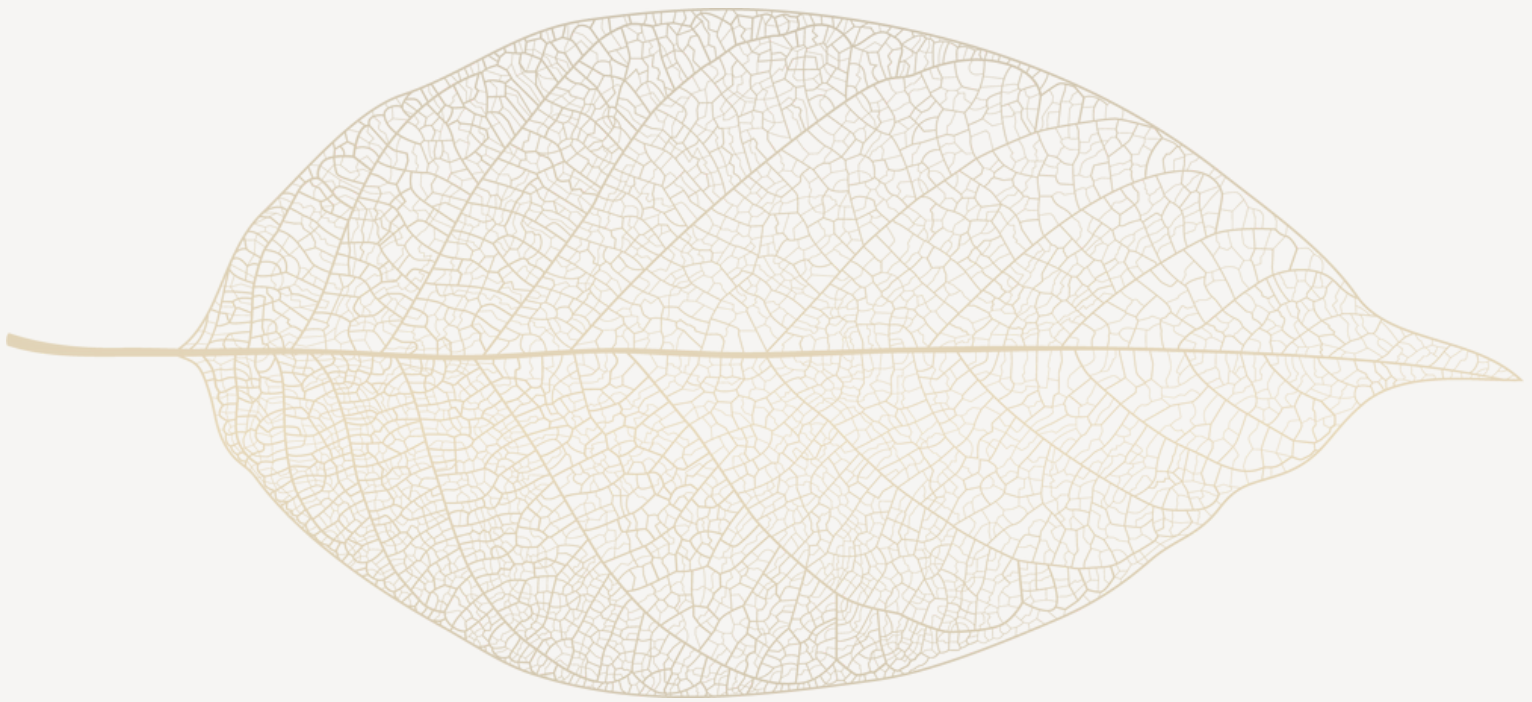


# THE ART OF NEUTRALISING INNER AND OUTER CONFLICT



learning the language of your needs &  
emotions

*inspired by the tools and application of Non Violent Communication by  
Marshall B Rosenberg PhD*

# Introduction

Welcome to *The Art of Neutralising Inner & Outer Conflict*.

A transformative journey through Nonviolent Communication (NVC), a practice that invites you to shift from reaction to response, from defensiveness to depth. Developed by Dr. Marshall Rosenberg, NVC offers more than just a way to talk. It's a way to connect;  
To yourself, to others, and to the space between.

If you've found yourself stuck in loops like these, you're not alone:

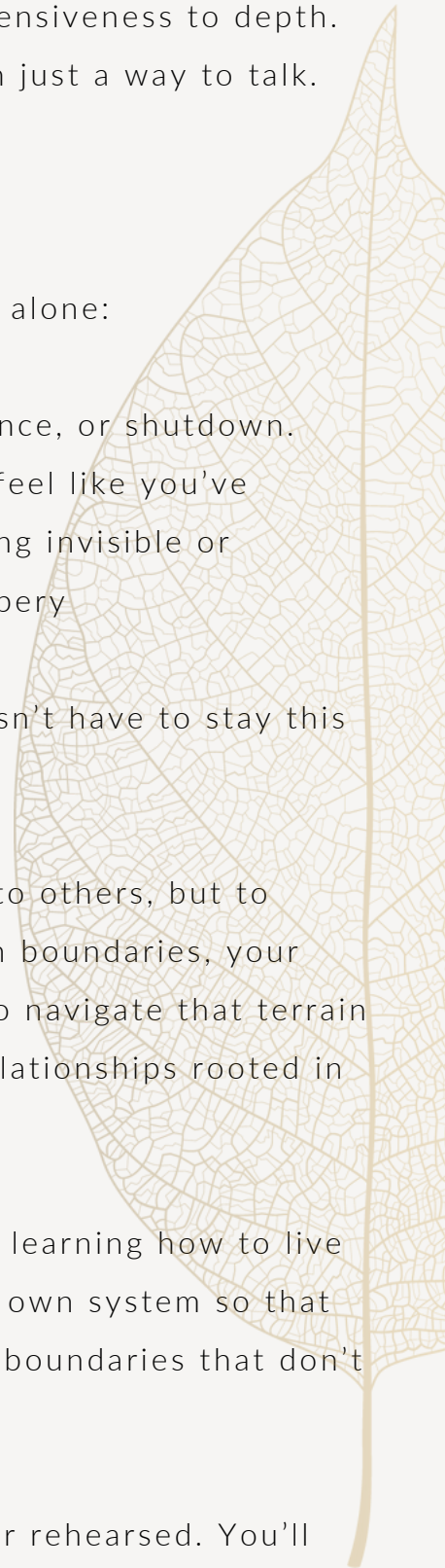
You get pulled into conversations that spiral into blame, silence, or shutdown. You over-explain or people-please to avoid tension, only to feel like you've abandoned yourself again. You walk away from conflict feeling invisible or misunderstood. You crave intimacy but connection feels slippery  
Too much, too fast, too exposed.

