

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.
3. Work together to imagine an observation that the teacher might have made.

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. Once in breakout room, give a two-sentence recap of your scenario to the group.

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

Thoughts (evaluations)

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

Observation

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

Feelings & Needs

6. 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)."

7. 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

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