

Non-violent Communication

In the practise of Inclusive school
according to the concept
of Marshall Rosenberg



EN

Inkluentrum

“Violence is all that is motivated by something other than love.”

M. Rosenberg

Introduction

Non-violence is perhaps one of the greatest challenges of our society, as M. Gandhi pointed out: “Permanent good can never be the outcome of untruth and violence”. Marshall Rosenberg, a student of C. Rogers and a prominent figure in humanistic psychology, uniquely transformed Rogers’s principles of freedom and responsibility into various detailed ways of relationships and communication. Growing tensions between people and extremism, bullying and socio-pathological signs, impaired mental health and depression, conflicts, rewards and punishments, selfishness and disinterest, judgment and power struggles, and many other problems today significantly afflict the world – families, schools, and nations.

In a series of bulletins on inclusive education, it is particularly this one that is so important, because it brings a philosophical basis and principles of an inclusive school based on non-violence, democratic culture, healthy discussion, freedom, and responsibility. It is not the intention here to introduce the whole method of non-violent communication – that requires education, training, deeper study, and a change of mindset. However, you may find here inspiration, tasting and references to other sources. We bring the implementation of non-violent communication into the school environment to create a more inclusive culture by reducing punishments and judgments, expanding reflection and experience, and transiting the power “above” others to the power “with” others, we also bring current topics such as bullying or assessing, dialogue previews and video, practical inspiration to think about during the change of culture of present schools. This bulletin is also accompanied by numerous statements from M. Rosenberg. Our wish is to contribute to the decrease of violence in schools.

