

Conscious Communication with Grace and Grit.m4a Transcription

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Tina Boljevac – slide 1 [00:00:01] Welcome to the Conscious Communication with Grace and Grit training brought to you by Allow L3C and Thrive Movement Vermont, or as we like to refer to our collaboration as Allow and Thrive Project.

Slide 2 [00:00:15] Your presenters for today are myself. My name is Tina Boljevac and I'm the owner and founder of Allow L3C, and with me is Luke Manson, the founder and owner of Thrive Movement Vermont. You can find out more about our work, our businesses and our services by visiting our respective websites at allowplayandyoga.com and thrivemovementvermont.com. There is more information about how to contact us in the slides that follow. [00:00:38] So what qualifies us to do this presentation? While Luke and I started out in different fields, my being early childhood education and psychology, and Luke's being exercise science, in addition to our work in our respective fields, we're both lifelong learners and have been actively working on our own personal growth and development for over 15 years each, which together, that puts us at 30 years of collective experience exploring effective communication, nonviolent communication, emotional literacy, mind-body connection, spirituality, law of attraction - or the way we like to call it is law of resonance - and integration of sciences such as psychology, physiology, quantum physics, epigenetics, neuroplasticity and biochemistry.

Slide 3 [00:01:24] And our influences, to name a few, include Marshall Rosenberg, Dr. Joe Dispenza, Bruce Lipton, Greg Braden, Joey Klein, Michael Singer, Deepak Chopra, Marianne Williamson, Jeff Brown, Brené Brown, Jay Shetty and Dr. Nicole LePera, which are some of the most contemporary influences.

Slide 4 [00:01:46] Luke currently works as a holistic body coach, offering massage therapy, movement therapy and lifestyle coaching.

Slide 5 [00:01:57] And as for myself, I am actively working in the field of early childhood education, and I'm also a certified yoga teacher, Reiki practitioner, EFT and TFT practitioner, a mindset coach and yoga life coach, as well as a parenting and relationship workshop facilitator. I'm also a writer. You can follow me on social media, on Facebook and Instagram @allowmusings and via my website at www.courage-to-connect.net

Slide 6 [00:02:20] This particular training was born out of a previous training originally created by a small group of people, myself included, in 2013, with the intention of helping members of the residential housing cooperatives learn how to communicate more effectively with each other and to be able to live and work together more harmoniously. And the training has been modified a couple of times throughout the years to make it more relevant for a particular audience for which it was intended. It originally closely followed the framework of the book *Difficult Conversations* by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton and Sheila Heen, as pictured here in the slide that you can see. However, its latest updates include content created and brought to us by Marshall Rosenberg in his book of *Nonviolent Communication*, also pictured on the slide.

Slide 7 [00:03:05] So why are we doing this presentation? It is really important to take a moment to contemplate that in order to function in this world, we need to be able to communicate what it is that's important and true for us, and to receive information from others about what it is that's important and true for them, so that through this interaction, we can have our needs met as well as help others meet theirs. But what often happens is that most of us communicate unconsciously and we use our words in a way that contributes to alienation, versus connection. So, if we want to live in a peaceful world, we really need to start by becoming conscious of the way that we express ourselves. So let us use our words in a way that will take down, rather than build up, the walls around us.

[00:03:53] And what is really communication when you think about that, I mean, communication is a way to express ourselves, right? And so, we are expressing our thoughts, we expressing our feelings, we were expressing our needs in order to connect. Communication is a way to connect with other people. We thrive on connecting with other people, and relationships are the most important indicator of our own life satisfaction. It is also a way to request things of others that would support us and meet the other people's requests, right? One of our core needs as human beings is to contribute, and we contribute by helping to make other people's lives more wonderful. And difficult conversations are part of life, but we often get stuck and we get caught in a flight or fight or freeze response. So, what that often means is that we're either just stuck in that situation and we don't really know how to come to the end of that communication or conflict that we entered into effectively. So, nothing gets resolved and we keep spinning in circles or we don't even want to engage. We just are leery from even engaging in any kind of a difficult conversation because we feel like we don't have the skills, or we are really worried about what the outcome is going to be.

Slide 8 [00:05:04] So, the objectives of the training are learning how to connect through conversations in order to promote effective problem-solving. So, we want to learn about creating a safe and brave space for conversations, and we want to do so in order to set the stage for free expression and vulnerability. We want to learn about the dynamics underlying the difficult conversations, and we want to do this because we want to recognize what contributes to conflict. And once we have the idea what contributes to that conflict, we will be able to pinpoint that as it's happening in real time. We are going to want to learn how to shift from a difficult to a learning conversation so that we can engage in constructive dialog and be able to manage our conflicts more effectively. And we will also learn the basics of nonviolent communication, and we will do so in order to be able to have effective communications in which everyone's needs will be met, with the intention of nurturing the relationship by connecting to the humanness of the other person. And I believe that is worth repeating. So, we want to learn the basics of nonviolent communication - so communicating in the way that's peaceful - in order to be able to have effective communications in which everyone needs will be met, right? Mine and yours, with the intention of nurturing our relationship because we want to connect to each other's humanness.

Slide 9 [00:06:29] So some things that we will discuss as we work through these objectives are truth versus story. Is there one truth in a conflict? What are stories and what part do they play in difficult conversations? Intention and impact. And this has to do with a degree of alignment between what we intended to do or to say and the impact that our words had on the other person. Blame and contribution. What is the difference? We will learn how to express our feelings without assigning blame, judging, criticizing. And how do we do this when we have all been conditioned to confuse feelings and thoughts? When we think we're expressing feelings, we are, in fact, a lot of the times using our

cognitive skills and discernment at best, and most of the times we evaluate and we criticize. And that is just what we do, and we are not even aware of it. We will learn how to provide empathy to ourselves and to the other person, and we will talk about the interconnectedness of needs, thoughts, feelings, actions and experiences. And this is just amazing in and of itself, because only when we learn how to...how all of these elements are connected and how each element influences another, can we truly begin to appreciate the complexities that underlie our behavior and communication. And then when we recognize and appreciate those complexities, we can actually start to break up the unhelpful patterns that we catch ourselves in.

Slide 10 [00:07:58] So, before we get into the very essence of the training, though, we need to set the stage. So, what we need to do is create a space for all participants to participate – so, what we call a safe space, and we will want to also set an intention for the training, and also some ground rules.

Slide 11 [00:08:17] So how do we create a safe space? What is a safe space, in the context of a training? Here's a quote that I wrote a while back after participating in a training in which safe space was neither defined, nor maintained. "Instead of thinking of safe space as a space where we will all agree and no one will be triggered, which is ultimately a futile pursuit as we simply cannot control the way other people respond to our words or our presence - let's think of it as a space where it is safe for all participants to be brave. A space where everyone is free to express authentic feelings, needs and requests without fearing alienation or retribution. A space where what we express is held with care, an environment in which we know that we are met with gentle curiosity and unwavering acceptance rooted in our human connectedness. It is in this space that we can practice becoming increasingly, courageously vulnerable. And in doing so, we can begin to rebuild trust and grow in ways we wouldn't if we always retreated to spaces where nothing could touch us." All right? A lot of the times people, when people think of a safe space, they think of a space where just...no one will be triggered. And that is just not realistic because if we allow people the freedom of expression, if we let them really say whatever it is that's on their hearts and on their minds, undoubtedly that in some way it will trigger another person – so, we cannot avoid a triggering. But what we can all agree on is that the person who expresses themselves will be met with compassion, with care, with curiosity, with an open heart, an open mind. And we will just hold space for whatever is said within the context of the training or group discussion.

Slide 12 [00:10:11] And then we also need to set an intention, so when we think about setting an intention for the training, we need to really think about "what is that even?" and intention really refers to an aim, a plan, an objective, a purpose. It is something that has energy of action behind it, in which you are an active participant. So, you're putting your attention and energy in the direction of your intention. And what that is *not* is some kind of a wish or a hope or a desire. Because when you think of something you wish, or you hope for, or you desire, you know... it's more of a passive kind of a way of looking at this, versus really having an energy of action behind it.

Slide 13 [00:10:51] And there are two layers when we think of a setting an intention: it is what we want to get out of the training - so, let's say, what are some of the major takeaways? Like, let's identify two major takeaways. But it's also about how we will show up, or what we will do, that will allow us to reach that objective. So, in order to take two major takeaways with me into everyday life, I will do the following - so, whatever that may be for each of us, you know - I will listen intently to delivery of the content, I will suspend judgment, I will engage in activities. I will be open to shifting and expanding my

perspective. I will listen with curiosity to what others are saying... and other things that, you know, might be coming up for you that are not necessarily listed on this slide. There are a lot of different ways that you can commit to showing up to this experience so that you could leave the experience with, let's say, two major takeaways.

