labels I put on those sensations. Then I verbally connect them to the *NEEDS* underneath. For example, "I can feel a clenching in my belly here (pointing) and my breath seems restricted. I am Feeling scared, hurt and lonely because I yearn for connection and understanding."

"Can anyone tell me what I just did in Chair #3?" Usually someone can identify that I named *Feelings* but not more. So I coach; "Did I blame anyone?"

"No."

"What did I do?"

"You told us how you were Feeling."

"Yes, and then what did I do?"

Often during this exchange I point at the list of universal human *NEEDS* that we generated during the *NEEDS* Experiment exercise. And eventually someone gets it that I mentioned *Feelings* and then connected them to the *NEEDS*.

This is a very important moment for the entire class series - the moment that someone gets the connection between *Feelings* and *NEEDS*. I clearly express that in this way of thinking, every Feeling is a *NEED* trying to be heard by us. We learn to listen carefully to all our *Feelings* so we can connect to the *NEEDS* that are trying to be heard.

From this way of looking at life, we believe that everything I ever do or say – or not do or not say – is because I'm doing the best I can in that moment to care for *NEEDS*.

(Notice that I don't choose to identify *NEEDS* as met or unmet, as is traditional in *NVC*. This is a cornerstone of how I teach. To learn more about this point of view, please read:

<http://www.mainenvcnetwork.org/newsletter2.html#feature>

Another cornerstone of how I think and teach about *NVC* is to refer to *NEEDS* not as mine or yours; I prefer to use the word "the." E.g., instead of, "I'm annoyed because of my need of trust," I would say, "I'm annoyed because of the need of trust." For more about why this is important to me, please read:

<http://www.mainenvcnetwork.org/newsletter2-4.html#feature>)

Then I sit in Chair #4.

"If everything I do and say is because I'm trying to care for *NEEDS*, than that is true for other people as well. In Chair #4, I get curious about what *Feelings* and *NEEDS* **may** be up for the other person. I don't know for sure, I'm not trying to

analyze them. I'm just getting curious."

I often then ask the group to help me guess how the person might have been feeling when they made the original statement. After we gather some *Feelings* I then ask them to guess *NEEDS*. If this seems to be too much for a particular group I then verbalize what I am guessing about the *Feelings* and *NEEDS* that were motivating them to make the statement.

Then it is time to review the 4 Chairs. I quickly go through them again, asking the group to share what they remember of each. Usually people are pretty clear about Chairs #1 and #2. And don't have a clue about explaining Chairs #3 and #4. Don't worry. It takes several weeks for this to sink in.

As a review, go over *The 4 Chairs* handout, a visual representation of the 4 Chairs concept.

It's important not to conclude, or imply, that Chairs #1 and #2 are "wrong" ways of thinking, and Chairs 3 and 4 are "right." It is not wrong to be in any of these chairs. Actually, it's quite normal in our culture to have our minds thinking from Chair #1 or Chair #2 when there is any conflict. What is important is to pause and recognize where your mind is in any moment. This awareness is the beginning of freedom. If we recognize that our mind is in any of these ways of thinking, we can then decide if we are likely to get what we are hoping for from that thinking.

Note: While doing this activity, stop frequently to receive comments from the group. Respond to each comment/question. Point out that this is the heart of our work together and that we will review this framework every session. Take your time. Use questions as a teaching moment. Every presentation will be different. Demonstrate your willingness to hear and understand their comments and concerns. Have some fun!

NEEDS Sort

Give each participant a set of *NEEDS* cards to read through and sort into piles.

e.g. Ones I value, ones I don't care about, I don't know what it is

or

I have this, I don't have this, I'm not sure

or

I agree every person values this, I don't agree, I'm not sure

Be sensitive to the fact that there may be participants who can't read all the words, or who don't know what certain words mean. Let participants know you will help them read any word. When they are done sorting, start by asking, "Were there any words you didn't know?" Ask the group to help define any words – this helps get more voices into the lesson – and they are more likely to listen to each other; e.g. during one session a participant didn't know how to read "autonomy." Then they didn't know what it meant. Another class member said, "Like the planets and stars."

Someone else said, "No, that's astronomy."

Then another person said, "You know, like (and pointed to his hand, then his forearm, then his upper arm) – it's the bones."

Someone else said, "No, that's anatomy."

I then defined autonomy. In check-out several people said that they learned

the meaning of words today.

Introduce the option of reading Speaking Peace In A World Of Conflict.

At MCRRC I have agreement with the staff that reading this book and writing a one-page reflection on what the book means to the reader will be equal to attending two classes. This helps participants who miss classes due to court, medical, work or other reasons. Reading is also a preferred strategy for learning by some participants. Giving this option models consideration and choice. To be used as credit, the written reflection has to be in by session 8. Sometimes the quality of the reflections does not demonstrate that the person has actually read the book ; in such a case, my modeling honest feedback offers another potential learning.

Check-out: One thing you are taking from today

I am sure to express that ANY thing that is authentic is acceptable – so it could be a particular learning, or their judgments of the class (interesting, boring, stupid, etc). I want each person to take a few moments to self-reflect, as this increases learning. By hearing a variety of voices the group integrates more. I also want to be sure to hear each person's voice at least twice in any session (check-in and check-out). I also use this time to assess how much, and how accurately they have internalized the day's topic. This informs my future teaching. However, even this is choice!!! Modeling choice is of paramount importance to me. I think it contributes to our long-term trust. So if someone doesn't want to share I request that they say "Pass." Even that is more than a few people are willing to do. This is OK.

I find that even people who say little in the first few classes will start to participate by Session 5 or so, IF they have a sense of choice. During one series there was one man who would not even say "pass." When I asked if he wanted to do a particular activity he would not respond verbally in any way. Each class I would request some response and he never replied. The class was always watching. Again, remember that the primary purpose is to model *NEEDS*-based consciousness. I wanted to model care, consideration, respect. During our tenth session, when I asked him if he had anything to share for check-out, he said, "No." I immediately clapped and said, "Thank you!!!!" And the whole group celebrated that he trusted us enough to finally speak.

Session 2: Exploring the Connection between *Feelings* and *NEEDS*

Suggested materials: folders; pens/pencils; handouts: Choosing My Thinking, Feelings & NEEDS lists, Something Kind I Did; Feelings & NEEDS cards, one deck for each participant; four chairs set up in the front of the room

Check-in (suggested guidelines)

- one person speaks at a time
- how are you right now
- anything we are bringing into the room with us: joys or challenges
- no cross-talk

Review the 4 Chairs

Using the *Choosing My Thinking* handout, review the 4 Chairs concept in detail, both with the four chairs that are set up in front of the class, and reading over the handout.

