Divisive Not Derisive

Having Impossible Conversations

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You have my consent to contact me through email or Facebook messenger.

BUT FIRST,
let us agree to…

Use "I" Statements
Actively Listen
Respect Confidentiality
Honor Boundaries

'I' Statements

Active, 1st person speaking
'I' statements focus on the feelings and beliefs of the person speaking.
"I don't feel heard"
vs
"You're not listening to me"

"I think … ……"
"I feel… ……"
"I am concerned … … …"
"I want … … …"
"I need … … …"

‘Active Listening’



Confidentiality

Basically … “what happens in class, stays in class”
It’s okay to leave this class and tell your friends: “In the DEI class, we talked about.”
It’s NOT okay to leave this class and tell your friends: “In the DEI class, [this specific person] said [this specific thing.]”

Boundaries

- Dictionary Definition: a line that marks the limits of an area; a dividing line.
- **Personal boundaries:** are the limits and rules we set for ourselves.

GOALS OF THIS CLASS:

1. Identifying different communication styles

2. Understanding why we (and others) engage in divisive conversations?

3. Discussing what emotions might be motivating us to do so?

4. Identifying our goals: What do we what to achieve in this conversation?

5. What do we hope to get out of it?

6. Establishing how we might better achieve those goals

7. Becoming familiar with the Non-Violent Communication model

Communication Styles

There are four basic communication styles, as listed below. Take a deeper dive into assertive, passive, aggressive, and passive-aggressive communication styles below. How would you categorize yourself?

Passive

- Avoidance of interactions where emotions and opinions are involved
- Generally, keep emotional reactions subdued in the moment of conflict
- Don't often speak up to vocalize personal preferences - often blaming others in the end
- Would instead let others dominate the conversation and feel personal repercussions than vocalize personal needs or desires.

Assertive

- Very clear with others about what needs to be done and what is the timeline
- Respects other's opinions and personal needs/viewpoints
- Is direct and open with others about what is needed from them
- Is not afraid of saying no

Passive Agressive

- The willingness to vocalize frustrations to others but not to the person at hand
- Actions and words don't often align with each other
- Avoids confrontation and vocalizing personal needs
- Will openly communicate with others (even strangers) their grievances

Agressive

- Will attempt to dominate the conversation by whatever means possible
- Doesn't hesitate to add physical or verbal violence to a conflict
- Makes opinion very outwardly known
- Will blame others if things don't play out how they initially intended it to or wanted it to go.

Doesn't tend to keep an open line of communication.

communication behavior that strives to have dominance over others

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Why MIGHT we engage in divisive conversations?

There is a myriad of reasons to engage in divisive conversations!

- Boredom?
- Blow off steam, vent, “scream into the void”?
- Righteous Indignation?

- Standing up for/defending your stance?
- Education (either to be educated or to educate other)?
- Allyship, solidarity, support?

Value Judgment - an assessment of something as good or bad in terms of one's standards or priorities

Tone Policing - the action or practice of criticizing the angry or emotional manner in which a person has expressed a point of view, rather than addressing the substance of the point itself.

Gatekeeping - when someone takes it upon themselves to decide who does or does not have access or rights to a community or identity.

Performative Allyship - "Popular criticism of performative allyship assumes that these individuals mostly engage in actions that are easy, visible and not costly, whereas social change requires people to devote considerable amount of time and energy and be ready to endure personal costs by engaging in actions that challenge status quo."

Towards an understanding of performative allyship: Definition, antecedents and consequences by Maja Katlaca and Helena R.M. Radke

… a form of allyship that is more strongly motivated by personal needs than by genuine compassion and unity. Performative allies share their knowledge about inequity with others, but don't use their privilege and resources to make real change.