Slide 14 [00:11:54] So let's take a minute and you can pause this video while you are just taking a moment to set your personal intention for today. Maybe you want to write it down and maybe some of the suggestions that are here on the slide that we just went through... maybe they really speak to you, and maybe you have your own. So why don't you pause the video and maybe you want to close your eyes and just let the intention bubble up for you and write it down?

Slide 15 [00:12:22] So now it's time for us to tackle ground rules, so this will not be relevant for an online recorded training if this is the format that you're taking because there won't be opportunities for group engagement and participation during the training itself. But we still might come together live in some way, whether that's through a Zoom meeting in between or following the recorded training or via an in-person meeting. So, let's set some ground rules to ensure that everyone's presence and contribution will be valued. So, it is critical that everyone does their best to hold an attitude of non-judgment so that everyone can feel free and safe to share their inner experiences. Absolute confidentiality is essential. So, what that means is what is said in the group stays in the group. Please refrain from side to side chatting and or gossiping, and support and hold space for emotional expressions and experiences of others. Please be tactful when sharing your experiences - so consider if the manner in which you share is helpful and kind, and, are the messages truthful. And let's make sure that everyone has an opportunity to be heard in a way that works for them. So again, depending on the format of the training, if real time or direct engagement is not possible, then we can connect via email, a live Zoom meeting, social media or even in person following the training. During live Zoom trainings, you can raise your hand or type in the chat. We will review from time to time, and please know that I will not be able to follow the chat simultaneously as I am talking. I just cannot do those two things at the same time, but we will be checking or Luke could probably moderate as well. So, during the in-person trainings, there'll be lots of opportunities for individual as well as small and large group activities.

Slide 16 [00:14:14] Now that we have gone through the introduction part of the training, we're going to delve into part one. So, we will be defining difficult conversations and looking at what lies at the core of conflict. So let's take a look.

Slide 17 [00:14:29] What constitutes a difficult conversation? I would say that difficult conversation is any conversation in which the issues at stake are high and the outcome is uncertain. Also, it's any conversation where what we are talking about is something that we deeply care about. So, we deeply care about the issue. And also, we deeply care about the people that we're discussing it with. And it's also any conversation in which we feel vulnerable and in which our self-esteem might be implicated, right? Our self-identity. We're going to get into that a little later.

Slide 18 [00:15:08] And why are we unwilling to engage in difficult conversations? They're definitely a part of our lives. We're definitely needing to engage. But a lot of the times we are just hesitant. Why is that? Likely, it is because we ultimately fear that our needs will not be met. So, what do we mean by that? So, let's think about it. When we experience the fear of conflict, and we fear that we will damage the relationship further with the person that we truly care about, we really fear that our need for harmony and peace and

acceptance and love will not be met. And this is not necessarily happening on a conscious level, but there is definitely this subconscious, or unconscious, need for all of those things, and we just fear that it's not going to be met, right? Nobody wants to be in conflict, and nobody wants to enter difficult conversations fearing that a relationship will be damaged. So, we hesitate. There's also a lot of the times of perceived incompatibility of individuals' goals. So, we think that either this person is going to get their way or I am going to get my way, it cannot be both, right? So, it's "this or that" thinking. We call it "THIS OR" thinking. And then there is a sense of helplessness that might ensue if that person gets their way, right, and not me. So, the needs that are being unmet is really a need for consideration or need for respect and need for acceptance and need for understanding. Those are all real needs that, again, are going to be unmet if we perceive incompatibility in what we each can get out of the conversation. There is also a lack of clarity and lack of understanding and awareness of what might be going on within ourselves that prevents us from engaging in a difficult conversation. So, we have this need for clarity, right? So, if we don't feel like we were clear on what it is that we want, or what it is that we're trying to communicate, we're going to just hesitate or just not engage altogether. And then there is also a lack of competence and skill in managing conflicts effectively. So, we feel discouraged, right? If we feel like we don't have the right words or the right skills or the right state of mind, we just hesitate or not engage at all because we all deeply have the need for dignity and appreciation and respect, and we feel like we might not get that need met if we engage in a conversation without the skills necessary to manage it effectively.

Slide 19 [00:17:55] So what are some of the dynamics that are underlying difficult conversations? So, some of the things that the book has identified, you know - and that Luke and I had also put together from the Nonviolent Communication book and just our life experience - are the following things. So, there is this thing called "jackal language," and Marshall Rosenberg is the person who actually talks about that in his NVC material. And he defines jackal language as a language which we all use, which we all trained in, and we use it to judge, to criticize and assign fault. The book *Difficult Conversations*, identifies three different conversations that happen within one difficult conversation, and that might be a little challenging to wrap your head around, you know, without being familiar with the content. So just try to take it easy. And don't, you know, don't be too hard on yourself if it all gets confusing, but I'm going to try to explain this in a as simple...simplest way possible. So, the three conversations that are happening within one difficult conversation is the What Happened Conversation, the Feelings Conversation and Identity Conversation. And I would actually... Luke and I added Feelings and Needs Conversation because that is - the needs is - the component... it comes from nonviolent communication that the *Difficult Conversations* book does not actually identify specifically. So again, what happens? So, when we are in this difficult conversation with someone, we very frequently will make damaging assumptions about truth, about intentions and blame, and all of those things fall into a What Happened Conversation - and we'll get into each of those elements later on. We also are ill-equipped to deal with emotions that surface, that fuel the conversation. So, that would be our feelings conversation, right? Emotions will come up, and we don't know how to deal with that and what to do with them. And then our identity or self-esteem is likely to become and implicated. And that will knock us off balance, which is that identity conversation piece. And then on top of all of that, we tend to react according to our default conflict style, which can be, you know, competing/attacking, which can be avoiding/withdrawing. It can be also accommodating or giving in to the other person. We might like to approach by compromising or, you know, or not meeting the need. Or collaborating. There is just a lot of different ways that we can approach a difficult conversation or a conflict. And a lot of that will come from our default conflict style, that it

will be good for us to identify so that we can recognize and notice once the pattern is starting to show up in our conversations. And again, we'll get to that a little bit later as well.

Slide 20 [00:20:55] So let's talk about the What Happened Conversation. We're going to get into each of those three conversations - so, the What Happened Conversation, Feelings and Needs Conversation, and Identity Conversation - we're going to get into each of those separately. So, What Happened Conversation - the first part of that conversation is so called the truth assumption. And what that really means is, you know, you can think of it as "I am right, you're wrong." We are all so used to thinking in black and white terms in that way. So, if I am having an issue with something, and I'm talking to you about something, then you know, I believe that I'm right whatever it is that I'm presenting - and you are not. So that is just how we each approach a difficult conversation just by default. So, that's why it is called "the truth assumption." But is there only really one truth in conflict?

Slide 21 [00:21:48] So to find that out, we will be doing a couple of activities. One is called the Monkey Business video, and I hope that not many of you have seen it. If you have seen it then you know what it's about. But if you haven't, it's a really wonderful one to watch. And then we'll be looking at a couple of optical illusions.

Slide 22 [00:22:10] So I would encourage you right now to pause this video and to either click on the link if it's available or to you, and you can even type it into the YouTube yourself - and what it is called is The Monkey Business Illusion. Take a few moments to - or, a few minutes - to watch the video and follow the directions that are given to you in the video itself, and just watch the whole thing from the beginning until the end. All right. And now we're going to be looking at three different images here on this slide - in the next slide.

Slide 23 [00:22:50] And what's really interesting about these images is that different people see different things when they look at the images. So, look at each one and see - jot down - what it is that you see. What...what comes to mind first, when you look at each of those three images that are presented in this slide? And now, after you have written down at least one thing, then see if you can shift your perspective in such a way that you see something else because each of those images can be seen at least a couple of different ways, right? See if you can notice that for yourself.

Slide 24 [00:23:32] So what are some of the takeaways from the activity? We see that in the video, as our attention is in the counting of the passes, very few of us notice the gorilla walking across the room or that the curtain changed colors. While there are many pieces of information that is available for our brain to pick out from the environment, we will only consciously pick up the information that we're paying attention to. And this is why we miss the rest. So the saying goes: where our attention goes, the energy flows. So, in other words, what you focus on in life, or in a conversation that you are having with someone, is what you will see or experience more of. So, in the optical illusion images, we could see one thing or multiple things shown within the same image, and it all depends on where we place our focus. It was a young woman or an old woman, or in the other, next picture we could see a picture of a sculpture or a profile. I mean, there was no one right answer - all answers are correct.

