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Put Your Best Voice Forward Power Without Press

Introduction and opening remarks

Why it is often hard for women to speak from their clear, authentic selves?

What social factors have caused our voices to go into hiding?

How can we reclaiming the voice.

Learn practical exercises that you can put into practice immediately on such topics as confidence, breath, volume and clarity.

Tips for handling difficult conversations.

Crafting your introductory Statement

Why Voice is Important and How We lose It

Impact on professional success: I conducted an informal experiment to see if voice has much of an impact on professional success. I asked a group of women to stand in front of a panel of observers. Each panel member was given a form on which they were to rank each women's look of leadership potential. The first ranking was taken on appearance alone, without voice, on a scale of 1-5, who looks like they will be an effective leader? Then each woman spoke from a brief script. The panel was asked to rank again. Based on voice alone, some women went up on the leadership potential scale, some went down. If the voice was pleasing or had gravitas, they were perceived by the panel to have more leadership potential even if initially they did not have a "leadership" look. If the voice was described as childish or abrasive, they went down on the leadership potential scale.

Our relationship with our own voice is surprisingly complex. It is connected to the core of who we are. It is linked to our past, our emotions, our motivations and desires, and to our health. Our voice reveals our essence to the world. Whether we are confident, secure, happy, healthy, inspired, or intimidated, our voice tells all. It is no secret that desire and sincerity alone are not enough to get you where you want to go. Even full knowledge of subject or years of experience in your field may not be enough. The impact you make on others in the workplace is a combination of personal qualities that affect not only **what** you say but **how** you say it. No

personal quality speaks louder than does the voice. An individual's ability to use the voice in an expressive, open, relaxed, clear, and articulate manner is a tool for success in virtually any modern arena. A skillfully used, dynamic, and expressive voice will serve your message and seize your audience, whether it is in a small conference room, a court room, a large lecture hall or TV interview.

Make no, mistake voice matters! People make judgments about us as soon as we open our mouths, as soon as we utter a word. Right or wrong, we are found to be educated or not, professional or not, calm and confident or not, acceptable or not, hireable or not, believable or not. These assumptions are often formed solely on the quality of our voice and the clarity of our speech. A reassuring thought here – it is much easier to change the way you sound than it is to change the way you look!

Why women lose their voices

Stand in the middle of an elementary school playground; you hear children raising their voices in play. If you cover your eyes, you wouldn't be able to tell the difference between the boys and the girls. They shout, they command, they rejoice, they get angry, they share, they reject, they lead and they follow. All children sound the same.

Stand in the hall at a junior high school and you will hear a different sound. Boys are louder, girls are softer. And it is not just the biology of boys' developing voices. New rules, spoken and implied, are made evident to both girls and boys from teachers, parents, peers, the media, which define acceptable behavior and voice. Boys are encouraged to be independent, to speak up and to lead. Girls historically have been encouraged to "tone it down." To be popular, which is a supreme goal of most young women, you have to be less vocal, less loud, and less bossy. Our culture tells young women that they are more desirable, more likeable and acceptable if they are not too loud, not too pushy. Ironically, boys are typically praised for assertive behaviors both at play and in the class room while girls are frequently admonished for the same behaviors. In an article for the Wall Street Journal, Sheryl Sandberg says, "...where women walk a tightrope between being like and being respected – men don't."

For many girls the energy and confidence that is voiced in childhood goes into hiding. It is known that girls are genetically wired to nurture relationships. When biology is coupled with strong and consistent social messages, young women are trapped in a double bind. We are genetically and socially driven to maintain harmony, to keep up the illusion of being perfect little ladies; we learn to contain the voice. Carol Gilligan, in her seminal book *In a Different Voice*, writes "...many women feared that others would condemn them or hurt them if they spoke, that others would not listen or understand, that speaking would only lead to further confusion, that it was better to appear "selfless," to give up their voices to keep the peace." We learned these lessons early and for many of us the patterns of deferring, of speaking softly, of letting our actions speak for us, of compromising, of accepting less can stay with us for a life time.

Now skip ahead a couple of decades and we notice the behaviors that were rewarded by teachers, parents and peers don't serve us in the professional world. Employees who advance to the

highest levels of leadership speak up, make decisions quickly, think and act independently, confidently tell their story to employees, and motivate groups to unified action.

