



Distinguishing Observations and Evaluations

NVC Chapter 3: Observing without Evaluating

By the end of our 90-minute practice session, you'll be able to:

1. Spot the difference: Tell when you're describing what happened vs. adding your own opinions.
2. Turn judgments into understanding: Translate a judgment or opinion into feelings and needs behind it.

Large group discussions:

Observable data is exactly what happened, as if it were video recorded.

- It is just facts you can prove or have seen.
- Can also be defined as what your senses tell you: what you see, hear, etc.
- An exact quote: I heard Shoko say, "This is so boring."

Large group activity:

Marshall was asked to consult with an elementary school where the staff and principal had reported communication difficulties. Let's take a peek into the teachers' lounge before Marshall arrived.

Teacher 1: "If I hear one more war experience story, I'm going to scream!"

Teacher 2: "He thinks his stories about his childhood are more important than the curriculum development project."

Teacher 3: "I've had it. I'm filing a formal complaint."

Teacher 4: "He always wants to be the center of attention."

Teacher 5: "I'm done! I applied for the new job at Northside Elementary."

Which teachers voiced evaluations?

Which teachers voiced actions?

Were there any observations without evaluations mixed in?

Breakout room activity #1:

1. Introduce yourself to your partner.
2. Share your reasons for your choices with your partner.

Breakout room activity #2: Turning judgments into understanding

Breakout Room Roles:

1. **Player:** Explores and processes their own situation.
2. **Facilitator:** Guides the flow of the worksheet
3. **Empathy supporters:**
 - Silent witnessing: Sit with a quiet mind and an open heart, listening deeply with your whole being. Notice your own thoughts as they arise, and gently let them go, returning to presence.
 - Offering support: When invited, offer guesses about what feelings and needs might be present, using the provided sheet as a guide.



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Breakout room activity #2 – cont'd

1. Choose or create a scenario: Write what happened below (stimulus).

2. Share your thoughts: Note any thoughts or judgments that come up for you.

Thoughts (evaluations)

3. Make an observation: Write an observation about the situation, without mixing in evaluation or judgment.

Observation

4. Empathy exchange: Your partner will guess what feelings and needs might be behind your thoughts.

Feelings & Needs

Empathy for self: Choose the feelings and needs that resonate with you. Say aloud the training wheel sentence: “When I hear (observation), I feel (feeling word) because I need/want (need word).”

5. Consider action (optional): If you identified a need or two, note any action that comes to mind. If nothing comes to mind, you can skip this step.

Action

6. Reflect: Look back at the original situation (stimulus). Does it feel any different now?