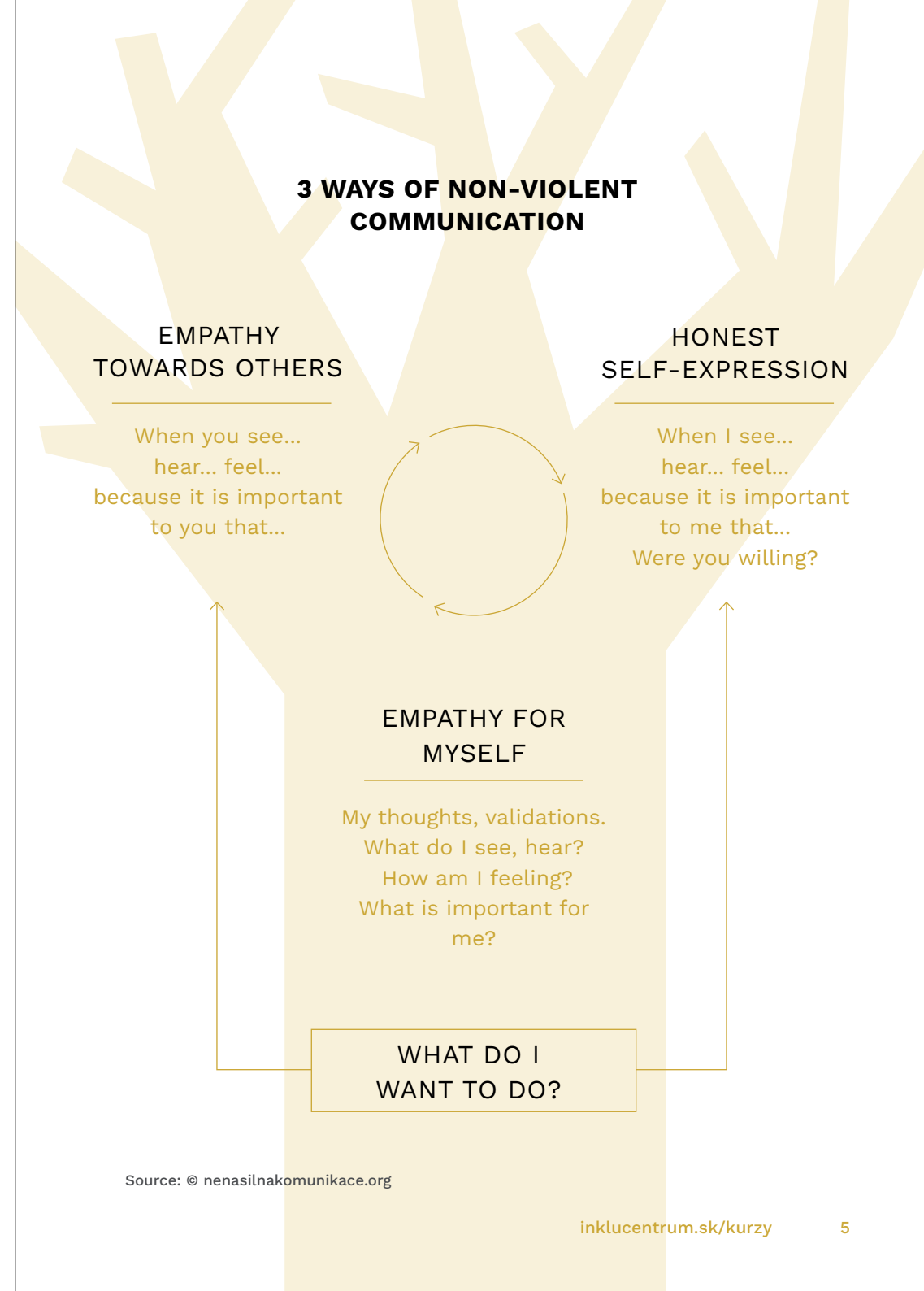
Viktor Križo a Jana Randa

What is Non-violent Communication? (NVC)

It is a lifestyle based on a humanistic approach to psychology created by an American psychologist Marshall Rosenberg (1934 – 2015), a student of Carl Rogers. It is not just a technique or method, but a philosophy of life and a belief that there is always something “**alive**” and **unique** in each person, something that, if expressed by an adequate strategy and words, can “**contribute to a common life**”. Initially, it is also about learning new words and ways to express them, but later it becomes a way of thinking, regressing to oneself and others, a way of being.

The basis of non-violent communication is **emphatic listening**. **This could be called a way of connecting**. It is not just about the acoustics of hearing what was said, but about understanding, what is happening in the other person, and what are the real motivations for his behaviour and expressions. Before we can listen with empathy to someone, it is important to consciously focus on listening to ourselves. Connecting to yourself “here” and “now” is the cornerstone of the ability to truly connect with others.

When I communicate with a student, colleague, parent, or partner, I try to understand what they are saying and what their feelings and needs are. At the same time, as a part of the process, I try to be aware of and make available to the other side my inner processes. Emphatic listening requires real interest, time to talk, and, at least at the beginning, getting off the usual.



Source: © nenasilnakomunikace.org

“How often do you ask yourself questions like “How do I feel now?”, “What is important to me?” How often are you careful to describe what you see without any judgment or assessment and paid attention to facts? When we mapped out ourselves (it is the basis, the cornerstone of the whole tree), we are able to come into contact with others and from our own self contribute to the lives of others. Make contact with them (branches).

This is either by giving the other one a message about our inner experience – sincere self-experience or by giving him empathy.



In non-violent communication, we are focused on what is often below the surface, on a deeper level, in which we move in everyday communication – feelings and needs. Feelings as signal flags that alert us to the needs, that are important to us and whether or not they are currently being met. Enriching the vocabulary of various feelings contributes to better self-expression and thus to mutual understanding between people. Here are some examples of phrases.

NEEDS

food, fluids, rest, exercise, air, health, safety, security, love, support, recognition, respect, acceptance, laughter, entertainment, connection, friendship, attention, trust, appreciation, understanding, honesty, choice, empathy, creativity, learning, freedom, beauty, goodness, harmony, order, inspiration, peace, celebration, life contribution, life meaning, self-actualization

FEELINGS

WHEN OUR NEEDS
ARE FULFILLED,
WE CAN FEEL

active, great, carefree, safe, moved, fascinated, at peace, excited, filled, impatient, courageous, surprised, joyful, energetic, zestful, amused, happy, comfortable, confident, relaxed, amazing, in a good mood, grateful, free, balanced.

WHEN OUR NEEDS
ARE NOT FULFILLED,
WE CAN FEEL

hopeless, poor, absent, terrible, ashamed, tense, “angry”, restless, nervous, lonely, annoyed, irritated, guilty, upset, sad, shocked, tired, hesitant, anxious, scared.

There are no positive or negative feelings, only feelings, that express fulfilled or unfulfilled needs. Both are crucial and help us to recognize what is happening inside of us, and what we need and feel. On the other hand, needs are universal “cups” of our inner world, whose fulfilment contributes to our self-actualization and growth. So we can be ourselves.