Some encouraging statistics were reported by Katty Kay and Claire Shipman in their book *The Confidence Code*. Women in the United States now earn more college and graduate degrees than men. We run some of the greatest companies. There are seventeen female heads of state around the world. Women make up half the work force and there is a high percentage of women in middle management positions. Women control the spending decisions in 80 percent of American families. By 2018 wives will out earn husbands.

Even as these facts give us cause for optimism, there are, at the time of this writing, only twenty-one women who serve as CEOs of Fortune 500 companies. Of the many reasons that this is true, of the ones we can actually control, confidence emerges as a huge factor. Women still undervalue their worth, expecting less salary than men for a similar job, underestimating their potential earnings, and are less likely to negotiate a salary increase. Women speak up less often, feeling they don't have anything to say, fearing they will not be taken seriously, or that they will appear foolish. Women who speak up are labeled as aggressive, pushy and self-promoting. In *How Remarkable Women Lead: The Break Through Model for Work*, authors Brash, Cranston and Lewis say, "These excuses mask deeper fears of being found out, being ridiculed. Fear drives many of us to set an unrealistically high bar that would stop anyone." When a man sees a job description, he will apply if he meets only half of the required skills and experience; a woman will only apply if she meets 100 percent of the requirements. Women need to embrace their strengths and do more to build confidence and skills in order to compete at the highest levels. Reclaiming your authentic voice can provide a firm foundation upon which to build. With voice work, comes increased confidence, presence and gravitas!

As I work with women throughout the country, I have noticed a wide spread trend that is central to my ongoing research. When a girl or a young woman suppresses her voice for any of the previously stated reasons, her voice will go to one of two default settings. First it may go into hiding, staying soft, quiet, childlike, and self-deprecating. I call this "**Denial.**" Our shoulders round down, the chin drops toward the chest, and the pelvis tilts forward, diminishing the space in the torso for breath. Our negative mental messages that accompany this posture might be, "I don't deserve to be here. I can't do this. Everyone is better at this than I am. Quiet, don't rock the boat." As a result, the voice is thin, unsupported by breath, choked in the vocal tract. The voice has caved in on itself and sounds weak, thin and high. We deny ourselves access to our instinctive and creative impulses.

The second default setting, and on the other extreme, is the "**Bluff.**" When we are pretending or trying too hard to project confidence, to be in control, we often lift the chin, pull the shoulders back, lock the knees, and prepare the body for battle as it were. Our negative mental messages might be something like, "You can't touch me. I got it all under control. I'm the strongest, baddest, meanest! If I am going to succeed in man's world then I must sound like a man!" The breath is locked because the body is locked; when the breath is locked, we can never be truly present and authentic. Our voice becomes harsh, overloud and abrasive, leading to stridency, vocal aggression or press, vocal traits that are frequently called out in employee evaluations, "You come on too strong."

The authentic voice rests in between Denial and Bluff, where we can find “Power without Press.” The authentic voice lives in the **grounded, centered**, easy body. It is only from a place of ease that we can access our true power, the place from which our voice is strong, clear, and compelling.

Denial vs Bluff

For this exercise you will need a simple personal introduction statement which includes your name and your business or title. For example, “My name is Rena Cook and I am founder of Vocal Authority.”

- Stand in your **familiar** way. Bring awareness into your body. Be aware of your head and neck, where your shoulders are, where your hips are, where your weight is distributed over your feet.
- In your familiar stance introduce yourself using the introduction statement described above. Without judging, be aware of how that sounds and feels.
- Now allow your shoulders to round forward, slump a little, your head comes forward, your pelvis settles back. This is the Denial stance. As you stand in this way, certain feelings or thoughts may start to flow, “I am not prepared. I am not ready. Everyone else is better than I am.”
- In Denial, say your introduction statement. Be aware of that sound. What does that sound and feel like?
- Still standing, draw your spine up long and tall, pull your shoulders back, stretch across your chest, lift your chin. This is the stance of Bluff. Now say your introduction. How does that sound and feel?
- Now adjust your stance. Relax the shoulders down a bit, but not drooping forward. Feel the back of our neck long, feel soft front of neck, chin is parallel to the floor, your feet are hip width apart and the weight is evenly distributed. This is your **natural stance**. Say your introduction again. Is this different? What does the voice sound like? What do you think it conveys?

