



Witnessing with Presence

NVC Chapter 8: The Power of Empathy

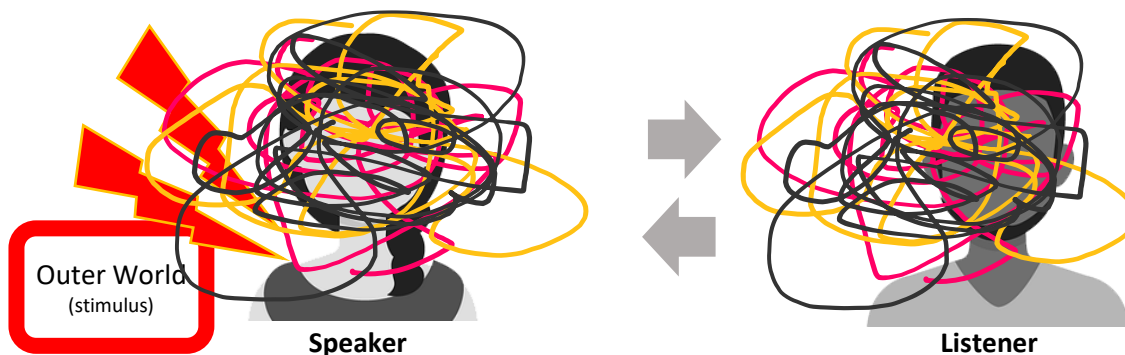
What's our intention?

- The intention of this session is to practice **receiving someone empathically**.
- We will also try out our “street giraffe” skills.
- Our aim is to offer empathy, witnessing what's precious to someone without carrying their load.

While you are waiting...



Think of a situation when you were listening to someone offload intense stories and you ended up carrying what's theirs by taking responsibility and thinking about how to fix the person or the situation.



Today's Agenda:

1. Check-in

- In breakout rooms, share with you partner:
“Have you ever felt burdened after listening to someone talk about their distress?”

2. Dissecting Dear Amy using NVC

- In large group, read “Dear Amy” and identify observations, feelings, needs, and request in pairs.
- In breakout, translate the assigned sentence into feelings and needs.

3. Classical NVC + Street Giraffe

- In large group, practice offering empathy using classical NVC.
- Next, practice offering empathy using “street giraffe.”

4. Check-out

- “I can offer empathy to this without carrying it or fixing it.”
- What does this mean to you?

“Society evolves not by shouting each other down, but by the unique capacity of unique, individual human beings to comprehend each other.”

Lewis Thomas



Dissecting Dear Amy Using NVC

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Excerpts from Advice Columnist Amy Dickinson in WSJ on Tuesday, Sept 30, 2008

Read the letter below and then discuss the questions in your small group.

Dear Amy,

My mother has always been manipulative, controlling, and pushy, but now that she is in her seventies, these traits have gotten much worse. She believes she has the right to know everything and the right to tell people what to do all the time.

My mother knows no boundaries, fights with everyone and turns people off. Her incessant need to control and manipulate different situations and people has resulted in bad choices with bad consequences.

Unfortunately, her poor choices have affected and continue to affect us, her family, in a negative way. She causes unnecessary stress and drama in our lives.

My [brothers] and I have tried to confront her about issues in the past, but she has never taken responsibility for any of her actions.

My brothers and I are in our forties. Is it too late to address the situation? Now we feel guilty because she is elderly. I have to admit, though, that I cannot take it any longer. How do I suggest that she seek counseling for her unacceptable behavior, when I already know she will play the victim?



As a group: (1) Underline any clear observations without evaluations. (2) Circle any words or phrases that express an actual emotion.

(3) Guess what the writer might be feeling and write it down.

(4) Highlight any place in the letter where the writer mentions his/her own actual needs.

(5) Could you guess what needs are up for the writer?

(6) What is the writer's request? Is it clear? Do you think it will be effective in meeting his /her needs? (*Note: I am not asking you to solve this problem — just to answer the questions. We are more interested in the way the author is communicating than the actual issue being discussed.*)



Everyone: Assign a number to everyone. Count from 1 to 12. Once you have the assigned number, add your number to your name in Zoom (Participants > Hover over your name > More > Rename > add number > OK).



Dissecting Dear Amy Using NVC

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Working with your partner (breakout room): Identify feelings and need that might be behind the statement that coincides with your assigned number. The aim is to translate the statement into feelings and needs.

Thoughts	Feelings	Needs
1. My mother has always been manipulative, controlling, and pushy...		
2. ...now that she is in her seventies, these traits have gotten much worse.		
3. She believes she has the right to know everything...		
4. ...and the right to tell people what to do all the time.		
5. My mother knows no boundaries, fights with everyone and turns people off.		
6. Her incessant need to control and manipulate different situations and people has resulted in bad choices with bad consequences.		
7. Her poor choices have affected and continue to affect us, her family, in a negative way.		
8. She causes unnecessary stress and drama in our lives.		
9. My [brothers] and I have tried to confront her about issues in the past, but she has never taken responsibility for any of her actions.		
10. Now we feel guilty because she is elderly.		
11. I cannot take it any longer.		
12. How do I suggest that she seek counseling for her unacceptable behavior, when I already know she will play the victim?		



Classical NVC + Street Giraffe

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Large group: We will practice hearing someone without judging the person, without trying to take responsibility for the person, and without trying to fix the situation or the person.

Round 1: The facilitator will start by saying the first sentence to person #1. Person #1 will respond with empathy using the feeling and need identified in the table. Use the phrase: "Are you feeling...because you need/want..." Then ask, "Is that it?"

When receiving empathy, receive the identified feelings and needs silently. And silently bring attention to your body when hearing the question, "Is that it?" Take a deep breath before proceeding.

Next, person #1 will say the second sentence to person #2. Continue this process until you reach #12.

Round 2: Use the same process. This time, respond using "street giraffe." Focus on the longing behind the statement and use any words that you might actually say to the person who shared the thoughts.

Summary