Slide 25 [00:24:30] So, we are learning is that there is no such thing as one truth in conflict. There are multiple truths. Or, what we should say is that, really, what we are seeing and experiencing - or where we are coming from - is our story. So, what we call

truth is subjective. The truth itself is based on our perceptions. So, what we put our intention on, right? Just like we saw in these previous examples of the activities that we just did. So, there is a story of an uncle and a four-year-old at a parade, that the authors of the Difficult Conversations book highlighted to illustrate that we just talked about. The story goes like this. So, there is an uncle. And he took his four-year-old nephew to a homecoming parade, and after the parade was over, Uncle checked in with the child, asking him what he thought of the parade, and the child said: "It was the best parade I have ever been to! There were so many cool trucks!!" and Uncle was puzzled because he hadn't noticed a single truck. So, while he also thought that the parade was great, what he was remembering were the various elaborate floats. So, it's almost like they were witnessing two different parades. So why were their experiences be so different? Their child loves trucks, so his attention was on the trucks, and that is what he was noticing and later remembering. And the uncle was an artist and a carpenter with zero interest in trucks. So, what he was noticing was exactly the things he was paying attention to, which were the creative floats. So our truth, or our story, is not only based on what we pay attention to, but also on our interpretations of experiences, and implicit rules that we live by, which are both largely based on unconscious programming - so, the rules we absorbed in childhood from our parents or teachers or media. Such as, for example, "fairness is synonymous with equality, which means that everyone gets an equal share and only that is fair." But in that case, we don't account for the fact that not everyone has the same starting point. But that is something that we might not consciously really even realize that we're coming from there, because that is an implicit program that we have in our in our subconscious that we operate from without any conscious awareness. What we think is truth is really typically our position, or stand, and not what the conflict is about. So, when we have a conflict with someone, it is usually about our unmet needs, or their unmet needs or interests. So, we will see that once we can connect to each other's needs and approach the conversation and a conflict with a willingness to meet those need, the strategies by which we will be meeting them will likely organically present themselves. And yes, sure, there might be factual errors. But again, conflict or difficult conversations are rarely about factual errors. And also, while there might be policies, or laws that are, you know, set in stone, the conflict that arises about the policies, let's say, or laws, isn't about what is actually stated. It's about the interpretation of what is stated. And hence, you know, you go to court so that the court can determine the right interpretation of any given law...just, for example, a tap on my head.

Slide 26 [00:27:46] The second part of the What Happened Conversation is "the intention invention" piece. And really, what that means is, you know, the saying "you meant to do it" - or our assumption that the person meant to do something that was harmful or hurtful to us.

Slide 27 [00:28:01] So what...what happens? Why is it? So, what we do is we judge other people's intentions by the impact on their actions on us. So let's take a moment to think about that. We judge other people's intentions by the impact of their actions on us. So, if I am hurt, that means that you meant to hurt me. That is that is our default approach. So many of us just assume that if we are feeling hurt, that person has meant to do that to us, although we do not know their intentions, right, but we can feel the impact. But we also, at the same time, conversely, we judge our actions by our own intent. So, if you are hurt, I didn't mean to hurt you. I'm sorry that you are hurt, but I didn't mean to hurt you. Right? Is what we will commonly default to.

Slide 28 [00:28:50] So, it's really important for us to disentangle impact and intent. And the most important thing to remember is that I am aware of my intentions, and I'm also aware

of your impact on me, right? So, my intentions and the other person's impact, that is something that I am aware of, but I cannot be aware of - I'm not aware of - that other person's intentions and my impact on them. So however, it is that I was impacted is how I was impacted. But I don't know that that person meant to have that impact on me. And I also have no idea how I impacted the other person. I know what my intentions were, but I don't know, unless they tell me, what those words or my behavior, really...in what way it impacted them and what it meant to them. So we will make assumptions about the person's intentions based on our history with that person and as well as our experiences and preconceptions that are unrelated to the specific person. The tip here - or, the best advice that could be given - is to really when you find yourself in that kind of a challenging, difficult situation, try giving the other person the benefit of the doubt and do always assume best intentions. So, unless you know that that person is somebody who is historically intending to hurt, you know, just give the person the benefit of the doubt, assume the best intentions. Then openly acknowledge the impact and be curious about their intentions. So, like, if you have been impacted in a way that's really hurtful to you, let them know what the impact of their words or their behavior was and ask them, you know, did you mean to have that impact on me? Was that your intention? Or were you trying to...you know...was there a different goal that that was happening [because of], that you intended to [reach]...or a different outcome that you intended to get to? And then, you know, just realize that often we act with mixed intentions, so we might have good intentions that are directed towards the other. But we also have some self-serving intentions mixed in there. Or, sometimes we will act without any conscious intention whatsoever. So those are behaviors that are considered thoughtless or just completely mindless. Or, you know, when you do things on autopilot, we just do something and we are not even really intending anything in particular. So that is also possible, right? So, it's really important to really keep that in mind. Again, I'm aware of my own intentions, but I'm not aware of how my behavior and my words are impacting you. But I *am* aware of how your words and behavior are impacting me, while at the same time, I am not aware of your intentions, and I don't know if...that you meant to have that effect that you had.

Slide 29 [00:31:48] So the example of a time when we might act with mixed intentions was also illustrated by a story brought to us by the authors of *Difficult Conversations*. And it's about a couple at a party. Luke and I refer to this story as the "ice cream story." So this is how it goes. The woman in this story asks her boyfriend a few days prior to the party to help keep her accountable when it comes to consuming large number of treats. She was working on adhering to a healthier lifestyle and healthier food choices, so she was hoping for his support and encouragement. And at the party, as she was about to serve herself the third bowl ice cream, her boyfriend said: "Maybe you want to lay off the ice cream" in front of her friends. The woman felt hurt, embarrassed and humiliated, and had told her boyfriend about how insensitive he was by acting in this manner. And he was surprised to hear this, and hurt by being labeled insensitive, when he only tried to meet her request to hold her accountable in restricting her consumption of treats. So, without going into the actual words used in their conversation, let's focus on the boyfriend's intentions. He likely had mixed intentions. He may have truly wanted to keep his promise that he would help keep her accountable to eating healthier, and he also may have felt embarrassed by watching her binge on ice cream in front of his friends. So, while his intentions in saying what he said might have been mixed and self-serving to a degree, he might still not have meant to hurt her. So, in that way, the impact of his words and his behavior - that his behavior had on his girlfriend - were not necessarily aligned with his intentions because his intentions were not to hurt her.

Slide 30 [00:33:25] So the third part of the What Happened Conversation has to do with assigning blame, and the authors of the Difficult Conversation call it “the blame frame.” And really what that has to do with is just our defaulting to assuming that everything else is somebody else's fault and not ours.

Slide 31 [00:33:44] And what happens when we blame people and oftentimes we will even blame not even consciously, we just automatically jump to a conclusion that something is somebody else's fault. Then we just start blaming. And when we do that and distract us from exploring why things went wrong and how we might correct them going forward. And so there is a little cartoon that I had read once, and it just illustrates this really beautifully. It says: “You have a problem with accepting personal responsibility,” you know, one character tells another. And the second character says: “Yeah, and whose fault is that?” You know, it's just so easy. It is so easy to assign blame to other people. And when we do that, then blaming puts people on the defense and then when this happens that people are really not open to learning. So, in a defense mode, you are just closed off to everything else that otherwise you might be able to experience. And you know, shift perspective and expand perspective and learn new information, integrate that information and then come out, you know, having grown from the experience. And none of that happens when you are on defense. So, blaming is an attack on the person's character. So then when attacked, what do we do in light of any perceived threat? We will fight back, freeze or withdraw, and we're just not in the frame of mind to problem solve. So that in that case, we no longer have access to our prefrontal cortex, which is the thinking part of the brain. And we're at the mercy of our emotional brain, which is reactive - which is also called the limbic part - or, then we could even descend even further down into our reptilian brain - or our brain stem - the main function of which is to preserve life. So, we definitely don't have any ability to think clearly and to act in a way that will be conducive to, you know, nurturing the relationships and coming out out of a situation, you know, feeling good about it.

Slide 32 [00:35:51] So the fourth part that plays the role within the What Happened Conversation has to do with unclear requests. While authors of the Difficult Conversations don't specifically talk about unclear requests, Luke and I thought it was important to include this element because we have found that unclear requests can be a cause of many misunderstandings and also unintentional hurt on both the side of the person giving their requests and the one who is attempting to meet it. Unclear requests lead to expectations that might not be realistic and therefore they go unmet, which then results in disappointment on the part of the person who expected their request to be fulfilled. And this is something that is thoroughly discussed in nonviolent communications materials. So we thought it was the right thing to include it in this section.

