

Nonviolent Communication - self-empathy journaling instructions

Identify the observations

In the yellow ring, write the exact words or actions that triggered you - the best you can remember them. Check you don't confuse your observations with thoughts. What would a video camera have recorded seeing/hearing? It could include a person's words, actions, body language, tone of voice - whatever the triggering factor was for you.

Write down your thoughts

In the white area, write down your thoughts about what happened. Give full reign here to your judgments, criticisms and blame about the other person and/or yourself. No need to censor yourself - you don't need to share this with others and if you allow your 'worst' thoughts out onto the page you may get to discover some deeper needs of yours encoded within them. Use more paper if needed! Start with "I'm telling myself.."

Connect to your feelings

In the pink ring, write down how you feel now when you remember what happened. Look at each thought above and ask yourself how you feel when you tell yourself that thought. Use an NVC feelings list* if needed.

Wonder about your needs

Look at the thoughts again and take some time to think about what universal needs were unmet or unacknowledged and write them here. Maybe there were some met ones too? You might find it helpful to use an NVC needs list* if you are new to this practice.

Don't rush...

Take some time to be with your needs – allow space for any sadness, disappointment or mourning. See if you can notice where the constriction of the unmet needs lies in your body (throat, chest, stomach, other?). Allow yourself to see the innocent beauty of them... to contemplate that those needs connect us all; they are needs that, to the best of our knowledge, all humans share. See if you can experience the needs as living qualities in your body (to do this you could close your eyes and imagine a time when those needs were met, experience how that feels in your body - maybe you can remember how alive and well you felt when that need was fully met in you?. Then...

Requests

Once fully connected to your needs, see what fresh insights or new requests naturally bubble up for you without forcing anything. If nothing comes, give more space - maybe overnight or even some days... If something comes, write them down. This could be a request to yourself, the specific other or anyone else.

NOTE: We increase willingness when requests are -

Transparently connected to needs | Specific | Time bound | Doable | What you want (not what you don't want) and | With a willingness to hear a 'no'