I see you. I've lived this too. And I want you to know: it doesn't have to stay this way.

Real change begins with learning to listen—deeply. Not just to others, but to yourself. To your body. To your unmet needs, your unspoken boundaries, your quiet truth waiting to be heard. NVC gives you a structure to navigate that terrain with clarity and compassion. It teaches you how to create relationships rooted in truth, not survival.

This work isn't about becoming better at "talking." It's about learning how to live and speak from your centre. How to build safety inside your own system so that you can meet others with openness, not armour. How to set boundaries that don't punish, and make requests that don't control.

And yes, it's messy at first. You'll probably sound awkward or rehearsed. You'll second-guess your words. You'll want to do it "right." But over time, this way of relating becomes less of a technique and more of a rhythm. You'll begin to speak from a place that is sovereign and soft, strong and spacious.



NVC is not about controlling outcomes. It's about reclaiming your response. When someone reacts poorly, that's their choice. Your work is to stay anchored in yours. And when you do? Even conflict becomes a portal.

This manual will walk you through the core principles and real-life applications of Nonviolent Communication, with grounded tools, examples, and reflection points. Whether you're working through relationship patterns, family dynamics, team tension, or your own internal chaos, this is a place to begin. A place to return.

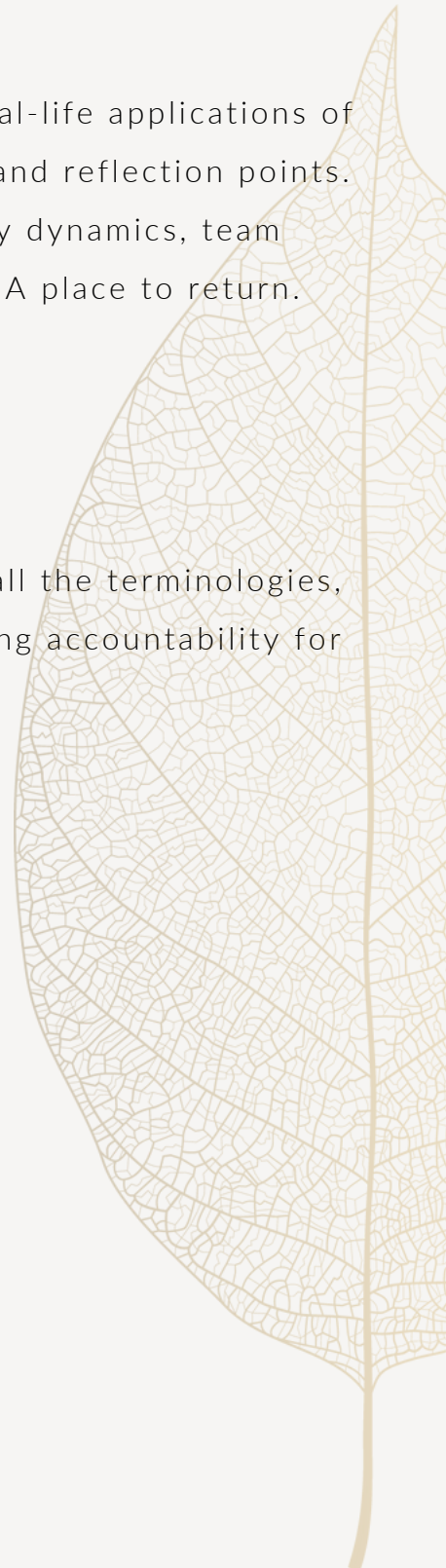
A loving reminder...

These tools won't work unless YOU do.

It's great to know more about yourself and others, or know all the terminologies, but not using this knowledge (or weaponising it without taking accountability for your part) will only lead to further disconnection.

Your **ability** to **respond** is your RESPONSIBILITY.

Let's walk...



## Chapter One: Foundations of NVC

Nonviolent Communication is a practice of transforming conflict into connection by getting to the root of what's alive in us—beneath the stories, beneath the blame, beneath the noise.

At its heart, NVC is built around four simple elements:

**Observation.** Describing what's happening without layering judgment or assumption.

**Feeling.** Naming the emotion that arises in response to what's happening.

**Need.** Identifying the deeper human need underneath that emotion.

**Request.** Making a clear, actionable request that honours both your needs and the other's autonomy.

This is the **OFNR** model, and you'll be working with it deeply throughout this guide.

Some people call NVC “giraffe language,” inspired by the giraffe's wide heart and long neck. The idea is to speak with both courage and perspective—to see beyond the surface reaction and hold space for what matters most.

In contrast, “jackal language” is reactive, sharp, blame-laden. It comes from hurt, but it creates more hurt. It's not bad—just misdirected. Most of us were raised speaking jackal. NVC doesn't shame that—it simply offers a different choice.

Why does this matter?

Because most of us weren't taught how to communicate with emotional clarity.

We learned how to protect ourselves, not how to reveal ourselves.

We learned how to perform peace, not how to create it.

When practiced consistently, NVC helps you:

- Navigate difficult conversations without self-abandonment
- Move from reactive patterns to conscious response
- Understand and express your needs without guilt or shame
- Build relationships based on mutual respect and authentic care



And when you pair this with nervous system regulation? That's where real transformation takes root. Because words don't land the same from a dysregulated body. If your system is in fight, flight, freeze, or fawn, even the gentlest phrases can come out sharp, fast, collapsed, or avoidant.