Slide 33 [00:36:40] How do we formulate requests that are not unclear? In other words, how do we formulate clear requests? One of the most important things to consider is to be specific. So if all possible, we want our requests to answer the four open ended questions: *when* - so for example, you can start off your request by saying “next time when this happens..”. The second one is *what* - “I would like you to do such and such”. Third question is *how* - “by way of” whatever it may be. And then the fourth question is *why*. You can start answering it by starting with “because”- so in the ice cream story that we visited earlier when we talked about intentions, the woman may not have been very specific when asking her boyfriend to hold her accountable - specific wording could have gone something like this: “Next time, when you see me go for a second serving of the dessert, I would like you to gently kiss me on the cheek to remind me of the fact that I'm trying to limit my dessert intake. I really want to keep this promise to myself, and I would like you to hold me accountable.” So, in that way, she was more specific. Next time when

you see me do this - which answers the question when - I would like you to do – what - you know, gently kiss me - is how – why? - to remind me of the fact that I'm trying to limit my dessert intake. So, by being as specific as we can possibly be, we give the other person enough information that's necessary for them to have in order to fulfill our requests so that it meets our expectations.

Slide 34 [00:38:20] So now we are actually going to jump into doing an individual activity where we will be formulating clear requests. So let me formulate a clear request to you by saying this, I would like you to pause this video for the next five minutes so that you can think and jot down a request that you could make to your coworker tomorrow about something that will make your experience in the classroom easier or more rewarding by using the following prompts: when, what, how and why. So, in terms of using the prompts, you can use all four or you might not need to use all four, depends on what it is that you're asking, some things are just implicit. So as a particular example of the above, I could offer this. So, for example, I'm formulating a clear request to my coworker by saying this: would you be willing to clean the tables and mop the floors during rest time tomorrow so that I can work on finishing up the journals? So again, I had to formulate a request by answering the question what - would you be willing to clean the tables and mop the floor floors – when? - doing rest time tomorrow – why? - so that I can finish and work on finishing up the journals. And the assumption here being that the coworker knows how to clean and mop so it doesn't have to be explicitly stated. So again, I would like you to pause this video, and try to think of something that would be really helpful to you, whether it is that you are, you know, asking a coworker to do or your partner or friend, it doesn't really matter. The purpose here is for you to practice formulating clear requests.

Slide 35 [00:40:12] So now we're moving from the What Happened Conversation in which we discussed the impact of stories, of assuming the other person's intentions, assigning blame and providing unclear requests, to a second type of a conversation happening, simultaneously with the What Happened Conversation, and that conversation we call the Feelings and Needs Conversation.

Slide 36 [00:40:34] So let's look at what happens with our emotions first. When we are in the midst of a difficult conversation, we - if we just take a moment to pause and to actually acknowledged this - we will realize that feelings are embedded at the heart of any difficult conversation. But oftentimes, you know, we were told to ignore our feelings, and it's just “feelings are not important; facts are important.” So, we try to frame the feelings out of the problem. But you know, we are human beings and it is impossible to separate our feelings from whatever it is that is happening. So, the feelings would always get away in solving the conflict, even if we're trying to frame them out of the problem, because they will either leak into a conversation in some way or they will just burst into a conversation if we have been suppressing them. So, they will make it difficult for us to listen to the other person or vice versa. And the feelings that arise often can take a toll on our self-esteem and relationships. So then, you know, we find this out and we learn this information, and then we think to ourselves: “OK, so I guess we will include the feelings in our difficult conversations” and then we decide to share our feelings. You know, we were told, “Yeah, it's good to share. Just make sure you do.” And then we think we are sharing our feelings, but we are perhaps not quite doing that. So before we actually get into the nitty gritty of this - and this is one of my favorite parts of the training - let's do an activity.

Slide 37 [00:42:06] I would like you to think about an example or two of what you might say to someone when you're sharing your feelings just you know, just think of your, again, a coworker or a partner or a friend or a family member or whoever, and think of something

that maybe is currently happening or has just happened that is really fresh in your mind, and share your feelings with them. Write a sentence or two sharing your feelings.

Slide 38 [00:42:33] Often when we think that we're sharing real feelings, we translate our feelings into judgments. And an example could be: "if you were a good friend, you would be there for me." So this is the example. Feelings are not really expressed, but they're leaking through the judgment that was expressed...and the feelings may be those of sadness, disappointment and pain that the person is actually experiencing, right? We also translate our feelings into characterizations or labels or criticism. One example of that could be telling someone "You're always so inconsiderate," right? What are some of the feelings under that criticism? Maybe there is some frustration. Maybe there is anger. Maybe there is some disappointment, but it's definitely not directly communicated. What the other person hears is the criticism, and hearing your criticism will lead the other person to go into a defense mechanism, right? And that's not going to be conducive to receiving the information compassionately. Another way that we will try to communicate our feelings is through problem-solving. So, for example, a person A can say "What's wrong?" and the person B will say, "You need to call me more often." As you will notice that the person thinks that they - I mean, they might think that they - are expressing their feelings of sadness and loneliness or concern or worry. But what they're actually doing is jumping right into problem-solving, which may not be received with the same amount of empathy that it might be had the person shared their actual feelings.

Slide 39 [00:44:04] So we might notice that the above expressions are expressions of thoughts, and not actually feelings. Feelings have to do with emotions, with sensations that we're feeling or sensing in our body, and feelings are not what we think the other person has done, is doing, or what should be done.

Slide 40 [00:44:25] So that is a lot of information. And again, we will go into some of this in a greater detail when we come back from the little break that hopefully everybody will take. So at this time, I encourage everybody to take a little break to digest the information that has been offered so far. You know, go stretch your legs, wiggle your body, have a glass of water, shake off any stagnant energy and then come back to the training and we will move on to the next activity.

Slide 41 [00:44:55] Welcome back. We will continue by immersing ourselves into the activity that will help us expand our feelings vocabulary. So, in your workbook, as well as on the slide in front of you, there is an NVC list of feelings that, as you will see, divides our feelings, or our emotional experiences, by whether or not the underlying needs have been met. So take 15 minutes to read through the list and then choose the following options rewrite the sharing of the feelings from the previous activity that we did. Or you can choose to write down any feelings that you think may be missing from the list that you have in front of you.

Slide 42 [00:45:37] So I'm curious, how was your experience, any insights? Was it challenging to try and reward your previous write up to more closely reflect your true feelings versus thoughts you may have been having about the situation?

Slide 43 [00:45:52] Also in your workbook, you will find a handout on NVC words which express our thoughts instead of feelings.

Slide 44 [00:45:59] So in the live or in-person training, we would go through it together. But for now, take a moment to examine which thoughts are frequently mistaken for

feelings and see whether you find yourself expressing your thoughts inadvertently disguised as feelings.

Slide 45 [00:46:13] So let's talk about needs. How do they fit in? Needs matter!

Slide 46 [00:46:18] So, what do we know about needs? So, what we know is that needs are universal, so every human being has needs. And thankfully, lately, at least on social media, it seems that people are increasingly more accepting of this fact. It used to be that acknowledging one's needs, especially talking about them and openly asking for support in meeting them made one seem needy, and this was considered an undesirable trait. So many of us erred on the side of overreliance on ourselves, but yet still deep down, we wanted other people's support. So, what we ended up doing was resenting the people in our lives for not reading our minds, as though somehow, they should know what we need without us telling them. Or, some of us rejected the idea of having needs so much that we completely lost touch with them. And not that the needs ever went away, we just stopped being able to recognize them and meet them in a way that would be fulfilling for ourselves and beneficial to our relationships. And we know that - especially working in this field of early childhood education - that all behavior is an attempt to meet an unmet need, whether it happens consciously or on an unconscious level. So let's take a moment briefly here to actually think about behavior. What is behavior? We can think of behavior as the choice of words we use, delivery of the message we're communicating, nonverbal communication, a lack of communication or engagement altogether, as well as overt and covert actions. And we also know that behavior is influenced by our feelings, and feelings in turn, are influenced by our thoughts, which really are just the stories we tell ourselves about the person and the issue at hand, and also about ourselves, which often results in projection, as we well know. And important to note here is that feelings can sometimes be evoked by an external stimulus that bypasses thought. So, for example, a really loud thump might trigger a feeling that is not really necessarily associated with a conscious thought. And also, there is such a thing we call a gut feeling, and that is related to the energy of our inner or outer surroundings that we're picking up on. We also call this vibe. So what happens then, is that we close the loop by allowing the feelings to further influence our thoughts or stories, which lead to more feelings, which then results in a particular behavior. But needs is what's at the core of it all. So, when there is an unmet need, there is this internal pull towards a particular behavior in our conscious or unconscious effort to meet that need. For more on this, you can refer to the handout in your workbook on interconnectedness of needs, thoughts and behaviors. And there is a fascinating interplay between these various elements, as we've seen that show just how complex our experiences are. And as I mentioned earlier in this presentation, the more aware we are about this interplay, the better equipped we are to break unhelpful patterns. More on this very topic in the next training on affecting positive change.