“The main cause of our anger is something within us, that react to the actions of others, our thoughts, and judgments. Anger is a gift offering us to connect with our unfulfilled needs.”

M. Rosenberg

Many times it happens that in certain communication, the needs and strategies are in conflict. For example, a teacher yells at a student: “Quiet!” That is a strategy meant to take care of the teacher's need for peace, or safety. There are also other strategies that may also fulfil the students' needs for entertainment and strengthen their relationships. An appropriate start of communication is when the teacher first expresses his feelings and needs, that are unfulfilled, finds out the needs of the students, and then together looks for the right strategy that will fulfil everyone's needs. However, that often depends on the current capacity for empathy.

CAPACITY TRIANGLE



Source: © Godfrey Spencer

The capacity of empathy or a capacity triangle is very suitable for establishing procedures in the school environment and clarifying where I am at, as a teacher, parent, or student. Am I able, at this moment, to express empathy and listen to the experience of others. Or, do I need to express my needs first when I enter the classroom feeling angry, and only then perceive the needs of others? Or, I do a specific step towards empathy for myself, I will take care of myself first (do I need a glass of water, to go for air, silence...). If I have a small capacity for empathy or I am empty at the moment, I need to accept it from the outside, from the surrounding (e.g. a student, after she was hit by a ball in her head). The last phase of this capacity is to say stop, non-violently ask for silence, leave, I will ensure safety (e.g. during a fight) and later I will come back to the situation to express understanding for myself and others.

Four types of communication

During the conception of NVC, Marshall also borrowed examples from nature – **the jackal and giraffe**. Both animals are ultimately beautiful, but the giraffe has the biggest heart of all the terrestrial animals, can look at things from high above, and takes responsibility for its feelings. While the jackal often uses the strategy of an attack and fogging. This image can be associated with human communication, both with oneself and towards others.

	JACKAL'S EARS AND TONGUE	GIRAFFE'S EARS AND TONGUE
Towards myself	I blame myself out loud or in my thoughts: "I screwed up that test." "I am always the bad one." "I am a weak teacher!" "They don't respect me."	I give myself an understanding. "I am very tired and I need silence." "I am scared because I am missing support." "I am angry when I see a mess."
Towards others	Obviňujem druhých nahlas alebo v myšlienkach. "He is so rude." "Everything takes you so long!" "You are irresponsible!"	Dávam porozumenie druhým a sústredím sa na nich. "Are you angry that you didn't get any feedback?" "Do you need more time, when you are under stress?"

"Many parents and teachers think that their role requires them to make their children happy all the time. They don't realize that sometimes their children just want the adults to feel sad with them."

M. Rosenberg

Short preview: the translation of jackal's language to the giraffe's according to NVC

S(tudent): I'm the worst again! *(the student reacts after a conflict with another student when the teacher comes to resolve the situation)*

T(eacher): You are angry and expect the blame to be put on you.

S: Yes, as always.

T: When you see the teacher coming to the classroom after the conflict, you think to yourself: "And again, I will be the worst."

S: Exactly, and yet I was just defending myself, Adam threw down my pencil case again and now I'll listen to a lecture on how to behave better or get a note.

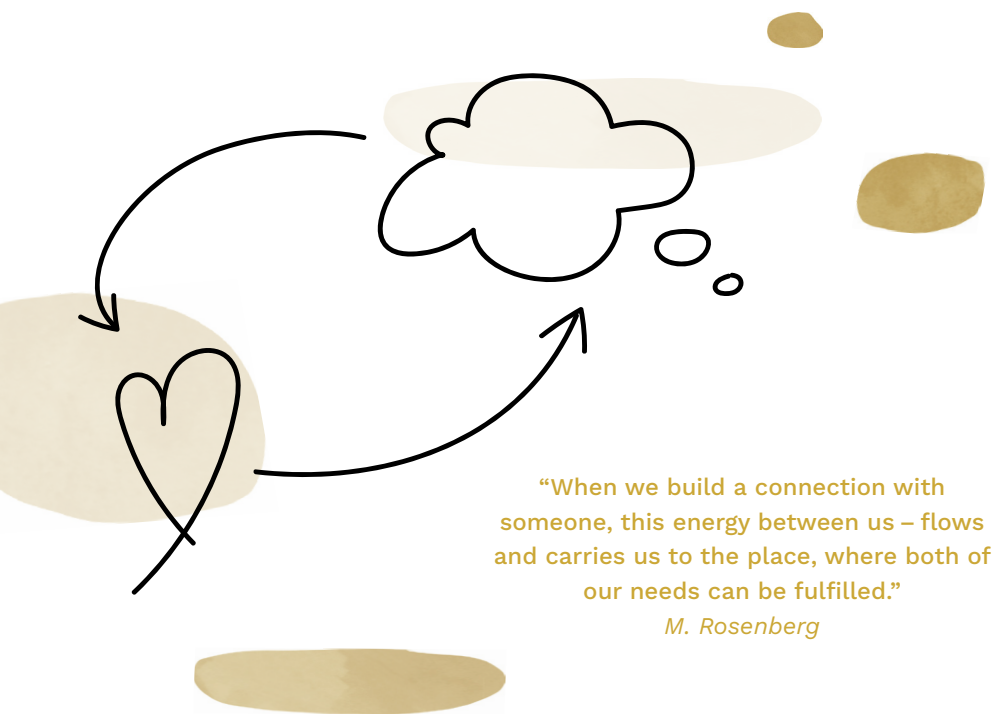
T: And you would like to be heard instead, so your view would also be heard, about what made you angry and what you would want.

