

MAKING SENSE OF A POLARISED WORLD

Whether we are protesting in the streets or having an argument with a friend or relative via social media, we experience an array of emotions in our bodies.

We might feel frustrated, overwhelmed, outraged, or filled with despair.

All of these feelings point to needs you have that are fulfilled or unfulfilled. And every single one of us has feelings and needs in each moment.



So how do we move from fighting, struggle and hurt to mutual understanding, connection and fulfilment?

Conflict happens around the strategies we each have to meet each of our needs, not around the needs themselves. This is a cornerstone of Nonviolent Communication (NVC).

When we connect to the needs underlying our strategies and those of others, we can begin to build understanding and connection. Once we have this clarity, we can look for new strategies that consider everyone's needs. Our conversations then become a win-win opportunity for all.

Premises underlying Nonviolent Communication

- Needs are universal. All human beings have the same needs
- Every single thing we do or say is in service of meeting our need(s).
- All violence, criticism, judgments are tragic expressions of needs.
- When we truly see this, we can only see the humanness in every person at each moment. This is the foundation of Compassion.
- Every person is always doing the best they can, given their access to internal resources / self-connection to meet their needs.

THE NEEDS THAT DRIVE OUR ACTIONS

What are Needs?

Have a look at the needs list provided. We tend to think of needs as only referring to that which is in the service of our own self-interest. This would include our physical needs, such as for food, shelter, rest, or movement, along with our emotional needs for love, connection, to be seen, or to belong.

However, what we mean by needs includes everything that is required for a human being to thrive and have a meaningful life. When we get to that realm of meaning, the understanding of needs as an expression of self-interest can become limiting. Needs go far beyond personal self-interest: just as much as we want to be loved, we also long to offer our love, to contribute our gifts, to have a positive effect on others.

Recognising and expressing our needs and hearing other's needs actually serve to connect us to one another rather than isolate us. As one small example, if you look at a small child feeding another person and the absolute joy they have in caring for that person, you will instantly know that caring is intrinsic to life. Here are some examples of needs and the feelings and how they drive us to act in service of life.

- Need for food → feeling hungry (propels us to search for food, cook dinner, go to the supermarket)
- Need for health → feeling worried (we decide to get a vaccine or not, eat more vegetables, take vitamins, to exercise)
- Need for connection → feeling lonely (propels us to call a friend, strike up a conversation, join a community event)
- Need for warmth → feeling comfortable (propels us to stay inside, keep on our warm clothes, ensure we continue to have a heat source)
- Need for safety → feeling scared (propels to buy a gun, or get rid of one, to get a dog, to live in community, keep quiet, to build a wall)