Regulation doesn't mean perfection. It means you take a beat. You breathe. You check in before speaking. You know your internal cues. And from there, your words soften, your presence anchors, and your relationships shift.

## **Let's Talk About Stories**

*Everything we feel is attached to a story:  
something inherited, absorbed, or repeated until it became a truth.*

*NVC invites us to gently investigate those stories.*

*Are they still helpful?*

*Are they actually true?*

*Are they protecting a need that hasn't been named yet?*

*Much of what we call "communication issues" is actually nervous system issues.  
Or unmet needs in disguise. Or old survival strategies playing out in real-time.  
When we bring awareness to the pattern, we free ourselves to choose something new.*

*This is where your work begins: in listening, observing, owning, and experimenting  
with a new way of relating.*

*The next chapter will introduce you to OFNR in detail and guide you through how  
to use it without sounding like a robot because the point isn't to be polished.  
The point is to be real, regulated, and in right relationship.  
With yourself and with others.*

## Chapter 2: The OFNR Model

The OFNR model is the backbone of Nonviolent Communication. It's a structure that helps us shift from reaction to response, from assumption to curiosity, from power struggle to mutual clarity.

When used with intention, it becomes a compass—not a script—for how to communicate with integrity.

At first, this model might feel clunky. You may overthink your sentences or worry it sounds robotic. That's normal. The purpose isn't to "get it right"—it's to bring more awareness to how you show up in conversation. Over time, it will weave into your natural language, grounding your words in truth and offering connection instead of control.

### **Step 1: Observation – The Neutral Space**

*Observation is about seeing clearly. It asks you to describe what's happening without layering judgment, story, or interpretation. That's harder than it sounds—because most of us have been taught to collapse what happened with how we felt about it.*

*But if we want to create space for understanding, we need to separate the raw facts from the meaning we assign to them.*

*Example:*

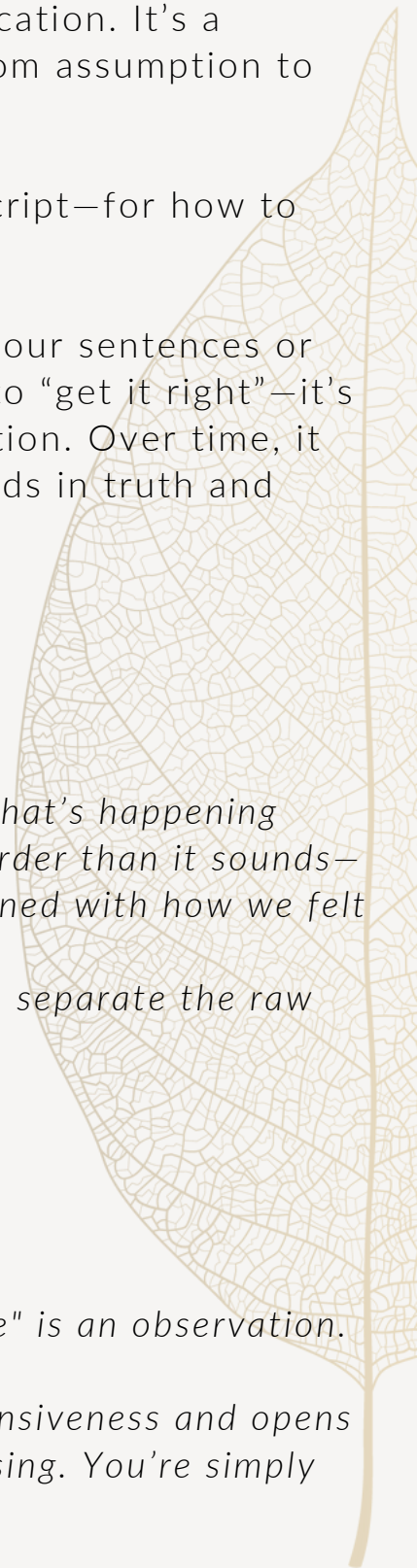
*"You're ignoring me" is not an observation.*

*"I noticed you didn't respond to my message today" is.*

*"You always interrupt me" is a judgment.*

*"I noticed you started speaking before I finished my sentence" is an observation.*

*This kind of clarity is disarming. It removes the need for defensiveness and opens the door to a different kind of conversation. You're not accusing. You're simply naming what you saw, heard, or sensed.*



Neutral observation doesn't mean suppressing emotion.

It means choosing to ground the conversation in what's actually happening so your emotions can be expressed in a way that supports connection, not collapse.

It's the difference between building a bridge and throwing a grenade.

When you lead with curiosity instead of conclusion, you create room for something new to emerge; Maybe even resolution.

And no, you won't always agree on the "facts." That's okay. You're not trying to win the perception war.

You're practicing the art of saying what you experienced without adding layers that distort it.

This requires presence.

Objectivity.

And the willingness to stop performing righteousness in favour of real connection.



## Step 2: Feelings – The Heart of Connection

Feelings are the body's way of letting you know what's going on beneath the surface. They point to what matters. What's working, what's missing, and what's alive.

In NVC, we learn to identify feelings not as weapons, but as signals. Instead of "You made me angry," try "I'm feeling frustrated because my need for respect wasn't met."

That shift matters. It moves us out of blame and into ownership. A note here: *thoughts disguised as feelings* are not feelings.

"I feel like you don't care about me" is a thought.  
"I feel hurt because I need reassurance" is a feeling.

Real emotional literacy requires the ability to distinguish between the story in your head and the signal in your body.

When you get good at this, you stop outsourcing your emotional regulation. You become more fluent in your own inner landscape. You get less lost in reactivity and more rooted in self-awareness.

It also helps others understand you without getting hit by emotional shrapnel.

Expressing how you feel, rather than accusing someone for how you feel, keeps the nervous system of the conversation more regulated—for you and them.

**Remember: feelings are not problems. They're messengers.**





### Step 3: Needs – The Root of Every Feeling

Every feeling we have points back to a need—met or unmet. This is the heartbeat of NVC.

Needs are universal. Whether you're feeling lonely, anxious, calm, excited, or enraged, there's always a deeper need underneath.

