

One in a series of articles by

Rachelle

Connecting With Others: NEEDS AS GIFTS

When learning NVC, one of the most wonderful and challenging pieces for me was the concept of needs being gifts. I really liked the idea that my needs could be a gift instead of a burden which was how I'd previously perceived my needs.

Responding to my needs in this new way however represented a significant challenge to me. I didn't know how to make the switch from needs as burdens and impositions to needs as gifts.

In sharing NVC with others, it's apparent that many people share this dilemma. Here's one reason why this may be so: How many times have people given to you when they didn't really want to? How often have others given to you motivated by guilt, fear, shame, duty of obligation. Similarly, how often have you given to others from this kind of energy? To the degree that our giving comes out of these energies, we will experience needs as a burden or as toxic in some way.

Imagine a child in need of love, attention and nurturing whose parent is exhausted from overwork and the stresses of supporting a family as a single parent and unable to meet the child's needs as a result. It's hard under these circumstances for the child to experience the needs for love, attention and nurturing in a positive light. This will likely colour

the child's experience of those needs for quite possibly the rest of their life.

As an exercise, think of the needs you find hardest to express or receive from others as gifts. What experiences led you to hold this belief about these needs? Explore the ways in which these needs might have gone unmet for you in the past.

Also, see if you can get in touch with what made it difficult for others to meet your needs. In the case of the previous example, the parent's unmet needs for empathy and support got in the way of the child's needs being met. Exploring the situation in this way frees us from blaming others and allows us to clearly see that our needs are not toxic but rather that we sometimes experience situations and circumstances in life which make it very difficult to address needs as we would like.

As a final step, maintain this awareness of needs and explore different ways to meet your needs. Referring again to this example, I might make up a list of actions I could take to meet my needs for attention and nurturing: getting a weekly massage, preparing a nutritious meal for myself, taking a pottery class, going to a play, etc. and if I choose to do any of these things, I would want to perform them with awareness of how wonderful it is to meet my needs.

Finally, I remember that if I want to continue to experience my needs as gifts, that I will never let anyone give to me out of an energy that is not joyful and that similarly, I will never give to others unless I can do so joyfully. I define "joyful" as meaning that I see how my giving meets my own need to contribute to enrich life while meeting the needs of others.



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In this sense, changing a soiled diaper, doing the dishes, cleaning my father's shed or driving a taxi can all be done joyfully.

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