While it is usual that the participants will remember Chairs #1 and #2, they frequently don't have a clue about Chairs #3 and #4. Don't worry. This is part of the learning curve.

Remind them that Chairs #1 and #2 are how we have been conditioned to think and therefore come easily. Emphasize Chair #3 - when something happens, I will have reactions which can be tracked by noticing the *Feelings* in my body and connecting them to *NEEDS*.

Sampling the Process of Connecting *Feelings* and *NEEDS*

It is my intention to begin the exploration of *Feelings* and *NEEDS* with something positive. I believe starting with a pleasant memory enhances the learning, and assists in grasping these concepts:

- we are having *Feelings* in every moment
- it's OK to recognize and experience our *Feelings*
- *Feelings* are *NEEDS* expressing
- we have more choice in how to respond when we connect to *NEEDS*

This is how *NVC* gives us more choice and self-empowerment.

It is easier to learn a new concept when we are more relaxed and content. So beginning the exploration of *NEEDS*-based consciousness with a "positive" memory is a strategy to help people enter this learning effectively.

Hand out the *Feelings & NEEDS* card decks, and the *Feelings & NEEDS Lists* and *Something Kind I Did* handouts.

Encourage people to take a few minutes to read over the first handout: *Feelings* on one side and Universal Human *NEEDS* on the other. Review that universal means that every person has them.

Ask everyone to fill out the *Something Kind I Did* handout by remembering a time that they did something kind or caring for another person, then describing it in several sentences or by drawing a picture. (*Observation*)

There are often a few people who at the beginning of this exercise can't think of ANY kind or caring thing they have done for others. Encourage them by letting them know it can be from any time in their life, e.g.

bringing a handful of dandelions to their grammy when they were young
helping a neighbor
stacking wood for someone
holding a door for someone
giving a cigarette to someone without one
any kindness at all.

I encourage (and sometimes push) them to find something in their life that they can reflect on as a kindness.

Each person works on their own. Encourage them to go slowly, and coach each section. This is a foundational exercise, and if they get the idea, it will help later exercises be more effective.

Suggest that they use the *Feelings* cards (or *Feelings & NEEDS Lists*). Coach them by saying, "Thinking about this kind and caring act now, what do you notice in your body? Use the *Feelings* cards to find words for what you are feeling. Record these on the left hand side of the chart."

If they don't use the cards they are likely to write a feeling that is actually a judgment such as "*I feel they needed help.*" If that happens, coach them with this prompt, "Thinking that they needed help and remembering that you helped them, how do you feel in your body? Use the *Feelings* cards to find some words for the feeling."

It doesn't matter if they come up with one Feeling or many.

When most people seem to have filled in *Feelings*, instruct them to now use the *NEEDS* deck to discover what *NEEDS* are under each of the *Feelings*. Again, it is important at this stage of their learning to use the *NEEDS* deck (or *Feelings & NEEDS Lists*). Otherwise they may write something like, "*I needed to be a nice person.*"

It is fine if they find one *NEED* for each Feeling, or that one Feeling represents multiple *NEEDS*, or that multiple *NEEDS* are expressed through one Feeling.

Encourage a sense of discovery as opposed to a "right" way.

After completing side one, have a sharing time. Take time to let each person who wants to share as fully as they are willing. Often they really enjoy letting each other know about positive things they have done.

If there are members who choose not to share, ask the whole group to pick one *NEED* they identified, and go around the circle for people to share. If someone doesn't want to share even that, ask them to say, "Pass." There may be participants who won't even do that. It is OK. Remember you are modeling the *NEEDS* of care, consideration and to matter. Everyone will be watching to see how your teaching style models valuing everyone's *NEEDS*.

BREAK: 10 minutes helps them stretch and re-focus. It also gives the teacher time to regroup and assess what will help the group.

After break, ask that they flip the paper over and, using the same situation, guess the *Feelings* and *NEEDS* of the other person.

When everyone is complete, again invite sharing.

Check-out:

One thing you are taking from today

It is very important to me that everyone listen carefully to each other during check-out. This takes some practice. I suggest you have people put their papers in their folders, and that all card decks are picked up, before sharing begins.

It is not unusual to hear statements in check out such as:

“Wow, at first I couldn’t think of any kind things I’d ever done. Now I can think of lots of them.”

or

“For years all I hear is what a f****-up I am. It feels good to remember that I’m more than that - I have done kind things.”

Session 3: Deepening the Connection between *Feelings* and *NEEDS*

Suggested materials: folders; pens/pencils; handout: Something I Like/ Don't Like; one deck of Feelings & NEEDS cards for each participant; four chairs set up in front

Check-in

Be sure to use anything really important and emotional for participants, as described in the introduction. This takes precedent over any activities suggested in this curriculum.

Continuing last session's work using a new process

The purpose of this session is to continue to make the connection between *Feelings* and *NEEDS*. The format is to use experiences that they enjoy and don't enjoy about their facility, to again practice connecting *Feelings* to *NEEDS* with both pleasant and unpleasant experiences.

Begin by brainstorming with the group things they like about the facility and things they don't like about it. Hearing what others say can help ideas flow even for the most reticent participant. (During these brainstorming times it is an *invitation* to share -not a demand. Participants have frequently expressed to me their appreciation for the lack of pressure created with this attitude. My making class participation optional helps generate a sense of inner freedom and choice which actually increases a student's willingness to share.)

This also offers an opportunity to begin teaching about *Observations*. If someone says, "This place sucks!", draw out from them one thing they are unhappy about. Continue to explore with them until they have something quite specific. Modeling how to get to a clean *Observation*, and not putting in your own judgments/opinions of the comment, is an important lesson in acceptance, trust and mattering.

Even is it's a "positive" judgment, "This place is way better than (other place name)," draw out from them one thing they like about the facility. Keep working until you have something very specific.

After the brainstorming have them work individually on one side of the handout. It doesn't matter which side they begin with. This again models choice.

Encourage them to use the *Feelings* and *NEEDS* cards.

When each individual has finished one side, have a sharing about what came up for them doing it. Ask who is willing to share starting with telling us which side of the paper they did. Some people like to share the whole thing: the *Observation*, the *Feelings* and the *NEEDS*.

If some people do not share anything, I ask each person to share two or three *NEEDS* that they chose. I usually go around the circle to hear responses. This way more voices are heard. Even then some people will not want to share. I always want to model choice and the value of an authentic "No," so everyone is encouraged to pass if they don't want to say anything. I often thank them for their honesty, which is a surprise to many.

When everyone who is willing has shared, then ask, "What Chair thinking is this?"

BREAK

After break, continue with the other side of the handout.

When people seem to have finished, ask who is willing to share. Some people like to share the whole thing: the *Observation*, the *Feelings* and the *NEEDS*.

