LOOP
Empowering teachers

BUILDING BLOCK I: MENTOR'S PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

UNIT VI - EMPATHETIC LISTENING IN THE CONTEXT OF NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION

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INTRODUCTION

Nonviolent communication (NVC) in Rosenberg's (2003) words is compassionate communication: "NVC: a way that leads us to give from the heart./ ... / We perceive relationships in a new light when we use NVC to hear our own deeper needs and those of others./ .../ " (str. 2,3).

There are **four crucial elements in each communication situation** people should direct their attention to (see Figure 5):

Observation	Feelings	Needs	Request
•What do I and the other person in the communication situation see/hear?	•What do I and the other person in the communication situation feel?	•What do I and the other person in communication situation need?	•How can I sincerely express my needs and emotions and how can I empathically accept feelings and needs of other

Figure 5 – The four elements present in any communication situation.

This means that people should consciously...

1 Try to differentiate observations/fact and their interpretations and try to avoid interpretations/evaluations

2 Identify and name their emotions

3 Raise their awareness and verbally express the needs in the core of their emotions
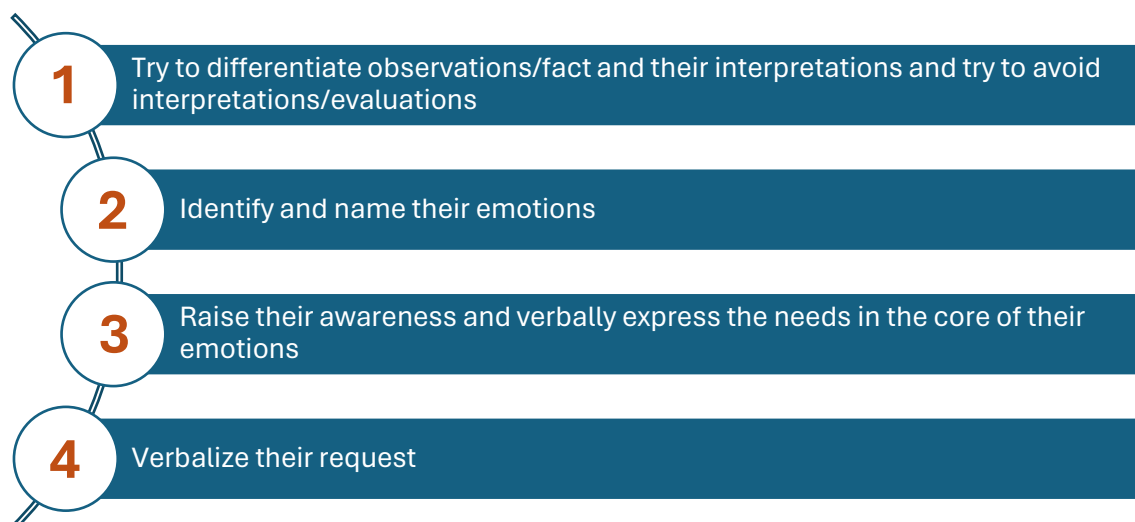
4 Verbalize their request

Figure 6 – What people need to do when communicating with others.

At the same time, they **should empathically listen** to the other person to understand his position, emotions, and needs.

There are **four** fundamental **rules of nonviolent communication** (see Figure 7):

> Don't react automatically, let your words become a conscious reaction to what is going on (grounded on the awareness of perceptions/observations, feelings, and needs of people in the situation)

> Express your feelings openly and clearly and at the same time honestly end emphatically take into account the feelings of others

> Raise your awareness and consider your own in-depth needs and also the in-depth needs of others

> Substitute defensive and aggressive behaviour patterns based on judging and critique with compassionate reactions grounded on an understanding of others, using empathic listening

Figure 7 – The four rules of nonviolent communication.

