

EXERCISE 2: Empathy guesses when hearing the common communication choices.

Choose one of the expressions from the handout that you would not enjoy hearing from someone else.

1. If your practice partner is playing a role, tell them who they're playing e.g. "This is something my father would say to me, so you're playing my father."
2. Ask your practice partner to speak this expression to you.
3. Empathy guessing:
 - a) Give a brief reflection of some specific words you're hearing that give you a sense of what the other person might be feeling and needing – the "anchor" for your guesses.
 - b) Guess at how the person is feeling as they say these words
 - c) Guess at a need(s) associated with this feeling.

You can also use other kinds of self-expression that are not on the "Common Choices in Intimate Relationship" handout.

Perhaps use something that your partner has said to you that you did not enjoy. Ask them to say those words to you again, and follow the Empathy Guessing steps above. Steps.

EXERCISE 3: Needs into action.

In NVC we say that conflict does not happen at the level of needs, it happens at the level of strategies. However, the statement "we have conflicting needs" is a common one. Let's look a little closer at this.

Let's say Sarai wants to go away this coming weekend to go to a workshop on something that interests her greatly. She's hoping for learning, growth, and also, she says, "Sometimes I like to meet people on my own terms, not as part of a couple. It's about a need for independence and freedom. I'm deeply committed to our relationship, and I still have a need for freedom."

Eli, Sarai's partner, wants to either go to the workshop with Sarai or for her to stay home this weekend. For him this is a common situation, and one that he describes as "We have conflicting needs. She wants freedom and independence, but I'm more traditional and I want us to have togetherness and closeness – to be a unit."

If I ask Sarai if she values togetherness and closeness she says "Absolutely. They're vital parts of my life and I love that part of my connection with Eli."

If I ask Eli if he values freedom and independence he says, at first, "Well, I don't think it's right for Sarai to live like she's not in relationship with me." I clarify that I'm asking a

different question: “In your life, Eli, do you ever experience freedom or independence? In any way – home life, work life, social life, family life etc.?”

Eli pauses and then says: “Yes. I go away on work trips and have a sense of freedom and independence, and at work in general I get tons of creative freedom. I would not do the job otherwise. I also go mountain biking and a huge motivation for that is the sense of freedom I get from it.”

So, is Sarai the only partner here who values freedom and independence? No.

Is Eli the only partner who values closeness and togetherness? No.

Strategy #1. Sarai going away on her own for the weekend is a strategy to meet needs.

Strategy #2. Eli accompanying her is a strategy to meet needs.

Strategy #3. Sarai staying home to spend the weekend with Eli is a strategy to meet needs.

The first strategy conflicts with both of the other two, but the underlying needs are common to both people. They both value, and and take action to meet, the needs for freedom, independence, closeness and togetherness.

Seeing this they can now look at the decision about this weekend in a different way. If both Sarai and Eli state clearly to each other: “**Your needs are as important as mine. My needs are as important as yours**” this gives them a new joint project.

Sarai’s uppermost needs for this weekend are learning, growth, freedom and independence.

Eli’s uppermost needs for this weekend are closeness and togetherness.

Their new joint project is defined by the question, held by each of them: “**How can I help you to meet your needs while also meeting my own? What strategies would make that happen?**”

I invite you to put yourself in their shoes. What mutually satisfying solution might they come up with in this new joint project? What can they decide on doing that would show their commitment to each other’s needs?