Many people will not share anything. So then I ask each person to share two or three *NEEDS* that they chose. I usually go around the circle to hear responses. This way more voices are heard. Even then some people will not want to share. I always want to model choice and the value of an authentic “No,” so everyone is encouraged to pass if they don’t want to say anything. I often thank them for their honesty, which is a surprise to many.

When everyone who is willing has shared, then ask, “What Chair thinking is this?”

Check-out: One thing you are taking from today’s class.

Session 4: Revisiting the 4 Chairs

Suggested materials: folders; pens/pencils; one deck of Feelings & NEEDS cards for each participant; four chairs set up in front

Check-in

Be sure to use anything really important and emotional for participants, as described in the introduction. This takes precedent over any activities suggested in this curriculum.

Purpose of this session is to review the 4 Chairs and give participants an opportunity to experience them directly.

Begin by reviewing the thinking that belongs with each chair. Ask everyone to think of a time when someone said or did something that upset them. (I find that using a phrase like, "something that pissed you off," really humanizes me to the group and builds connection. Choose your own wording here.) It can be from any time in their life - the only request is that it NOT involve someone else in the room (except for me – I think it would be terrific to process a live conflict with me, but not anyone else.)

Ask them to indicate with a thumbs up that they have something in mind.

Then ask if there is anyone who is willing to share their event. Choose a volunteer and ask them to share in a few sentences.

Then ask for other volunteers to come up and sit in the 4 Chairs. If you don't have four volunteers, have one person who is willing to move through each chair. If no one is willing for the first round, then I would be the receiver of the comment/action and demonstrate moving through the 4 Chairs.

The person who is volunteering their upset now becomes the person who upset them. Help them come up with one sentence that represents the upset. They say it to the person sitting in Chair #1. The Chair #1 sitter responds with some outward blaming responses.

Then the same thing is said to the person sitting in Chair #2, and that person makes some self-blaming responses.

Then the same thing is said to the person sitting in Chair #3. This person usually requires coaching from me. Learning to experience, then express their own *Feelings*, is new for most participants. They often start by saying something like: "I feel they are a jerk!" or "I feel they are stuck in their own anger," or "I feel they want control of the situation."

I coach with something like this, "When you tell yourself they are a jerk, how does it feel in your body?" If that doesn't bring out an actual feeling word, I try, "When you tell yourself they are a jerk, where do you feel something in your body?"

For many of the participants, this is one of the first times they are actually trying to notice what their body is feeling. Many people learned at an early (often pre-language) phase of life that it was dangerous to express *Feelings* - so dangerous that they stopped being aware of their *Feelings* themselves. Instead they are accustomed to expressing judgments instead of *Feelings*.

Take your time. Don't rush. Guide the person sitting in Chair #3 to actually

notice what is happening in their body and help them find words for it. As the guide, watch closely for clues and cues about what is happening within the person. You may decide to offer them some choices to get started: “Are you feeling tense?” “Is your chest getting tight?” “Are you feeling nervous and angry?” If you have centered yourself in empathy before beginning this lesson, you will be ready to take cues from the participant and make gentle guesses.

Once you have identified a feeling or two, ask them what *NEEDS* are under those *Feelings*. If they don’t have any guesses, ask those participants still in their regular places to use their *NEEDS* decks and make some guesses. The person in Chair #3 decides which of the guesses to use.

Then the original statement is said to the person sitting in Chair #4. I often make this a group effort by asking everyone to guess how the person who made the upsetting statement might have been feeling in the moment the message was said. We collect some options. Then I ask what *NEEDS* might have been very important to them in that moment. Again we brainstorm. The person sitting in Chair #4 then uses the suggestions to make a guess.

We harvest this by getting feedback from the five people directly involved: the person whose situation we used, and the people sitting in each chair. Then I ask for feedback from the other participants.

Remember to take a **BREAK** at a convenient time about mid-way through class.

If there is group energy for this exercise, process another example in the remaining time. This is a very powerful exercise that gives the participants a visceral experience of our choices when responding. Don’t rush. It’s worth the effort.

If not, here are some alternate activities.

Focus practice:

Many of the people I have worked with at the Center have been given, and believe in, labels. Many perceive themselves as hyperactive and unable to focus. Giving people short effective practice in focusing helps them develop skills that will be vital in changing inner judgments and building confidence in their ability to pause at stressful moments.

Ask everyone to get comfortable, and, if willing, to close their eyes. If that is uncomfortable, lower the eyes to the floor about three feet in front of them.

Think about a movie you like.

Wait about 15 seconds.

Now remember one thing you did yesterday.

Wait about 15 seconds.

Think about your favorite meal.

Wait about 15 seconds.

Now remember what you had for breakfast this morning.

Wait about 15 seconds.

Now, without looking around, focus on this room.

Wait about 15 seconds.

Now, without looking around, focus your mind on one person in this room.

Wait about 15 seconds.

Now focus on your body, what do you notice? Keep tracking what you notice.

Wait about 15 seconds.

Thank you. Please open your eyes.

I'd like to hear how that was for you. Who is willing to share?

Exploring *NEEDS*

Ahead of time, pre-select *NEEDS* cards, a pile equal to the number of participants in the class, plus three. Choose *NEEDS* that you want the class to explore more fully, e.g. Love, Interdependence, Power With, Beauty, Order, etc.

Fan them face down and go around the circle, letting each participant pick one. Each person silently reads the card they chose and takes some time to think about what that word means to them.

Ask, "What does that *NEED* mean to you? There is no right or wrong response. I'd like us to hear your thoughts. The rest of us will listen with as much focus as we can to what you say. I will reflect back what I'm hearing you say. Who is willing to begin?"

Move around the circle in order. If someone doesn't want to share they just say, "Pass." I might ask them what word they had so we can hear their voice. I think it is very important to help people practice choice and consideration, so no one is forced in any way to participate verbally if they don't want to.

Check-out: One thing you are taking from today's class.

Session 5: Three Pieces of the Puzzle

Suggested materials: folders; pens/pencils; handouts for this session: NEEDS Sort handout to be run on card stock and cut into cards for sorting; Changing Our Judgments handout run off on regular paper; one deck of Feelings & NEEDS cards for each participant; four chairs set up in front.

Check-in

Be sure to use anything really important and emotional for participants, as described in the introduction. This takes precedent over any activities suggested in this curriculum.

Piece 1: *NEEDS*

Review definition of a *NEED* as Universal – everyone on the planet has that *NEED*. If it doesn't apply to everyone, it is a strategy, possibly a very strongly preferred strategy.

NEEDS sort: Using the sorting cards, working in groups of two or three, decide if the words on each card represent a Universal Human *NEED* or a strategy. If it's a strategy, guess what Universal Human *NEEDS* it might represent.

