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# HEAR ME OUT

INEX MESSENGER

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MERIKE PUURA

2019

EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE PROJECT

# TAKE A CHANCE, BE A CHANGE

HOSTING ORGANISATION: INEX SLOVAKIA

SENDING ORGANISATION: ESTYES





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## NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION

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Creating my own workshop is something I have never done before. When the idea was first presented to me, I felt I could never manage to do it, it was too big of a task. But then, I got some guidelines, tips, tricks, advice, and after some days of googling and browsing ideas from previous years' projects, I started to gather a sense of the idea what was expected of me.

In the search of my workshop topic, I found nonviolent communication (NVC) as a communication tool and it fit well to the issue close to my heart. I hold the belief that the root of most if not all problems and conflicts is miscommunication. People don't speak to each other or don't express themselves clearly enough for others to truly understand what they're trying to achieve. We all have our wishes and pursuits which can clash unless we make them clear to each other and respect them.

Hence, I decided to tackle the issue and give my best to get one step closer to a solution.



## AIMS & GOALS

I set some goals and aims to guide me in the process of creating the workshop:

### GOALS

- to contribute to diminishing communication issues in the world
- to learn and to train to communicate in a nonviolent way

### AIMS

- to make people aware of the way they use language and perceive other people's language use
- to learn to express oneself nonviolently
- to raise awareness for violent communication as a reason for the escalation of conflicts

## REQUIREMENTS

Before starting to create the workshop, I was given some guidelines to follow:

- the workshop had to be 30 to 45 minutes long,
- topic had to be something that is currently relevant in the European societies,
- it had to be interactive, to contain a theoretical and practical part.

## MATERIALS

- colourful paper
- pens
- markers
- flipcharts
- worksheets
- roleplay instructions

## STRUCTURE

- **Introduction**
- **Rainforest - energiser**
- **Active listening exercise**
- **Theory**
  - Components of nonviolent communication
  - Communication that blocks compassion
- **Roleplay**
  - Forum theatre rules
  - Preparing the roleplay
  - Performing
- **Discussion, reflection**
- **Untie the knot - teambuilding exercise**

### Introduction (1 min)

I explain who I am, what is INEX Messenger and why I've chosen the topic.

### Rainforest (1 min)

People stand in a circle. One person starts rubbing their hands together. The person next to them copies and one by one everyone follows. Next, the first person starts snapping their fingers, and when everyone has started to do the same, the first person starts clapping and the next round is patting the knees. Once that circle has been completed, the movements will be repeated in the reverse order: clapping, snapping and at the end rubbing the hands.

### Active listening exercise (3+1 min)

In pairs, people take turns to speak about a designated topic (e.g. "Talk about your day" or "Your favourite memory of the workcamp"). First, one person speaks for 1 minute and the other person cannot verbally respond during that time. Then, for 30 seconds, the other person summarises what they just heard. After this, they switch. At the end of the exercise, I briefly ask for their feedback and



impressions about how they were feeling in the role of the listener or the speaker.

## THEORY

In order to learn to communicate in a nonviolent way, we need to **express honesty** and **receive emphatically**. This means that we need to be truthful about what we say and listen to the others actively and with empathy. This can be done through the four components of NVC.

### Components of nonviolent communication (12 min)

Participants are divided into four groups. Each group receives a paper with a definition and an exercise about a component of NVC (see worksheets pp 8-9). The groups have four minutes to read, discuss and do the task.

After that, a discussion in one big group follows. Each group reads the definition to others and gives one example pair of sentences, in one of which NVC is used and in the other it is not used.



### Communication that blocks compassion (5 min)

Together, we discuss examples of communication that blocks compassion (see p 10) and try to find how to express them using NVC.

I briefly summarise the most important points of the theory to ensure everyone understood it.



### ROLEPLAY

For the next part of the workshop, participants will be divided into two groups - two actors and the spectators. Before they get their tasks, I explain the forum theatre rules.

#### Forum theatre rules (2 min)

The actors will perform the play one time from start to finish. Then they start again. Whenever someone from the audience feels they want to change the situation, they will clap, and the actors on the stage will freeze. Then the person who clapped can go on the stage, switch places with one of the actors and try to change the situation using nonviolent communication. If they don't feel

comfortable with being on stage, they can suggest what the actors should do differently instead. The actors will then perform the play again from the start considering these suggestions.

#### Preparing the roleplay (6 min)

The people who were chosen to be the actors get a paper with instructions and a description of a situation (see p 11). They have 6 minutes to prepare the play.

