



TRANSFORMING EMOTIONS

**Nonviolent Communication
meets Contact Improvisation**

GUIDE through EMOTIONS

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EMOTIONS

Emotions play a big role in human experience. They are part of our everyday life and they impact how we perceive the world around us. They influence the way we relate to others and they influence the choices of our actions. They are present in our life, no matter how much we want to avoid them or diminish their existence. In this guide we want to share some important aspects of emotions that we focused on exploring during 6 days of a training course. Inspired by Nonviolent Communication and Somatic Practices including Contact Improvisation we developed this guide that can be useful for anyone interested in connecting with emotions and understanding how they can serve us in everyday life.



PROJECT

TRANSFORMING EMOTIONS is a project based on the idea coming from acknowledging that EMOTIONS are ENERGY IN MOTIONS so they, if working well, TRANSFORM all the time. In fact, even if they get stuck, they often transform into some illness or disease, or at least some chronic pain or discomfort. Nonviolent Communication gives some clues how to give them the right direction, towards ease, understanding and power. Contact Improvisation puts all the mental process directly into connection with the energy of emotions that flows in our body all the time.

NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION *meets* CONTACT IMPROVISATION

NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION

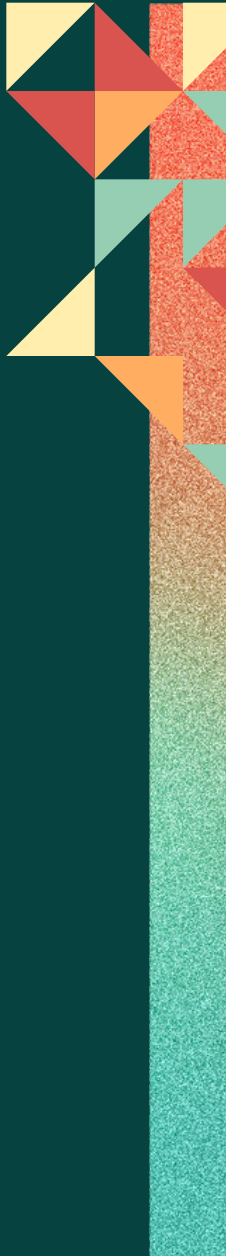
Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is a communication process developed by Marshall B. Rosenberg. In NVC, feelings, as distinct from thoughts or interpretations, are seen as body sensations or experiences that arise in response to our observations and interpretations of events. According to NVC, all human beings share universal needs, and our feelings are indicators of whether these needs are being met or unmet. For example, if we feel joy, it may be an indicator that our need for connection or celebration is being met. By connecting with our needs we shift our reactivity to relatedness and we can transform any emotion into an opportunity to connect with ourselves and others.

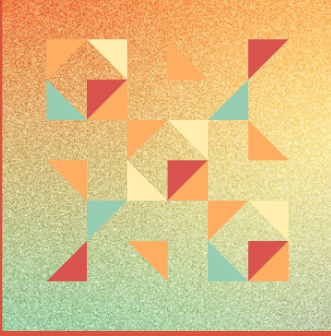
CONTACT IMPROVISATION

Contact Improvisation (CI) is a dance form that involves spontaneous movement and physical contact between two or more people. It can be a powerful and transformative practice that goes beyond the physical aspects of movement and touch. It offers a unique and expressive way to explore and transform emotions through movement and touch. By embodying emotions through dance, people may experience a release of intense emotions and gain a deeper understanding of their emotional states. The practice emphasises the connection between the mind and body. CI often involves exploring physical boundaries in a consensual and respectful way. This exploration can provide a platform for individuals to confront and transform emotional boundaries bringing more confidence and self-awareness. CI encourages participants to be present in the moment which can lead to a greater awareness of emotions as they arise and transform during the dance.

"Everything we do is in service of our needs. When this one concept is applied to our view of others, we'll see that we have no real enemies, that what others do to us is the best possible thing they know to do to get their needs met."

Marshall B. Rosenberg





ANGER

"The core of all anger is a need that is not being met."

Marshall B. Rosenberg

Anger is an emotion that rises to protect us, tells us about what is at stake and what is or might be threatened in the moment. By transforming anger we get in touch with what is important to us, what we want to protect or change. Anger is like a guard of our integrity. It can signal that a personal boundary has been crossed. Anger arises when there are some unmet needs wanting to be seen. Understanding these needs can provide insight into the source of the anger. For example anger can be a response to witnessing and experiencing actions we consider unfair or morally wrong, which show us that need for fairness and respect is not being met.

Once we understand how much we value and care for something it can be a drive for a change. Without understanding the real reasons for anger it can intensify and it can transform into aggression and violence. That's why it's important to transform it with curiosity and compassion into understanding and empowerment.