**Connection. Autonomy. Safety. Respect. Play. Rest. Clarity. Contribution.**

These are not indulgent desires—they're core to being human. When you know what your needs are, you stop blaming people for not guessing them. You stop turning feelings into accusations.

For example:

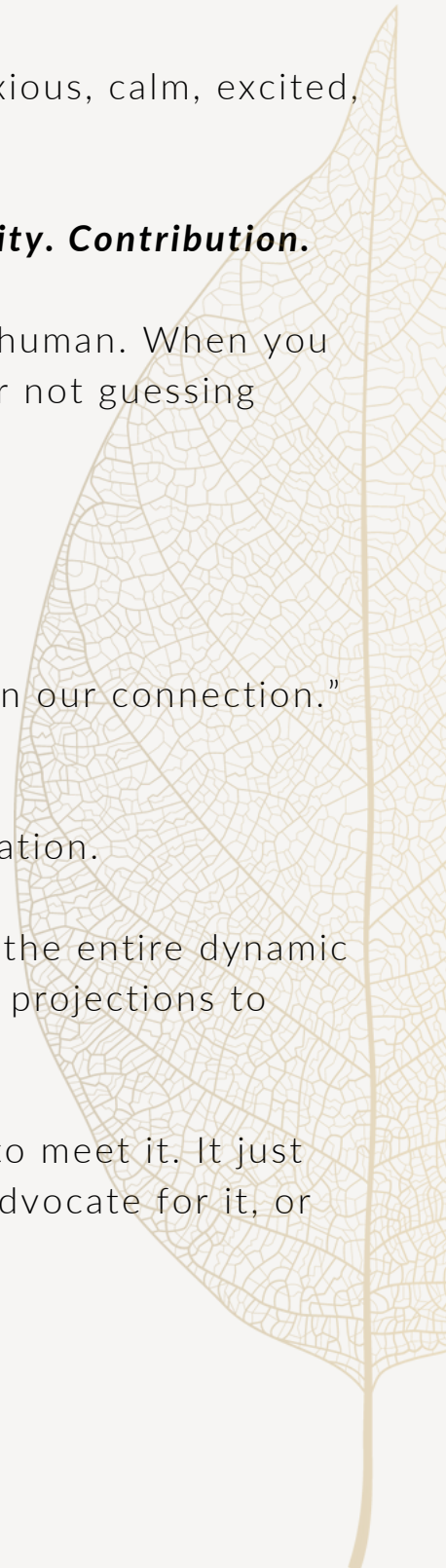
"You always flake on me! You're so unreliable"  
becomes

"I feel let down because I need reliability to feel safe in our connection."

Now you're not painting someone as a villain.  
You're naming what's true for you and inviting conversation.

And yes—it's vulnerable. But this is the moment where the entire dynamic can shift. From righteousness to relationship, and from projections to presence.

Owning your need doesn't mean the other person has to meet it. It just means you've named it clearly—so you can tend to it, advocate for it, or re-evaluate the container you're in.



## Step 4: Requests – The Art of Inviting, Not Controlling

A request is not a demand dressed up in polite language. It's an invitation to collaborate, not a tool to coerce.

Demands say: "Do this or else."

Requests say: "Here's what would support me—what's possible on your end?"

If your "request" can't tolerate a "no," it's not a request. It's manipulation. Real requests are clear, actionable, and leave room for autonomy.

You're not trying to force someone into compliance. You're simply naming what would meet your need and checking if the other person has capacity or willingness.

"I want you to stop ignoring me" is vague and blaming.

"Would you be willing to put your phone down while we talk so I feel heard?" is a request.

If they say no? You don't collapse. You get curious. What's going on for them? What's their limit? Can you meet your need in another way?

This isn't about perfection. It's about staying in dialogue rather than defaulting to control, silence, or withdrawal.

Your clarity is the doorway to connection—not a guarantee, but an opening.

*Together, these four components—Observation, Feeling, Need, and Request—offer a roadmap for honest, human communication.*

*Not perfect. Not polished. But alive, grounded, and real.*

*They remind us that communication isn't about getting it right—it's about staying present, telling the truth, and making space for what matters.*

## Chapter 3: Giraffe Language vs. Jackal Language

Language is more than just what we say.

It's the architecture of a relationship. Every word we speak either builds a bridge or raises a wall.

In NVC, we use two symbolic languages to explore how we communicate: Jackal Language and Giraffe Language. These aren't about being "good" or "bad" communicators. They're reflections of the energy we speak from—survival or sovereignty, protection or presence.

Jackal Language: Survival First, Connection Later (or Never)

Jackal Language is defensive, sharp, reactive. It bites when it's scared. It blames when it's hurting. It speaks from old stories, often with unmet needs driving the narrative. Jackal Language isn't evil. It's just misdirected. It's what we learned to do to stay safe, to get attention, or to try to control connection when we didn't know how else.

It sounds like:

"You're so selfish."

"You never listen."

"If you cared, you'd just do it."

"You made me feel like crap."

"Why do I always have to ask?"

Jackal Language centres around who's at fault. It seeks righteousness over resolution. It creates a dynamic where someone wins and someone loses—usually at the cost of deeper intimacy.

This isn't wrong. It's just familiar. And often, it's inherited.

The problem is, Jackal Language triggers defensiveness and reactivity in the other person, too. It escalates. It closes hearts. It reinforces the very disconnection we're trying to fix.

If you're speaking jackal, it's usually a sign that your inner world needs attention before the conversation can be truly relational.



# Giraffe Language: The Language of the Heart

Giraffe Language is rooted in curiosity, clarity, and compassion.

It doesn't avoid truth—it just delivers it in a way that honours the nervous system, yours and theirs.

Why the giraffe? Because it has the largest heart of any land animal and the longest neck—symbolising both care and perspective.

Speaking giraffe means naming what's happening without blame. Owning your emotions and needs. Making requests without coercion. Creating space for the other person's truth too, even when it's uncomfortable.

It sounds like:

"When you didn't reply to my message, I felt hurt because I need clarity and connection. Would you be open to letting me know when you're unavailable in future?"

"When I'm interrupted mid-sentence, I feel frustrated because I value being heard. Could we try pausing until the other is finished?"

