

***Language of Compassion Workshop
February 18, 2024***



"Believing that it is our nature to enjoy giving and receiving in a compassionate manner, I have been preoccupied most of my life with two questions. What happens to disconnect us from our compassionate nature, leading us to behave violently and exploitatively? And conversely, what allows some people to stay connected to their compassionate nature under even the most trying circumstances?"

***Marshall Rosenberg,
Nonviolent Communication
Page 1, Chapter 1, Paragraph 1***

A Life-Alienating Dialogue

She: You never take me out to dinner.

He: What do you mean? I took you out to dinner last night.

She: That doesn't count; we always go there. That's nothing special.

He: What do you mean, "That's nothing special"? I thought you enjoyed dinner out.

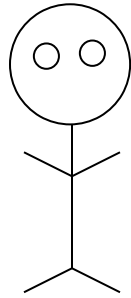
She: How can it be special when all you do is talk about work?

He: Here we go again—it's always about work. You know, it's the money I make from work that pays for the dinners out.

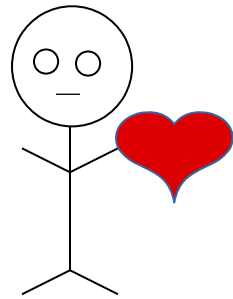
She: Am I supposed to be grateful for that? Fred takes Alice to nice places, but you never take me to nice places.

He: Too bad Fred married Alice, or you could have married him and he could take you out to nice places.

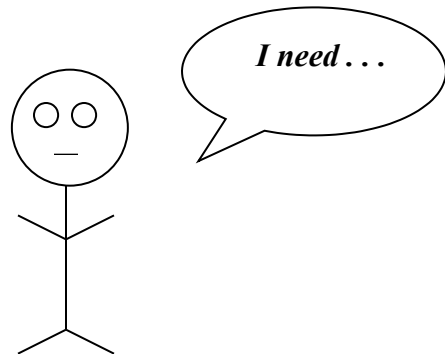
4 Components of Compassionate Language:



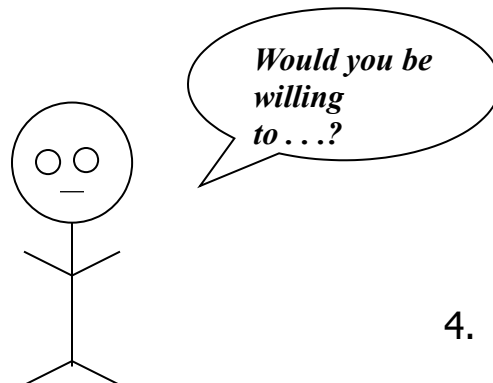
1. Observe without evaluation



2. Share feelings



3. State needs



4. Request specific response

Needs Inventory

The following list of needs is neither exhaustive nor definitive. It is meant as a starting place to support anyone who wishes to engage in a process of deepening self-discovery and to facilitate greater understanding and connection between people.

CONNECTION

acceptance
affection
appreciation
belonging
cooperation
communication
closeness
community
companionship
compassion
consideration
consistency
empathy
inclusion
intimacy
love
mutuality
nurturing
respect/self-respect
safety
security
stability
support
to know and be known
to see and be seen
to understand and be understood
trust
warmth

PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

air
food
movement/exercise
rest/sleep
sexual expression
safety
shelter
touch
water
HONESTY
authenticity
integrity
presence
PLAY
joy
humor
PEACE
beauty
communion
ease
equality
harmony
inspiration
order

MEANING

awareness
celebration of life
challenge
clarity
competence
consciousness
contribution
creativity
discovery
efficacy
effectiveness
growth
hope
learning
mourning
participation
purpose
self-expression
stimulation
to matter
understanding
AUTONOMY
choice
freedom
independence
space
spontaneity

Feelings Inventory

The following are words we use when we want to express a combination of emotional states and physical sensations. This list is neither exhaustive nor definitive. It is meant as a starting place to support anyone who wishes to engage in a process of deepening self-discovery and to facilitate greater understanding and connection between people.

Feelings when your needs are satisfied.

AFFECTIONATE

compassionate
friendly
loving
open hearted
sympathetic
tender
warm

CONFIDENT

empowered
open
proud
safe
secure

ENGAGED

absorbed
alert
curious
engrossed
enchanted
entranced
fascinated
interested
intrigued
involved
spellbound
stimulated

INSPIRED

amazed
awed
wonder

EXCITED

amazed
animated
ardent
aroused
astonished
dazzled
eager
energetic
enthusiastic
giddy
invigorated
lively
passionate
surprised
vibrant

