



Observations vs. Evaluations

By Gregg Kendrick, Certified Trainer

When we express what has stimulated us, we strive in NVC to express it without blame or criticism—simply by stating the observations of what happened without evaluation.

Observation Cues:

- “When I see ...”
- “When I hear ...”
- “When I recall seeing/hearing ...”
- “When I imagine seeing/hearing ...”

Examples:

“When I see you reading the newspaper ...”

“When I hear you say, ‘I’ll never amount to anything,’ ...”

“When I remember seeing you hit the table with your fist, ...”

“To observe without evaluation is the highest form of human intelligence.”

—J. Krishnamurti

Observation Check:

- Is my observation free of evaluation?
- Can my observation be recorded by the lens of a movie camera or the mike of a tape recorder?
- Does my observation contain words such as “always,” “never,” “whenever,” “constantly,” etc.? ... am I using these words factually or evaluatively?

* parts of this document are adapted from the book “Nonviolent Communication,” by Marshall Rosenberg, 2nd Edition, 2005, Puddledancer Press

Observation with Evaluation Mixed In	Observation Separated From Evaluation
You are too generous.	When I see you give your lunch money to others, I think you are too generous.
Doug procrastinates.	Doug studied for the exam the night before.
She won’t get her work in.	I don’t think she’ll get her work in.
If you don’t eat balanced meals, your health will be impaired.	If you don’t eat balanced meals, I fear that your health will be impaired.
Minorities don’t take care of their property.	I have not seen the family living at 1679 Ross shovel the snow on their sidewalk.
Hank Smith is a poor soccer player.	Hank Smith has not scored a goal in 20 games.
Jim is ugly.	Jim’s looks don’t appeal to me.
You seldom do what I want.	The last three times I initiated an activity, you said you didn’t want to do it.
He frequently comes over.	He comes over at least twice a week.



Requests vs. Demands

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Only after a connection has happened between people (i.e. a mutual understanding of each person's feelings & needs) do we seek to find solutions. ("Connection FIRST, then solutions")

We are more likely to get our needs met when (1) we are conscious of our needs and (2) we explicitly make a request that may fulfill our needs. ("Ask for what you need.")

REQUESTS vs. DEMANDS

In making a request, we honor a "NO" as much as a "YES." For example, are we willing to try to understand what a person is saying "YES" to while they are saying "NO" to us? Do we value the other's needs in that moment as much as our own?

Example:

You: "I'd really like to understand your needs so we can work this problem out. Would you be willing to talk about it right now for 5 minutes?"

Mary: "I don't want to talk now."

You: "Are you exhausted and want to get some rest?"

Mary: "No, I just want to sit here & be left alone."

You: "So you want to just be with yourself right now?"

Mary: "Yeah, just leave me alone."

You: "I want to trust that we'll work this out soon ... would you be willing to talk this afternoon after lunch?"

Mary: "Maybe so, but not now."

You: "OK ... I'll check with you after lunch."

Request Cues

"Would you be willing to ...?"

Request Check

Requests are *clear*, *positive*, and *immediately "do-able"*. They offer a tangible solution to meeting needs in the moment.

Examples:

Clear: "Would you meet me for coffee at 3:30 tomorrow at the Downtown Coffee Shop?"

Vague: "Would you have a conversation with me sometime?"

Positive: "Would you be willing to explore with me what needs of yours are met by smoking?"

Negative: "Would you stop smoking?"

Do-able: "Would you be willing to tell me what you just heard me say?"

Not do-able: "Would you listen to me?"

Connecting Requests

■ *Did the person hear what you wanted to communicate?:*

"Would you be willing to tell me what you just heard me say...?"

■ *What's going on in the other person after hearing what you said?:*

"Would you be willing to tell me how you feel after hearing what I said ...?"