"I'm feeling overwhelmed and need more shared responsibility around the house. Would you be willing to talk about dividing up tasks together?"

It's honest. It's vulnerable. It's clear. And it respects both your experience and theirs. Giraffe Language doesn't mean being "nice." It means being real and responsible for how you show up. It invites connection without demanding it. It builds trust over time—not through perfection, but through consistency.

## **Why It Matters**

Jackal Language escalates conflict by turning people into problems. Giraffe Language transforms conflict into a doorway. Not because it guarantees agreement—but because it makes space for truth.

Let's look at the same situation through both lenses.

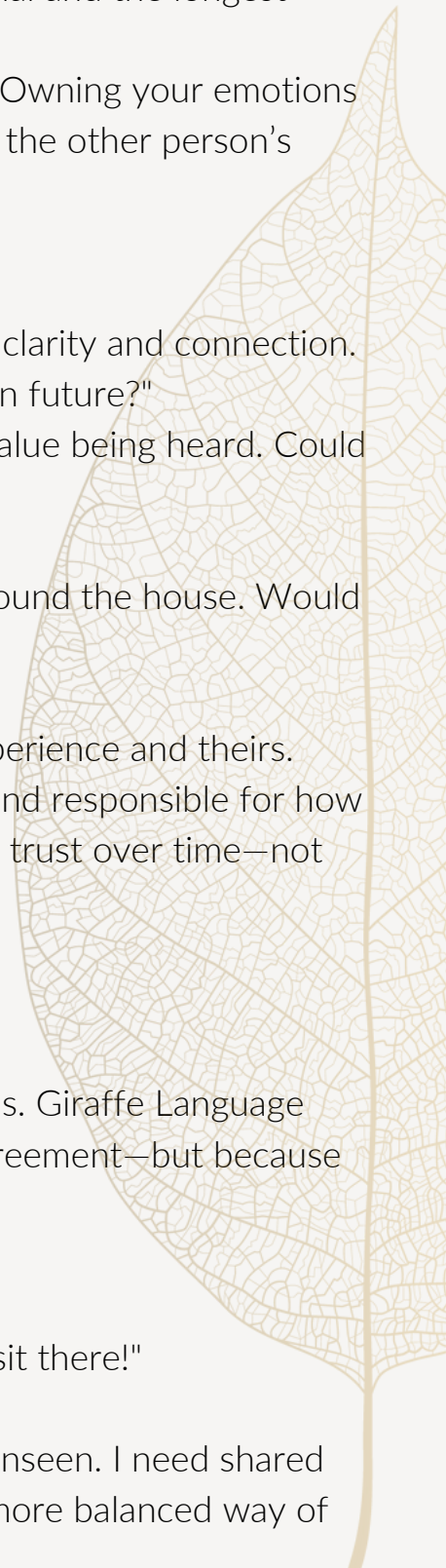
Jackal:

"You never help out around here. I do everything while you just sit there!"

Giraffe:

"When I do all the housework on my own, I feel exhausted and unseen. I need shared responsibility and support. Would you be open to figuring out a more balanced way of doing this together?"

One closes the door. The other opens it.





## When Both People Are At Capacity

Sometimes, both people are maxed out. Dysregulated. Burnt out. Worn thin. Even when you're trying your best to speak giraffe, it might not land because the other person's system isn't open.

This is where co-regulation matters more than language.

Instead of pushing harder, slow down. Acknowledge the overwhelm. Invite collaboration from where you *both* are.

You might try:

"I know we're both stretched right now—what could make this feel less heavy for us?"

"Would you be open to trading tasks for today and revisiting how we divide things later?"

"If this feels like too much, could we take a breather and come back to it when we're both more resourced?"

Giraffe Language isn't just about the words. It's about the *quality of presence* you bring to the conversation.

## The Shift Is a Practice

We all speak jackal sometimes. Especially when we're scared, tired, triggered, or hungry for connection we don't know how to ask for. The invitation isn't to shame that. It's to *notice* it—and choose again. Every time you catch yourself mid-jackal and choose curiosity over collapse, that's growth.

Every time you own a feeling instead of blaming it on someone else, that's growth.

Every time you soften into clarity rather than clinging to control, that's growth.

Try asking yourself in the heat of a moment:

What am I feeling right now?

What need is underneath that feeling?

Can I name it in a way that invites connection, not defence?

With practice, your language shifts. Not because you memorised a method, but because you've built enough safety in your own system to speak from truth—not trauma.

Giraffe Language isn't about spiritual bypassing or softening your voice to be more palatable. It's about becoming more honest—not less—and doing it in a way that protects dignity, invites understanding, and prioritises real connection over performative communication.

We don't need more politeness. We need more presence.

## **Chapter 4: Conflict Resolution**

Conflict is inevitable. Disconnection isn't.

Most conflict doesn't happen because people are inherently incompatible—it happens because needs are colliding, unmet, or unclear.

What looks like drama on the surface is often two nervous systems trying to protect something that feels vital: autonomy, belonging, dignity, understanding.

Conflict isn't bad. It's just information. And an opportunity to get curious. The problem is, we're rarely taught how to stay present with it. Most of us learned how to avoid, attack, collapse, or fix. We learned how to win arguments, not how to repair.

But NVC invites us to step into conflict differently—not to eliminate tension, but to use it as a doorway.

Conflict isn't a threat. It's an opportunity to get honest, recalibrate the dynamic, and meet each other with more clarity and care.

What's required?

Willingness. Curiosity.

The ability to pause before reacting. And a practice of emotional self-responsibility.

When both people have access to these, conflict becomes a collaborative process. When only one person does, it still matters—because it only takes one regulated system to interrupt a looping pattern.

## Step 1: Empathy Before Anything Else

Most conflict escalates because no one feels heard.

If you skip straight to your point, your perspective, your righteousness—you're just arguing louder, not deeper.

Start by listening. Not to fix. Not to defend. Just to understand.

This might look like:

"It sounds like you're feeling overwhelmed and want more say in how things are decided—does that land?"

Or

"You seem frustrated. Are you needing more clarity or consideration from me?"