Slide 48 [00:49:28] But to come back to this particular training – because the needs are the primary driver behind our behavior, which, as we said, includes the words we use when we engage in challenging conversation, understanding and articulating needs is one of the major components of NVC. Many of you likely are familiar with NCV – the nonviolent communication – to some degree. But those of you who may not be - and as we have been referring to it throughout the training - I just want you to take a quick moment here to define it. So nonviolent communication is the way of communicating that is free of judgment, criticism, blame and demands with the main purpose of connecting empathically with self and others to have more satisfying relationships and promote, and actively contribute to, peace on the planet. And again, like many other things, you know, I think

this is just worth a repeat. So, I'm going to read this again. So nonviolent communication is the way of communicating that is free of judgment, criticism, blame and demands with the main purpose of connecting empathically with self and others to have more satisfying relationships and promote, and actively contribute to, peace on the planet. So, we are going to be using that kind of language that is not going to put the other person on defense, as we have mentioned before, because that is not going to be conducive to any kind of, you know, a helpful resolution of any kind of conflict or a connection.

And once we are able to use that kind of a gentle, nonviolent, peaceful language, we're going to be able to connect with the other person's humanness, so, with the other person's core. And by being able to articulate the needs that we have and by being able to empathically receive information that the other person is giving us about their own internal state - about their own feelings and about their own needs - we will be able to nurture that relationship, and somehow the solutions will just come up organically because we will be able to connect. And then through that connection, we will be able to work together to come up with particular strategies that will that will get us, both of us, to get our needs met.

Slide 48 [00:51:48] Now we're going to move to an activity, so if you would notice that in your workbook, and you will see in the following slide, there is a list of NVC needs.

Slide 49 [00:51:58] So, take a moment to read through the list and circle some universal human needs or values that really speak to you. Share if you're willing with the person sitting next to you, or if you're taking this training independently, just spend some time really contemplating this. It is extremely valuable for us to get in touch with our core needs and values so that we can both live our lives authentically and communicate what is real and true for us with the people who matter the most.

Slide 50 [00:52:27] I hope this activity has been valuable to you and that you will continue to use this list as a reference in your daily life. It's been very helpful to me in my life and I'm sure that Luke would say the same to have this quick reference that I can use as a guide whenever I feel unsure what it is that I am experiencing internally in any given situation. So, let's put needs in the context of difficult conversations and just really take a moment to think about this. We have already talked about which needs might come up when we sense a reluctance to engage, right? So, our need for connection for love, harmony, acceptance, appreciation, respect, dignity - all of those needs are influencing us beneath the surface, even as we're just approaching the conversation. If we know that all behavior is an attempt to meet a need, then it follows that engaging in communication with someone is also an attempt to meet a need. Right? So when we're thinking about engaging in this challenging conversation that we need to have, we are attempting to meet some kind of a need, but so is the other person. Right? So, the challenge is for us to recognize what particular needs we're trying to meet by engaging in a difficult conversation and then to keep in our awareness that both parties in the conversation, at the core of it all, are trying to get their needs met. What we tend to do when we find ourselves in a difficult conversation is to focus on the differences of opinion around the strategies of meeting our needs, without actually taking the time to acknowledge and explore needs themselves. Right? So, we're focused on the strategies. But when we share our needs and we learn about the other person's needs, we're likely to experience a great degree of compassion for each other because one of our universal human needs is a need to contribute to the well-being of another person. Once the needs are clear and they're empathized with, then the engagement around the strategy by which to meet each other's needs will be much easier to come to.

Slide 51 [00:54:32] Now I invite you to refer to the NVC resource of suggested feelings and needs beneath words we commonly confuse with feelings. Take a moment to just really study the list and circle a few that resonate with you and then share if you're willing.

Slide 52 [00:54:50] Silence (image only).

Slide 53 [00:54:54] Why should we share our feelings and needs in a difficult conversation? The purpose behind sharing our feelings and needs and communicating them clearly is so that the other person would be less likely to hear judgment and criticism in our words, as we were talking about before, and approach the conversation defensively. Again, if they're hearing judgment or criticism, they will approach the conversation in a way that they will going to try to defend themselves versus being open to learning what it is that you're actually trying to say. At the same time, we're giving the other person a gift of an opportunity to contribute to our well-being. How so? Well, contributing to another person's well-being, as we mentioned earlier, is one of the universal human needs. So, when we're in a conversation with someone and they offer empathy after we share our feelings and needs, not only are they meeting their own need for contribution, but are also meeting our need for understanding and acceptance. So, when we do the same for them, we're mutually strengthening our connection, which is essential in getting through a difficult conversation.

Slide 54 [00:55:57] An example. So, imagine listening in to this conversation, person A says: "I feel really angry in light of what happened because I have a strong need for autonomy and this leaves me feeling stuck and resentful, which is not how I want to feel. And the person B responds, "I hear you. You're feeling angry because you would have wanted more choice in the matter." So when someone expresses themselves in this way, clarifying what it is that is going on for them, most of us are not only likely to hear this - versus keeping our focus on what we want to say next - but we also find ourselves drawn to want to help them. So, we empathize, and through empathizing, we help bring down the heat of the argument, right? And when there is less heat, there is more space for everyone to step out of their first-person experience and look at the bigger picture. So being able to recognize and integrate different perspectives is essential for effective communication, and that is the way we do this. ...Luke and I first admit that this level of self-awareness that is needed to communicate feelings and needs in the moment is quite challenging without lots of practice. Sometimes in the middle of the conversation, we need to pause and regroup. So, we need to get in touch with what we're feeling and why we're feeling it, so that we can then communicate that to the other person without resorting to default modes of evaluating, criticizing and blaming and assuming intentions and so forth.

Slide 55 [00:57:23] So the third type of conversation that the authors of Difficult Conversation talk about is Identity Conversation. And again, remember that all three: so, What Happened Conversation, the Feelings and Needs Conversation and Identity Conversation are all happening simultaneously during a difficult conversation. So let's explore this.

Slide 56 [00:57:43] Almost always related to the feelings that are underlying difficult conversations is the impact of the conflict on our identity, and identity can be thought of as our ego. And what is ego? So simply put, ego is a story that we tell ourselves about ourselves. So, it's the way we view ourselves. And for most of us, the way we view ourselves is also the way we would like to be seen.

Slide 57 [00:58:07] And so we'll do a little exercise next, where you will be asked to explore your identity. If we were in a group setting, we would do this activity in a small group, but it works just as we're all doing it individually. I would like you to take a few moments and write five sentences that start with "I am." And be sure to include adjectives. In other words, include in your description, characteristics that you possess that are important to you. So for an example, you could write "I am patient" or "I am a knowledgeable or a caring teacher." "I'm a thoughtful friend or person or a partner" versus simply saying I'm a mother or I'm a teacher. So the adjectives are important as it is in the adjectives themselves, where we will begin to notice which attributes are important to us, and we internalize those as our character traits, and we want those traits to be associated with our very person. So, let's take a few minutes and do this activity.

[00:59:09] All right. So hopefully you have taken some time to contemplate this and were able to see what's important to you about yourself. We can think about those personal characteristics as the way we show up in life and in relationship to other people. And it's important to us that we have a sense of being acknowledged for that. So for an example, if you see yourself as a sensitive and compassionate person who generally has the best intentions, and then through a conversation, something you have said or done is being brought up as a problem, you're very quickly rattled because your ego immediately interprets this as your identity being called into question.

Slide 58 [00:59:45] While there are as many identities as there are people, three core identities or the three core identity issues that seem particularly common, described by the authors of *Difficult Conversations*, have to do with competency, contribution and worthiness. So basically, we're continually gauging how competent, smart or skilled we are or appear to be if we're a good person - so if we are trustworthy, reliable, dependable and whether we're worthy of love. And I would say that the degree to which we are unsure of the answer to these questions is directly proportional to the degree to which we will find ourselves rattled when those aspects of our identity are called into question. In other words, if we are grounded in our ego and at the same time can separate ourselves from it, then we can create stability and space to take into account information that seems contrary to what we believe about ourselves.

Slide 59 [01:00:43] Let's look at an example of an identity trigger. Something has happened in the recent past, and the trust was diminished between two old friends. So in the present time, person A says: "So you won't give me another chance?" And a person B responds: "I just don't trust that your actions would necessarily be aligned with your intentions, or that you would speak the whole truth." And such a response can be very triggering to person A if they have a strong identity as a trustworthy person.