Personal testimony:

Even now, as a teacher, I remember a big conflict with the principal after years I remember when being a teacher. The more I think about it, I find out that I am still angry and have a feeling of umbrage. I imagine how amazing it would be if he apologized and admitted that he was unfair to me. But when I think about it more, I find out that, actually I would like him to care about what I feel and what I need. Essentially, I only want to have the experience of him understanding how I felt then. And I would listen to and understood his side of things without anyone being identified as culpable.

When we can connect to ourselves and others, **we use these basic pillars:**

1. **Observing** – describing what I saw/heard as precisely as I can without any evaluation.
2. **Feelings** – searching and expressing, what is alive within me, what feelings do I have.
3. **Needs** – together with feelings, I express which needs were (not) fulfilled when I felt/observed/saw/heard something.
4. **Wishes/ gratitude** – conveying without any expectations, a feasible and positively formed wish (not a request), which (would) contribute to the fulfilment of my needs.



“When we build a connection with someone, this energy between us – flows and carries us to the place, where both of our needs can be fulfilled.”

M. Rosenberg

NVC and giraffe schools

Non-violent communication introduces an important principle during the transformation, inclusion, and humanization of the school environment and education. It is therefore desirable to permeate into all the levels of school: into the everyday communication, methods, forms of education, and also into the school management. Through non-violent communication, we can resolve conflicts and bullying at school and transform the way we use power.

The School of Donum Felix Kladno (Czech Republic)

All of our employees went through non-violent communication training. It is important because we bring non-violent communication into schools so that teachers will use it – model it – and the children learn it from them. We would like to create space for conscious training of skills in this area at the grade school. What we perceive is that children are able to clearly express their attitudes and opinions, they can ask for what is important to them and listen to others. They can deal with many misunderstandings and conflicts by themselves. We use the principles of NVC in everyday communication, conflict management, and finding common ground through an agreement and during adult meetings.

Conflict mediation in the school environment

The most visible is non-violent communication when it helps to overcome barriers between students in a conflict, between a student and a teacher, or between colleagues. There is a rich NVC practice in conflict mediation. The basic principles of mediation can be summarized as follows:

1. Express our own needs
2. Feel the needs of the other side, no matter how the other side expresses their needs.
3. Make sure we really hear the needs of each party.

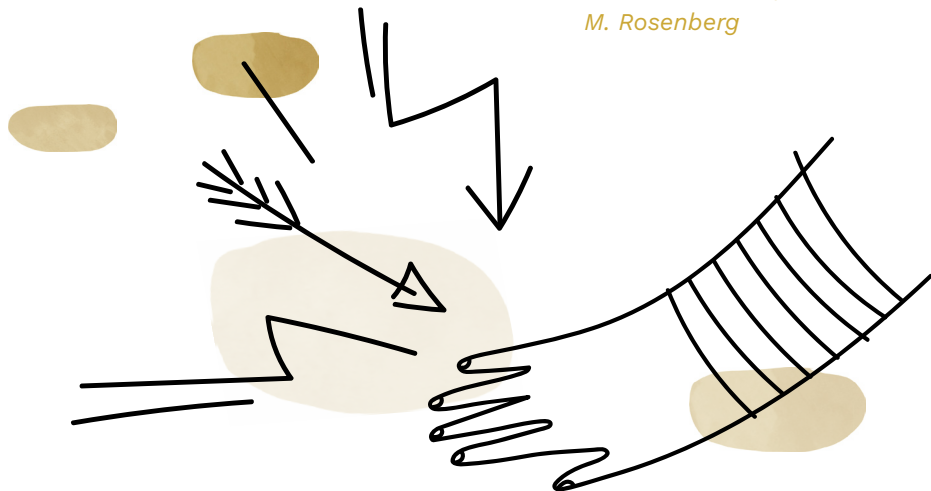
4. Offer the understanding that people need so they will be able to perceive the needs of others
5. Translate the proposed solutions and strategies into the language of constructive negotiations.