It's also important to teach and support nonviolent communication skills in classrooms. When doing this we enable students to learn how to:

1) identify and express their emotions and needs

2) identify and accept different emotions and needs of others

3) react to others with empathy and respect. In this context the success criteria written in the form of I-sentences could be very useful

   a. I say what I see/hear without evaluations or criticism.
   b. I express my feelings and needs without blaming others.
   c. I ask (instead of demand, manipulation, or pressure).
   d. I express gratitude.
   e. I don't take accusations, critics, and demands I listen empathically to the language of others to find out what are their unspoken or unsatisfied needs.
   f. I'm aware, that all that others are doing is trying to fulfil their needs.

OBJECTIVES
- To deep knowledge of the theory of nonviolent communication (M. R. Rosenberg, 2003)

- To raise awareness of teacher mentor' communication style, strengths and weaknesses according to criteria/principles of nonviolent communication
- To train the use of principles of nonviolent communication in mentoring process with the accent on empathic listening
- To think about nonviolent communication in the teacher mentor-teacher mentee relationship:
  a. how to support the teacher mentee in self-reflection on his/her communication in the classroom
  b. how to direct teachers mentees' attention to supporting students in developing nonviolent communication skills

CONTENTS

- Theory of nonviolent communication: observing, feelings, needs, and request
- Empathic listening

DURATION, ACTIVITIES AND DYNAMICS

Estimated working time: 120m

Running time for activity and dynamic:

Activity	Dynamic	Duration	Total Duration
1. Verbalize just facts, avoid evaluations	1. Understand rule nr. 1 of the non-violent communication	30m	30m
2. Identify and clearly express your emotions	1. Understand rule nr. 2 of the non-violent communication	30m	30m
3. Identify and express your needs	1. Understand rule nr. 3 of the non-violent communication	30m	30m
4. Clearly express your need and your request and listen to another person empathically	1. Understand rule nr. 4 of the non-violent communication	30m	30m
			120m

Activity 1: Verbalize just facts, avoid evaluations | 30 Minutes

Facts are things that are known or proven to be true. Evaluations are subjective reactions or interpretations/evaluations of facts. The first rule of nonviolent communication refers to facts and their interpretations: "Avoid interpretations, the state just facts."

Example 1: The statement: "The rose smells good," is an evaluation statement. The fact is just: "The rose has a smell."

Example 2: "Math exam was demanding." It is another evaluation statement. The facts about the math exam are: it includes equations, it has six activities, 15 students pass the exam, 2 students collect all points, etc.

Dynamic 1 – Understand rule nr. 1 of the non-violent communication | 30 Minutes

Find out which of the following assertions are facts (observations), and which are interpretations/evaluations. Convert interpretations into facts.

a. You are too generous.
b. She didn't ask me for permission.
c. He is an excellent basketball player.
d. Pina is a sleepyhead; she was late at school every day this week.
e. David said the red colour is not suitable for me.
f. Our boss works too much; he is a workaholic.
g. My daughter complained when I talked with her.
h. Matt was jealous of me for no reason.
i. She is a good teacher.
j. Val got just one 4 in high-school physics, and all other marks were 5. He is such a clever boy.
k. If you will not eat enough vegetables, you'll become sick.
l. Don't strain yourself so much, everything will wait for you.

Activity 2: Identify and clearly express your emotions | 30 Minutes

Common confusion (generated by language): we often use the word «feel» without actually expressing feeling. We mix feeling with thoughts.
Examples:

a. Instead of saying: „*I feel cheated*" say it in a more exact and consequently more suitable way: „*I think I'm cheated and I feel angry, disappointed, etc.*" Explanation: The first sentence contain thought (I think that someone cheated on me), but the other contain also emotion, which accompanies this thought.

b. Instead of saying: „*I feel inadequate for this task*" *say* it more clearly: „*I think I'm inadequate for this task and I'm feeling frustrated, anxious, feared …*". Explanation: In the first sentence emotion is mixed with the thought about oneself. It is more clear and more suitable to verbalize the thought (what I think I am) and the emotion (anxiety, frustration, etc.).

c. „*I feel unaccepted (ignored, misunderstood).*" In this sentence person mix emotion with the thought of others. It would be more suitable to say: „I think others don't accept (understand) me and I'm disappointed, frustrated, unsatisfied ..."