In this simple exercise we went from Familiar, to Denial, to Bluff, to Natural. **Authentic voice, a voice that is powerful without press comes from this natural stance, balanced, upright, but not rigid or held.**

Grounding

Grounding is a term we use when we speak of our stability, our foundation which starts with our feet. The feet must always be in solid contact with the floor. A sense of gravitas, the quality that projects inner confidence, comfort and quiet power is built upon this foundation – an awareness

that the feet are connected to the floor, drawing energy up from the earth. You will want to remove your shoes for this sequence, you will get a stronger awareness of feet in relationship to the floor.

- Stand in the natural way we experienced earlier – long back of neck, soft front of neck. Place your feet hip width apart, toes point straight ahead, soften your knees (locked knees are the spawn of satin). Imagine that the base of the big toe, the base of the little toe, and the heel form a solid triangle of support. Keeping the knees released, stand firmly on that base and relish the sense of strength it gives you.
- Rock forward on your toes, then back on your heels several times. Rock side to side across the bottom of your feet. Find that place where the weight is evenly balanced over both feet. Imagine the bones in the foot spreading out across the floor.

Feel as though you can draw energy and support from the earth. Imagine that energy is drawn up through the soles of the feet, the whole of the earth is supporting the body as it speaks and moves.

Grounding with Dowel Rods

I have found that this is one of the most powerful grounding exercise. You will need a dowel rod ½ inch in width, 24-36 inches in length (these can be found at stores like Lowe's or Home Depot; or a broom handle works too).

Before we go through this, I want to tell you that at first you are going to hate me; when we are done you are going to love me again. We are going to walk slowing across a small dowel rod, which is not at first glance the most comfortable thing you have done today. The more tension we have in our feet, the more discomfort we are likely to feel. All our nerve endings go through our feet, so if we release the tension there, we should feel relief all the way up. That is what reflexology is all about – message my feet, ah, I feel better everywhere! I have had clients proclaim they never understood grounding until we did this exercise!

Before we start, let's do a little pre-test, a check in to get a base-line reading of what the body feels like at this very moment.

- Close your eyes and be aware of your feet against the floor. Be aware of your knees; are they locked or soft? No need to change anything at this point; just be aware. Send your attention to your hips and lower back. Is there tension or pain or stiffness?
- With your eyes still closed, picture your spine as if you are drawing it from the base of the spine to the vertebrae in your neck. Imagine your head as it balances on top of the spine. Be aware of your jaw and tongue.
- Send your attention to your breath. Is it deep or shallow? Where are you most aware of breath entering and leaving your body? Don't change anything yet, but be aware.

- Be aware of any emotions you might be feeling. Fatigue, boredom, anxiety, excitement?
- Open your eyes. Allow your toes to hang over the rod, breathing deeply, softening jaw and tongue, thinking a long easy spine. Slowly walk across the dowel rod, lingering for a count of fifteen at toes, ball of the foot, two places in the arch, and the heel, surrendering to any discomfort until feet are flat on the floor once more. For variety you can exhale on an “sh” or “v,” breathe out a sigh of relief as you move to the next point on the foot, or even vocalize on an easy “ha ha ma ha ha.” These are distractions from the discomfort of the exercise and provide an opportunity to easily begin the warm up of the voice.
- When you step off, be aware of what is different in the feet, the knees, the hips, lower back, top of head, jaw, shoulders, breath. Do the feet feel different against the floor? What is your sense of how your alignment is now organized? Is the breath flowing more freely? Have your emotions shifted any? Some clients report that anxiety lifts a little and that focus is clearer; they feel more present.
- Speak your introduction phrase again. Be aware of any shifts or changes in you sound, feeling of effort, awareness of breath.

The first time I did this exercise as an adult graduate student, I cursed the teacher under my breath the whole time. But when I stepped off the rod and felt my feet in contact with the floor, I was amazed. I finally knew what it felt like to be truly grounded! The release of tension went up through my entire body.

Centering

If grounding has to do with feeling the feet against the floor, centering has to do with the awareness that your power center is just below the navel. I call the source “from whom, all blessings flow.” It is an image that the all your thoughts, opinion, emotions, experiences are housed in your center. When we are pressing the energy goes high in the chest as the chin juts forward to prove a point. If we shift that focus to our center and believe that the center is leading us through space or guiding our thoughts and inspiration, it puts our power lower in the body where it is more effective and reliable.

- Stand with feet hip width apart, knees relaxed, shoulders down, long back of neck, soft front of neck. Feel the grounding our feet, the energy coming up through the floor. Place a hand at or just below your navel. Focus on your center. Imagine the video of your mind that is playing in your head all the time is actually located in your center. It is like a camera lens, not at eye level, but at your center.
- Envision a hoped for accomplishment: asking for a raise, expressing the perfect thought at a meeting, adeptly steering a conversation to your point of view. See it happening in your center. Not your mind’s eye which we usually do, but happening in your center.
- Now speak your introduction from this place of powerful awareness. Be aware of how little effort you need from the waist up if you are grounded and centered.