Have class members generate other sentences that demonstrate the difference between a *NEED* and a strategy. Save these to use for future sort activities.

Piece 2: Strategies for Pausing

"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." - Viktor E. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning

Helping people develop strategies for pausing is vital skill development in this work. I suggest that each facilitator share with their class what pausing strategies work for them.

Some possible strategies include:

- conscious breathing
- a HeartMath® activity (see Resources)
- strategies from the book, The Epictetus Club, by Jeff Traylor, a former prison counselor (see Resources)

What is important is that you share something that you actually use yourself so your enthusiasm for the strategy is real and strong. Whichever strategy you introduce, continue to practice it in the remainder of the lessons so that it is more likely to be integrated into the participants.

Invite sharing of other strategies that class members already use to "pause." In one class a man who was 19 years old and finishing up a two-year sentence shared that whenever he found himself in a difficult situation he imagined his two-year old daughter standing next to him, watching. He then made choices based on what he wanted her to witness him doing.

Other men share that they remember to ask themselves what they want as the longer range outcome of the situation, not just for this moment, but how it may

ripple out into future times. For instance, one man shared that when he was getting into an argument with someone he remembered that he had a home visit scheduled in a few days, and knowing that if he got “into trouble” he’d lose the pass, he turned and walked away without saying anything more. The men attribute this strategy to what they learn in a different class at the Center, The Epictetus Club. (see Resources)

BREAK

Piece 3: What is a clean *Observation*?

When we begin a conversation expressing a judgment or opinion, it often creates defensiveness in the listener, and when a person is defensive it is hard for them to listen. The purpose of making a clean *Observation* is to increase the likelihood that the other person will hear what we want to say.

Remembering that we have been taught all our lives to make judgments, it is sometimes hard to see clearly the *Observation* underneath our judgments. Let's take a look at some reasons we use judgments in our thinking and speaking.

Pass out the *Changing Our Judgments* handout. Give everyone a few minutes to read this silently. Then take turns reading it out loud. Take any questions as they arise. Or try to elicit other examples that fit each section.

When you get to the exercise "Identifying Judgments," do the first few together as a group. Then have the participants work in groups of two or three to complete.

What did you notice doing this? What learning are you taking away?

Check-out: Review briefly all the topics that were covered in this class. Then ask who is ready to share one thing they are taking from today's class.

Session 6: Exploring Empathy

Suggested materials: folders; handouts: Important Relationships, Empathy; pens/pencils, paper; Feelings & NEEDS cards: one deck for each participant

Check-in

Be sure to use anything really important and emotional for participants, as described in the introduction. This takes precedent over any activities suggested in this curriculum.

Practice Pause Strategies

Practice the Pause activity you chose to share in Session 5. If possible, have a volunteer from the group lead the process.

Important Relationships Handout

I want the participants to have an open receptive heart when we begin our direct instruction on Empathy. This exercise is designed to be a time of self-reflection and heart opening. This can be challenging for people who have learned to be especially guarded and self-protective. It is important for the facilitator to practice deep presence while they are completing this document and to hold strong attentive presence while people are sharing afterwards.

Have five to ten minutes of quiet while they complete the form. The purpose is to get them ready to consider when empathy might actually be important to them.

Give everyone who wants to enough time to share fully. At first ask, "Who would be willing to share?" Then, be sure to invite people to share by name because some people enjoy sharing but don't feel comfortable volunteering. When I invite each person by name, it communicates that I know them and that I care about hearing from them. Remind them it is totally acceptable to say "No." This models respect and consideration.

Focus practice

Now we are going to explore what it means to focus our awareness on someone or something.

If you are willing, please sit comfortably.

If you are willing, please close your eyes; if you are not comfortable closing your eyes just let them look down about three feet in front of you and let your eyes relax.

I am going to ask you to focus your awareness on something. Keep your mind focused on that, until I ask you to focus on the next thing. If your mind moves to a different focus, bring it back. Keep bringing it back as many times as you can.

It is VERY important to notice when your mind has changed its focus.

As soon as you notice, please raise your hand, and then immediately re-focus and put your hand down. The purpose of raising your hand is to acknowledge your awareness – it is for YOUR benefit.

Focus on what you had for breakfast.

Focus on a pleasant memory from your life.

Focus on an unpleasant thing that has happened in the last 48 hours.

Focus on an object in the room.

Focus on someone in the room.

I suggest you do the exercise along with the class. That way you will have a feel for when to move to the next focus invitation. About 15 seconds for each will be a good way to start.

Harvest this activity: "What was it like for you? What happened when your mind moved to something else? "

"By repeating this activity we can actually strengthen our ability to focus. This is an important skill to strengthen EMPATHY. From now on in class, when you notice your mind has changed focus from the speaker, please raise your hand briefly and re-focus. Once you get used to this, or in other parts of your day, just raise a finger to acknowledge your change in focus and re-focus."

BREAK

Empathy

Pass out the *Empathy* handout. Read over the handout together. Discuss listening with focus as a primary example of empathy. Take turns reading the *BLOCKS to Empathy*, and discuss.

Silent Empathy Practice:

Group the class into pairs. Give some direction to decide who will be the first empathic listener., e.g. whoever has the longer hair; whoever is older; be creative. The listener will not speak. They will listen with their focus on the speaker. If your mind wanders or starts thinking about any of the BLOCKS to empathy, just say to yourself , "Focus, come back to (name of partner) ."

The speaker can talk, or not, about anything they want. The session will be 3 - 5 minutes. (Choose the length you think will work best for your group. You might begin with 3 minutes and if it works well, try again with 5 minutes.) Then let them talk about what that was like for them. Then have them switch roles.

Have them share as a whole group what this was like for them.

Check- out: One thing you are taking from today's class.

Session 7: *Feelings & NEEDS* Poker

Suggested materials: folders; one deck of Feelings & NEEDS cards for each group

Check-in

Be sure to use anything really important and emotional for participants, as described in the introduction. This takes precedent over any activities suggested in this curriculum.

Practice Pause Strategies

Practice the Pause activity you chose to share in Session 5. If possible, have a volunteer from the group lead the process.

Feelings & NEEDS Poker (see directions below)

Demonstrate for the whole group, using two volunteers from the group and you sharing a real story. Be sure to make all *NEEDS* statements in the positive. Do NOT practice associating a *Feeling* with a lack of a *NEED*; such as, "Are you sad because your *NEED* for empathy was not met?"

Instead, "Are you sad because you value empathy?" or "Are you sad because of the *NEED* of empathy?"

Then divide the participants into groups to proceed with the game. Explain that a sharing can be a happy sharing, a sad sharing or a neutral sharing. The only thing that is important is that it is REAL. Please pick something that does NOT directly involve someone in the class. Write the speaking prompt on the board for all to see, "Are you (feeling word) because of the *NEED* of ?"