Emotions, Feeling and Needs:

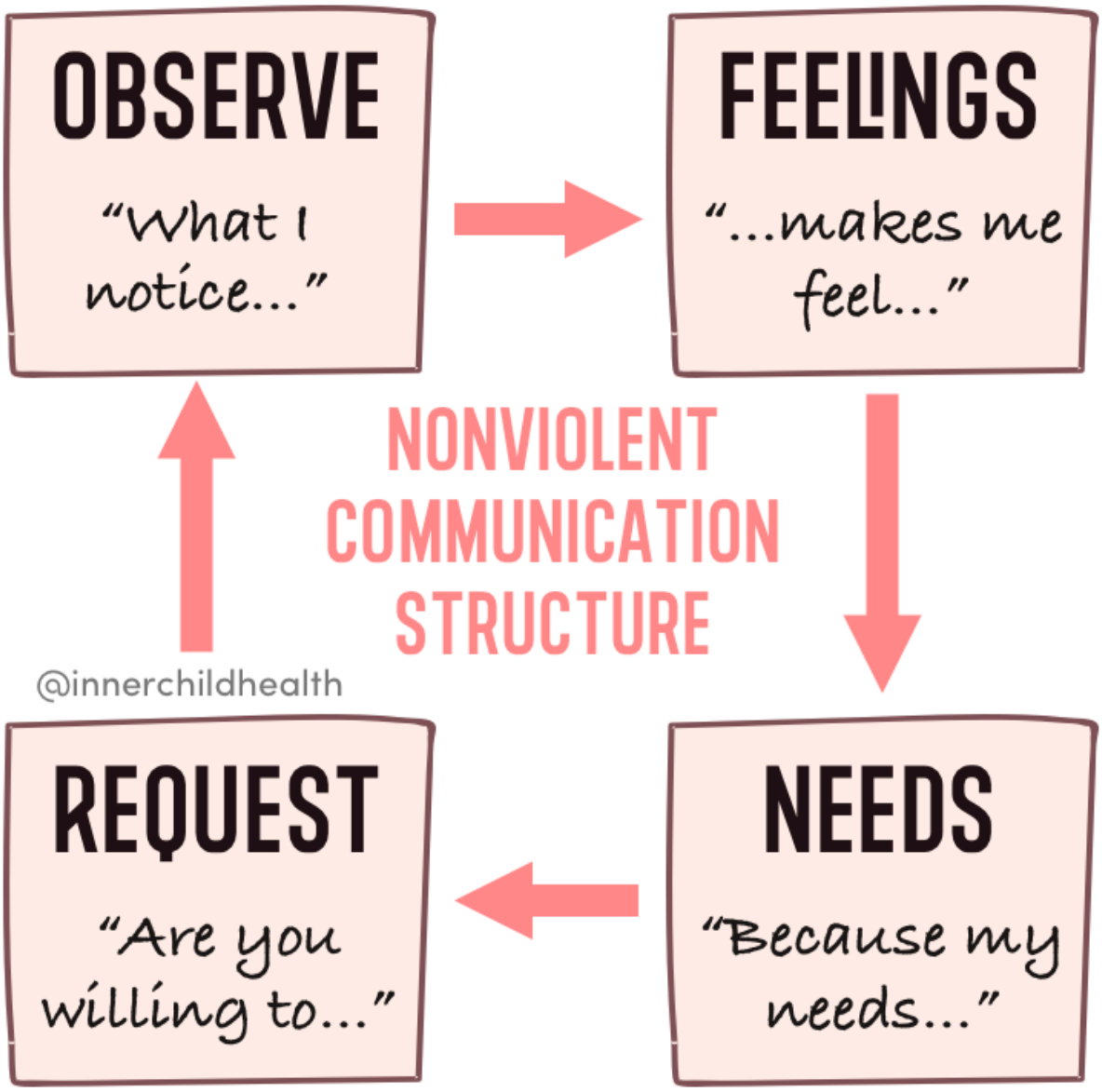
An **emotion** is a physiological experience that gives you information about the world. You might say, you are HAVING an emotion.
A **feeling** is your KNOWING about that emotion. It's your conscious awareness of emotion.
We are all experiencing emotions all the time. Emotions are neither "good" nor "bad." They just are. However, many of us have been conditioned to place value judgments on our own (and other's) emotions.

Ex. Happy, peaceful, confidant = “good”
Sad, ashamed, jealous = “bad”

Because of these value judgments, we might suppress or simply NOT FEEL (not acknowledge) our emotions.
Unfelt emotions in fact, are what often lead us to have BIG reactions.
Have you ever said, “you make me so____!?” It can feel like our feelings happen or occur based on other’s behaviors. What others say and do is a stimulus, but our feelings are a reaction to that stimulus based on our met or unmet needs.