Alignment:

Our bodies speak volumes about us. The shape of the spine, whether it is long and straight or hunched and rounded, communicates confidence or the lack thereof. The position of the shoulders, the lift of the chin shouts to world the presence or absence of authority.

The concept here is that our body parts - head, neck, shoulders, rib cage, hips, knees, and feet - are naturally organized in such a way as to counter the effects of gravity, to insure maximum efficiency of breath, and ease of movement. It also involves how the weight is carried, standing or moving through space. Efficient alignment creates a foundation, the platform upon which our body space is built. Lifting the body into its natural organizational relationship creates space for the diaphragm to move, space for breath in the lungs, space for resonance in the throat and mouth.

Many of us, who are not aware of the power of alignment, allow our posture to deviate from the point of maximum efficiency. Our familiar posture, that is what we have grown accustomed to through years of habitual use, may be thwarting our vocal potential. The head may jut forward, the shoulders round or press back, the rib cage caves or thrusts, the hips push to one side or the other. The feet may not be making solid contact with the floor. You probably recognized yourself in one or more of these images and wanted to answer, "but Rena, that is just the way I stand, that's how I move naturally." It may be how you have grown accustomed to standing or moving; but it may not be the most efficient way for your body to function. If you want maximum vocal authority you need to look at your alignment.

Exercise:

Head & neck

Shoulders

Spine

Hips

Knees

Feet

Dowel Rod

Breath

Sharing the voice is a deep and personal thing; it takes courage, clarity of thought and breath. Breath may be the single most important factor in the efficient use of the voice. Nothing will work quite right unless the breathing is working right for you."

Adequate breath support and control translates directly to volume, quality, and ease of delivery.

How breath works

We can equate the voice to the trumpet. In order for the trumpet to sound you have to blow air into it. Breath is the power source. If you want the trumpet to be louder you blow more air into the mouth piece. It is the same with the human voice, if you want a louder, fuller sound, you need more air.

There are essentially two kinds of breath that an individual may require – passive breath for sustaining life, and active breath for speech. As we further discuss breath we look at the two parts of each breath cycle - the inhale and the exhale.

Breath to sustain life, both the inhale and exhale, happen unconsciously with minimal effort, the body instinctively does its job of keeping us alive. Breath for speech differs in that both the inhale and the exhale are conscious and take energy and muscular control. It takes a great deal of effort and breath to speak lengthy ideas, to communicate a large emotion, or fill a large hall with sound that is capable of taking an audience on a journey.

In breathing for speech, the brain sends a signal that it would like to say something, it has something that needs to be communicated with the voice. A release of the abdominal wall follows and the diaphragm contracts and drops. This creates a negative pressure in the lungs. Air rushes into the lungs to equalize the pressure.

It is on the exhale portion of the breath cycle that sound occurs. It is the muscles of the abdomen that control the exhale in terms of length of time and amount of air that leaves the lungs. The exhale is managed or controlled by the abdominal muscles.

Release of the abdominal wall is a challenging concept for a culture that adulates the flat stomach. Many of us expend a lot of energy and effort to keep the stomach held in at all times. But the professional voice user must learn to cast that ideal aside and embrace a tummy that is relaxed and flaccid on the inhale. It is on the exhale that the stomach moves toward the spine. As a matter of fact, I have found that conscious and muscular breath work has actually made my stomach muscles firmer rather than the reverse.

The image that the words are carried out on a stream of breath is an appropriate one. Breath and sound are one. When the exhale stops, the sound stops.

How Breath Goes Wrong

High shallow breathing: When the nerves of performing kick in, that is the "fight or flight" mechanism responsible for the many changes that take place in the body when we experience stage fright, one of the first and strongest is the seeming inability to take a deep breath. Under pressure, many of us resort to high shallow breathing, which is

counter-productive to good voice usage and also deepens our sense of panic. If your shoulders move up noticeably when you breathe in, you are filling only the top lobe of the lung. That will not give you the breath capacity for an authoritative voice, or the stamina to complete a complex thought without gasping for breath in mid-sentence.

