

PEACEFUL LIVING

Daily Meditations for Living With
Love, Healing, and Compassion



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INTRODUCTION

Everyone in the class gasped; we were stunned by our poignant realization. The Nonviolent Communication trainer had led us through a process in which we identified our greatest need, and every one of us was surprised at what we uncovered. In the next exercise, we had identified all the things we were doing to meet our greatest need. Not one of us could identify a single behavior that would help us! In fact, we were acting in ways that guaranteed failure.

I realized in that moment that I had spent my life protecting myself by building walls between myself and other people, responding to them in a defensive or aggressive manner, and not allowing their love to pass through my tough exterior. All these behaviors were strategies to meet my need for protection. However, they made it impossible for me to meet other, more pressing needs for love, nurturing, caring, community, belonging, and intimacy. Had it not been for this trainer and Nonviolent Communication, I might never have noticed how my behaviors were ensuring my unhappiness.

Nonviolent Communication is also known as Compassionate Communication; you will see these terms used interchangeably as you read through this book. It has taught me how to be present to the moment, to identify my underlying needs in situations, and to consciously choose behaviors that are in alignment with those needs. Today, I live more authentically, more directly, more lovingly, and more peacefully than I ever dreamed possible. I have transformed my relationships with family members, friends,

and business colleagues to such a degree that I can no longer imagine the grief I used to feel in these relationships. I am sincerely and profoundly grateful for how living the Nonviolent Communication process has altered the course of my life toward peaceful living.

Each daily meditation in this book offers an inspiring quote, information on an aspect of Nonviolent Communication, and an action step that you can take each day to integrate these principles into your life.

My hope is that these daily meditations will help you start each day more centered and connected to yourself and your values. For those new to this process, may the daily messages reveal new tools for directing the course of your life toward your deepest values and needs. For those who are familiar with Nonviolent Communication, may the meditations help further ground you in its techniques and reinforce what you have learned. Together, may we fathom a different way of being in the world, a way that allows for everyone's needs to be valued equally.

The more each person lives in harmony with her values, the closer we are to manifesting world peace. It will not happen overnight, but each step we take, each moment that we choose not to snap at our children or the grocery clerk, each time we consider someone else's needs, world peace is closer. It is inevitable.

Peace and blessings on your journey.

—Mary Mackenzie

Feelings and Needs Lists

In Nonviolent Communication, it is essential to recognize feelings and needs. The following tables, which are drawn from Marshall B. Rosenberg’s *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, will help orient you to the language of feelings and needs. If you like, you can begin to familiarize yourself with it by reviewing the tables now. It may also be helpful to refer back to them as you progress through the daily meditations in this book.

Some Basic Feelings We All Have

Feelings when needs “are” fulfilled _____

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| • Amazed | • Joyous | • Comfortable |
| • Moved | • Confident | • Optimistic |
| • Eager | • Proud | • Energetic |
| • Relieved | • Fulfilled | • Stimulated |
| • Glad | • Surprised | • Hopeful |
| • Thankful | • Inspired | • Touched |
| • Intrigued | • Trustful | |

Feelings when needs “are not” fulfilled _____

- | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------|
| • Angry | • Hopeless | • Annoyed |
| • Impatient | • Confused | • Irritated |
| • Concerned | • Lonely | • Disappointed |
| • Nervous | • Discouraged | • Overwhelmed |
| • Distressed | • Puzzled | • Embarrassed |
| • Reluctant | • Frustrated | • Sad |
| • Helpless | • Uncomfortable | |

Some Basic Needs We All Have

Autonomy _____

- Choosing dreams/goals/values
- Choosing plans for fulfilling one's dreams, goals, values

Celebration _____

- Celebrate the creation of life and dreams fulfilled
- Celebrate losses: loved ones, dreams, etc. (mourning)

Integrity _____

- Authenticity • Creativity • Meaning • Self-worth

Interdependence _____

- Acceptance • Appreciation • Closeness • Community
- Consideration • Contribute to the enrichment of life
- Emotional Safety • Empathy
- Honesty (the empowering honesty that enables us to learn from our limitations)
- Love • Reassurance • Respect • Support • Trust
- Understanding

Physical Nurturance _____

- Air • Food • Movement, exercise
- Protection from life-threatening forms of life: viruses, bacteria, insects, predatory animals
- Rest • Sexual expression • Shelter • Touch • Water

Play _____

- Fun • Laughter

Spiritual Communion _____

- Beauty • Harmony • Inspiration • Order • Peace

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Meditations for
JANUARY

JANUARY 1

If we ourselves remain angry and then sing world peace, it has little meaning. First, our individual self must learn peace. This we can practice. Then we can teach the rest of the world.