Or otherwise:

- What happened? What was the problem? What, who saw and heard? (emphasis on non-evaluative observation)
- How does each of them feel about it? (emphasis on feelings, options, and needs)
- What do you care about? What would you want to happen? (emphasis on the needs and then on strategies)
- What can be really done now? (emphasis on strategies that work for all)

“It can help us resolve conflict when we show our vulnerability.”

M. Rosenberg



CONFLICT MEDIATION – EXAMPLE – “HOMELESS”:

A couple of six-graders run to the teacher that Sam is beating Tom. Sam is lying on the desk and Tom is recovering from the fight. Sam's reaction to the teacher's questions is sharp, and he feels offended. Tom allegedly laughed at him for his stinky unbranded clothes and called him homeless.

T(eacher): Boys, I need more peace for me and you, I suggest let's go outside and talk about it. I would like to hear you out, but I feel that you are angry now (boys nod their heads).

Sam: He told me I stink!

T: I see that you are angry. You want others to respect you.

Tom: You started it. You told Matias he is a monkey.

T: Tom, I hear that you care about Matias and you wanted to support him.

Sam: ...that I stink and my clothes are stupid, and I don't have anything, that I am dressed by a homeless person and that I am the worst.

T: Sam, you hear it again in your head, how uncomfortable it was for you to hear it and you want to scream: *I am not like that!*

Sam: Exactly. (Here is the first connection and understanding with the teacher) No one believes me anyway. You are just still laughing and constantly provoking me.

Tom: How am I provoking you? You are the one who always starts. Why do you still bother Matias?

T: Guys, stop for a second, I can't hear you both and feel what you need. Sam, you need more trust from the boys. Tom, what did you hear from Sam now?

Sam: But he...

T: Stop, stop... please, I need to know, what did you hear?

Tom: That we don't want to be friends with him... Or...that he wants more trust or something like that.

T: Ok, great, and you Tom, would like to stand up for your friends, when you hear someone insulting them because you care about them. Sam, what did you hear?

Sam: He doesn't want me to bother Matias... or... that he cares about Matias.

....

Subsequently, the teacher continues the discussion, whose basis is to offer the first aid of empathy for both students. He does not react to their critical words but to the needs behind the words. Only at the moment, when both boys connect to the needs of the other one, they can experience understanding and are able to hear the other one. "Solution" is often way faster from now on here, but often isn't even necessary. If the class is very good at non-violent communication and has the necessary skills, this can be also done with the whole group, even better the students may be able to do mediation with each other on their own.



The power over others

In the history of education, the teacher was perceived as the judge, evaluator, knowledge transferor, or superior (the school principal was understood in a similar way). C. Rogers considers it differently: A teacher "is a person, not the embodiment of faceless requirement curriculum or a sterile pipeline that transfers knowledge from one generation to the other."

He can feel excitement or boredom, sadness or fear, he can be mistaken and take a responsibility for it in a kind manner. Even today, the relationships in the school environment and the school management is often built on the concept of "having power over the others." This kind of setting is usually not good for anyone in the long term. NVC considers this kind of power as a tragic expression of the unfulfilled needs of the one who has it.

Power with others means that we apply strength with others, that the power and decisions are shared, and take into account the needs of all. For example, the teacher in the classroom creates a participative environment and tries to be himself, and the students perceive and respect him as much as he respects and perceives everybody else. Instead of the role of the leader, he becomes a facilitator of students' learning.