Weak abdominal release: When the abdomen releases, the diaphragm has more space to make its trip down as it contracts, this creates more space in the chest cavity for more air to enter the lungs. Many voice users initially do what I call reverse breathing - the stomach is sucked in on the inhale and pushed out on the exhale. This leads to shallow breathing and a reduction in the ability to support the sound.

Lack of support: Lack of breath support on the exhale, or poor breath management, can cause one of two things. The first is a pressed-sounding voice which occurs as the speaker pushes for volume from the vocal folds. This can result in vocal fatigue at the least and permanent damage to the vocal folds at the worst. The second is thin small voice that cannot be heard, let alone communicate any range of emotion, volume and quality.

Locked knees, rigid pelvic girdle, tight stomach, tension in the shoulders, held jaw or tongue all can sabotage effective use of breath.

The exercises for the breath fall into three phases: 1) Connecting to the natural breath that sustains life. 2) Releasing the abdominal wall that must precede the inhale. 3) Finding the moment of readiness when the inhale becomes the exhale

Exercises:

Standing breath

Start from your natural alignment and be aware of how you are breathing. Stay with this at least 10 breaths

Place a hand just below your navel, and release the abdomen into your hand on each inhale.

Blow all the air out of your lungs and wait until your body needs a breath. When your body signals that a breath might be nice, release the abdominal wall and feel a breath drop in. Repeat this sequence 5 times: blowing out all the air, wait for the need to breath, allow a breath to drop in. You should feel the abdomen release and expand out on each inhale.

Straw breath:

Breathe easily and steadily through a straw, take straw out of mouth just before the end of the exhale, release the rest of the breath out through the nose, then breathe in and out through the straw.

Balloon breath

Breath control and management:

You can also use numbers.

Say the word "One," then breathe

"One, two," breathe

'One, two, three" breathe, etc

You should notice that the amount of breath needed for "One" is very different from "One through Ten." The amount of breath varies with the length of thought.

For a longer thought, you need a bigger breath. Doing these exercises will train the breath muscles to respond to the varying size of your thoughts.

Lengthening for Ease

Gravity, tension, stress, and the simple activities of daily living compress the body. The spine shrinks through the day, the shoulders move closer to the ear lobes, the back of the head sinks onto the top of the spine, the intercostal muscles that separate the ribs shorten, the chest falls toward the stomach, the knees lock, and the ankles tighten. With this collapsing of space in the body comes a collapse of the voice as well. The voice has less space in which to live, less space to gather energy and vibrancy, less resonance, less volume and less brilliance.

When space inside the body diminishes, the jaw, tongue, vocal folds jump in to compensate, to help push the voice. This compensation only creates more tension, tightness, and effort. The voice gets thin, or strident, it may feel scratchy and fatigued. The speaker may feel frustration that the voice doesn't reflect the depth of passion, knowledge, or commitment; the message is not reaching the listener.

In order for the voice to work in its most efficient and effective way, a sense of feeling of space must be continually created in the body.

For our work today we are focusing on length in the back of the neck, and space in the mouth.

Exercises:

Neck release

Opening the throat

Lifting soft palate

Tongue release

Freeing the Expressive Voice

The expressive voice is supported by an aligned body, adequate breath support, resonance with space in the mouth for vowels, and clarity of articulation. The expressive voice has endless options for pitch and inflection variety. It does not fall off at the end of sentences. It is a voice that believes it has something to say.

Exercises

NG Siren

High/low

Pitch Absurd

Tips before presenting

Find the floor

Soften knees

Take Breath

Make space

Dealing With Difficult Conversations

Transactional Analysis

Developed by Dr. Eric Berne. At its simplest level, *Transactional Analysis is the method for studying interactions between individuals.*

Berne ultimately defined the three ego states as: **Critical Parent, Adult, and Adaptive Child.** Each can be confirmed with observable behaviors.

Critical Parent: It is always/never/should language

Adaptive Child : It is not my fault. Why does she always do that to me.

Adult – Is rational. Always asks questions.

Each of us carries each of these with us and at various times, depending on the trigger, we respond from our child, our parent or our adult. True communication and understanding only happens when both are in their adult.

What relationships trigger you out your Adult? Do you have a default ego state that tends to dominate your communication? What kind of language do you use with your children, your colleagues, your spouses/partners. In what situations are you most likely to remain in your Adult?