—The Dalai Lama

Setting Goals for the New Year

What do you want to focus on this year? What are your goals, hopes, and dreams? It's important to make your goals concrete and specific. Don't just say that you want to be happier; consider how you would like your life to be different. What if your goal is to support world peace by living your own life more peacefully? Consider the specific ways you will do this, such as learning Nonviolent Communication, taking a course on anger management, working a twelve-step program, or seeing a therapist. If your goal is to contribute to world peace, your actions can be very specific and concrete. Avoid focusing on what you don't want, such as conflict at work. Rather, focus on what you want, such as harmony at work. When your goals are concrete and positively worded, you can begin to manifest them. This simple process can have a profound impact on your success.

Take a few minutes today to write down your goals for the year, knowing that the goal-setting process is the first step toward manifesting your dreams.



JANUARY 2

The Nonviolent Communication process strengthens our ability to remain human, even under trying conditions. It reminds us about what we already know—how we humans were meant to relate to one another—and assists us in living in ways that concretely manifests this knowledge.

—Marshall B. Rosenberg, PhD

Nonviolent Communication

Nonviolent Communication is a communication process and a model for living that was developed by Marshall B. Rosenberg, PhD, more than forty years ago. It is used in thirty-five countries worldwide. The two primary components of this process are: 1) a process for living that values everyone's needs equally, and that values connections with people more than being right or winning; and 2) a set of tools that helps us do this.

Most of us have been taught a way of living that promotes distrust and self-protection. In contrast, Nonviolent Communication teaches us that true safety lies in our ability to openly connect with ourselves and other people, to live authentically, and to respond to all situations with compassion and humanity. This process promotes peaceful living on a daily basis.

Be aware today of the times that your behaviors or attitudes promote distrust and self-protection, rather than compassion and humanity.



JANUARY 3

I saw my Lord with the eye of my heart, and I said:

Who art Thou? He said: Thou.

—Al-Hallaj

What Is Nonviolent Communication?

Nonviolent Communication (sometimes known as Compassionate Communication) is a way of interacting that facilitates the flow of communication needed to resolve differences peacefully. It focuses on shared human values and needs, and encourages the use of language that increases goodwill, and avoidance of language that contributes to resentment or lowered self-esteem.

Nonviolent Communication assumes that enriching life is the most satisfying motivation for doing things, rather than being motivated by fear, guilt, blame, or shame. It emphasizes taking personal responsibility for choices and improving the quality of relationships as a primary goal. It is effective even when other people involved are not familiar with the process.

—Marshall B. Rosenberg, PhD

The four components of Nonviolent Communication are:

Observations—observing a situation without moralistic judgment, or diagnosis.

Feelings—expressing to another how you feel without assigning blame.

Needs—expressing to another which of your universal needs are unmet or which you would like to have met.

Request—expressing a specific, doable request of another person in an effort to help you meet your needs.

For today, focus on making observations without moralistic judgment in at least two of your interactions.



JANUARY 4

I am not easily frightened. Not because I am brave but because I know that I am dealing with human beings, and that I must try as hard as I can to understand everything that anyone ever does.

—Etty Hillesum, Holocaust survivor

Improving Relationships as a Primary Goal

Compassionate Communication suggests that improving the quality of our relationships is a primary goal. Indeed, that connection with ourselves and other people takes a higher priority than being right, winning, making more money, or looking good to other people. If you focus on *improving the quality of your relationships* through deeper connections, you will improve the state of your life, enhance the peace and love in your life, and feel better about yourself.

I learned this through personal experience. I worked from time to time with a business colleague. Over the years, our relationship deteriorated to the point where we had no civil connections with each other. Our association was worst just as I was starting to look at how I contributed to the angst in my relationships. As a result, I started to focus more on my connections with people rather than trying to be right or to win arguments. Within a remarkably short time, my colleague was telling me how much she admired the changes

I was making and how much she enjoyed her relationship with me. We both expressed our sadness for our earlier behaviors. Today, we are close colleagues who work together in a variety of projects and easily call each other a friend.

When you shift your focus to valuing your connection with other people, you improve the quality of your life and your relationships. Everyone who crosses your path will benefit from this shift of focus. It is inevitable.

Be aware today of the times when your priority is to win or to be right rather than to connect, then shift your focus to connection with others.