This isn't about taking blame. It's about creating space. When people feel heard, they soften. Their system settles. From there, actual resolution becomes possible.

## Step 2: Express Without Blame

Once the other person has been heard (or you've at least made space for it), it's your turn to speak—but not from attack or reactivity.

This is where the OFNR framework becomes powerful.

Observation: Just the facts.

Feeling: What you're experiencing emotionally.

Need: What's underneath the emotion.

Request: A clear, doable invitation—not a demand.

Instead of:

"You're always ignoring me and dumping all the work on me!"

Try:

"When I end up doing all the planning, I feel overwhelmed because I need shared responsibility. Would you be open to choosing a few things to take on so we can balance this out?"

You're not diminishing your experience—you're just delivering it in a way that doesn't make the other person the enemy.

This takes practice. And courage. It can feel clunky at first. But the clarity it brings is worth it.

Let's try it out. Grab a paper and pen, or use this section to note down a few examples you can pull from your own life. Take this as practice to rewrite and reframe some of the experiences you've had.

Observations:

Feeling:

Underlying need:

Request to self or other:



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Observations:

Feeling:

Underlying need:

Request to self or other:

## **Regulate First, Speak Later**

You cannot communicate clearly from a dysregulated state. If your body is in fight, flight, freeze, or fawn, your words will follow.

To stay grounded during difficult conversations:

Breathe. Slow, steady breaths to signal safety to the body.

Ground. Press your feet into the floor, feel your seat, orient to the room. Check in. Notice your jaw, shoulders, voice tone. Are you in urgency or presence?

When you notice reactivity rise, pause. You don't need to speak right away. You need to return to yourself first. If this means you need to pause and return at an agreed upon time frame, respect it and follow through.

This boundary works only when communicated. For example:

“I will remove myself from the conversation if you start yelling”

Or, when collaborating with getting to know each other's boundaries...

“If I'm noticing myself reach capacity I'll require a 15 minute break to self regulate, would you agree to that?” “...and what would you need if X happens?”

You're not just learning to speak differently—you're learning to relate differently. Nervous system first, language second.

## **Real-Life Example: The Thermostat Standoff**

Two coworkers fight daily over the office temperature.

"You're so inconsiderate. I'm sweating in here!"

"You're ridiculous. It's freezing!"

Jackal Language. Accusation. No one's listening.

But with NVC, something else becomes possible.

"I feel nauseous when it's too hot because I need physical comfort to concentrate."

"I get migraines from the cold. I need support for my health and focus."

From here, they start finding solutions: split schedules, personal fans, compromise on settings, clearer agreements.

Conflict resolved not by picking a winner—but by meeting the needs under the noise.

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*Conflict resolution doesn't mean getting your way.*

It means choosing connection over control. Owning your part. Offering curiosity. Asking better questions. Staying with discomfort without armouring up.

You don't have to be perfect to do this work. You just need to be willing.

One breath at a time. One choice at a time. One moment of grace inside a reactive pattern is enough to shift the whole dynamic.

This is how peace gets made. Not all at once—but in the micro-moments where someone chooses honesty over hostility, presence over power.



## **Real-Life Example: The Thermostat Standoff**

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## Chapter 5: Practical Applications of NVC

This isn't just theory. Nonviolent Communication is a living practice. It's not something you only pull out in a crisis or write in your journal. It's meant to be woven into your daily life—across relationships, parenting, work, and the messy places in between.

This chapter brings it off the page and into the real. Consider it your field guide.

### In Intimate Relationships

Let's start with the pressure cooker. Intimacy tends to expose our oldest stories and rawest needs. That's why it's often the hardest place to practice new tools.

The biggest breakdown? Unspoken expectations. Needs go unnamed. Stories get assumed. Hurt builds. Then it spills out sideways.

Example:

"You never listen. I can't even finish a sentence before you interrupt me!"

That's the jackal. It's honest in its frustration, but not in a way that invites connection.

Let's reframe:

"When I'm interrupted while speaking, I feel hurt and frustrated because I need space to express myself and to feel respected. Can we agree to let each other finish speaking before jumping in?"

You've just moved the energy from attack to awareness.

From assumption to advocacy..

It doesn't guarantee agreement, but it does invite mutual consideration. That's what shifts patterns. That's what builds trust.

A simple practice here: when your partner is upset, try reflecting what you're hearing before you respond.

"It sounds like you're feeling anxious because you need more support with everything going on this week. Did I get that?"

It slows down the loop. It signals safety. It invites partnership.

## Chapter 6: Reflective Practices & Exercises

Nonviolent Communication isn't just something you pull out mid-conflict. It's a daily practice of listening to yourself. Of pausing before reacting. Of tuning into what's actually alive beneath the noise.

If you only try to use these tools in high-stakes situations, they'll feel awkward, clunky, maybe even manipulative. But when you use them day-to-day, they become second nature. You're not performing presence—you're living it.

This chapter is about building that fluency. Think of it as your training ground.

### ***Daily Self-Reflection Practice***

After a conversation—especially one that felt off or charged—take a moment to review it through the OFNR lens.

Ask yourself:

What was the observation?

What actually happened, without interpretation?

What feelings came up?

    Name the emotion(s) clearly—without blaming.

What need was underneath that feeling?

Go deeper. Was it safety? Clarity? Respect? Rest?

What request could have been made—or what boundary could've been named?

This is how you start tracking your default patterns.

You notice where you collapse, where you go sharp, where you mute yourself, where you ghost. And you get the chance to gently course correct.

Write it down. Say it out loud.

Even just naming it retrospectively begins the process of rewiring.

## The Giraffe Buddy Practice

Practicing alone is powerful. But practicing with someone else? That's where it gets real.

Find a "giraffe buddy"—someone willing to practice with you. It doesn't have to be deep right away. The point is to get used to speaking and listening through this framework, with safety.

Set aside 30 minutes each week. Take turns.

One person shares a situation they're navigating. The other just listens, reflects what they hear, and maybe asks gentle clarifying questions.

No advice. No fixing. No spiritual bypassing.

Just space to name feelings, needs, and potential requests.