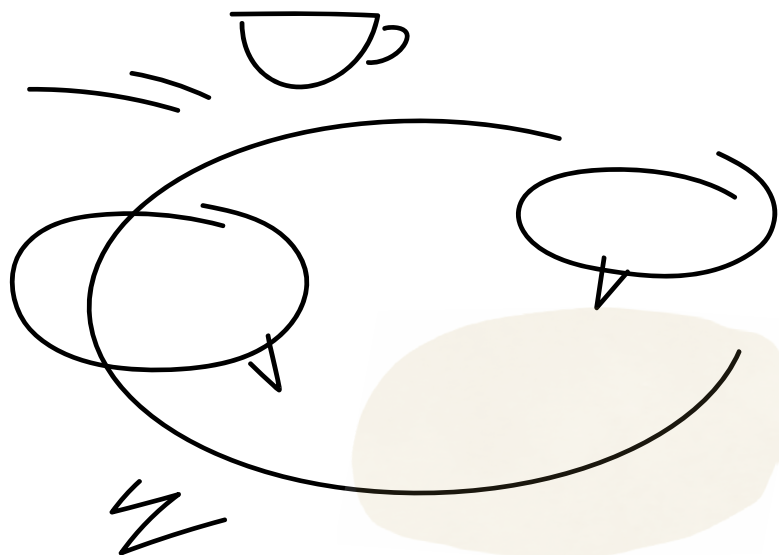
Example:

Leading the meeting at school. M. Rosenberg claims, that many meetings at school or in companies are only about the declaration of unfulfilled needs which are not expressed. They are hidden and masked as power, by sitting at the "top" of the table, by the length of a monologue, and by fear of discussion.

Many meetings are absolutely unnecessary, instead, teachers would do better if they would sit for a coffee together in groups and talked about their experiences or anger during the day. A lot of information, that are usually being said are the ones people could read for themselves. This time of lengthy and inefficient meetings costs the schools lots of money and takes a lot of time and energy from people, says M. Rosenberg. The concept of NVC would be asking: What is the need of the convenor of the meeting? Does he communicate this need clearly? Are wishes being communicated clearly, not orders? What are the needs of the attendees of the meeting? What kind of strategy is needed to fulfil everyone's needs?

“Punishment and reward are basically the same because by this we strengthen our power over others.”

M. Rosenberg



Evaluation – praise and punishment

Evaluation, praise, scolding or notes... constant waiting for what others/adults are going to say about me, how I manage or don't manage, etc. Grading from 1 to 5, and bees and pigs are a specific strategy how to fulfil the needs of the ones involved in education. Often, it doesn't fulfil anyone's needs. The student desires relationship, appraisal, support, acceptance, learning and growth. The teacher might be looking to fulfil his need for respect, safety, order, or meaning. Are all those needs at school fulfilled during an evaluation? Maybe, but they don't have to be. There is an infinite number of strategies, on how to fulfil these needs, e.g. (self) reflection, feedback. Here are some notes on it:

- In the non-violent concept, we move from evaluation to (self) reflection
- Exams and tests serve as a tool to verify the knowledge and skills of the student, not control from the side of the teacher
- oral exam changes more to a project learning and the development of the student's potential according to their own styles of learning and possibilities,
- grades and verbal assessments are replaced by regular group reflections in class (morning circles at the beginning of the day, reflection of work processes at the end of the day/lesson/block),
- evaluation from others changes to self-reflection and setting the goals of our work (e.g. according to the curricula and criteria) and at the same time, it changes to feedback from the teacher and the group.

Mentioned principles also support an inclusive atmosphere within the class and at school. Two short examples follow:

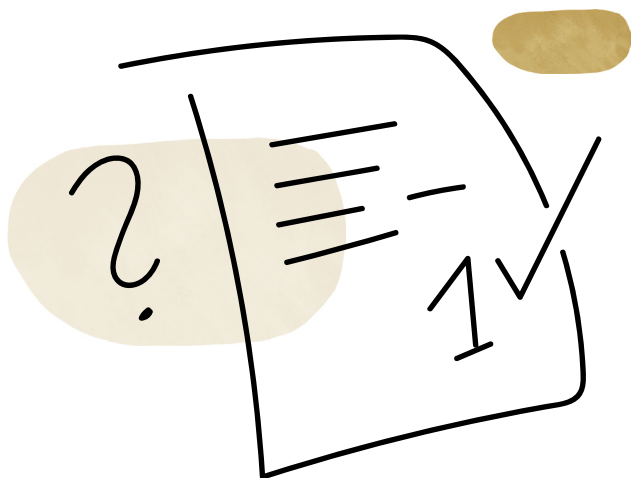
A SHORT SAMPLE – TRANSLATION OF THE TEACHER'S EVALUATION FOR A REFLECTION ACCORDING TO NVC

Teacher (evaluation): Your work is great. You should all take an example from her. I will give you 1*

Teacher (giraffe self-expression): Jane, when I was reading your work, I was excited and carried at times because it made me realize how much I love the forest. Do you want to say how it felt when you wrote it?