"Every criticism, judgement, diagnosis, and expression of anger is the tragic expression of an unmet need."

Marshall B. Rosenberg

HOW DO WE TRANSFORM ANGER according to NVC?

When you feel anger:

- **Stop** and breathe, don't do or say anything.
- **Listen** to your thoughts, all "shoulds" and "shouldn'ts", blames and judgments.
- **Observe** what exactly happened, how do you remember that.
- **Connect** to your needs. What "treasure" is lying at the root of your anger?
- **Finding** your needs, check if your body is shifting? What are your feelings right now?
- **Express** your feelings and needs underlying your anger and a request that would serve those needs



EXERCISE: TRANSFORMING ANGER WITH NVC

STIMULUS.

Recall a moment from your life when you felt angry. It may be something recent or from your past and still needs to be taken care of.

THOUGHTS.

Identify your thoughts, beliefs you may have about the other person or the situation. Maybe the thought is "It's not fair", "Normal people shouldn't behave in this way". Check how your body is reacting. What are your body sensations?

OBSERVATIONS.

Try to describe the situation using facts, what was said, done, or not said, not done. Do it as you were a video camera that registered the situation without any filters.

NEEDS.

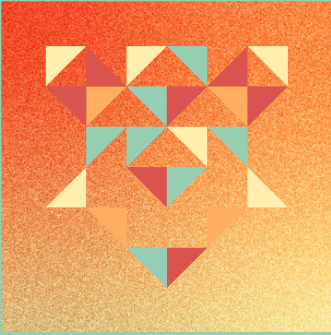
Find what is important for you in relation to this situation, what needs are behind?

FEELINGS.

Discovering the needs produces some shift in our bodies and transforms anger into other feelings. What are your body sensations? What are you feeling right now?

REQUEST.

Express your anger and make a request. Express your observations, feelings and needs lying behind your anger. Make a request that would serve your needs. What do you want to do now? Do you want to ask someone/yourself for something?



SHAME

"Never do anything to avoid shame or guilt..."

Marshall B. Rosenberg

Shame is a feeling that we often perceive even when talking about. When we feel shame it affects our body in a visible way. Our body often shrinks like it would like to disappear. The blood rises until we can hardly think. Shame can be triggered by various factors, and the sources of shame are often influenced by individual experiences, societal expectations, and cultural norms. According to many researchers, shame is an emotion connected to the interaction with others and how we believe to be perceived by others. Unlike guilt, which typically arises from a belief that one has violated a specific moral or social norm, shame is more about a pervasive feeling of being fundamentally flawed. The roots of shame lay in our early childhood, when shame was our inner response to not being accepted and loved. The more rejections we experienced the more intense feelings of shame can be. As shame can be a very overwhelming feeling, most people tend to avoid shame.

WHERE DO WE GO TO AVOID SHAME according to COMPASS OF NEEDS by LIV LARSSON

- We move away from shame by hiding, being silent and giving up on our requests and dreams.
- We move towards shame by showing that we are willing to submit and shrink ourselves to fit in.
- We invade shame through rebelling against any sign of it. We do this by doing the things we are afraid of, doing what is unusual and what is startling, all of which demonstrate our independence.
- We learn to attack anything that is shameful to us. We do this by trying to gain power over others, becoming angry and inducing shame.

"A tragic result of using strategies to get away from shame is that we miss the awareness of needs that shame could have brought to our attention. Thus we miss the chance to develop or gain further insight into how we can relate to others in a more satisfactory way."

Liv Larsson

TRANSFORMING SHAME

As any other emotion SHAME appears to show us something and to protect something that is dear to us. Shame often suggests that our need for belonging, connection and acceptance are not being met. We can transform shame to regain the power of choice and connection.

EXERCISE: FROM SHAME TO CONNECTION by Liv Larsson

Follow the four steps below to regain connection and inner balance after a shame attack.

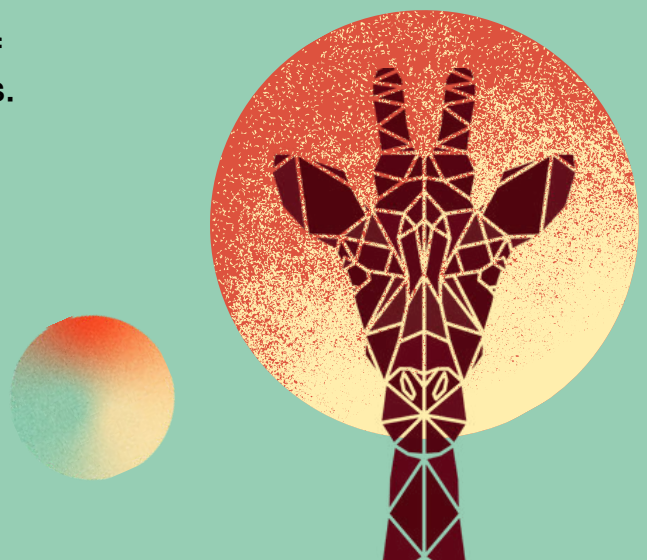
1a. **Experience** the effects on the body that shame has. It can be experienced as warm waves that will make you blush or as a discomfort in the stomach.

