

Choice in the Face of Demand: Summary

1. External and internal demands

- Understanding the power to create consequences as that which makes demands possible
- Distinguishing between the intention to make demand and the perception of demand received
- Recognizing internal demands as based on internal stories about potential consequences

2. Anatomy of choice

- Distinguishing between submission, which is based on fear of consequences, and open-hearted "yes" which is based on needs
- Distinguishing between rebellion, which is reactive to submission and to fear, and open-hearted "no" which is based on needs
- Distinguishing between submission and entrustment
- Distinguishing between external choice, which is what action we take, and internal choice, which is about how we respond internally to a perceived demand
- Exercising choice in hearing a demand or a request
- Exploring constrained choice: externally based on social structures, and internally based on past experiences such as trauma which make choice not accessible

3. Taking responsibility

- Taking full responsibility for our feelings by connecting them to our interpretations and the needs that they point to instead of the actions of others
- Taking full responsibility for our actions by identifying and connecting with all the needs that give rise to internal demands
- Experiencing the moment of choice - bringing acceptance and greater choice to using our skills in challenging moment

Choice: Facing "Demands"

Purpose: To increase our ability to access our true sense of choice beyond the submission/rebellion dance, and respond authentically to another's request even when we hear a demand.

Keys:

- a. Our need for autonomy is met through an internal process of conscious choice; it is not something others can meet for us. Others can contribute by meeting our need for respect for our autonomy.
 - b. When we hear a demand, we may interpret it as lack of respect for our autonomy and we may react to this interpretation.
 - c. When we react to a perceived demand by either saying "yes" out of fear or by saying "no" to protect our sense of autonomy, we are constraining the range of choices available to us. We may be operating within the "submission/rebellion" paradigm instead of living from our authentic autonomy and being grounded in interdependence.
 - d. No matter how the other person expresses their request, ultimately the choice to hear it as a demand or as a request resides within us.
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1. Think of a situation in which you perceive someone as making a demand of you. Write down what the person says, and what you are hearing (said or unsaid, imagined or real).

 2. What are your feelings and needs in the moment of hearing this? If the need that arises is autonomy, what other needs are alive in you? (e.g. acceptance, full internal choice, self-connection)

 3. What is your best guess as to the feelings and needs of the other person? Take a moment to connect with those needs.

 4. What feelings and needs become alive in you as you stretch to open your heart to this person?

Choice: Taking Responsibility for Our Actions

KEYS:

- a. Like every other action, actions which we take because we think we "have to" are also attempts to meet needs.
 - b. Recognizing the needs that lead us to choose to take those actions can free us to decide how we want to act, and at the very least to recognize that we have a choice in all our actions.
 - c. Taking responsibility for our actions supports our movement toward self-empowerment and having relationships free from blame and guilt.
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1. Write down an action that you are telling yourself you have to do or that you think have no choice about.

 2. What are the consequences you are trying to avoid by taking this action?

 3. What are the needs you are trying to meet by taking this action? Take a moment to connect in full with each need you discover before proceeding to another need. In particular, separate each need from the specific strategy of avoiding consequences, and from whether or not the need is ultimately met by the action you are taking. Simply connect with each need you are *attempting* to meet.

 4. What needs are not met by taking this action? Again, take a moment to connect in full with each need you discover before proceeding to another need, and separate it from the action you are taking. You may discover some of the same needs as in question 3, since the attempt to meet some needs may not be successful.

 5. Bring your awareness to *all* the needs you identified in the previous two questions, independently of whether or not they are met. How are you feeling when you focus on all the needs? Stay with this until you reach full connection with yourself in relation to all the needs you identified.

 6. Check in with yourself: do you want to choose to keep taking the original action? If yes, write down what needs you would be attending to by continuing to take the action. If no, do you have other strategies that you believe might meet your needs better?