JANUARY 5

*Try not to become a man of success, but rather,
try to become a man of value.*

—Albert Einstein

Giraffe Consciousness

In Compassionate Communication, we use giraffes as our metaphor because they have the largest heart of all land mammals (forty pounds!). They remind us to connect from the heart. They also have long necks, a metaphor for seeing far down the road. So when we say or do something, it is important for us to be conscious of the potential long-range consequences of our actions. It's about being fully present to our actions and words, knowing that each action creates a reaction. When we consciously choose to respond to life

with compassion, peace, and harmony, we meet our own needs for these positive qualities.

Be aware of your own or other people's actions that demonstrate a giraffe consciousness to you.



JANUARY 6

Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.

—Martin Luther King Jr.

The Jackal as a Teacher

In Compassionate Communication, we use the jackal as our metaphor for that part of us that is critical, judgmental, or self-righteous. We chose the jackal image because they walk low to the ground, tend to be more interested in satisfying themselves in the moment, and are less likely to consider the future ramifications of their actions. My inner jackal says things to me like: “Who do you think you are? You can’t do THAT! You are too much—too intense, too demanding, too weak . . .” Can you relate to this jackal? Or maybe you have your own version.

I used to ignore my own inner jackal because I thought it was mean and uncaring. Then, after much empathy, I started to realize that it holds wisdom for me. When it tells me that I’m too intense, I believe it is trying to protect me from rejection. When it tells me, “You can’t do that!,” I believe it is trying to protect me from the disappointment of

failure. I may not enjoy its methods, but I now know that it has my best interests at heart.

Do not think that ignoring your jackal will be healing. The more you ignore your jackal, the louder and fiercer it howls! Your jackal truly cares about your well-being. Hear it, empathize with it, learn its intentions, and create more satisfying strategies to meet your needs. This journey is filled with self-care, love, nurturing, and healing for both of you.

Pay attention to what your inner jackal
has to teach you today.



JANUARY 7

Speech is a mirror of the soul: as a man speaks, so is he.

—Pubilius Syrus

Tragic Expressions of Unmet Needs

Marshall B. Rosenberg, PhD, who developed the Compassionate Communication process, uses the phrase “tragic expressions of unmet needs” to illustrate how often we do things that aren’t likely to meet our needs. The copy machine doesn’t work, so you hit it and scream at it. I’m guessing you’re frustrated because you would like ease and predictability when using it. Will hitting and screaming help you meet this need? How about the ways that you communicate with other people? For example, your husband forgets to change the oil in your car for the third week in a row, so you say: “You haven’t done that yet? Do I have to do

everything?” I’m guessing you’re angry and confused, and want relief, support, and fairness. In another example, you may feel angry, hurt, or scared when someone yells at you on the phone, so you shut down and don’t say anything. Is it possible for you to meet your needs for understanding, consideration, and respect if you don’t say anything? It’s not that the way you communicate is bad; it’s tragic, because it won’t help you meet your needs.

This simple realization was transformative for me and it helped catapult me into changing my behaviors to better meet my needs. So, the next time you feel hurt, angry, sad, or disappointed, consider the potential results of the action you’re about to take. Will it help you meet your needs? If not, consider a different approach that is more likely to satisfy you.

Today, notice how often you do things that will
not help you meet your need in the situation.
Make a different choice that will.



JANUARY 8

*Nobody sees a flower—really—it is so small it takes
time—we haven’t time—and to see takes time,
like to have a friend takes time.*

—Georgia O’Keeffe

Empathy, a Potent Healer

I cannot say it enough. Most of us rarely feel truly heard and understood. Empathy, the simple act of hearing someone

and focusing your attention on them, can be incredibly healing. Try to listen for the feelings and needs behind someone's words. This isn't always easy, but the results are remarkable.

Here's an example. One of your kids says, "We never do what I want." That might be hard to hear if you focus on the words he uses and if you think 90 percent of your life is focused on meeting his needs. Take a deep breath and listen for what they are; I'm guessing respect, and a say in decision making. You don't have to agree with him, by the way. All you're doing is trying to understand his view of things. You could respond with, "Are you frustrated and want more say in the family's decision-making process?" That's it! Now, carry the conversation through by listening for his feelings and needs and expressing your own. The whole conversation might sound like this, "Yeah, you and Dad always get your own way." "So, you think we're only doing what we want without considering what you want?" "Yeah." "I feel sad about this because I know I spend a lot of time considering your needs, and then often neglecting my own. I guess we both want the same thing, balance and respect. You and I would both like to know that the other one values our needs too. Do you agree with that?" "Yeah, I guess." "Would you be willing to talk about what we are both hoping for tonight, and maybe brainstorm ways we can both get what we want?" "OK."

If we focus on the words, we often miss the point. Listen deeply to the needs the other person is trying to convey. Once you understand each other, you will be ready to resolve the situation.

Empathize with at least one person today.