EXHILARATED

blissful
ecstatic
elated
enthralled
exuberant
radiant
rapturous
thrilled

GRATEFUL

appreciative
moved
thankful
touched

HOPEFUL

expectant
encouraged
optimistic

JOYFUL

amused
delighted
glad
happy
jubilant
pleased
tickled

PEACEFUL

calm
clear headed
comfortable
centered
content
equanimous
fulfilled
mellow
quiet
relaxed
relieved
satisfied
serene
still
tranquil
trusting

REFRESHED

enlivened
rejuvenated
renewed
rested
restored
revived

Feelings Inventory

Feelings when your needs are not satisfied

AFRAID
apprehensive
dread
foreboding
frightened
mistrustful
panicked
petrified
scared
suspicious
terrified
wary
worried

ANNOYED
aggravated
dismayed
disgruntled
displeased
exasperated
frustrated
impatient
irritated
irked

ANGRY
enraged
furious
incensed
indignant
irate
livid
outraged
resentful

AVERSION
animosity
appalled
contempt
disgusted
dislike
hate
horrified
hostile
repulsed

CONFUSED
ambivalent
baffled
bewildered
dazed
hesitant
lost
mystified
perplexed
puzzled
torn

DISCONNECTED
alienated
aloof
apathetic
bored
cold
detached
distant
distracted
indifferent
numb
removed
uninterested
withdrawn

DISQUIET
agitated
alarmed
discombobulated
disconcerted
disturbed
perturbed
rattled
restless
shocked
startled
surprised
troubled
turbulent
turmoil
uncomfortable
uneasy
unnerved
unsettled
upset

EMBARRASSED
ashamed
chagrined
flustered
guilty
mortified
self-conscious

FATIGUE
beat
burnt out
depleted
exhausted
lethargic
listless
sleepy
tired
weary
worn out

PAIN
agony
anguished
bereaved
devastated
grief
heartbroken
hurt
lonely
miserable
regretful
remorseful

SAD
depressed
dejected
despair
despondent
disappointed
discouraged
disheartened
forlorn
gloomy
heavy hearted
hopeless
melancholy
unhappy
wretched

TENSE
anxious
cranky
distressed
distraught
edgy
fidgety
frazzled
irritable
jittery
nervous
overwhelmed
restless
stressed out

VULNERABLE
fragile
guarded
helpless
insecure
leery
reserved
sensitive
shaky

YEARNING
envious
jealous
longing
nostalgic
pining
wistful

Words That Sound Like Feelings But Are Not Feelings

Words like *ignored* express how we interpret *others*, rather than how we *feel*.

Here is a sampling of such words from *Nonviolent Communication*, p. 43:

| | | |
|------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Abandoned | Distrusted | Put down |
| Abused | Interrupted | Rejected |
| Attacked | Intimidated | Taken for granted |
| Betrayed | Let down | Threatened |
| Boxed-in | Manipulated | Unappreciated |
| Bullied | Misunderstood | Unheard |
| Cheated | Neglected | Unseen |
| Coerced | Overworked | Unsupported |
| Co-opted | Patronized | Unwanted |
| Cornered | Pressured | Used |
| Diminished | Provoked | |

4 Tips for Expressing Compassionate Language (Shifting from Judgment to Compassion)

1. Be aware of a judgment:

You never take me out to dinner.

2. Connect to these 4 components:

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Observation: | What do I observe, specific to time and context? |
| Feelings: | What do I feel? |
| Needs: | What do I need? |
| Request: | What is my strategy, specific to time and behavior? |

3. Shape the connection by using these 4 sentence stems:

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Observation: | When I see/hear . . . (specific to time and context) |
| Feelings: | I feel . . . |
| Needs: | because I need . . . |
| Request: | Would you be willing to . . .? (specific to time and behavior) |

4. Share that connection:

When I realized that 90% of our conversation during last night's dinner was about work, I felt disheartened because I have a need for connection with you. Would you be willing to share your feelings about what I've just said?

Exercise for Expressing Compassionate Language (Shifting from Judgment to Compassion)

Assume that a husband and wife are in an argument over their household budget. The man is yelling and the wife says to him, *You are always angry.*

Create a compassionate statement from the woman to the man, using the Language of Compassion to convey the idea, *You are always angry.*

1. Consider, first, her connection to the four components:
 What might she observe?
 What might she feel?
 What might she need?
 What might her strategy be?
2. In two sentences, write a reply from the woman to the man, using the following sentence stems appropriate for each component:

| Component | Sentence Stem |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. Observe without evaluation | <i>When I . . .</i> |
| 2. Share feelings | <i>I feel . . .</i> |
| 3. State needs | <i>I need . . .</i> |
| 4. Request specific response | <i>Would you be willing to . . . ?</i> |

3. Write your sentences here:

Examples of Compassionate Language (Shifting from Judgment to Compassion)

1. From Judgment (i.e., “You are always angry”) to Compassion:

When we reviewed our household budget last night, I heard an increase in the volume of your voice and saw your face turn red and your hands shake. I felt anxious because my need for peace and calm was unmet. Would you be willing to tell me now what you think could bring peace to our budget discussions?

