



“I resort to using force.” – Own rather than justify

NVC Chapter 12: The Protective Use of Force

Breakout Room Activity #1: Grounding

With a partner, read the content below and discuss: What does this bring up for you?

Marshall suggests using force when:

- There is a real and immediate threat to someone's life, safety, or rights.
- There is no time or ability to talk it through.
- Physical action is the only option.



#1: Protect.

Use the least amount of force needed to stop the harm. No more.



#2: Connect – as soon as possible after

- **Give empathy:** What need was the other person trying to meet when I intervened?
- **Share vulnerability:** What need was I trying to meet when the behavior of the other person impacted me? I take responsibility for my intervention. And honestly and vulnerably share my needs.

Marshall Rosenberg coaches **very limited circumstances** for using the protective use of force.

What counts as punitive (punishing) force?

- Physical punishment (e.g., spanking, corporal punishment)
- Labeling, blaming, or shaming (e.g., “How could you be so stupid?”)
- Taking away privileges or things people need (e.g., cutting off allowances, etc.)

Why does punishment often backfire?

- When people comply out of fear, they stop thinking about their own values
- Being punished damages self-respect and trust — which hurts connection



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Breakout Room Activity #2: Compare the protective use of force

Individually, recall/imagine situations for sections A-C. In breakout rooms, process each section. Take turns.

Section A: Being on the receiving end

Recall or imagine a **situation** when you were on the receiving end of the protective use of force. Make observations.



Get empathy to your reaction from others.
Guess your **feelings** and **needs** at the time.



What **request** emerges from your feelings and needs?



What are your empathic guesses of the other person’s use of force. What needs were up for that person?

Section B: Being on the giving end

Recall or imagine a **situation** when you were on the giving end of the protective use of force. Make observations.



Describe the situation with **feelings** and **needs**. What was going on in you that prompted to behave in a way that was protective?



This moment is over. Now, what **request** would you make in this moment as you recall the situation? What do you notice when you give the gift of protecting someone else?



What’s your guess about the needs alive in the other person?

Section C: Being on the receiving end

Recall or imagine a time when you observed someone else applying what they believed was the protective use of force. Make observations.



When someone thinks they are using protective use of force, but they are communicating their strong preference, what’s the impact to the relationship? What will happen to compassion, a flow between yourself and others based on mutual giving from the heart?

Manske, J. (2023, March 17). The protective use of force [Journal questions are from meeting presentation] Supporting Holistic Systems (NVC and Social Change), online event.



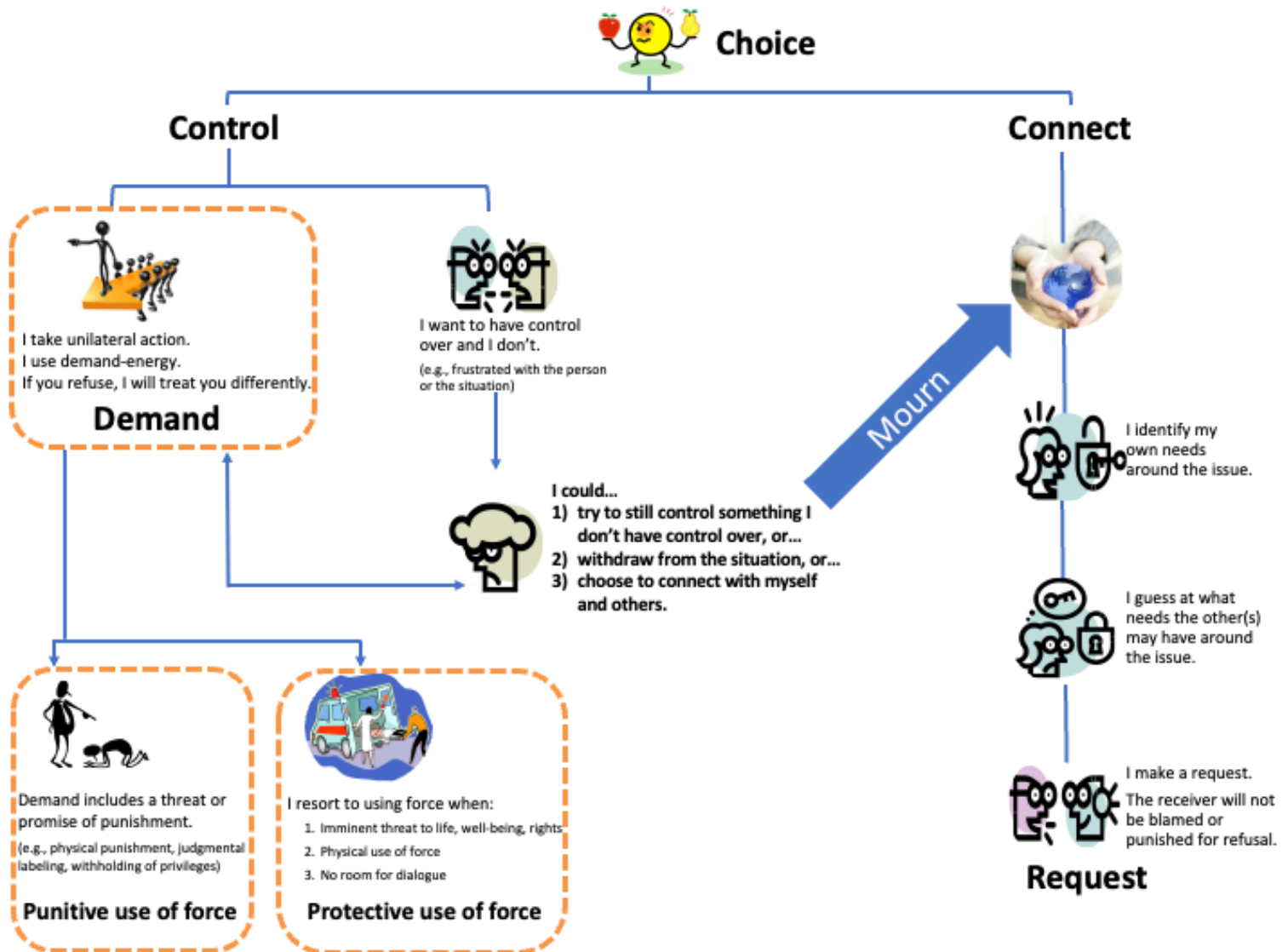
Protective use of force within the context of NVC