An alternative structure is to have one person tell their story to the whole group and lay down their *Feelings* cards (or I write them on the board). Then the whole group offers guesses. These are also recorded on the board for everyone to see.

I use this strategy when the group seems quite unfocused or I think the whole process will be challenging for their ability level.

Directions for *Feelings & NEEDS* Poker

This activity helps participants deepen the awareness that *Feelings* arise from *Needs*.

Divide the participants into groups of three or four and tell the groups how long each individual will have to tell their story.

Each group of three or four has a deck of cards, and one person begins as the Storyteller. The Storyteller starts with the deck of *Feelings* cards. The other group members divide up the *Needs* cards.

The Storyteller shares about something that really happened to them. It could be something "positive" or "negative" or "neutral." After they finish, they sort through the *Feelings* cards and lay out the cards that show what they are experiencing in that moment.

The other people, the listeners, now take turns trying to guess

which *Needs* were at the root of the Storyteller's *Feelings*. They take turns laying down one Need card at a time and speak in a question format, such as:

"Are you feeling ____ because of your beautiful Need of ____?"

or

"Are you feeling ____ because you value ____ and want more of it?"

Be sure to make all statements in the positive. Do NOT practice associating a Feeling with a lack of a Need; such as, "Are you sad because your Need for empathy was not met?"

(To learn more about this point of view, please see:

<http://www.mainenvcnetwork.org/newsletter2.html#feature>)

The Storyteller does not respond as the *Needs* cards are laid down. They listen calmly and focus on letting in all the possibilities that are offered. The Storyteller tries to sense the reactions in their body as the cards are laid down, as these are clues to which cards really do or do not represent the experience.

Play continues until all the appropriate cards are played, time is up, or the group is ready to move on. At that time the Storyteller chooses which *Needs* cards spoke to them and actually represented their experience. They do this by picking the *Needs* cards up and taking a few moments to slowly read through them, trying to stay aware of any reactions in their body or mind to each Need card as they read it. As the Storyteller, allow yourself to savor each Need card that you select as having inspired one or more of your *Feelings*. Allow yourself to sense the beauty of having that energy within you.

The other players should hold presence by quietly watching while Storyteller connects to the chosen *Needs* cards .

The *Feelings* cards are then passed to another member of the group, who is the new Storyteller. Repeat the process until everyone has had a chance to be the Storyteller.

BREAK

More *Feelings* & *NEEDS* Poker

Harvest activity

How was this experience for you? What insights did you get?

Do you think this activity is better named *Feelings* & *NEEDS* Poker or *Feelings* & *NEEDS* Go Fish?

Check out: One thing you are taking from class today

Session 8: *Requests*

Suggested materials: folders; pens/pencils; handouts: Requests, Who Am I? and Strategies to Nurture NEEDS; one deck of NEEDS cards for each participant; four chairs set up in front of the room.

Check In

Be sure to use anything really important and emotional for participants, as described in the introduction. This takes precedent over any activities presented during this curriculum.

Practice Pause Strategies

Practice the Pause activity you chose to share in Session 5. If possible, have a volunteer from the group lead the process.

Requests:

Read over the *Requests* handout, and discuss each item, with specific examples.

BREAK

I'm More Than My Story

When I first read over the "Who Am I?" exercise in the Connection curriculum, (see Resource list), I thought of it as a small "cute" activity that could be used as filler from time to time. After using it in class, I now think of it as a *powerful* simple way to help us experience that we are far more than our stories and self-judgments.

For this population, this is a huge step toward making other life choices. So handle this small activity with care and relish its power.

The Connection curriculum version is a bit different than the one included here. One day I forgot my handouts and relied on my memory. What my memory created is slightly different and yielded deep insights from the class. I encourage you to try both this and the original and see what arises.

I tend to do this as a whole group activity on the board for about 45 minutes and then give people five to ten minutes to fill in one example on their own, either one they shared during group time, or a new one.

Some examples of self-judgments that came up in class:

I'm a thief.

I'm a good person.

I'm a manipulator.

I'm violent.

Marshall Rosenberg called this type of thinking "Static Language." It defines us and confines us. Learning to see ourselves in a broader, richer, more dynamic and malleable way can help us touch our humanity.

Allow time for anyone who wants to share.

Developing strategies to strengthen *NEEDS*

Give each participant a *NEEDS* card deck, and have them sort the deck into

three piles:

- * I have plenty of this
- * I want to have more of this in my life
- * I could care less about this

Using the (blank) back side of the *Strategies to Nurture NEEDS* handout, take one card from the “I have plenty of this” pile and write two or three things you do in your life to address/enrich that need.

Now using the front side of the handout, choose one card from the “I want more of this in my life” pile and fill in the handout. Encourage people to take their time.

Harvest an awareness that has come from this activity.

Check Out: One thing you are taking from today’s class.

Session 9: Using *NVC* to Influence My Life

Suggested materials: folders; handout: A Time I Did Something that Hurt Another; pens/pencils; one deck of Feelings & NEEDS cards for each participant

Check-in

Be sure to use anything really important and emotional for participants, as described in the introduction. This takes precedent over any activities suggested in this curriculum.

A Time I Did Something that Hurt Another

Approach this activity with caution and care. Only do it if you have a sense of significant trust within the group and with you. The underlying purpose is to help participants begin to experience "beneficial regret." This is often a tender topic.

I have found that often participants are highly defensive about the word "regret." It's my belief this is because regret in our culture is usually used as a form of shaming. Many people who are incarcerated have experienced tons of shaming regret and they don't want more. So their response can often be something like, "I don't regret anything I've done because it all contributed to me being me. It brought me to this moment and I'm using all of it to become better. So if I regret any of it I'd be turning my back on myself."

What I do want the participants to experience is a bodily experience of the beautiful *NEEDS* underneath their tragic behavior. And to open themselves up to the probably uncomfortable feelings that arise when they acknowledge the pain of the other person(s) involved.

Sometimes individuals are able to deeply touch this from both perspectives. Some, only from their own perspective. Yet even this can be a giant step on the path of self-connection: to realize clearly that there are beautiful *NEEDS* underneath our tragic behavior.

Some will choose to say "NO!" to this activity. I want to honor where people are and demonstrate that they matter, that I trust their process, and I value their exercising choice. Having them see others doing the work and hearing the sharing afterwards can all be held as part of the journey.

BREAK

Harvest what learnings came from this exercise. Remind the group that when someone is sharing everyone else is listening from a place of focus/presence.

Question: "What does this activity have to do with the 4 Chairs?"

Check Out: One thing you are taking from today's class.

