I Wrote this Summary of Nonviolent Communication

Glen Anderson

Much of our nation – across the entire political spectrum – is very angry right now.  This is a reality that we cannot deny.

Instead of escalating in back-and-forth escalations (or circular firing squads), we can recognize the reality that much anger exists.  If we recognize that reality we can harness our own anger and move toward solving the underlying problems.

*(FULL DISCLOSURE:  I myself have been angry about political matters for more than half a century.  But instead of wallowing in anger and cynicism, I keep learning, keep sharpening my analysis, and work with other people to actually solve the problems that we are all so angry about.)*

All of us would benefit from understanding Marshall Rosenberg’s model of “Nonviolent Communication” (also known as “Compassionate Communication”).  **See the article below.** Also search the internet for his other articles, videos, etc.  His book about it is very helpful.

Contact me for additional resources.  I’m at (360) 491-9093 **glenanderson@integra.net**

**Marshall Rosenberg devised this smart 4-step process, which I summarize and briefly explain here:**

1. Observe without judgment.  Simply say what you have observed without contaminating your comment with any judgment or blame.

2. Say how you feel about what we’ve observed.  Acknowledge and own your emotions.  Again, avoid contaminating your expression of how you feel with any kind of judgment or blame.

3. Express your needs.  When I use this in various settings where I’m working on issues, I also express my **values**.  Disclosing what we need and/or what we value can help ground this interaction in a legitimate personal way.

4. Request what you want the other person to do.  This is a request, NOT a demand.  Your request engages the other person in an opportunity for them to help solve the problem.

Nonviolent Communication (“Compassionate Communication”) offers ways for us to connect with other people in ways that meet each person’s needs, contribute to each person’s well-being, and help us solve problems outside of ourselves too.  When one person understands this model, he or she can use it even when the other person does not.

Nonviolent Communication helps us hear other people’s feelings and needs, and it helps each person express himself or herself in ways that will more likely result in everybody understanding and cooperating.  **One of its strengths is that it helps everyone to recognize and name our underlying feelings or needs.**  This makes a human connection and lays the foundation for meeting each person’s needs – and solving problems that exist outside of ourselves, such as social or political problems that are upsetting us.

Instead of making demands and dominating the other person, nonviolent communication each person make requests that are more likely to be fulfilled voluntarily.  This preserves our relationship and helps to solve the problems.  Although Rosenberg designed his Nonviolent Communication model especially to help resolve conflicts between individuals, he has used it also to resolve conflicts in social settings (schools, workplaces, communities, etc.).

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I believe we can apply this model to a great many situations in which we do our grassroots organizing, community outreach, speaking engagements, and so forth.  For example, when discussing an issue (such as climate or foreign policy), when people ask us asks for information, we nearly always give factual answers.  But **when someone asks a hard question about the issue we are working on**, there is often **more behind it** than a request for factual information.  We need to **satisfy the person’s underlying values, feelings and needs** too.  Indeed, unless we acknowledge and satisfy these underlying feelings and needs, the person won’t be able to hear our facts.

**Re-read the 4-step process I summarized above.** We can help to resolve the conflict if we hear the other person’s judgmental or abusive language as expressions of feelings and unmet needs.  Instead of letting that “push our buttons” and reacting judgmentally, Nonviolent Communication helps us translate the other person’s message so we can respond from our grounding in compassion and understanding.  Then we can respond in ways that explore how to satisfy their feelings and meet their needs and de-fuse the conflict.

During this time of political and social stress, I encourage all of us to practice the compassionate good sense that can help us actually SOLVE the problems.