EVALUATION AS A CRITERION

Teacher: Jane, I set up two criteria for drawing a cube – geometrical accuracy (straightness of lines, precise lengths) and appearance (identical line thickness, outer appearance, smoothness). Do you want to say how you see your work in relation to these criteria?



Bullying at school

Most current concepts of bullying consider the following terms: victim and aggressor, individual vs. group, guilt and punishment, compassion, and justification. NV thinks differently in terms of bullying – it prefers the individual person as the centre of attention – his feelings and needs. It talks about sweat pain instead of punishment, more than justification, it considers understanding and reconciliation.

Terms like “victim and aggressor” assume that it is a war, in which one is the aggressive enemy who needs to be beaten and the other is a compassionate friend. In reality, with violence, everyone usually experiences the same feelings and their unfulfilled needs are somewhat similar, sometimes even for a longer time. They use dysfunctional strategies to fulfil their needs. However, only through understanding, we can help resolve bullying in the long run. For everyone.

No one commits violence “just like that”. If he could find a different strategy to fulfil his needs, he would have done so. But he does not know how and he has not received any help from others. At the same time, a question arises: What does the bullying say about the classroom/school? About their functioning? Do people at school feel that their needs are being fulfilled?

For us as teachers, non-violent communication teaches us to listen and gives us a tool with which we lead the children to a better understanding of themselves and self-expression of their own needs. Where aggression occurs (verbal or physical), the NVC gives us a tool to mediate the conflict and come up with a healing understanding for both sides.

“The Giraffe's Street Language”

At the conclusion of this short guide, there is a key question of how to transform specific steps, phrases, and models into everyday life.

It is the same as when a person learns to speak a foreign language. In the beginning you learn the vocabulary, phrases and grammar. The more you use it the more you get used to it. In this process, there comes a time when you don't need to repeat the cases or word classes because we can already use the language flexibly, creatively, and naturally – we start to think in that language. It is the same with non-violent communication. First, the person needs a lot of time to learn but over time we can say things easily, naturally, and some-times even “vulgarly” without insulting anyone.

Marshall, in the concept of NVC, uses the term “giraffe's street language”. It is a language, in which we can express our feelings, needs, observations and wishes, and at the same time, we don't sound like a robot or a psychology handbook. It is a process of learning where the “giraffe's street language” works with the needs of all, which is the goal we are reaching for.

Jackal's speech: Leave me alone, I am sick of all of you!

Giraffe's translation: I am angry because I need more space and when I hear more requests from others, I can't concentrate. Could I divide it and talk about your requirements one at a time, e.g. for several weeks?

Giraffe's colloquial speech: I am furious! 15 minutes and we can talk... Is it ok with you?

PREREQUISITES OF A NON-VIOLENT APPROACH

(Kashtan et Kashtan, 2021)

- 1. People desire the same qualities and share the same needs.** Though, strategies by which we try to fulfil these needs may vary. Conflict occurs at the level of strategies, not at the level of needs.
- 2. Everything, that people do are only attempts to try to fulfil their needs, to experience the qualities they desire.** This effort can be unconscious and it doesn't even have to lead to the fulfilment of needs. People resort to violence of various forms when they are unable to find other ways to accomplish the fulfilment.
- 3. Feelings and emotions indicate whether we experience our needs as fulfilled** (the feeling of joy, peace, gratitude) **or unfulfilled** (sadness, anger, nervousness...). The actions of others do not directly evoke feelings in us. Rather, our feelings are related to our interpretation and expectations.
- 4. The most direct way to inner peace leads through connection to oneself,** even when our needs are unfulfilled.
- 5. The choice is always ours.** Regardless of the situation, we are able to fulfil our need for autonomy by consciously making decisions based on the understanding of our needs.
- 6. Everyone is capable of compassion and empathy.** By developing the ability for empathy, our ability to fulfil our needs without violence grows as well.
- 7. People like to give and contribute to the joy of others** when they are aware (connected) of their own and others' needs, and when they give of their own free will, not out of coercion.