Slide 60 [01:01:15] So let's look at implications of what we just talked about. If we cling to a purely positive identity, which is that "all or nothing" thinking – an example of which can be "If I make a mistake, I'm not competent," then this will have no place in our self-concept for negative feedback. And it will throw us right into the clutches of self-defense, where any hope of truly listening to the other person goes right out the window. Or, it can leave us vulnerable to getting knocked off balance internally. An example we might think to ourselves is "Since I was capable of doing this, it must mean that I'm really not a good person," or it can trigger us to react physically in ways that can make a conversation go from difficult to impossible...meaning we would need to first gather ourselves, our composure, before we could continue the conversation. And this is where self-empathy comes into play.

Slide 61 [01:02:17] What is self-empathy? Why do I really mean by it? I'd like to share a quote with you that I wrote that describes the way that I understand self-empathy. And it goes like this: Self-empathy is the process of giving ourselves grace for the big feelings, unmet needs, requests that went unfilled -for all of the internal and external experiences that we would otherwise be quick to judge. It is a process of coming to a place of acceptance without beating ourselves down or attempting to make others feel small. It is that sweet spot where accountability means compassion, the tender moment in which we shine a light on what it is that we truly need so we can begin to meet those needs in ways that are supportive of the life we want to live.

Slide 62 [01:02:58] And here's an example. Let's say then after an hour of listening to this content without taking a break, you tell yourself "I must be dense because I'm really not following this material." To reframe this in an empathetic way, you could tell yourself: "I'm getting restless and fidgety because I'm feeling overwhelmed by all this new information, and I'm in need of some understanding of how challenging it is for me to follow along without getting ample opportunities for stretch and play." So in this way, instead of berating yourself, you simply acknowledge what's going on for you. What are you feeling in your body? What emotions are arising, and what you're needing? And even perhaps a strategy of meeting that need will bubble up, such as "I need to take a break."

Slide 63 [01:03:45] In conclusion of the section identity, I would just urge everyone to remember that our identity - so the story we tell ourselves about ourselves - is not fixed, but instead it's fluid. We're never this or the other. We have tendencies, but do not fit within the constraints of labels - not the ones we attach to ourselves, nor those that others attempt to assign to us. Our identity story is constructed from what we believe to be true about ourselves, and in light of new information, new experiences and contemplations, those beliefs may change. We might discover that we have expanded our capacity to understand and empathize with someone, or show compassion or patience. And this is the essence of growth.

Slide 64 [01:04:31] I encourage everyone at this time to take a little break. Do what you need to do to shake off any stagnant energy. Have a drink of water, go get some tea. Do whatever you need to do to be able to come back ready to engage with this valuable content.

Slide 65 [01:04:48] We're going to move on now and talk about personal styles of conflict.

Slide 66 [01:04:53] And, in a jackal world, as Marshall Rosenberg would say, we are accustomed to approaching difficult conversations and conflicts with a win or lose mindset, rather than the mindset that prioritizes connection and understanding which would contribute to peace and harmony in the world. Given that awareness is the first step to change, Luke and I thought it might be helpful to talk about personal styles of conflict that seep into the dynamic when we're either contemplating or are already engaged in a difficult conversation. As we work through these. I would ask you to pay attention to what resonates with you. What is your tendency? Which conflict style do you gravitate towards most? And this information has been adapted from a handout that I had been given in one of my trainings years ago. And we will offer a resource guide at the end of the training so you can look more into this if you're interested. So let's explore some common ways that we approach conflict.

Slide 67 [01:05:45] One of the common ways is by simply avoiding - we either withhold information, or will give the other person a silent treatment. And it is a so-called "I lose, you

lose approach.” And why? Because no one gains. Things are left unspoken, and resentment, guilt or internal conflict builds and the other person can usually sense something is off. But on the positive side, it could be used when it is necessary or desirable to buy some time or give the issue a chance to resolve itself.

Slide 68 [01:06:18] Another conflict style or approach we can take is competing. Also called “I win, and you lose approach” and a disadvantage here is that the relationship suffer as connection is damaged when everyone is out for themselves. On the positive side, though, it might be useful when it's important to get a job done and we can worry about the relationship building later. And when time is of the essence.

Slide 69 [01:06:44] Yet another way to approach conflict is by accommodating. That is also called a “you win and I lose approach” because I will accommodate you now, so I lose. I give you what you want while I repress my needs. However, it's important to realize here that even though you might get what you want now, you'll pay for it later. Because when we don't give from the heart, we eventually experience resentment. And resentment is highly damaging to the relationship long term. On the positive side, accommodating might be useful when the issue is less important to us than it is to the other person and allows others ownership. And also, it banks us a favor.

Slide 70 [01:07:24] We could also attend to one to compromise, which is “I win some, you win some” approach. And, so we each win a little bit of what we want, but no one's needs have been explored or met fully. So to some degree, we each are still left unfulfilled. On the positive side, it can be used when we need to resolve issues of moderate importance or we need to create temporary solutions, or when we're dealing with time constraints.

Slide 71 [01:07:54] The most effective approach is that of collaborating. Hence, it is called the “I win and you win” approach. And here, the focus is on learning and understanding what the other person brings to the table. It's also about merging perspectives and integrating solutions. It supports or enables buy in, it gains commitment from the other party, and most importantly, it improves relationships.

Slide 72 [01:08:19] So we have covered a lot so far. We talked about how easy it is for us to jump to conclusions when making wrong assumptions, how easily our emotions get stirred, how quickly our identity can be shaken, how we can unconsciously jump to default conflict style. So, what is the impact of all of that? In other words, let's summarize all that likely takes place during a difficult conversation when we approach it without mindful awareness of all of those dynamics. We only consider our own story. We get entrenched in our position. We focus on ourselves and we miss out on expanding the view. And so, we stay close minded. We also react emotionally, so we take everything to the other person is saying as an attack on our own identity, we get defensive because of it, and we fail to hear what the other person is trying to tell us. And at this point, we get ready for battle or to run or we shut down. So, in other words, our fight, flight and freeze response kicks in. If we do engage in battle, we're always waiting for our turn to express ourselves without giving empathy or consideration to the other person. And in this way, know learning or understanding as possible.

Slide 73 [01:09:29] So then what can we do? How can we begin to manage our conflicts more effectively?

Slide 74 [01:09:36] First of all, we need to change the way we think about conflict.

We need to seek to understand and not win. And why? My take away from all of my learning is that understanding is the door to compassion, and compassion makes empathy possible, and empathic connection is what allows for solutions to flow organically. So once we change our mindset, then we have a learning conversation. We own our own contributions and we learn and use the basics of nonviolent communication. And this really refers to learning how to make observations without making inferences, developing feelings and needs vocabulary, and also learning how to make requests without expressing a demand. So, we will dive into each of these separately.

Slide 75 [01:10:22] So let's start with learning conversations. How do we create learning conversations?

Slide 76 [01:10:28] Well, we begin by inviting the other party to a conversation, so we start with a third story. So, for example, instead of starting with "I am" - a specific example could be "I'm frustrated because I'm constantly doing dishes" - or starting with "you are" - such as "You're always living the dishes up to me" begin with "it seems." So, begin with a third story. So, an example is, "It seems like we're at odds about how to approach doing the dishes." So, what we want to do is want to find the common ground that both of the people would agree on, so it is much less threatening to the other party. When we start with our story, we describe the problem for our from our own perspective, which is precisely to please the other person thinks is causing the problem. We also threaten their identity from the start...and usually from a judgment that we dole out. They become aggressive, they get angry or shut down. Next is to move from certainty to curiosity by changing our thinking. And that means we need to seek understanding with versus seeking to win. Be curious because it's the only way to learn, asking "I wonder what kind of information they might have that I don't have?" And when you seek to understand their point of view first and then share yours, then this strategy communicates that we care about what the other person is saying or what the other person's perspective is, and it lessens the likelihood that they will be on the defensive.

Slide 77 [01:11:55] The next thing we can do is we listen and acknowledge, so this can happen in multiple ways. We can restate what we heard the other person say – meaning, just means repeat what we hear. We can paraphrase by putting their words into ours. We can summarize - and that would look like "Let me see if I understand". And we really need to really listen and not think about what we're going to say when the other person is done talking. And if we do, and when we do, find our internal voice shouting, it's really important that we acknowledge that, and we communicate that to the other person. So we just might need some time out until we can compose ourselves, and really just understand that it is really, crucially, important that we are listening to the other person and not just waiting to say whatever it is that it's on our mind that we want to respond with. And then sometimes a nod or eye contact can go a very long way.

