



A Comparison of Life-Serving and Life-Alienating Systems

“Giraffe” vs. “Jackal”

| | Life Alienating | Life-Serving |
|--|---|--|
| Symbol in NVC ... | “Jackal” | “Giraffe” |
| Consciousness ... | Domination | Partnership |
| Intention ... | To be right To get others to do what I want | Connection or Understanding |
| Principal judgments ... | Moral judgments (good/bad, right/wrong) Dualistic (either/or) | Life-serving judgments (needs met or unmet) Dialectical (both/and) |
| Motivation for actions ... | Extrinsic (rewards / punishment) | Intrinsic (feelings / needs) |
| Source of feelings ... | Caused by outside actions, people & events | Caused by our own thoughts or needs |
| Create safety through ... | Obedience | Connection |
| Relationship with others ... | Caste system / hierarchy Power over win / lose Getting our own way | Equality / mutuality Power with win / win Meeting everyone’s needs |
| Source of authority ... | External government, church, employer, parents | Internal Divine within |
| Give through ... | Guilt or shame or anger | Compassion or joy |
| Want others to feel our pain by ... | Stimulating pain in others | Others empathically present to us |
| See another’s pain as ... | Causing pain in ourselves. | “Please” ... a cry for help. A cry for empathy ... a gift |
| “See” another person through ... | Enemy or hero images What do you deserve? What are you? You (object) | Wholeness as a human What do you need? What’s alive in you? Thou (person) |
| Focus on... | Past behaviors Future events | Present moment |

The "4 Ears": How We Choose to Hear Difficult Messages

EXAMPLE #1

Person A: How dare you walk out of the room when I'm talking! You inconsiderate S.O.B.! You just can't stand to hear the truth.

1. **B (blaming A):** Me the S.O.B. ... how about you! You're the one who started all this in the first place. You are so self-righteous telling me I'm inconsiderate. You've never thought about another human being besides yourself!
2. **Person B (blaming himself):** Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be disrespectful. It's just that I don't know what to do. I never know what to do, or what to say. I feel so worthless!
3. **B (sensing his own feelings/needs):** When I hear you say that, I feel hurt because I'm needing respect and to be seen for who I am. And I really need some space because I'm in a lot of pain right now... Would you be willing to tell me what you heard me just say?
4. **B (sensing A's feelings/needs):**
Are you feeling angry and wanting respect and to be heard? ...

EXAMPLE #2

[Mother has a 1-1/2 hour coffee with a friend... her first time away from the children in 3 days.]

6-Year-Old: Mama I don't want you to go! What could be more important than being with me?! (tugging at her leg, crying loudly)

1. **M (blaming child):** Let go of my leg! And be quiet! You've got no reason to cry ... I've been with you all day. You always make this so hard! ... when all I want to do is have a few minutes to myself!
2. **M (blaming herself):** Oh, my gosh, I've really upset you! Why do I always do this?! ... Why am I so selfish? ... I'm such an awful mother.
3. **M (sensing her own feelings/needs):** Honey, I'm really feeling exhausted and needing to just have some personal time to connect with my good friend, Betty. Would you be willing to let Mary (the babysitter) hold you? ...
4. **M (sensing her child's feelings/needs):**
Are you feeling sad and wanting to be held? ...
Are you feeling hurt and needing to know that you are precious and loved? ...

4 Ears:

1. Blaming others
(attacking)
2. Blaming ourselves
(submitting)
3. Sensing our own feelings
& needs
4. Sensing others' feelings & needs

Blaming is the realm of the *jackal*. The jackal part of us sees the only choices as fight, submit or flee. More than likely, the jackal doesn't even see choices, but responds in a habitual or automatic manner.

We are each responsible for how we hear what other people are saying.

Connection is the realm of the *giraffe*. The giraffe part of us knows that there are two ways to connect in any moment: to sense our own feelings & needs, or to sense the feelings & needs of the other person. The giraffe is also keenly aware of the choices she is making in every moment.