Session 10: Wrapping Up

Suggested materials: folders; handout: Requests That Matter; Course Completion Certificates, pens/pencils, paper; blank paper; one deck of Feelings & NEEDS cards for each participant

Check-in

Be sure to use anything really important and emotional for participants, as described in the introduction. This takes precedent over any activities suggested in this curriculum.

Making *Requests That Really Matter*

On the board model your own example of this process so there is clarity about the steps.

As participants are working individually on this exercise be available to help, coach and encourage.

Harvest this activity. There will be much for people to share – particularly what awareness they had as a result. Ask all the others to listen with focused presence. Remind them of the strategy to lift a finger when they find their mind “somewhere else,” and use that as a reminder to bring their focus back to the speaker.

BREAK

Feedback session for instructor

Give everyone paper and pen/pencils. Invite them to think about the following prompts, and then take about ten minutes to write their responses on the paper, to be turned in. (The questions below are what I use; choose your own questions for feedback.)

What did you learn during our course?

What did you like or not like about the course?

What would make the course better in the future? (a 30 minute break is not a doable request option)

Anything you would like to communicate about the course.

Complete any evaluation forms required by the facility.

Hand out Certificates

I have come to enjoy handing out each certificate with a handshake and a strong supportive look into each participant’s eyes, and some words of exchange so that they experience being deeply seen. Remember, the intention of the curriculum is not to produce accomplished *NVC* practitioners; rather, that as many participants as possible have, over the course of our time together, a direct experience of “power with,” that everyone's *NEEDS* matter – their *NEEDS*, other people in the class, their families' *NEEDS*, the *NEEDS* of people they harmed and who harmed them, mine too. If they leave with this experience, the journey of change has been nourished.

Transformation to wholeness and inner freedom has been supported.

Celebrate!

Feedback from past participants:

I know I was always challenging you during class - was being difficult really. Since I got out, I find myself using what you shared with me. I think about it a lot; it's really changed me.

I thought your class was excellent. I didn't even talk at first, and now I do. So for me that's a big accomplishment.

In my time in *NVC* I have learned how to identify my feelings and needs in certain situations. I have also learned how to change my patterns of thoughts and how to appropriately express these thoughts in a more productive manner.

I thought this class was a great learning tool for me. In the beginning I thought this class was not for me. Then something happened; before I knew it, I was thinking differently. Thinking about mine or other's feelings and needs. Thinking through my problems. I found I didn't get upset as much. My brain took over my feelings and was thinking on how to fix what I was going through. This class has helped with my family a lot. I'm going to take this class home and teach what I have learned.

I have ~~learned to speak~~, started to learn how to speak better. I think a little before speaking. Don't get so frustrated when people can't see my point of view. Think about how others might be thinking or feeling.

Please note: If there is any part of this document that you are unclear about or would like to explore further, please contact Peggy through her website:

OpenCommunication.org

Suggested Resources:

Feelings and NEEDS cards can be downloaded for free:

<http://opencommunication.org/resources.html>

Core Books:

Speak Peace In A World of Conflict, Marshall Rosenberg

The Surprising Purpose of Anger, Marshall Rosenberg

Both books available at <http://nonviolentcommunication.com/store>

Connection: a Self-Care Approach to Conflict Management, Bonnie Fraser

Available at <http://connectionselfcare.com>

A number of the exercises in this curriculum come from this document, modified for this population with permission.

Anger, Shame and Guilt: Reclaiming Power and Choice, Liv Larsson

Available at <http://livlarsson.com>

To be used as self-study by the facilitator, NOT for use in class.

Additional resource books:

The Epictetus Club, Jeff Traylor

Available at <http://epictetusclub.com>

The HeartMath® Solution, Doc Childre and Howard Martin

Available at <http://store.heartmath.org/Books-Stress-Solutions/>

Connecting Across Differences, Jane Marantz Connor and Dian Killian

Available at <http://nonviolentcommunication.com/store>

NVC Facilitator's Toolkit, RajGill, Lucy Leu, and Judi Morin

Available at <http://nvctoolkit.org>

The Freedom Project:

For many years a dedicated group known as The Freedom Project has been sharing NVC and Mindfulness with incarcerated and recently incarcerated populations in Washington State, USA. They have a depth of knowledge and expertise. While I have not directly worked with the Freedom Project, I am continually inspired by them and recommend them as a resource to others wanting to do this work. <http://freedomprojectseattle.org>

Peggy Smith, author of this curriculum, is certified as a trainer by the *Center for Nonviolent Communication*. For 32 years before becoming an NVC trainer, Peggy was a school teacher. She enjoys weaving teaching skills, humor and presence into this work. Peggy is an ordained Dharma teacher in the Thich Nhat Hanh tradition.

She co-founded the Maine NVC Network and is chief editor and frequent writer for the Network's educational newsletter, "Phases of the Moon." Peggy shares NVC in a wide variety of settings, including schools, hospitals, mental health facilities, and businesses, and offers a year-long NVC Integration Program.

She can be reached from her website: OpenCommunication.org

The 4 Chairs



<p>Chair #1</p> <p>There's a problem, and it's YOUR fault.</p>	<p>Chair #2</p> <p>There's a problem, and it's MY fault</p>
<p>Chair #3</p> <p>There is a problem, and I check inside to discover MY feelings and needs.</p> <p>This nourishes presence and turns me toward connection.</p> <p><i>Example: Am I feeling upset because of the need of consideration?</i></p>	<p>Chair #4</p> <p>There is a problem, and after checking on my own feelings and needs, I use my curiosity to wonder about THEIR feelings and needs.</p> <p>This nourishes presence and turns us both toward connection.</p> <p><i>Example: I wonder if they are feeling sad because of the need to matter?</i></p>

Modified by Peggy Smith and Tarek Maassarani during Seeds of Peace International Camp
Appreciation to the following for contributing to the creation of this section:
Marshall Rosenberg, PhD (www.cnvc.org)
The Freedom Project (<http://freedomprojectseattle.org>)
photo: © Whitenight / Dreamstime.com

Choosing My Thinking

Freedom is the ability to pause between stimulus and response. Rollo May

Whenever someone says or does anything, I can think about it from different perspectives.

When we have been raised in an authoritarian way, our minds tend to respond in one of two perspectives. Imagine each perspective as a chair.

Chair #1	Chair #2
There is a problem and it's YOUR fault.	There is a problem and it's MY fault.

We spend much of our time thinking about who is at fault in each moment. This is not an effective way to change an unpleasant or harmful situation or to strengthen a pleasant one.

Thinking in this way is a response to being raised in a world focused on right and wrong, good or bad. Our brains are doing the best they can to work within the rules of our society. However, this has not been an effective pattern to resolve problems between people with consideration for everyone, nor in creating a world where people build trust and care between groups.