Slide 77 [01:12:52] Another thing that we really need to do is adopt "and stance." What does that mean? It means that it's not either or. It's not...it's not" this or"- it's "this and" - my experiences are real, my observations are valid, and my perceptions and interpretations are valid. And your experiences are real, your observations are valid and your perceptions and interpretations of it. And we need to remember that our perceptions may not accurately really reflect the person's intentions. And that is something that we constantly have to keep coming back to - always remind ourselves - their intentions is not something that we are aware of. We need to ask. We can know the impact of their words or behavior, but we do not know the person's intentions. And we also have to keep in mind that everyone's story is different, and it's due to info that's available to each of us. It's due to

what we put our attention on. It's, you know, dependent on how we interpret the situation that's happening to us, it's dependent on the hidden rules that we all have and in our past conditioning. And a lot of that is unconscious. So, a lot of unconscious programming plays out here.

Slide 78 [01:14:01] Next, we have to work on discovering true feelings. We need to accept that the feelings are normal and natural, and we need to learn that our feelings are just as important as their feelings. And then we need to negotiate with our feelings. And what does that mean? It means that we need to recognize that our feelings are formed in response to our thoughts. So, the road to changing our feelings is altering our thinking. The shift in perspective shifts, or eases, the heavy and strong feelings. So, another question that we can ask ourselves is what is missing in our story? What are we unaware of? Because the idea is that if our story expands, if we become aware of the information that we may not be aware of at the moment, we will change the way we feel about it. We will just have more information, and it will change our feelings. And to what extent our feelings that we are experiencing right now based on the untested assumptions about the other person's intentions? We always keep coming back to that. Might have the other person acted unintentionally or from multiple or conflicting intentions? And then, we need to express our feelings without judging or attributing or blaming. So we will start with "I feel..." whatever it is that we feel versus "I feel that you..." because when we say "I feel that..." we're not really expressing our feelings. We're expressing our thoughts about whatever the other person did. Or, if we say "I feel like what you did..." it's not really expressing a feeling. It's really, again, expressing a thought.

Slide 70 [01:15:31] Another thing that's important to do is to search for and seek to reveal to the other person what our interests are. In other words, what is it that we want and why? Which gets to the core need that we're trying to meet. There is a cartoon I once came across that depicts two chefs, each trying to get their hands on the same woman. So, problem - conflict - in this situation is that we have two cooks who need a lemon and there is one lemon. So, without learning more, it seems like it said this-or-that situation. So one or the other cook will end up with a lemon. However, if you're curious and ask each other why is it that we want what each other wants, a solution can present itself quite effortlessly. So in this case, one cook might have needed to extract lemon juice from a lemon, and the other cook might have needed the lemon peel. So, what really this little example goes to illustrate is that parties in conflict often have a position they're arguing for. And it's what they call - it's what they say that they want. So, it's a strategy. It's getting the lemon. "I wanted the lemon." However, interests or need is what each person is really after. So in the little cartoon scenario, one is in search of a lemon peel and the other one's recipe requires lemon juice. So, when people take the time to learn what each other needs, as I mentioned earlier, the strategy presents itself. Even when they are seemingly wanting the same thing. And to get to those interests and needs that are underlying the conflict, we just have to keep asking ourselves, and the other person, "Why?" Why is it that we want what we're saying that we want?

Slide 80 [01:17:10] So there is an example in the next slide - or multiple examples - that could illustrate this point. So, in the first one mother, mother, says to her son: "Can you turn the music down?" And the son responds: "I won't turn it down." So just looking at it at face value, it seems like there are two people wanting two different things. So mother wants the music to be turned down and the son won't turn it down. But if we really get to the why of it, you know, the mother is really trying to hear the grandmother on the phone, and she's having a really hard time with the loud music in the background. And the son is just trying to learn the lyrics for tomorrow's play practice. So they both have a really

important reason why they're sticking to their position, but they're not communicating to each other what that reason is. And the suggestion here is that if they do actually communicate the reasons to each other, they will be more empathetic to each other. They will understand why they're each wanting what they're wanting, and then they will come up with a plan. And again, in the next example, friend A says: "Could you close the window?" And the friend B says, "I want it open." Again, it seems like it's seemingly incompatible. One wants it open; one wants it closed. But if the friend A says "I'm freezing" and the friend B says "I need fresh air, I'm feeling nauseous" then just in the simple act of trying to hear each other's needs, you're really becoming, again, empathetic to the other person's situation and you are likely to come up with a plan. And in the third example, a coworker says: "No onions in the classroom, please." And the coworker B says: "But I need to eat." Again, it seems like - what do we do now? This is incompatible. But if the coworker A says: "You know, the smell is so strong, I might get sick" and the coworker B says: "I don't get another break and I can't leave the classroom" then they're realizing they're in this peculiar situation. So what can they do so they both get their needs met? And again, it just opens up this compassion among each other, and it's just that they're more likely to come up with a solution that really benefits both once they understand the why behind their interests or the position.

Slide 81 [01:19:21] Besides learning how to create learning conversations, we also need to learn how to own our contributions.

Slide 82 [01:19:28] I would say that there is a certain kind of power that comes from seeing how we ourselves have contributed to the problem because it doesn't leave us feeling like we're acting victim in the situation. It motivates us to do what we can to learn from the current situation and then to act differently going forward. So it's important to realize that everyone contributes to the problem to some degree, even if not in equal measure. But having said that, I want to make sure that we're not talking about blaming the victim here. And what do I mean? So let's say that you're walking down a street and you're mugged. Sure, you're certainly a victim in the situation and the blame - if we are going to place blame - is on the perpetrator of the crime. That's without a doubt. But how might you have contributed to the situation? For whatever reason, you find yourself at the wrong place, at the wrong time with the wrong person, and it can be as simple as that. So, it's always important to ask ourselves, what did I do or did not do to contribute to finding myself in this situation? And we do this a) so that we are not placing blame entirely on the other person - because when we do that, that positions us somehow morally or otherwise superior - and will not be helpful if you're trying to have a graceful and effective conversation. And b) so that I can make a different choice in the future.

Slide 83 [01:20:43] And sometimes it's difficult for us to see how we have contributed to the problem. So, let's examine some hidden contributions. And they include: avoidance, being unapproachable, rule assumptions - meaning we expect someone to do something based on a role they play, assuming that they are on the same page so that their expectations of the role they are in match ours. And we don't really know that we we're just making an assumption. And then also, we could have been giving special attention to something or someone without consciously realizing it. Or we may have been unclear about our needs, intentions, concerns, expectations. And that happens very, very frequently. So as you can see, there are a lot of ways to contribute to a conflict.

Slide 84 [01:21:26] And now we're going to turn our attention to learning about Nonviolent Communication.

Slide 85 [01:21:26] I took a two-day training in NVC - Nonviolent Communication - back in 2014. I was a member of a co-op advisory committee at Champlain Housing Trust and was asked to describe to the other members of the committee what NVC is all about. So this is what I wrote: "Nonviolent communication teaches us a new language by using words we know in a soft, non-combative way. It teaches us to recognize the difference between one's judgments about a person or a situation and observations - which are about objective descriptions of what we see or hear; between our thoughts on the subject and feelings stirred up as a result of it between our needs - which are universal and broad; and strategies - which are ways to get those needs met, often confused with the needs themselves. It teaches us to form requests in a way that respects the other person's choice, whether to fulfill it or not, versus communicating demands which are requests attached to negative consequences if unfulfilled.

Slide 86 [01:22:33] So there are two parts to nonviolent communication. First part is receiving empathetically. What that refers to is hearing the other person's feelings and needs through their words, even if they don't state them explicitly. So we need to understand the basics and the principles of nonviolent communication, and then in listening to the other person, even if they don't understand nonviolent communication and they're not using the syntax that NVC provides, we can still understand what it is that they're feeling and needing. Or at least, you know, we can use our best guess while we're compassionately listening to them express themselves. And then also it has to do with sharing honestly, so expressing our own feelings and needs.

Slide 87 [01:23:18] And NVC answers these two questions: One, what is alive in us? - Meaning, what are we feeling in this very moment and what are the needs that are being met or remaining unmet? And, two, what would make our lives more wonderful? And in other words, what can we request of others to help us meet our needs?

Slide 88 [01:23:39] And there are four steps to NVC, and those steps include observations, feelings, needs and requests.

Slide 89 [01:23:49] When it comes to observations, we need to learn how to make observations without making inferences. And as early childhood educators, a lot of us have actually been taught how to do this. So to some of us, this will come naturally. But let's review. Observations are objective. So when we are offering our observation, we will be describing something that could be observed on a video recording or, as though it could be observed on a video recording. For example, we will say "She had a big smile on her face when I walked in the door" instead of saying "She was happy to see me." So we will not attempt to describe what we think is going on with somebody else.

Slide 90 [01:24:31] We also need to develop feelings and needs vocabulary. And for that, I would encourage you to refer to the NVC feelings and needs resources that we shared earlier in the training - and they can be found in your workbooks. There are many feeling words listed that correspond to various emotions that arise when our needs are met, as well as those that we feel when our needs go unmet. And the list of needs is helpful because you can then begin to identify the deeper why that lies beneath what you're feeling. And then practice! What makes NVC unique is that it uses simple language in a novel way that is simple, as we will see in a bit when we look at the syntax of NVC. But simple does not always mean easy, as we well know.