You'd be surprised how much changes just by being witnessed clearly.

Over time, this builds your capacity to sit in discomfort without collapsing. It rewires your brain to associate conflict with curiosity, not danger. And it helps you develop the muscle memory of presence.

### ***Reality Check: This Will Be Messy***

Let's be honest—this isn't clean work. You're going to mess it up. You'll speak jackal. You'll default to sarcasm, to silence, to shutdown. You'll use "I feel" statements and still come off passive-aggressive. You'll get reactive and try to fix it mid-fight.

That doesn't mean you've failed.

It means you're practicing.

Every time you catch yourself and come back—that's the work.

Every time you repair instead of retreat—that's the work.

Every time you speak from truth, even when your voice shakes or your chest tightens—that's the work.

So don't wait until it's polished. Start messy. Stay real. Fail forward.

You're not trying to be perfect. You're learning to be present.

That alone changes everything.



## Chapter 7: Insecure Relational Attachment & NVC

Understanding your attachment style is like getting a map to your own nervous system. It's not a label.

It's context.

And when you pair that with the framework of NVC, things start to make sense in a way that's both disarming and empowering.

Let's get something clear from the start: attachment patterns are not personality traits. They're adaptive strategies. You weren't born "anxious" or "avoidant." You were moulded. (can't help but think about the Bane meme reference here.. Ok editing-Salma, out!). You learned how to relate in the way that helped you survive your earliest relationships. That's it.

This isn't about diagnosis. It's about compassion and clarity.

And while attachment work often gets reduced to internet soundbites or armchair therapy, it's actually sacred terrain.

It asks you to sit with how you learned to receive love, how you defended against vulnerability, and how you now meet intimacy.

With others and with yourself.

## **What Attachment Styles Really Are**

Secure attachment means you're comfortable with closeness and space. You trust that connection doesn't require collapse. Conflict doesn't feel threatening. You don't shrink or control.

You stay open and honest.

Anxious-preoccupied styles crave closeness but fear abandonment. There's a deep need for reassurance, and a tendency to over-function, over-explain, or people-please in order to feel safe.

Dismissive-avoidant styles value independence to a fault. Vulnerability often feels threatening. The instinct is to withdraw, intellectualise, or shut down before ever being seen.

Fearful-avoidant (disorganised) styles want closeness but are terrified of it. Love and fear are entangled. Intimacy feels unsafe, but so does being alone. This often stems from trauma or unpredictable caregiving environments.

Again: these are adaptations, not life sentences. Patterns—not prisons.

## **NVC + Attachment = Alchemy**

Your attachment system is the lens through which you interpret behaviour. NVC gives you the language to name what's happening within that lens; So you can respond, not just react.

Instead of:

"You never text back. You clearly don't care."  
(anxious style, jackal)

You can learn to say:

"I feel unsettled when I don't hear from you because I need clarity and connection. Would you be open to checking in when you're unavailable for a while?"

Instead of:

"I just need space. This is too much."  
(avoidant style, shutdown)

You can shift into:

"I'm feeling overwhelmed and need some space to recalibrate. Would you be open to reconnecting later this evening once I've had time to ground?"

Instead of:

[ghosting, then resurfacing]  
(disorganised style, freeze/fawn)

You can learn to name:

"I've noticed I've been pulling away, even though part of me wants to connect. I feel conflicted and need some gentleness while I sort through what's coming up."

### **This is what NVC offers:**

Not a script, but a way to move toward secure relating by owning your experience and respecting the other person's, too.

## You Will Sound Robotic at First

This is unavoidable. You're retraining your nervous system to speak in a way it was never taught. Your voice might wobble. You'll second-guess. You'll try to sound "giraffe" but it'll come out jackal with a mask on.

That's fine.  
Stay with it.

This is how you break the trance of reaction.

At first, you're just recognising your old strategies. The over-functioning, the withdrawing, the panic, the people-pleasing, the stonewalling, the oversharing. You're catching it in the act.  
That alone is a miracle.

With time, you'll start naming what you feel. Then you'll name what you need. Then you'll speak that need without bargaining, blaming, or collapsing.

That's integration.

## ***A Quick Breakdown***

### **Anxious Attachment**

Core pattern: Fear of abandonment. Seeking constant reassurance.

Typical behaviour: Overexplaining, texting to "check if everything's okay," people-pleasing, emotional reactivity.

Practice:

Learn to pause before reaching out. Track what your body is asking for. Can you give it to yourself first—some regulation, some warmth, some breath?

OFNR example:

"I noticed you didn't reply to my text today. I felt anxious because I need reassurance and consistency. Would you be open to letting me know when you're tied up so I'm not left wondering?"

## **Avoidant Attachment**

Core pattern: Fear of engulfment or emotional exposure. Pulling away to preserve autonomy.

Typical behaviour: Shutting down, suppressing feelings, avoidance of “talks,” disappearing to regulate alone.

Practice:

Stay in the room, even if just for a little longer. Speak the truth of your discomfort instead of ghosting. Let connection become tolerable over time.

OFNR example:

"I noticed you asked to talk earlier and I shut down. I felt overwhelmed and needed space. Would you be okay pausing for now and checking in later when I can be more present?"

## **Disorganised Attachment**

Core pattern: Craving closeness but fearing it. Push-pull dynamics. Often trauma-rooted.

Typical behaviour: Cancelling plans, ghosting and resurfacing, emotional outbursts followed by shame.

Practice:

Track what's happening in your body before, during, and after interactions. Anchor into self-regulation tools. Name what's true—even if it's contradictory.

OFNR example:

"I've noticed I've been pulling back even though I care about you. I feel scared and conflicted. I need both connection and space. Would you be open to something low-pressure while I figure out how to stay present?"

## **Secure Attachment**

Core pattern: Comfort with closeness, boundaries, autonomy, and repair.  
Typical behaviour: Honest, attuned communication. Conflict is faced, not avoided or escalated.

Practice:

Keep doing the work. Tend to your relationships like living things. Don't confuse "secure" with "done." Maintenance matters.