So how else could our minds think about a conflict?

Chair #3	Chair #4
When something is said or done, check inside yourself for your full authentic physical and emotional reaction then find what is really important to you underneath those sensations. <i>I notice that I am feeling _____ arising from the need(s) of _____.</i>	When something is said or done, remember that anything a person does is in support of their Universal human values or needs. Can you be curious about them? <i>I wonder if they are feeling _____ because they value _____.</i>

To create change, the first step is awareness of where your thinking is right now. It is not right or wrong to be in any of the 4 Chairs. Honest awareness of where you are is powerful. If you are in Chair #1 or #2, any action you take is likely to lead to disconnection or a continuation of the conflict. You can choose to shift to Chair #3 and #4 by using the processes in this course.

If you are already in Chair #3 or #4, you can use this process to create actions that can be beneficial for everyone.

Feelings
FEELINGS GUIDE ME TO UNIVERSAL NEEDS
(flip to other side for **NEEDS** list)

Joy & Contentment

glad	happy	tender	warm
joyful	pleased	peaceful	eager
refreshed	intrigued	relieved	thankful
delighted	relaxed	serene	adventurous
invigorated	thrilled	excited	calm
content	curious	amazed	inspired
bubbly	invigorated	energetic	loving
touched	vivacious		

Fear & Anxiety

afraid	alarmed	anxious	cautious
troubled	apprehensive	lonely	nervous
shocked	tense	worried	terrified
restless	numb	torn	confused
rattled	uneasy	unsure	bewildered

Anger & Frustration

aggravated	agitated	angry	annoyed
cranky	frustrated	furios	impatient
indignant	infuriated	resentful	upset
numb			

Sadness & Grief

sad	fragile	anguished	troubled
lonely	discouraged	exhausted	melancholy
despairing			

Beware!! Thoughts disguised as feelings

attacked	rushed	bullied	overworked
ignored	stupid	rejected	betrayed
manipulated	intimidated	unappreciated	etc.

FEELINGS GUIDE ME TO UNIVERSAL NEEDS
(flip to other side for **NEEDS** list)

Needs & Values
FEELINGS GUIDE ME TO UNIVERSAL NEEDS
(flip to other side for **FEELINGS** list)

CONNECTION

acceptance	appreciation	cooperation	community
compassion	consideration	empathy	intimacy
love	mutuality	nurturing	self-respect
safety	stability	support	to see and be seen
to be heard	to be understood	to be seen for my true intentions	
understanding	trust	interdependence	honoring agreements

MEANING

celebration of life	challenge	clarity	competence
contribution	creativity	discovery	growth
learning	mourning	purpose	stimulation
self-expression	to matter	to understand	to explore & honor my own values

HONESTY

authenticity
integrity
presence

PEACE

beauty
ease
harmony
inspiration
order

AUTONOMY

choice
space
spontaneity
freedom

PLAY

joy
fun
humor

WELL-BEING

air/food/water
movement/exercise
sensory stimulation
rest/sleep
touch
intimacy

Connecting Feelings to Universal Human Needs

A time I did something kind or caring for another person.

Observation: What I did: just the facts

Thinking about that now,

I feel

because of the needs of

(add more if you want)

This is an example of **Chair #__** thinking.

From the other person’s point of view:

Observation – same as from the first page

How do I guess what the other person might have felt? What needs might be under those feelings?

Their possible feelings

because of what needs

(add more if you want)

This is an example of **Chair #__** thinking.

Something I like about the _____ experience
(name of the facility)

Observation: (what are the actual details ... be specific)

When I think about that I feel because of the Universal need of

(add more if you want)

If I was going to talk to someone about this, who would it be? _____

Something I don't like about the _____ experience
(name of the facility)

Observation: (what are the actual details Please be specific)

When I think about this I feel ... because of the Universal need of

(add more if you want)

If I was going to talk with someone about this, who would it be? _____

I need to see my children.

I need connection and love.

I need you to listen to me
right now.

I need to be heard.

You better smarten up
because I need peace
and quiet.

I need inner peace.

I need you to clean up that
mess and keep it cleaned up
like you are supposed to.

I value order and support.

I need you to be quiet in
the morning.

I need consideration
and rest.

I need decent food.

I'd like more choice.

CHANGING OUR JUDGMENTS/OPINIONS INTO OBSERVATIONS

Our inner dialogue about what is happening often focuses on making moralistic judgments, deciding who is right, wrong, smart, stupid, sketchy, or cool.

- Judgment: *Peggy is bossy.*
- Observation: *Yesterday Peggy told me what to do about my paperwork and I never asked her for advice.*
- Judgment: *Alton is cool.*
- Observation: *Alton gave me two cigarettes at smoke break.*

We generalize from one or a few events and think that this behavior is ongoing across the board.

- Judgment: *I'm no good at math.*
- Observation: *I never learned to do long division and have avoided math ever since.*

We exaggerate a bit to be more persuasive, to make a point.

- Judgment: *The food here is crap.*
- Observation: *Yesterday there were no fresh vegetables and there wasn't enough food for everyone at lunch or dinner.*

We imagine we are mind readers and can tell the motives and thoughts of another person.

- Judgment: *He's only nice to me because he is interested in my sister.*
- Observation: *Every time I see him he starts conversation with me.*

If we want others to act in a certain way and they don't, we find the rule they have broken.

- Judgment: *You need to act your age.*
- Observation: *You make jokes during serious conversations, and usually no one else thinks they're funny.*
- Judgment: *Friends don't ever snitch.*
- Observation: *I have never reported anyone to the staff.*

We use variations of the verb "to be" about a person or group, and imagine we have stated a fact.

- Judgment: *Guys from county jail are punks.*
- Observation: *Prison is a much more dangerous place than county jail, so guys coming from prison tend to be more serious.*
- Judgment: *He's all right for a C.O.*
- Observation: *He waited five minutes before leaving for community service so I had time to finish my phone call.*
- Judgment: *My roommate is lazy.*
- Observation: *I cleaned our cell three times this week by myself.*

We use "it is" to imply that we are stating a fact and that everyone agrees with our opinion.

- Judgment: *It is cold out.*
- Observation: *It is 40 degrees outside.*
- Judgment: *Once a felon, always a felon.*
- Observation: *It's very hard to get a felony charge taken off your record.*
- OR, Observation: *The recidivism rate for the state prison is 65%.*

*Exercise from Connection: A Self-Care Approach to Conflict Management,
Bonnie Fraser, p. 11 & 12, examples modified with permission*

IDENTIFYING JUDGMENTS / OPINIONS

Anything you cannot hear or see on a video is a judgment / opinion. Find the part of each statement that is not observable.