- 8. In a relationship, the fulfilment of needs is mutually dependent.** Often when the needs of the others are not fulfilled, for example, they are sad or angry, then some of our needs also stay unfulfilled.
- 9. There are ways to fulfil the needs of all the involved parties,** but sometimes we don't have to see it.
- 10. People change.** Strategies by which we fulfil our needs change over time. Regardless of our individual or collective situation, we always have the ability to grow, evolve and change.



“It is not that important what you do, but what you do after you have done it.”
G. Landreth

“We only decide what to do with the time that has been given to us.”
J. R. Tolkien

USEFUL RESOURCES

Video of Marshall Rosenberg – NVC in practise:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7TONauJGfc>

Preview of NVC in class at school:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hyexw2hQqMQ>

Podcast about NVC:
<https://www.nenasilnypodcast.cz/>
<https://vudpap.sk/nenasilna-komunikacia-prva-cast/>
<https://vudpap.sk/nenasilna-komunikacia-druha-cast/>

RECOMMENDED LITERATURE

Kashtan, I. – Kashtan, M. Key Assumptions and Intentions of NVC, 2021.
Available at: <https://thefearlessheart.org/nvc-reference-materials/key-assumptions-and-intentions-of-nvc-2/>

Abraham Maslow: *O psychologii bytí*. Portál, 2014.

Marshall Rosenberg: *Nenasilná komunikace*. Portál, 2016.

Marshall Rosenberg: *Nenasilná komunikace v praxi*. Portál, 2020.

Marshall Rosenberg: *Nenasilná komunikace a moc*. Portál, 2019.

Marshall Rosenberg: *Co řeknete změni váš svět*. Portál, 2015.

Carl Rogers: *Sloboda učit sa*. Didaktis, 2020.

Nováčková, J. – Nevoldová, D. *Respektovat a být respektován*. PeopleComm. 2020.

ENGLISH SUBTITLES CAN BE FOUND:

www.nonviolentcommunication.com/shop/
www.nenasilnakomunikace.org nenasilne.sk

Reviewed by:
Adam Čajka, Eva Malířová, NVC Brno, z.s.
www.nenasilnakomunikace.org

Our education

We recommend our courses on non-violent communication:

- COURSES**
- Non-violent communication
 - Mediation for life – long-term training
 - Non-violent communication I., II.
 - webinar Mediation of student conflicts according to NVC

Bulletin: Teaching assistant

- COURSES**
- Teaching assistant in practice
 - webinar Minimum for the assistants I, II, and III.

Bulletins: Group facilitative learning, Morning circles in class

- COURSES**
- Facilitative and reflective learning
 - webinar Morning circles in class
 - webinar Guide circles at school
 - webinar Reflection and feedback at grade school
 - webinar Group work with reflection

Bulletins: The School support team, Individual educational program

- COURSES**
- webinar School support team
 - webinar School psychologist – beginning
 - webinar Legislature for the school support team
 - webinar Individual educational program

Our Publications:

We create the bulletins in cooperation with a team of experts on inclusive education. Employ them as a useful guide in your work or for explaining the principles of inclusive education to the general public.

We also create useful videos for you on Inklucentrum's YouTube channel, some of which are available in English or German. For deeper understanding of the topics, we recommend signing up for the training courses we organize.



Our Publications:
inklucentrum.sk/publikacie

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Webinars and Videos:
inklucentrum.sk/kurzy

We cover Inclusive education

Inklucentrum – The Centre for Inclusive Education is an advocacy, educational, consulting expert organization on a national level, working in the field of support to inclusive education. It is dedicated to supporting quality and humanistic education in the school environment for the benefit of the development of potential for all children, families, and the school staff. It provides support, consulting, and education in accredited programs and workshops, especially for pedagogical and professional employees.

We are preparing a project of establishing a primary school with an inclusive centre, which will be using humanistic and inclusive principles described in our bulletins.

INKLUCENTRUM – The Centre for Inclusive Education

Hálova 16, 851 01 Bratislava
www.inklucentrum.sk
facebook.com/inklucentrum

INFO: info@inklucentrum.sk
COURSES: vzdelavanie@inklucentrum.sk
COUNSELLING: poradenstvo@inklucentrum.sk

ONLINE: inklucentrum.sk/publikacie
inklucentrum.sk/kurzy

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