- Observing WITHOUT VALUE JUDGMENTS,
- Pinpointing your feelings based on your observations,
- Identifying what met or unmet needs are influencing your feelings,
- Then making a simple request for something which might help better meet those needs,

Are the core tenets of Marshall Rosenberg’s Nonviolent Communications.


OBSERVE
"What I notice..."
FEELINGS
"...makes me feel..."
NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION STRUCTURE
@innerchildhealth
REQUEST
"Are you willing to..."
NEEDS
"Because my needs..."

10 COMMON DEFENCE MECHANISMS

DENIAL	Denial is one of the most common defense mechanisms. It occurs when you refuse to accept reality or facts. People in denial may block external events or circumstances from the mind so that they don't have to deal with the emotional impact. In other words, they avoid painful feelings or events.
REPRESSION	Unsavory thoughts, painful memories, or irrational beliefs can upset you. Instead of facing those thoughts, people may unconsciously choose to hide them in hopes of forgetting them entirely.
PROJECTION	Some thoughts or feelings you have about another person may make you uncomfortable. When people project those feelings, they misattribute them to the other person.
DISPLACEMENT	You direct strong emotions and frustrations toward a person or object that doesn't feel threatening. This allows you to satisfy an impulse to react, but you don't risk significant consequences.
REGRESSION	Some people who feel threatened or anxious may unconsciously "escape" to an earlier stage of development. This type of mechanism may be most obvious in young children. If they experience trauma or loss, they may suddenly act as if they're younger again.
RATIONALIZATION	Some people may attempt to explain undesirable behaviors with their own set of "facts." This allows you to feel comfortable with the choice you made, even if you know on another level it's not right.
SUBLIMATION	This type of defense mechanism is considered a mature, positive strategy. That's because people who rely on it choose to redirect strong emotions or feelings into an object or activity that is appropriate and safe.
REACTION FORMATION	People who use this defense mechanism recognize how they feel, but they choose to behave in the opposite manner of their instincts. A person who reacts this way, for example, may feel they should not express negative emotions, such as anger or frustration. They choose to instead react in an overly positive way.
COMPARTMENTALIZATION	Separating your life into independent sectors may feel like a way to protect many elements of it.
INTELLECTUALIZATION	When you're hit with a trying situation, you may choose to remove all emotion from your responses and instead focus on quantitative facts.

How to Prepare for Difficult Conversations: Questions to Ask Yourself

- What is your purpose for having the conversation?

- Who is your target audience?

- What do you hope to accomplish?

- What would be an ideal outcome?

- What assumptions are you making about this person's intentions?

- What "buttons" of yours are might be getting pushed?

- How is your attitude toward the conversation influencing your perception?

- What are your needs and fears?

- Can my participation in this conversation contribute to the problem?

Steps to a Successful Outcome:

1. **Inquiry**

I want to discuss something with you that will help us be more effective.

I want to talk about _____ with you, but would you mind telling me your point of view?

I would appreciate your help with what just happened. Please let me know when you have a few minutes to talk.

I would appreciate your help with something. Can we talk about it (soon)? If the person says, “Sure, let me get back to you,” follow up.

I think we have different perceptions about _____. I’d like to hear your view on this.

I want to talk about _____. We may have different ideas about how to _____.

I’d like to see if we might reach a better understanding about _____.

I want to hear your feelings about this and share my perspective.

We seem to have a recurring conversation (conflict, disagreement, problem). I want to talk about why that happens.

I want to talk with you about some things I’ve noticed.

I have some observations I’d like to share with you and some of the conclusions I’m starting to draw, and then I’d be interested in hearing your perspective.

2. **Acknowledge**

Communication Barriers

Below are various types of communication barriers with examples. When you have difficulty communicating your needs or listening to others, consider what barriers may be in the way.