Judgmental Thoughts or Opinions	Parts that are the Judgments or Opinions
The C.O.'s are always messing with me because they're jerks.	
Jane doesn't know how to cook. She messes up the lunch every time.	
Every time you speak, nothing intelligent comes out.	
There is no consistency in the rules.	
My roommate is solid.	
People who have never done time will always judge me, the wimps.	

Important Relationships

People who are now dead	People I have lost touch with
People who might not be happy to see me	People who would be happy to see me

Empathy

Empathy is the practice of being fully present with yourself or another without trying to change the situation in any way; being with, fully accepting what is.

Empathy is **being present**, it is **NOT agreement**.

Two skill sets:

Presence – which includes intention and focus
Speak only about Feelings & Needs

Four levels of listening:

Pretending to listen
Intellectual understanding
Sympathy
Empathy/Presence

When empathizing, we speak only in order to:

Support the speaker in connecting with their feelings and needs
Support ourselves in staying present

Speak in the form of a question: "Are you feeling ____ because you value ____?" Use as few words as possible; the more words you use, the more likely you are bringing the attention to yourself.

Once you've made a guess, be quiet and listen to their response. Just guessing helps the person self-connect. Follow the person's lead.

Once the person is fully heard and understood, help them formulate a request.

When speaking:

Empathize from the **ESSENCE of the NEED** instead of the DEFICIT of the NEED.

Examples:

"Are you feeling ____ because you so treasure the need (value) of ____, and want more of it in your life and in the life of others?"

"Are you wanting enough self-connection that you will feel safe inside no matter what someone else does or says?"

Things that Block Empathy for myself or others:

Advising/educating: "I think you should ____." "This could turn into a very positive experience for you if you just_____."

One-upping: "That's nothing wait till you hear what's happened to me."

Consoling/Reassuring: "It wasn't your fault: you did the best you could." "It'll be OK."

Storytelling: "That reminds me of the time_____"

Sympathizing: "Oh you poor thing ____"

Shutting down: "Cheer up. Don't feel so bad." "Come on let's go ____"

Interrogating: "When did this begin?"

Explaining: "I would have called, but ____"

Correcting: "That's not how it happened."

Denial of Feelings: "Don't worry. It's silly to worry."

Minimizing: "This isn't so important."

Diagnosing: "Your problem is you're a compulsive worrier."

Spiritualizing: "When one door closes, another always opens." "It's probably karma."

Requests

Asking for what I really want, in a way that the other person is happy to give it.

The difference between a request and a demand has nothing to do with how many times I say "Please." We sometimes say, "Please," but inside we will be annoyed (or more) if the other person says, "No."

When I make a real request, I hold the other person with as much care as I hold myself. I only want them to say "Yes" if they really mean it. I don't want a false "Yes," because I'll pay for it later on.

Here are the elements of an authentic request, one that is more likely to be clearly understood by the other person:

1. Positive:

This means talking about what we do want, not what we don't want.

Examples:

Saying what I don't want	Saying what I do want
I don't want you to work so much.	I would like you to spend more evenings with me.
I don't want any more trouble.	I want to wait and discuss this next week
Stop being such a nag.	I want you to tell me what's bothering you just once and then let me think about it.

2. Doable

Doable actions are actions that are realistic, and not too huge a change, such as like a change in character, attitude or feelings ("Don't feel that way" is not a doable request.)

Examples:

Not a doable request	Doable Request
I would like you to be more friendly.	I would like you to say hi when you walk into the room.
I want you to love me more.	Tell me one thing you appreciate about me.
I wish that you would miss me every moment you're gone.	Try to send me an email every day.

3. Concrete

Concrete actions mean carefully defined, specific behaviors.

Examples:

Not concrete and specific	Concrete and specific
Clean your room.	Make the bed, dust, and put your books on the shelf.
Grow up.	Tell the truth, even when it's hard to do.
Grow up.	Do your chores tomorrow without being reminded.

4. Time Specific

A time specific action is anchored in a specific time frame.

Examples:

No time frame	Specific time frame
I would like you to help me in the kitchen.	I would like you to help me in the kitchen before breakfast tomorrow.
I would like you to talk to me about your work plans.	I would like you to talk to me about your work plans this weekend.

Remember: behind every "No" is a "Yes" to something.

If someone says "No" to my request, can I get curious about what is motivating them to say "No"?

*Exercise from Connection: A Self-Care Approach to Conflict Management,
Bonnie Fraser, p. 55 & 56, examples modified with permission*

WHO AM I?

What is one judgment you have about yourself?	I am
Write one observation that supports this judgment / view of yourself.	
Write one observation that does NOT support this judgment / view of yourself.	
Write one more observation that does NOT support this judgment / view of yourself.	

Expanding Your Own Strategies to Nurture Needs

*If you want to understand your actions,
Look at the Needs you are trying to nurture.
If you want to understand the actions of others,
Look at the Needs they are trying to nurture.*

Identify one Need you wish to have more of in your life:

What are you currently doing to nurture that Need?

Brainstorm 3 – 5 additional possible strategies that would nurture that Need.

Now, REALLY stretch yourself. Brainstorm 3 – 5 more possible strategies that would nurture the same Need. Be creative (yet legal) !!

Put a * by any of the above suggestions that you can see yourself really doing in the next 3 months.

From Connection: a Self-Care Approach to Conflict Management, Bonnie Fraser, p. 42.

A Time I Did Something that Hurt Another

Observation:

<p>How was I feeling at the time I did this?</p> <p><u>FEELINGS</u></p>	<p>What were the Universal Needs under these feelings?</p> <p><u>NEEDS</u></p>
---	--

What needs suffered because of what I did?

Take your time. Circle the 3 – 5 needs that are the most important to you.

Think about someone on the receiving side of this act when it occurred.

<p>Guess how they were feeling.</p> <p><u>FEELINGS</u></p>	<p>What needs might have been under those feelings?</p> <p><u>NEEDS</u></p>
--	---

What judgments might they be having now -

- about you
- about the situation
- about themselves

Can you guess some needs underneath these judgments?

What insights do you have now about the situation? If you were going to talk to someone about what you learned, who would it be?

Making Requests That Really Matter

Observation:

Something I would like _____ to stop doing.
(person's name)

or

Something I would like _____ to do.
(person's name)

Please be specific.

When I think about this behavior, what feelings and needs do I experience?

Feelings	NEEDS

This is an example of **Chair #** ____ thinking.

Observation:

Thinking about the same observation:

What feelings and needs do I think are under this behavior for that person?

Feelings	NEEDS

This is an example of **Chair** # ____ thinking.

What needs might be suffering within that person because of this behavior?

What specific doable request do I have of myself?

Am I willing to ____

What specific doable request do I have of the other person?

Would you be willing to ____