

One in a series of articles by

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## Connecting With Others: LANGUAGE & CONSCIOUSNESS

Words . . . they constitute the precious vehicle by which we convey vital information to each other about how we are experiencing the world and what we would like to enrich our lives.

I am interested in how we choose to weave our words together because of how enormously powerful language is in shaping our relationships, both with ourselves and others.

In my twenty-five years of working in the field of human development and relationship dynamics, the most powerful approach to creating harmonious relationships and resolving conflict that I have encountered is Dr. Marshall Rosenberg's model of Nonviolent Communication (NVC). Dr. Rosenberg's model, also known as Compassionate Communication, takes us straight to what matters most - compassionate connection with others through the use of life-serving communication.

Using this model, we either express honestly what is presently alive in us or we listen deeply and empathically to others as they express what is alive in them. We do this without any agenda to change others, without any enemy images and without blame, criticism, judgments, analysis or diagnosis. Making the shift to communicating in this way is surprisingly challenging as a result

of our cultural conditioning. Words such as right, wrong, good, bad, appropriate, inappropriate engage us in the game Who's Right. This is a tragedy since this kind of thinking and communicating increases the likelihood that we won't get what we while increasing the likelihood of alienation and violence. NVC helps us to recognize the fact that every moment offers us an opportunity to get clear on our intention and choose responses that are in alignment with our needs and values.

For those who chose to learn the NVC model, the results are often deeply transformational. It facilitates a receptive space where one can be truly present to another and receive the gift of their expression even when that person speaks or acts in ways that have been traditionally difficult to hear. It also helps people to frame their own aliveness into verbal expressions that are far more likely to elicit compassionate responses from others. By using the four steps of the model, which revolve primarily around the clear and honest expression of needs, our awareness shifts and enables us to see and hear differently. We tune in to the humanness of others, to what they're feeling and needing which then draws us, quite naturally, to find creative ways to enrich each other's lives so that everyone's needs can be met.

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