

Vulnerability in the Face of Fear: Summary

1. Distinguish between *choosing* to step into vulnerability and the experience of feeling vulnerable and protecting yourself from the experience or its potential consequences.
2. Transforming "rejection" and "humiliation" by uncovering the needs at the heart of the pain, as well as the needs of others that lead to their actions that trigger pain.
3. Distinguish between feeling safe/unsafe and the interpretation of safety as external to us.
4. Distinguish between real life-threatening fear (in the present) and thought-based fear (in the future or in the story).
5. Separate between observations and thoughts, which makes possible a shift into needs-consciousness and openness to explore different feelings associated with each.
6. Recognize self-connection as a source of inner safety and choice instead of attempting to change the external situation to make it "safe" for us, or withdrawing to protect ourselves.
7. Once connected, we can make requests of ourselves or of others to support our well-being. For example, we can request empathy or reflection from others; or we can prepare for moments of difficulty by making agreements with ourselves about how we want to respond to our fear in the moment.
8. Recognize the option of cultivating the sense of safety that comes from the experience of "surviving" others' responses. We increase capacity in this area by understanding others' responses as being expressions of their needs rather than statements about us.
9. Distinguish between caring for others and worrying about being able to handle others' responses.
10. Protecting our vulnerability often leads to *less* connection with another, as we are likely to be less connected with ourselves. Open-hearted, fully responsible expression is more likely to be received by another.

11. Redefining strength: from being able to contain and manage our feelings to being able to share our experience with vulnerability and embracing the risk of losing connection.
12. The willingness to risk another's non-acceptance allows more freedom to choose authenticity.
13. Cultivating self-acceptance reduces the chances of hearing another's reaction as criticism of ourselves.
14. Increasing vulnerability and authenticity contributes to closer relationships, reduction in the cycle of protective shields in conflict, and full aliveness.

Self-Connection: Authenticity and Vulnerability

For writing, reflection, buddy conversations or real life

1. Exploring the choice not to share full honesty

- a. Write down something you wish you could say to someone in your life, but for whatever reason you've chosen not to say it. Try not to edit it into "NVC language" or in any other way. Just write exactly what comes to mind or heart.

- b. What needs are you trying to meet by not sharing this with the person?

- c. What needs are you not meeting by not sharing this? Or in other words, what needs might be met by sharing it?

- d. Now imagine sharing this with the person (in NVC). Notice what feelings come up, and what needs those feelings are connected to that you imagine would be met or unmet.

- e. How do you feel and what needs arise after exploring these questions? Do you want to continue with the choice you have made or choose differently? (If any self-judgments arise, go into self-empathy for both the needs met and unmet with your choices.)

2. Giraffe "lies"

Think of a situation in which you chose to use NVC but the words didn't match your internal experience. In writing or with a partner (could be an empathy buddy if you have one), role play the situation and get more authentic, still taking full responsibility for your feelings and needs, but choose more honesty than you did previously.

3. Jackal honesty vs. giraffe honesty

Think of a situation in which you have been honest with someone about something difficult, but you shared more of your evaluations/judgments than your feelings and needs. In writing or with a partner (could be an empathy buddy if you have one), get more vulnerable/honest about the feelings and needs behind whatever honesty you shared, and consider what requests you might have that may support more connection and honesty in this situation.

Consciousness: "Safety" and "Unsafety"

Purpose:

- a. Recognizing interpretations and observations that trigger the experience we identify as "NOT SAFE": what leads us to the assessment that something is not safe?
 - b. Consider what relationship we want to have with the experience of "unsafety."
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4. Think of a situation - as recent as possible - in which your need for safety wasn't met. Describe it in up to 2 sentences.

 5. Were you thinking that there was lack of safety? __ yes __ no (NOTE: There is no "right" and "wrong" answer here - just honesty.) If yes, what were you telling yourself created that lack of safety?

 6. What specifically happened that triggered those thoughts? Write it in observation language.

 7. Consider this observation without any interpretations, then write down your feelings and needs (in addition to safety) in relation to it. Take a moment to connect fully with each of the needs you identify before moving to additional needs.

 8. Did you have any images of what might happen that would be "unsafe"?

 9. If those things happened, are there any ways in which they actually impair your safety? What might be your feelings? What needs would be unmet? Take a moment to connect fully with each of the needs you identify before moving to additional needs.

10. What would contribute to your sense of safety?

11. Shifting attention to the person or group you're engaged with during this experience. What are you telling yourself about the other person or group? Do you find any judgments or assumptions about them?

12. What might be the needs motivating whatever is going on with that person or group of people?

13. When you notice their needs, how do you feel and what additional needs in you do you notice?

14. Now, staying connected with the variety of needs you are aware of, consider: When you have an experience of "unsafety," what might you want to do to help you stay self-connected and at choice about how to respond to the situation?

15. Take a moment to notice and connect with your feelings and needs in this moment.

Note: If you notice any judgments of yourself coming up in relation to your experience, or to a gap between what you experience and where you would like to be, consider spending time with the "Self Judgments" journals or with empathy with someone else.