Nonviolent Communication

NVC was created by a man named Marshall Rosenberg. A very extraordinary man, he died a couple years ago but his model of communication has spread around the world and has been used successfully in the conflict in the Middle East, Inner City gangs, prisons and schools. This is a quote from Marshall: "What I want in my life is compassion, a flow between myself and others based on a mutual giving from the heart." NVC is a way of communicating that leads us to give from the heart.

Key Assumptions of NVC

- Human needs are universal
- Feelings point to needs being met or unmet
- All actions are attempts to meet needs
- Giving is joyful when it comes from choice and connection
- Connection arises from mutual understanding of the needs behind behavior
- There is enough for all to meet our basic needs
- Moving away from "right/wrong" judgements supports us in making peace

Key Intentions when using NVC

- Self-compassion
- Taking responsibility for our feelings
- Taking responsibility for our actions
- Expressing from the heart with full authenticity
- Prioritizing connection
- Caring equally for everyone's needs

Four Components to NVC:

1. Observation
2. Feeling
3. Need
4. Request

Observations vs Evaluations

Evaluations

You never do what I want.

You always procrastinate.

Your head is always in that cell phone!

The doctor refuses to explain anything.

Avoid words like: you always, never, constantly, whenever, nobody.

Observations

The last three times I initiated an activity, you said you didn't want to do it.

You started work on that project the night before it was due

I observed that during the meeting today you checked your phone four times.

The doctor didn't say anything to me about what causes my pain or what can be done.

Exercise: Observation or Evaluation

Circle the number in front of the statement that is an observation only, with no evaluation mixed in.

1. John was angry yesterday for no reason.
2. Yesterday evening Nancy bit her fingernails while watching television.
3. Sam didn't ask for my opinion during the meeting.
4. My father is a good man
5. Janice works too much
6. Henry is aggressive.
7. Pam was first in line every day this week.
8. My son often doesn't brush his teeth.
9. Luke told me I don't look good in yellow.
10. My Aunt complains when I talk to her.

Drawing from your experience, make an evaluation-laden observation. Then rewrite them as observations free of evaluation. (Think of your kids, colleagues, partners, or friends.) Perhaps a

challenging conversation that you need to have and this can be the first step in forming an entire approach to that discussion.

Feelings

The second component necessary for expressing ourselves is feelings. By developing a vocabulary of feelings that allows us to clearly and specifically name or identify our emotions, we can connect more easily with one another. Allowing ourselves to be vulnerable by expressing our feelings can help us resolve conflicts.

Exercise: In the following statements is the speaker expressing a feeling?

I feel dismissed when no one at work responds to my suggestions.

It feels completely incomprehensible how you can do such a thing.

I'd be furious too if that happened to me.

You're wearing me out.

I feel independent, now that I have my own car and paycheck.

I am flabbergasted to see her picture on the front page.

I feel you're annoying me on purpose.

I feel displaced, with all this new technology coming in.

I feel I am being unkind to them.

Exercise: Look at the feelings inventory and create two feelings statement for a situation in your personal, professional or civic life.

Needs

Connect a feeling with a need. "I feel _____ because I _____."

I feel angry that the supervisor broke her promise, I was counting on that long weekend to visit my brother.

I feel really infuriated when spelling mistakes like that appear in our public procures, because I want our company to project a professional image.

Judgements, criticisms, diagnosis, or interpretations of others are all alienating expression of needs.

“You never understand me,” they are really telling us that their need to be understood is not being fulfilled.

“You’ve been working late every night this week; you love your work more than me.” She is really saying that her need for intimacy is not being met.

If we express our needs they have a better chance of getting.

Exercise: Look at the needs inventory and create two needs statement that follow up with the two feeling statements you made earlier.

Requests

Use positive language when making requests. Say what you would like rather than what you do not want.

Making requests in clear, positive, and concrete action language reveals what we really want.

Be open to hearing “no” as a response, otherwise our requests are really demands.

A helpful request is to ask the listener to reflect back in their own words what they heard us say. Not to judge their listening skills but to make sure we communicated clearly.

Requesting honesty: what is the listener thinking? feeling? Is the listener willing to take a particular action? We want them to comply only when they can do so willingly.

The objective of NVC is not to change people and their behavior in order to get our way, it is to establish relationships based on honesty and empathy that will eventually fulfill everyone’s needs.

Empathy

Empathy: respectful understanding of what others are experiencing.

Empathy: emptying the mind and listening with our whole being

Exercise: Putting It All Together

Observation “When I see/hear _____,”

Feeling “I feel _____,”

Need “Because I am needing _____,”

Request “Would you be willing to _____?”



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