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Main Room Debrief: Wrap-up – the bigger picture

Notice if we are having thoughts like, “Punishment is bad. Punitive force is bad. I’m a bad person if I use demand or punishment to get my needs met.”

The goal of this lesson isn’t to label your actions as good or bad. It is to notice what you’re doing and give a “seat on the couch” to the demand-energy (punitive force or protective force). When we use protective use of force, demand with a threat of punishment, be honest about it. Own it. Don’t dress it up.



Are there conditions to co-exist (boundaries)?

Rewards for obedience and punishment for non-compliance?

- Employment agreement
- Wear a mask (+ cover nose)
- Vaccination
- Quit smoking/drinking
- No abusive behaviors
- Help with house chores
- Pass the exams & do homework
- Potty training
- Be monogamous
- Use of contraception



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Take Home: Resources and examples

Activity #1: Re-enactment

1. **Action taker:** Enact **ONE** situation below. The action taker behaves in ways that are authentic.
2. **Receiver:** The receiver experiences the situation and identifies what feelings are coming up.
3. **Debrief:** Discuss the intention of the action taker and how the action landed on the receiver.

Situations:

- I snatched a 5-year-old child who was moving towards a busy street.
- I grabbed the arm of a young woman who was looking at her mobile phone when the crosswalk light turned red, and I saw a car coming toward her.

Were there...?

- Physical use of force?
- **IMMINENT** threat to life, wellbeing, or rights?
- No room for dialogue (unwilling or unable to communicate)?

Activity #2: Muddiest Points

1. **Dialogue:** Talk with your partner about **ONE** of the following situations where you resorted to using force.
2. **Discuss** whether you would consider them as protective use of force or demand that includes a threat of punishment. What feelings and needs are present for you? What's your guess about the needs alive in the other person?

Situations:

- I put my elderly parent in a care facility even though she refused vehemently.
- I'm leaving a physically abusive relationship.
- I told a young woman filling her tank of gas while the car engine was running, "Hey, stop filling the gas and turn off your engine! You have two kids in the car. You could blow up your car."
- I approached a man at Costco. "Hey, your mask has slipped down. Let me fix your mask to cover your nose."

I resort to using force.

- I justify my use of force by calling it protective use of force.
- I wonder if my use of force was received as punitive use of force.
- I own my use of force and am honest about it and call it a demand.

Session objectives: By the time you exit the room after 90 minutes, you will have...

1. Discussed the protective use of force in the context of NVC.
2. Identified multiple perspectives.

Lofty goals: A year from now, what audacious and inspiring thing will you be able to do?

1. Own that you used force (including demands) instead of justifying.
2. Cope with the fact that we use force. Empathize or give space to discomfort.
3. Mourn when your protective use of force is received as demand or punitive force.