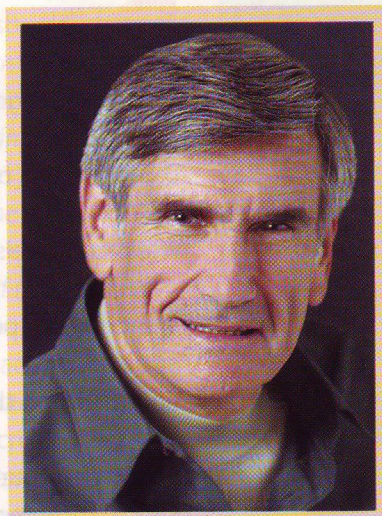


Resolve Conflict with Compassion

THE UNREST OF his childhood neighborhood in Detroit spurred clinical psychologist Marshall Rosenberg, Ph.D, to investigate why some people are motivated to be violent and others compassionate. In the early 1960s, he traveled the world to study foreign societies and learn about peacemakers throughout history. His findings convinced him that human beings are not inherently violent, and came to serve as the foundation for his "language of the heart"—a mode of interaction called Nonviolent Communication.



Marshall Rosenberg, Ph.D

"Nonviolent Communication is a process of empathy and honesty that strengthens our ability to inspire compassion from others and respond in kind," says Rosenberg.

To spread the word, he established the Center for Nonviolent Communication (www.cnvc.org), which became a not-for-profit in California in 1984 and has evolved into a global training-and-peacemaking organization. Its 180 certified trainers have instructed 500,000 people worldwide in the past two years alone, and numerous self-organized groups practice Rosenberg's techniques on their own.

Nonviolent Communication has been embraced in approximately 50 countries in the Americas, Western Europe, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Africa. In settings ranging from school systems to prisons to the military to the home front, the process has helped resolve conflict and nurture negotiation between coworkers, communities, couples and family members. Police departments, in particular, have found it useful: In the United States, an officer turned to Nonviolent Communication to quell angry citizens. And in Israel, police brutality dropped after officers received training.

Nonviolent Communication incorporates compassion—rather than guilt, shame, fear or blame—as a tool for action. Through the process, one learns to be more empathetic and attentive, listen deeply without evaluation or judgment, consciously respond in the moment, and make requests clearly to avoid defensive reactions.

The four components of Nonviolent Communication are:

- Observing what is actually happening
- Feeling how the observation is affecting one's well-being
- Expressing needs that are connected with the identified feeling(s)
- Requesting concrete actions

Nonviolent Communication also involves awareness of nonverbal means of expression, such as countenance, posture and tone of voice. "Research indicates that they have even more power in influencing the reaction one receives than the words themselves," Rosenberg says.

When Donna Timpone ended a working relationship 10 years ago, things got ugly. She knew there had to be a better way to handle conflict, but was unsure where to begin. She found her answer after participating in a Nonviolent Communication workshop, and has since become a trainer for a self-organized group. The process has helped at home with her teenage son, and at work, where she had to end another relationship.

"It was difficult, but we parted with hugging and tears instead of anger and hate," recalls Timpone. "The process changes the way you think and offers insight. It allows you to ride the waves of emotion and makes you want to hear what others have to say."

Roberto Schiraldi also started practicing Nonviolent Communication in his personal and professional life and saw results immediately. "It's about making a heart-to-heart connection rather than a head-to-head one," he says.

To improve communication with family, friends and coworkers, Rosenberg suggests regular meetings during which everyone has the opportunity to discuss needs and express gratitude to others. "Your intention is the most critical part of the process," he stresses. "You must desire to form a connection that allows everyone's needs to be fulfilled through compassionate giving." ■

For more information about Nonviolent Communication, including workshops, visit www.cnvc.org or call (818) 957-9393.

—Julie Jacobs