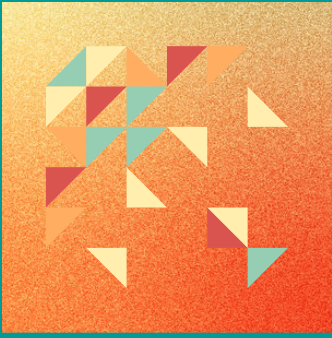
1b. **Remind** yourself that it is valuable to get in touch with your feelings and needs. Do not do anything to avoid or numb the shame. If you act before you have connected with yourself, it is possible that you will do something you will later regret.

2. **Realise** that you need support and that you will benefit from sharing how you feel with another human being.

3. **Get in touch** with someone you know can listen and tell them what you are ashamed of. If no one is available, make sure to take the time to listen to yourself with compassion. Shame cannot keep us in its grip when we experience empathic connection.

4. If you did not perceive the shame erupt through your body, you can **recognize** it in how you move in any of the directions in the compass of needs.





GUILT

"When we understand the needs that motivate our own and others' behaviour, we have no enemies."

Marshall B. Rosenberg

Guilt is a feeling that arises from a person's belief or awareness that they have violated a moral or ethical standard, either externally imposed or internalised. It is often associated with a specific behaviour or action that the individual perceives as wrong or harmful. Guilt involves a sense of responsibility for the perceived wrongdoing and a desire to make amends or seek forgiveness. Guilt is a sign that we are torn in making a choice between two or more different things that are equally important for us. We chose to do or say something to meet some of our needs. We do regret it and feel guilty because some other important needs were not met. In NVC these two voices are called CHOOSER and EDUCATOR. Listening to both of them can transform guilt into other feelings and help us to decide what actions we can do.

TRANSFORMING GUILT according to LIV LARSSON

- When you feel guilty, stop, breathe, and connect with what is going on **inside** you.
- Give space for all judgements and should-thinking. **Listen** to the thoughts, but do not act on them.
- Ask yourself what needs these thoughts are trying to **remind** you of.
- Ask yourself what needs would be met if you **choose** not to do what you say to yourself that you should do.
- Ask yourself what you **can** do to meet, or at least take into account, both the needs you found before.
- **Act** when the feeling of guilt shifts, even if you haven't found out how you can meet all needs. Allow yourself to mourn the needs you do not see how to meet right now.



EXERCISE: FROM EDUCATOR TO CHOOSER with NVC

Remember a situation, where you feel guilty. How do you feel in your body, when you connect to this situation?

EDUCATOR

What are you telling yourself? Name your thoughts and judgments.
To which unmet needs do these thoughts point to?
How do you feel now, as you see these unmet needs?

CHOOSER

What happened? What are your observations?
Which needs do/did you attempt to meet?
How do you feel now, as you see the needs you tried to meet?

LEARNING:

finding strategies that include all needs?

"An important aspect of self-compassion is to be able to empathically hold both parts of ourselves-the self that regrets a past action and the self that took the action in the first place."

Marshall B. Rosenberg



"We want to take action out of the desire to contribute to life rather than out of fear, guilt, shame, or obligation."

Marshall B. Rosenberg



Emotions is energy that flows through our bodies that is constantly influenced by what we perceive and think. It's important to remember that transforming emotions does not mean suppressing or denying them. Instead, it involves acknowledging and understanding emotions, responding to them in a healthy way, and utilising them as valuable sources of information and energy for personal growth. Working with emotions in a constructive manner is a lifelong process that can contribute to a more fulfilling and resilient life. Nonviolent Communication as well Contact Improvisation can bring a lot of awareness to emotions and hence allow people to live a more fulfilled and authentic life. If you want to explore more, visit our recommended websites:

www.perform.org.pl The organiser of the project

<https://www.polandcontactfestival.com> Contact Improvisation Festival

<https://www.empathiceurope.com> Partner of the project

<https://www.cnvc.org> Center for Nonviolent Communication

<https://www.livlarsson.com> Website of Liv Larsson

<https://paulinaorbitowska.pl> Certified NVC Trainer who co-created this project

Literature:

Marshall B. Rosenberg "Nonviolent Communication. A Language of Life."

Marshall B. Rosenberg "Living Nonviolent Communication"

Liv Larsson "Anger, Guilt and Shame – Reclaiming Power and Choice"

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