Physical Barriers

- People's time availability is not lining up
- Not physically able to meet due to distance
- The space is loud and distracting
- The temperature isn't right to stay
- Not living in the same area
- Not comfortable with surrounding people
- Not comfortable with clothing

Cultural Barriers

- Language Barriers
- Different viewpoints in the conversation
- Differences in Jargon
- Stereotypes/Pre Conceived biases
- Difference in values
- The difference in nonverbal communication
- Social Standards

Organizational barriers

- Rules and Restrictions
- Societal Status
- Internal organization Company Structure
- The ability to (not) communicate openly
- Length of time between interactions
- Restricted access to information
- Restricted access to people

Psychological Barriers

- Premature Evaluation
- Distrust of individuals
- Lack of Attention
- Difficulty retaining attention
- Self-image plays a larger role in opinion
- Varying Emotions
- Avoidance of change/ New relationships

Semantic Barriers (Language)

- Differences in native languages
- The use of uncommon words
- Technology usage difficulties
- Varying levels of emotional intelligence
- Use of idioms in the conversation
- Lack of information
- Different levels of education

Personal Barriers

- *View of relationships*
- *Self-Worth Value*
- Level of education
- Native Language
- *Emotional Intelligence*
- Previous experiences /historical trauma
- Willingness to communicate openly

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People can only filter information and interpret the world around them based on preconceptions, past experiences, the resources they have access to.

People should not be criticized for not knowing what they don't know.

Acknowledgements can be as simple as:

- I can see where you are coming from.
- I think we are using different definitions for… It is my understanding that [this] means…. Is that different than your understanding of [it?]
- I can tell you feel strongly about this. Would you be willing to tell me a little more about why you feel this way?
- I acknowledge that we are coming at this from very different backgrounds.
- I have not had those experiences, could you tell me more about them?

3. Appreciate

"Yes… And…"

"Yes, and..." thinking, started as a rule-of-thumb in improvisational comedy that suggests that an improviser should accept what another improviser has stated ("yes") and then expand on that line of thinking ("and").

It has recently been adapted for interpersonal communication!
Human beings are sensitive creatures and while suggesting something or expressing an opinion they place themselves in a position in which they will face judgment. We crave for acceptance and the feeling that we belong, that we are equal to others. If as a response for each sentence we get a "no" or a "but", it is very possible that one becomes discouraged or starts to behave in a defensive or offensive manner.

The "Yes and" -approach aims to increase the interaction in a conversation and encourages each person build their response on top of the response the other person gave you. This makes the conversation co-operative instead of both individuals building solely upon what they have previously said.

4. Affirm

Let the other people involved know that you are committed to making progress together - whatever that progress may look like.
This could sound something like:

- Thank you for having the conversation with me; I'm sure there is something we can do about this.
- Let's work together to find a solution moving forward.
- We can certainly do something about this; what would you suggest we do next?

5. Act

Identify what all needs to happen next (both within the conversation and afterwards) and prioritize them.
What happens after the conversation is just as significant as what happens in it. If you have reached this part of a conversation, then everyone involved should agree on these next steps – whatever they are.

Action can range from: developing a big picture, breaking it down into actionable steps, and designating who is responsible for what … to saying "You've given me a lot to think about. I think I need to do a little bit more research. Could we get back together in the future to talk more?" OR "That's a very good question. I need time to think about it or gather some resources before I feel comfortable giving you an answer. Could we get back together in the future?"

RULES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

In his renowned book on effective communications, Dr. Frank Luntz's offers 10 rules to follow:

ASK QUESTIONS	A STATEMENT, WHEN IN THE FORM OF A QUESTION, CAN HAVE A GREATER IMPACT
SIMPLICITY	USE SMALL WORDS
BREVITY	USE SHORT SENTENCES
CREDIBILITY	PEOPLE HAVE TO BELIEVE IT TO BUY INTO IT
SPEAK ASPIRATIONALLY	MESSAGES NEED TO SAY WHAT PEOPLE WHAT TO HEAR
CONSISTENCY	REPEAT WHAT YOU ARE SAYING AND MAKE A POINT
NOVELTY	GET YOUR MESSAGE ACROSS IN A FRESH, NEW WAY
CONTEXT & RELEVANCE	GIVE THE OTHER AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE "WHY" OF A MESSAGE.
SOUND & TEXTURE	THESE ELEMENTS SHOULD BE AS MEMORABLE AS THE WORDS
VISUALIZE	PAINT A VIVID PICTURE

Reacting vs Responding

Conflict Resolution