

MEDIATION MODEL OF NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION (NVC)

(Based on the work of Marshall Rosenberg and the Center for Nonviolent Communication, www.cnvc.org)

The NVC approach to mediation focuses on connection before outcome; connection meaning that each party trusts they have been heard to their satisfaction by the other party – heard not only as to their “story,” but heard as to the underlying needs that have not been met in the conflict. With this connection present, the process moves to collaborative problem solving.

I. Four NVC Components of Communication (OFNR)

1. **Observation** (awareness, behavioral language) vs. Evaluation, thinking, right/wrong judgment
2. **Feeling** (inner body sensation, emotional exp.) vs. Thoughts, interpretations, images
3. **Needs** (universal, life enhancing qualities) vs. Strategies (specific actions, things, people)
4. **Requests** (present, positive, action/language) vs. Demand (use of fear and denial of choice)

II. Four Mediation Contexts

1. **Internal**: When there is a conflict between different aspects of ourselves.
2. **Interpersonal**: When you are a party in the conflict.
3. **Informal**: Entering a conflict and mediating before you have been asked to do so.
4. **Formal**: When you are asked by the parties to help them resolve their dispute.

III. Two Phases & Five Steps of NVC Mediation

Phase I – Connection and understanding

1. **Empathize with person A** and surface their need(s).
2. **Ask party B to reflect** party A’s need(s).
3. **Empathize with person B** and surface their need(s).
4. **Ask party A to reflect** the party B’s need(s).

Phase II – Requests, strategies, solutions, agreements

5. After both parties connected to each other’s needs, **support clear “doable” requests and agreements**. Go back to 1-4 if requests lead to a “triggering” of further reactions and conflict.

IV. Nine Mediator Skills/Choices

1. **Empathy** (self & other) – presence, understanding/meaning, and need language/deepening.
2. **Requesting Reflection** (and feelings) -- asking each party to reflect back each other’s needs.
3. **“Pulling by the ears”** – re-requesting when the person hasn’t reflected the other’s needs
4. **Emergency 1st Aid Empathy** when person is in too much pain to reflect back other’s needs.
5. **Tracking** where you are in the process and the needs that have been expressed.
6. **Interrupting** with the intention to connect with the speaker’s inner experience vs. judgments.
7. **Self-Empathy** for the mediator.
8. **Self-Expression** by the mediator.
9. **Solution Requests** -- present, positive, action language, to get all needs met compassionately.

V. Elements of empathy: being fully with a person's experience (following vs. leading)

"Every judgment is a tragic expression of an unmet need" – Marshall Rosenberg

- A. **Presence** – resting attention on the speaker, letting go thinking and efforting
- B. **Understanding/Meaning** – reflecting back in a way the person feels heard, understood, "gotten" as they would like about their reality and experience.
- C. **Need Language (translation) & Deepening** – connecting thoughts, feelings, wants to needs; linger and savor needs

VI. Dialing the difficulty of the three chair mediation role plays

A. Level I

- 1. Mediator does just steps 1 & 3 (empathy with A, empathy with B)
- 2. Requests to disputants: Strength of "jackal"; don't cross talk

B. Level II

- 1. Mediator does steps 1-4 (empathy and requesting reflection with A & B)
- 2. Requests to disputants – Strength of "jackal"; reflect other party's needs, even if don't feel like it

C. Level III

- 1. Mediator does steps 1-4
- 2. Requests to disputants – Strength of "jackal"; reflect needs only if feel like it
- 3. Exercise mediator skills of "pulling by the ears", emergency first aid empathy, and tracking by disputants reflecting thoughts instead of needs, expressing instead of reflecting, and getting "triggered" into too much reaction to empathize with other
- 4. Disputants talk in a way for mediator to practice interrupting for connection
- 5. Disputants cross talking

VII. Setting up the role plays

- A. Create a situation – real (opportunity for empathy) or made up from scratch
- B. Dial the difficulty level
- C. Requests to coach
- D. Requests to disputants and observers re giving feedback
- E. Mediator needing self-empathy before starting role play?

VIII. Practicing step 5, getting to the "request" phase

- A. In steps 1-4, disputants play roles with as much NVC ability as possible
- B. In step 5, disputants shift to intentionally making non-NVC requests
- C. Once disputants have mutual agreements -- support success, prepare for "failure"

IX. Practicing with intensity (in dyads or triads)

- A. Disputant gradually raises intensity of expression with neutral or triggering content
- B. Whenever mediator feels triggered, stop the process and receive empathy
- C. Go back to disputant expressing with intensity