

Transforming and Releasing Judgements Worksheet

Marshall Rosenberg, the developer of Non-Violent Communication (NVC) said, “*All judgements are alienated reflections of our own unmet needs*”. So often, we find ourselves in situations where there are judgements and blame, of ourselves and others. These thoughts and feelings only serve to keep us feeling disconnected and misunderstood, contributing to tension and even conflict. By learning to transform judgements into the NVC language of observations, feelings and needs and then making requests, it is possible to gain clues and valuable information about what is working and what isn't working. Furthermore, it can give us a way out of the conflict and offers us a path forward to finding greater ease and understanding. Below, is a brief description of these NVC elements that most simply answer the questions; “What happened?”, “How do you feel about it?”, “Why did it happen?” and “Where do we go from here?”.

Observations/ What happened? The first step towards transforming blame and judgement is to be able to make a clear observation about what has happened. To make an observation, state the event, as best as possible, in a specific, clear, and neutral statement, that is separate from your interpretation/evaluation of what happened. Observations provide a shared context and a reference point to begin working through the judgements.

Feelings/How do you feel about it? Using the word emotions and feelings interchangeably, consider what are they actually? They are powerful energies that sweep through the heart, mind and body and are made up of the ingredients of thoughts, images, and words. Feelings are intertwined with our needs. We have pleasant feelings when our needs are met and unpleasant or difficult feelings when our needs are not met. Use the attached list to support identifying emotions.

Needs/Why did it happen? Understanding needs brings awareness to the powerful motivations that lie beneath our thoughts, speech and behaviors. They are universal, positive qualities that drive human life. In every moment, with every decision we make, from the mundane (what am I going to wear today) to the profound (what is most important to me in life), we are attempting to satisfy these needs. How needs are met are called strategies. Use the attached list to support the identification of what needs you or someone else are trying to meet in the situation.

Requests/Where do we go from here? Making requests is about finding a way forward to meet the needs of self and other as best as possible. The more clarity we have about what we want and why, the more creative we can be in making requests and finding strategies that meet needs. It is helpful to frame requests in ways that will create understanding and foster relationship. Use words that communicate what we want versus what we don't want. Be specific and provide a path of action that is doable rather than being vague and abstract. And understand that requests are not demands, so maintain flexibility and openness to ideas and suggestions.

3. What emotions do you feel in relation to this event? Take some time here, allowing yourself to feel fully. If the original judgement returns or new judgements arise, acknowledge them and return to feeling your emotions. Use the list of emotions to support you in this reflection.

4. Listen inwardly for your needs. What really matters to you here? Use the list of human needs to help you identify what needs of yours are not being met in relation to that person's action. What is it that you do want rather than what you don't want? How do you feel when these needs are not met? Sift through all of the needs until you arrive at one or two core needs. Explore this sufficiently and give yourself or receive empathy to experience the relief of self-connection.

5. Explore the possibility of opening your heart to this person. What needs do you imagine they might be trying to meet in this interaction? How might they be feelings? Explore this sufficiently and or brainstorm to experience the release of empathy and compassion towards them.

6. Check back in with yourself regarding your original judgement(s). Are they still alive? If yes, return to connecting to your own needs or with the other person's needs, wherever you are experiencing a "charged" reaction/feeling. Continue to check in with yourself regarding the judgement. Consider the following questions:
- a. Is there any way that you believe the judgement to be "the truth"? If so, explore what needs might be met with this belief, and what needs might be met by letting go of this belief. See if you can get beneath the conceptual layer of thought to the direct experience of your emotions and needs. Ground your awareness in that experience. Is there a difference between your conceptual world of judgement and the reality of your direct experience?
 - b. Are you afraid to express this judgement? If yes, what needs are you afraid would not be met by sharing it and what needs might be met?
 - c. Are you judging yourself for having the judgement? If yes, explore in any way in which you're telling yourself that you shouldn't have this judgement. Connect with your choice about whether or not to work any further on transforming this judgement and explore any needs that might be met by continuing to work on transforming the judgment or letting go of working on it.
7. Reflect on your feelings, needs and any requests you of yourself that might be helpful in transforming and releasing the pain of judgement.

Adapted from these resources:

www.baynvc.org and Say What You Mean by Oren J Sofer