OFNR example:

"I noticed you missed my art show last night. I felt disappointed because I value feeling supported by the people close to me. Would you be willing to let me know ahead of time next time if something changes?"

## **A Note on Anxious-Avoidant Dynamics**

This combo is common and intense. One person pulls closer, the other pulls away. It becomes a dance of pursuit and retreat—each feeding the other's insecurity.

What's happening underneath?

Both people are terrified of abandonment. One protects against it by clinging. The other by pushing away. Neither feels safe.

NVC helps each person start naming what's actually happening, so the pattern loses power.

When both people learn to regulate and speak needs clearly, the whole dynamic softens. But even if only one person practices, it still shifts.

## *Final Reminders*

You will not do this perfectly. You will default to old patterns. You will get scared. You will over-function. You will withdraw.

But now you have a map.

And more importantly, you have a choice.

Every moment is an opportunity to return to yourself. To own what you feel. To name what you need. To stop outsourcing your worth to someone else's nervous system.

Your job isn't to control their reaction. It's to take responsibility for your own.

When you can do that, you become the secure base you never had. You become someone others can trust, not because you're always calm, but because you're honest, self-aware, and willing to grow.

That's the work.

That's the liberation.

That's love that doesn't cost your nervous system.



## **Appendix: Needs & Feelings Reference**

*Understanding emotions without connecting them to needs is like trying to translate a language without a dictionary.*

*This section gives you a working list of universal human needs and feelings—not exhaustive, but designed to help you get clearer, faster, on what’s actually happening under the surface.*

*This isn’t about over-intellectualising. It’s about naming what’s true in a way your body can track.*

*When you know your needs, you stop making others responsible for them.*

*When you can name your feelings, you become more available to hear someone else’s.*

***In the open spaces feel free to add your own!***

# TABLE OF NEEDS

Physical and Survival	Connection & Belonging	Autonomy & Freedom
Food Water Air Rest Touch Shelter Warmth Health Movement Sexual expression Safety (physical)	Love Affection Appreciation Mutuality Closeness Companionship Intimacy Being seen Being heard Inclusion Trust Support Community	Independence Choice Agency Space Authenticity Sovereignty Spontaneity
Peace & Harmony	Meaning & Purpose	Play & Creativity
Ease Stability Calm Flow Balance Emotional safety Relational repair Inner harmony Stillness	Growth Direction Contribution Spiritual connection Understanding Inspiration Integrity Coherence Impact Clarity Learning Ritual	Playfulness Humour Imagination Self-expression Creation Innovation Curiosity Joy Pleasure Exploration

# TABLE OF NEEDS

Order and Structure	Respect & Recognition
Clarity Consistency Organization Boundaries Predictability Reliability Rhythm Accountability Time	Respect Acknowledgement Consideration Fairness Validation Reciprocity Equity Honour Dignity
Make your own!	

# Feelings When Needs Are Met

affectionate	engaged	excited	exhilarated	grateful
compassionate fond loving openhearted tender warm	absorbed curious engrossed enchanted enthralled entranced fascinated interested intrigued involved open spellbound stimulated	amazed ardent aroused dazzled energetic enlivened enthusiastic exuberant invigorated lively passionate surprised vibrant	enthralled radiant electrified euphoric overjoyed thrilled	appreciative moved thankful touched HAPPY amused blissful cheerful delighted ecstatic elated giddy glad jolly joyful jubilant merry overjoyed pleased tickled rapturous
hopeful	inspired	peaceful	refreshed	add your own!
confident expectant jazzed light-hearted sanguine up upbeat	amazed eager enthused motivated moved psyched stimulated stirred wonder	calm comfortable centered content equanimity fulfilled mellow open quiet relaxed relieved satisfied serene tranquil	recharged rejuvenated renewed rested restored revived	

## Why This Matters

You can't resolve what you can't name.

Most people skip this part—they go straight to solving the problem without getting honest about what's actually driving it. But unmet needs don't disappear. They get louder. Or they get buried and become resentful. Learning to speak the language of needs and feelings is a form of emotional fluency. It allows you to meet yourself—and others—without needing to collapse, dominate, fix, or run.

It's not about being soft. It's about being real.

Next time you're activated, try this:

Pause.

Feel into your body.

Ask: What's the feeling?

Then ask: What's the unmet need behind that feeling?

Once you've got clarity, you can choose—speak it, tend to it, or sit with it. But you're no longer reacting blindly. You're responding with awareness.

That's power.

That's presence.

That's the whole point.

## ***Closing Note***

This work is not about being good. It's about being honest.

You'll get it wrong. You'll slip into old patterns. You'll speak jackal, blame others, shut down, over-function, under-ask. You'll catch yourself in a moment of clarity and still watch your mouth say the opposite.

That's fine. That's human. That's practice.

The point isn't to become a perfect communicator.

The point is to become someone who's willing to tell the truth.

Someone who pauses before projecting.

Someone who tracks what's real in the body before exploding.

Someone who can name their own pain without turning it into a weapon.

And someone who can sit with another's discomfort—without needing to fix it, prove something, or run.

This manual is here for the mess. It's here for the morning-after apology, the shakey boundary, the rewiring of patterns that kept you safe once, but now cost too much.

It's a reclamation. Of voice. Of nervous system. Of how you relate to others and to yourself.

Don't just read this. Live it. One breath at a time.

Use it when you're in conflict. Use it when you're alone. Use it when your chest tightens and you want to shut down or lash out. Use it when you're tired of abandoning yourself just to keep the peace.

Let this be the way back to connection  
Not as performance, but as practice.

And remember: nothing you feel is wrong.

Nothing you need is too much.

You are allowed to take up space and still be kind.

You are allowed to be messy and still be worthy of respect.

You are allowed to grow without getting it right the first time.

If this helped you soften, own, or rewire something, thank you for walking this path with me.

If you're using this to support connection and understanding with your kids, change your patterns, or build safer containers, thank you even more.

And if you've made it this far and still feel like a mess, congratulations. You're doing the work.

May this be one small contribution toward a more honest, connected, and human world.

Fail forward. Speak true. Be kind.

All the love,

**Salma x**



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*All the love*