 7. How are you feeling at this moment and what needs are you aware of?

Moment of Choice Keys

1. One aspect of NVC is that it can be seen/used/lived as a spiritual practice. A basic part of NVC as a spiritual practice is recognizing our choice.
2. NVC is a strategy, not a need. It's one choice among many options for how to respond to life.
3. There are three "stages" (not in any particular order) that most people wrestle with in using NVC:
 - a. Recognizing that they have choice to use NVC,
 - b. Having the skills to make an NVC choice, and
 - c. Choosing to use NVC (or making a conscious choice not to in order to meet other needs).
 - d. Each has its own challenges. Different people find different stages more or less challenging.
4. In practicing and living NVC, it's sometimes hard to remember NVC as a choice. Yet most of us come to a point when we integrate NVC consciousness sufficiently to recognize NVC as an option at a given moment of challenge.
5. When we recognize the option, we have a choice of whether or not to use it. It remains a choice, rather than a new "should" or "have to" or "right thing to do."
6. If we choose not to use NVC, we can still choose to use NVC to empathize with ourselves and meet ourselves with compassion, and to be at peace about the choice we made.
7. If we come to view NVC as a new "right" or "should," we may find that our needs for autonomy or authenticity or other needs may not be met. It's important therefore to keep reminding ourselves that we are at choice about whether or not to use NVC.
8. We may want to note whether there are patterns in our behavior - situations or specific challenges in relation to which we find it difficult to choose to use NVC. If we note a pattern, recognizing our needs in the moment can be enormously fruitful for understanding our behavior with compassion and empathy, thereby increasing our ability to make conscious choices.
9. We are choosing at every moment, but we are not always at conscious choice. Choosing based on consciously trying to meet our needs is what we're working toward, rather than reflexively choosing to use NVC language.
10. The process of remembering that NVC is an option is akin to "waking up." We can look for key practices or other reminders that will help to awaken us.

Choice: Awakening to Choice

"Remembering NVC":

1. What practices can help you remember to use NVC?
2. Do you notice any self-judgments about not remembering to use NVC? (Work with self-empathy or empathy, and/or with the Transforming Self-Judgments journal.)
3. Do you notice any shoulds or have to's about using NVC? (Work with self-empathy or empathy, and/or with the Taking Responsibility for Our Actions journal.)

"Don't have the skills to use":

4. What practices can help you develop your NVC skills? (Brainstorm on your own and/or with empathy buddy, friend, etc. Include daily practice or even hourly practice.)
5. Set up dyad as a role play of a moment of choice where you'd like to use NVC but are lacking the skills. The moment you "get stuck", look at the next two questions:
 - a. Do you notice any self-judgments about not having the level of skill you wish for? (Work with self-empathy or empathy, and/or with the Transforming Self-Judgments journal.)
 - b. Do you notice any shoulds or have to's about using NVC? (Work with self-empathy or empathy, and/or with the Taking Responsibility for Our Actions journal.)

"Choosing to use NVC (or not)":

6. Thinking of a particular situation where you chose not to use NVC, what needs were you trying to meet by choosing not to use NVC?
7. Do you notice any self-judgments about not choosing to use NVC? (Work with self-empathy or empathy, and/or with the Transforming Self-Judgments journal.)
8. Do you notice any shoulds or have to's about using NVC? (Work with self-empathy or empathy, and/or with the Taking Responsibility for Our Actions journal.)

Choice: Moment of Choice

1. Think of a situation in which you wished to use NVC but found yourself choosing not to use it. Choose a situation in which you recognized that you had a choice, vs. one in which you didn't remember that NVC is an option.
2. How do you feel about the situation you described and what needs of yours were not met?
3. Connect with the particular moment in which you recognized the option to use NVC. Are you having any judgments about your choice? Are you holding any "should," "have to," "right thing to do" or similar ideas about it? If yes, write them down, then translate the judgments into the feelings and needs that arise in you. If no, write down the feelings and needs you notice about that moment.
4. When you chose not to use NVC, what were your feelings and what needs were you trying to meet? (What were you saying "yes" to by saying "no" to NVC?)
5. Are there needs not met by the choice you made? What are they, and what are your feelings related to those needs?
6. What needs might you meet by choosing to use NVC in this situation? What are your feelings related to those needs?
7. How are you feeling and what needs do you notice at this moment?