2. From Judgment (i.e., “You are so irresponsible”) to Compassion:

When I came home from work today and saw last night’s dishes, unwashed, on the counter, I felt frustrated because my need for order was unmet. Would you be willing to wash the dishes and put them away after our evening meals?

3. From Judgment (i.e., “You are so controlling”) to Compassion:

When I see that my friends have a curfew of midnight and that mine is 11pm, I feel sad because I need to know you trust me. Would you be willing to extend my curfew until midnight?

4. From Judgment (i.e., “You never listen to me”) to Compassion:

When I tell you about my day and you ask me to get the milk out of the refrigerator, I feel frustrated and angry because I need to be heard. Would you be willing to tell me what you heard me say?

5. From Judgment (i.e., “You’re all about you”) to Compassion:

When we spoke on the phone yesterday, I was aware that I spoke for 5 minutes of the 45-minute conversation. I felt hurt because I needed for support and mutuality. Would you be willing to join me in future conversations where we each get equal time to talk?

***Language of Compassion Workshop
Empathy***



"When we are thinking about people's words, listening to how they connect to our theories, we are looking at people—we are not with them. The key ingredient of empathy is presence: we are wholly present with the other party and what they are experiencing."

***Marshall Rosenberg,
Nonviolent Communication
Pages 93-94, Chapter 7***

Examples of Non-Empathic Responses

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Advising: | <i>I think you should . . .</i> |
| Commiserating: | <i>That's terrible. She had no right to do that to you.</i> |
| Consoling: | <i>Everything's going to be okay.</i> |
| Correcting: | <i>It's not really that hard.</i> |
| Educating: | <i>You can learn from this.</i> |
| Explaining: | <i>I didn't want to do it this way, but . . .</i> |
| Evaluating: | <i>If you hadn't been so careless . . .</i> |
| Fixing: | <i>What will help you is to . . .</i> |
| Interrogating: | <i>What are you feeling? When did you start feeling this way?</i> |
| One-upping: | <i>You should hear what happened to me . . .</i> |
| Shutting down: | <i>Don't worry. It will go away.</i> |
| Story-telling: | <i>Your story reminds me of the time . . .</i> |
| Sympathizing: | <i>You poor thing.</i> |

Tips for Offering Empathy

I make my best guesses about:
Your Observations, Feelings, Needs, and Requests

***Observations
without Evaluations**

I guess what you see, hear, remember, imagine
When you see (or hear or remember or imagine) . . .

Feelings I guess your feelings.
Do you feel . . . ?

Needs I guess your needs.
Because you need . . . ?

***Requests I guess what might help you meet your needs.**
Right now, would you like . . .

*** Sometimes dropped when offering empathy**

Connecting Compassionately with Ourselves, a Personal Example

The Situation: I am facilitating a spiritual group on Sunday morning and am aware that I want to end the meeting at 1pm so that this group can meet with another group at Stone Mountain at 1:30pm. Everyone agrees with the strategy of ending at 1pm. Toward the end of our time together, one of our members brings up a powerful emotional experience that could take, potentially, more time than we have to discuss. I offer a head response, rather than a heart response. I feel guilty about my response and wish I had not done that.

Step 1: What is the judgment (moralistic evaluation) I make of myself when I've done something I wish I hadn't done?

In this case, I tell myself I am wrong or that I have done something wrong—that this is a bad thing I did.

Step 2: What need of mine was not met by my behavior?

My need to be empathic with this individual.

Step 3: How do I feel?

I feel sad and regretful.

Step 4: What need of mind was met by my behavior?

To respect and support the needs and strategies of the two groups; i.e., to end the class at 1pm and thus respect and support the needs of the two groups to meet at Stone Mountain at 1:30pm.

Step 5: With these needs in mind, how could I have met my needs?

When I felt the impulse to respond from my head, I could have connected with what I was feeling as well and have shared that with the individual. I could have said, "When I consider we have 10 minutes left in our meeting, I am aware of feeling anxiety over two needs: one, to respect and support the plans previously made to get to Stone Mountain at 1:30pm; and two, to respond to you empathically. Would you be willing to tell me how you feel about what I've just said?"

Step 6: What did I learn from this?

- *That I can be effective when I connect to my feelings and needs before I respond.*
- *That it's okay to take the time to connect to my feelings and needs before I respond.*
- *I am too quick to offer solutions and strategies.*

Connecting Compassionately with Ourselves

Step 1: What is the judgment (moralistic evaluation) I make of myself when I've done something I wish I hadn't done?

Step 2: What need of mine *was not met* by my behavior?

Step 3: How do I feel?

Step 4: What need of mine *was met* by my behavior?

Step 5: With these needs in mind, how could I have met my needs?

Step 6: What did I learn from this?