Dynamic 1 – Understand rule nr. 2 of the non-violent communication | 30 Minutes

Circle the number in front of any of the following statements in which feelings are verbally expressed. Upgrade sentences in which feelings are not verbalized in a way that will express emotions directly

   a. I'm glad.
   b. I feel challenged.
   c. I don't feel loved.
   d. I feel that I want to throw you into the wall.
   e. I'm lonely.
   f. I'm scared.
   g. I feel I'm successful.
   h. That is disgusting, I want to go away.
   i. I feel vulnerable.
   j. I feel unheard.
   k. I feel that I could tell this in another way.
   l. I live in a comedy.
   m. I'm a fool.

Think about situations where you couldn't express feelings directly.

Activity 3: Identify and express your needs | 30 Minutes

People have needs and different psychological theories list different categories of needs. The probably most influential theory is Maslow's hierarchy of needs: physiologic needs (breathing, water, food, sleep, homeostasis, excretion), safety needs (security of body, employment, resources, family, health, property ...), belonging/love needs (friendship, family, sexual intimacy), esteem needs (self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect of others, respect by others) and self-actualization needs (morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem-solving, fact-acceptance ...). It's important to be aware that if people's needs are satisfied they feel positive emotions, for example, calmness, carefreeness, joy, love, self-confidence, interest, hope, enthusiasm, optimism, satisfaction, happiness, curiosity, excitement, etc. When a person's needs are unmet, he/she feels negative emotions: fear, anger, disgust, disappointment, sadness jealousy, offence, agitation, anxiety, guilt, frustration, shame, etc.

In communication situations, it's important to raise awareness of our own needs and also be aware of the needs of others.

Dynamic 1 – Understand rule nr. 3 of the non-violent communication | 30 Minutes

Choose 5 positive and 5 negative emotions and for each of them identify the need in its base. For identifying needs use Maslow's hierarchy of needs: physiologic needs (breathing, water, food, sleep, homeostasis, excretion), safety needs (security of body, employment, resources, family, health, property ...), belonging/love needs (friendship, family, sexual intimacy), esteem needs (self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect of others, respect by others) and self-actualization needs (morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem-solving, fact-acceptance ...)

Describe two situations from your past in which a person felt strong emotion. Infer on need at the root of that emotion:

1. event: (description) _____, (emotion)_____, (need) _____

2. event: (description) _____, (emotion)_____, (need) _____

Activity 4: Clearly express your need and your request and listen to another person empathically| 30 Minutes

It's important to be aware of our feelings and needs and to clearly express them in the form of I-sentences. I-sentences are composed of 1. Distracting behaviour, 2. The consequence that this behaviour has for the person, 3. The emotion which person feels and 4. Need with the request for behavioural change.

Example: Teacher: "When you enter the classroom after I already started my lesson, you interrupt my flow of thoughts. I'm confused and angry about this. I need silence to concentrate on the lecture and I'm kindly asking you to come to my classroom in time."

Dynamic 1 – Understand rule nr. 4 of the non-violent communication | 30 Minutes

a. Imagine three situations in your classroom which were unpleasant for you. For each disturbing behaviour construct the I-sentences for your students using the 4-elements rule.

b. Role-play in pairs: determine roles, one person is the teacher mentor, the other is the teacher mentee. Set the communication context, then enter the communication situation trying (from the role of the teacher mentor) and listen to your student empathically. That means that you try to grasp: What does he/she see and hear? What does he feel? What does he need? What does he (even not directly) request? Follow rules:

    i. Listen to what another person needs from you, not what he thinks about you.

    ii. Instead of direct questions about your behaviour (What I did do wrong? What borders you?) try expressing your feelings first (ex.: I'm disturbed/uneasy because I don't understand what I did wrong, that you react like this. Could you possibly explain …?)

    iii. Listen to him/her carefully and try to understand his position (thoughts, emotions, needs).

    iv. Sometimes another person needs just someone who is trying to listen and to just be with her.

    v. A very powerful technique for checking for understanding is paraphrasing. (Careful: the tone)

b. Reflect on what was going on in the role play and exchange your insights with your partner: how did you feel, what did you think, what did you do right, and what you think you could do differently, maybe better?

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