Slide 91 [01:25:12] Then we need to learn how to make requests without expressing

a demand. Or, in other words, we need to learn how to ask for what we want in a way that will make the other person wanting to give us from the heart. So in order to do that, our requests need to contain positive action language, meaning we need to ask for what we want, not what we don't want. The requests need to be doable in the present or near future - or, what we are asking of the other person needs to be doable in the present or near future. So, we need to avoid being vague about when we would like our requests to be fulfilled. These should be stated in the form of a question and not just stated plainly because otherwise they will sound like a wish, and our request really need to honor the other person's choice, meaning that we need to offer empathy if the other person is not willing to meet our requests, as this shows that their needs are just as important to us as ours are. So, let's give an example. I could request of Luke to go pick Kian up from after school...and I can, if I'm following these suggestions, given above, this is an example of a request I would make: "Luke, I would feel so relieved if I were able to finish working on the communication training today. Would you be willing to pick Kian up from after school today at five p.m.?" Versus stating something vague, like: "I would rather you didn't go home right after work. I would like you to pick up Kian more often it would be nice if you could do it today. And if you don't, I won't be available next time you asked me to do it." So, you know, just to provide an example of a clear request that communicates what it is that's behind it and hopefully entices the other person to want to fulfill it versus stating something vague and then also stating that, you know, like, putting an ultimatum there that "if you don't do this for me now, then I'm not going to be available for your later." We will have an opportunity to practice all of this in the workshop part of our training, so we will definitely get back to this.

Slide 92 [01:27:22] Next, we would like to share with you a few different ways that you can formulate your sentences in a way that combines NVC and also takes into account all of the things we talked about earlier in the training. And the first one we will talk about is syntax for giving yourself empathy. You can also use this to prepare for sharing. So before you jump into a conversation, you can go through these steps. And it goes like this: "when I see or hear" - and then here you will insert your objective observation of what you see or hear - "I think" - and here you will identify your thoughts, which is helpful for you because you become aware of the thoughts that are fueling your feelings, and is also helpful for any other person because it helps them see and understand your perspective - "So I feel" - whatever you feel in response to those thoughts - "Because I need" - here, you identify your underlying needs that are at the core of what you're experiencing. And then you can finally make a request - "I would like". So whatever you would like that would make your life more wonderful.

Slide 93 [01:28:56] Now we will ask you to think of a situation where you could provide yourself empathy or prepare for a conversation by using the framework we just discussed. So "when I see or hear, I think, so I feel, because I need, would you be willing?" Write it out so you can come back to it and refer to it whenever you need. Here's my example. "When it's close to bedtime and I see you being loud and rowdy with Kian and he plays right along, I think to myself: "Oh, now that's going to rev him up and he will resist going to bed and will be too wound up for regular bedtime routine." So I feel impatient and agitated. It's because I need harmony and a sense of peace and calm as we're transitioning to sleep. Would you be willing to engage in calm interactions with him after eight p.m.?" So that is something that I could write out for myself in my preparation before I talk to Luke about it.

Slide 94 [01:29:29] So the next one will look at NVC syntax for sharing honestly. And it goes like this: "when I see" - whatever I see or hear - "I feel" - whatever feelings arise -

“because I need” - whatever need is going unmet – “would you be willing to?” – here is the request of the other person to help meet your need. You may notice that this is similar to the framework above, with the exception of the line “I think.” And this is because in NVC, the emphasis is on the feelings and needs rather than thoughts so as to prevent us falling prey to using jack language. So criticizing, judging, evaluating. That's all thoughts. It's all jackal language - and that leads to defensiveness and verbal attacks. NVC stays away from that.

Slide 95 [01:30:16] And lastly, we will share and we see syntax for receiving empathetically. And what does that even mean? When you are in a conversation with someone and they're sharing their own truth of what it is that is alive in them, whether or not they're skilled in using NVC, you can empathize with what they're saying by responding in this particular matter: “when you see” - whatever we imagine the issue may be – “do you feel” - whatever we imagine they might feel – “because you need” - here, we guess what their feelings are related to. And yes, and communicating this way and asking these questions, we are making guesses, and we might guess incorrectly, for sure. But more often than not, we are on the right track if we can lean into our intuition, which we can do if our intention is to understand and truly connect with the other person. And even if we're not on the right track, we communicate our concern and desire to understand what is alive in the other person. So, they are likely to share some more, to help us better understand what is going on with them. And so it's a concrete way to engage in that learning conversation that we talked about earlier. An example that ties back to the previous example I gave when preparing for a conversation with Luke could be something like this “When you rough house with Kian and you see me getting squirmy and quiet, do you feel worried and uneasy because you have a need for connection and acceptance?” As we have seen through this training, if our intention is to communicate in a way that is effective, kind, honest, respectful, graceful and peaceful so that we can nurture the relationships with the people around us, we have some responsibilities that we need to take to heart.

Slide 96 [01:31:59] I believe that our responsibility lies in making an honest effort to communicate what is alive in us and what we would like to receive to make our life more wonderful. And at the same time, to receive empathetically what is alive in the other person and what it is that would make their life more wonderful so that we can give from the heart.

Slide 97 [01:32:18] We are responsible for understanding the dynamics behind difficult conversations - which is what this training was all about - and for being mindfully aware of our intentions, our actions and behavior, and delivery of the message. So, the tone of voice we use, a choice of words we use; we are responsible for owning and managing our own feelings and recognizing and meeting our own needs.

Slide 98 [01:32:43] What we are not responsible for is the impact of our actions. I invite you to consider this. Instead of apologizing for something you cannot control, offer empathy instead. It is my belief that sincere apologies only meaningful when it is about something you can control and change in the future. You do not have to apologize for something you did with good intentions and delivered as best as you could. Offering empathy instead goes a long way in acknowledging the impact and communicating to the other person that their experiences matter. We also are not responsible for the other person's reactions because this is not something we have any control over. We are not responsible for the other person's feelings. So for sustaining their feelings, for improving

their feelings, from managing their feelings or controlling their feelings - actually trying to do any of this is actually manipulating them. And we are also not responsible for the other person's needs. We want to help the other person meet their needs, but we are not responsible for them. We're not responsible for the needs themselves or ultimately meeting them. The only exception to this is caring for children, and I think that's really important to mention since we are speaking to the audience of care givers. So, we do have a unique role in meeting the needs of the children that we care for in the work that we do.

Slide 99 [01:34:09] So this brings us to the end of the first part of the training. The second part will be applying the information to our everyday lives, both in personal and work contexts. I do recognize that this was a lot of information packed in a relatively short amount of time. Live training is different in that it allows for real time engagement, which provides opportunities for questions and clarification, and in that way diffuses the density of the material as we take each piece at a slower pace. That said, I hope you found the delivery of the information pleasant and effective, and that the content is valuable to you in all areas of your life.

Slide 100 [01:34:46] Any time we have received either new information or have been offered a new way to look at or integrate some of the things we already had some knowledge about, we need to allow some time for our brains to process that information. We need to sit with it. We need to create some space and silence and allow any insights or a-ha moments or questions to come to the surface. And then when we have given ourselves time to integrate the information, we need to actively engage with the knowledge. Receiving information is for the mind and applying that knowledge is for the body. And we need to use both our mind and our body to propel ourselves forward into new, more fulfilling experiences.

Slide 101 [01:35:26] And now we invite you to take a moment to find a comfortable seat where your spine is straight and your hands are resting on your thighs. You are alert but at ease. And feel free to close your eyes. Take a nice deep breath and then allow your breath to flow naturally in and out. Your belly and chest expanding on the inhale, all the tension dissipating on the exhale. In. And out. And as you breathe, notice whatever sensations, thoughts or feelings might arise. And instead of engaging with them, simply acknowledge them and watch them pass. In and out. And, you know, you're practicing bearing witness to your internal world. The more practice you have witnessing your thoughts and feelings, the easier it will be to stop identifying yourself with them and accept them for just what they are. Just thoughts - which are elusive, malleable, impermanent. Just feelings - which are simply energy in motion. When we stop identifying with our thoughts and feelings, we create a certain distance from them. Which helps us recognize our patterns in real time and which then allows us to change them. The first step is awareness. [01:37:02] You can feel free to open your eyes. And I want to thank you for participating in this training on Conscious Communication with Grace and Grit. And Luke and I are looking forward to engaging with you during the workshop part of it where we will be applying what we have learned to our own individual real-life situations so we can learn how to communicate compassionately and nurture relationships with people in our lives. See you then.

Slide 102 [01:37:33] Silent (image only)