

Facing Hard Conversations:

How to Stay Open, Curious, and Connected

with Kathy Simon

Based on Marshall Rosenberg's
Nonviolent Communication

Today's Session on Facing Hard Conversations:

- 1) Quick overview of Nonviolent Communication.
- 2) Focus on *attuned listening*, which can be used both to deepen communication in general and when there's conflict.
- 3) Demo and practice in small groups.
- 4) Focus on *empowered speaking*, which can be used both to deepen communication in general and when there's conflict.
- 5) Demo and practice in small groups.

What is Nonviolent Communication?

It is a set of skills to show up with

PRESENCE

inside of a **communication** model –
to be used everyday

The same set of skills can be used to

CONNECT DEEPLY

RESOLVE CONFLICT

CONNECT ACROSS DIFFERENCE

Listening

Speaking

We learned to speak when we were
very young, and our patterns of speech
are deeply engrained.

In other words:

We speak in habitual ways.

Many of our
habitual patterns of speech
do not serve us —

especially when there
is conflict or disagreement.

Does this idea resonate?
How would you name some of the patterns?

The challenge:

to change the patterns,
we might need to speak in ways
that at first don't seem
"normal" or "natural."

Listening

Speaking

Attuned
Listening

Empowered
Speaking

Attuned
Listening

Empowered
Speaking

Mindful Inner World

Self-awareness; noticing my own reactions

Breathing

Self care: what do I need to do for myself when I am triggered?

Slowing down

Finding compassion for myself and the other

Breathing

Recognizing my choices: how I might listen, speak, leave, or do something else to meet this moment with presence

Attuned Listening

Sometimes it is healthier not to listen.

Sometimes it is better to get some space.

Listening is a choice.
It is not always the choice
that will best serve you.

Listening Practices You Bring

Ways of Responding that are Different from Attuned Listening

- ❖ Giving advice
- ❖ Telling a similar story that happened to me
- ❖ Providing reassurance
- ❖ Encouraging the speaker to have a broader perspective or to look on the bright side
- ❖ Asking questions to get more information or to point the speaker's attention in another direction (as opposed to what the speaker is truly interested in sharing)
- ❖ Changing the subject
- ❖ Explaining how the speaker brought this trouble upon him/herself
- ❖ Disagreeing or agreeing
- ❖ **I hear you, but _____.**

Being heard
is a core human need.

Being heard
is a core human need.

People listen better after they have
been fully heard.

A radically different conversational choreography:

One person
speaks

The other
person listens
for what really
matters to the
other

Empathic, attuned listening practices

- 1) send the message verbally and non-verbally to the speaker that you want to hear him/her/them
- 2) communicate that you have understood *with care* what the speaker has said

Seven ways to send the message that
1) *you want to hear*, and
2) *you understand what you are hearing*

- ❖ Use body language and sounds intended to send the message "*I'm here and open and listening.*"
- ❖ Paraphrase or repeat what you heard, in a tone that *honors* the statement.
- ❖ Reflect the energetic gist: "She's such an idiot." "*It sounds like you really hate what she said.*"

- ❖ Invite the speaker to go deeper. "Tell me more." "I really want to understand."
- ❖ Guess a feeling: Are you feeling confused?
- ❖ Guess a quality that the person is yearning for:
"I'm really tired of how my daughter talks to me."
"Would like more gentleness in her tone?"
- ❖ Summarize what you've understood: "It seems like maybe you are torn between X and Y?"

Listening practice

One person
speaks

The other
person listens
for what really
matters to the
other: their
feelings and
needs

It seems like you and I are
thinking about this differently.
I would really like to understand
your perspective,
so I'd like to listen and hear you.
If you're open to it, after that, I'd really like to share
how I'm thinking about it.

After you have listened and reflected for a while:

Here is what I have understood you to say:

Did I get it?

(If yes:)

Is there more?

Role Play Demo
and
Small Group Practice