

Nonviolent Communication: Say hard things without blame

Adaptive module

~20 min

At work, most tension comes not from what people say but from how they say it. Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is not just a formula to recite: this module restores its real strength, a stance that hears the need behind an attack. It applies NVC to the most delicate situation, peer feedback, where no one has the authority to decide. And it makes clear that NVC only works when the intention is sincere.

— LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 01 Distinguish the judging, accusing “jackal” attitude from the defusing “giraffe” attitude to approach hard topics differently.
- 02 Express a difficult message with the OFNR model (observation, feeling, need, request) without sliding into judgment or demands.
- 03 Listen like a giraffe to hear the need behind a criticism, by restating the facts and asking questions rather than guessing.
- 04 Give critical or positive peer feedback with “I” statements, not accusing “you” statements.

— WHO IT'S FOR

Managers and team members who have sensitive messages to deliver and want to protect the relationship.

- **Prerequisite:** none

— HOW THE MODULE WORKS

Self-paced, with practice tailored to each learner.

- 1 **Self-assessment:** on 9 dimensions, to gauge current habits and guide the practice.
- 2 **Expert video:** 10 minutes, with 3 pauses for reflection.
- 3 **Practice scenarios:** the first 2 chosen from the self-assessment, then 16 optional ones. Every answer gets feedback: what it leads to, and one way to improve.
- 4 **Dated commitment:** one action to try, written by the learner or picked from the suggestions.
- 5 **Memo to download:** key takeaways, questions, commitment, personal notes and checklists.

— A SAMPLE PRACTICE SCENARIO

Amara and Kenji handle a laboratory's account together. On Tuesday, without telling Amara, Kenji agreed with the client to bring forward the dates of a seminar. On Thursday, Amara had to admit to the client that she didn't know. Last month, Kenji had promised to keep Amara posted. What does Amara say to Kenji?

— ASSESSMENT AND COMPLETION

Pass mark: 80%

The score takes into account your answers to the practice scenarios, your commitment and, where relevant, any additional learning activities. Passing requires a commitment and a score of at least 80%.

METHODS & MODELS

- The 3 giraffe listening practices and OFNR for peer feedback – Afthonios method, in the tradition of Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication
- Nonviolent Communication and the OFNR model (observation, feeling, need, request) – Marshall Rosenberg
- Empathic listening, inspired by Carl Rogers; the I-message, from Thomas Gordon

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Marshall Rosenberg – Nonviolent Communication, developed from the early 1960s (PhD 1961, University of Wisconsin, student of Carl Rogers)
- Marshall Rosenberg, “Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion,” 1999
- Manfred Max-Neef: fundamental needs; Carl Rogers: empathic listening
- Weger et al. (2014) – active listening and feeling understood