Meanwhile, the other group can go through some more example sentences from the theory or do an energiser.

#### Performing and finding solutions (8 min)

Two people will perform the play once, then, following the forum theatre rules, spectators can intervene and offer solutions. If someone replaces one actor, it is important for the other one to remember that they will have to respond in the way that they feel their character would in the situation.





### **Discussion, reflection (5 min)**

- Which words were the performers using?
- How did the performers feel?
- How did the people who changed the situation feel?
- What do you think about nonviolent communication?
- What will you take with you from this workshop?
- Any other feedback?

### **Untie the knot (1 min)**

People stand in circle with closed eyes. They will reach out their hands and grab someone else's hand. They open their eyes and need to untangle the human knot without letting go of the hands.

## COMPONENTS OF NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION

### WORKSHEET I. OBSERVATIONS

An observation is a neutral statement based on what a person sees or hears. It is free from judgement, evaluation and comparison to the past (e.g. “You are always late.” → always = every time in the past). Observations help to have a common understanding of the situation.

Read the following statements and identify observations and evaluations. See the example below. Can you make up some examples of your own?

Example:

Janice works **too much**.

*This is an evaluation. Someone has an idea about how much work is appropriate and they don't like that Janice works more than that.*

Janice spent over 60 hours at the office this week.

*This is an observation. This is what Janice did.*

*There is no evaluation if it is okay to work 60 hours per week or not.*

1. He is a poor soccer player.
2. They have cut over 90% of this forest, and are still continuing.
3. The doctor did not say anything to me about what causes the pain or what can be done.
4. He has not scored a goal in 20 games.
5. The doctor refuses to explain anything to me.
6. They are destroying the forest.

### WORKSHEET II. FEELINGS

A feeling is an emotional experience or a physical sensation that is caused by needs that are met or unmet. Expressing feelings helps others to understand what's important to us. In nonviolent communication, the focus is on describing our own feelings, not on explaining what we think other people are doing right or wrong..

Read the following statements and separate feelings out from thoughts and opinions. See the example below. Can you make up some examples of your own?

Example:

I **feel** you are annoying me on purpose.

*This is an opinion. Try to replace “I feel” with “I think”. If you can do it, it is usually a thought or an opinion.*

I am **upset** because I think you are annoying me purpose.

*This is a feeling. The person is says they don't feel well and gives a reason why.*

1. I feel you don't love me.
2. I feel regret around how I am behaving towards them.
3. I feel exhausted.
4. I feel like hitting you.
5. I feel it is useless.
6. I feel I am being unkind to them.



## COMPONENTS OF NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION II

### WORKSHEET III. NEEDS

All humans have the same basic needs: water, food, rest, shelter etc. In nonviolent communication, needs are our core values and deepest wishes. When we understand and honestly express our needs, we can improve the relationship with ourselves and also understand others better. We can never meet our own needs by blaming or hurting others.

Read the following statements and identify the nonviolent ways of expressing needs. See the example below. Can you make up some examples of your own?

Example:

I feel angry when you say that, because I am wanting respect and I hear your words as an insult.

*This is a nonviolent way of expressing needs.*

I feel angry because you insulted me.

*In this example, blaming is used instead of expressing the needs.*

1. I am sad that you won't be coming for dinner because I was hoping we could spend the evening together.
2. What I need is time for myself to rest and reflect on my actions and thoughts because the last week has been busy and stressful at work.
3. I need you to leave me alone.
4. When you raise your voice, I feel scared because I'm telling myself someone might get hurt here, and I need to know that we're all safe.
5. I feel scared when you raise your voice.

### WORKSHEET IV. REQUESTS

A request is a way to evaluate the willingness of others to help us meet our needs. A nonviolent request is positive, kind, but also firm and clear. Before making a request it is important to be ready for a negative reaction and to find other ways to meet everyone's needs.

Read the following statements and identify requests that use nonviolent communication. See the example below. Can you make up some examples of your own?

Example:

I'd like to get to know you better.

*This request is not clear, it is not said what exactly the person wants.*

I'd like you to tell me if you would be willing to meet for lunch once a week.

*This request is made using nonviolent communication. It is positive, kind and clear.*

1. I would like you to show respect for my privacy.
2. Please do not shout in this room.
3. Please talk in low voice in this room.
4. I'd like you to agree to knock before you enter my office.
5. I'd like you to tell me one thing that I did that you appreciate.
6. I want you to stop drinking.

## KEY

**Observations**

1. evaluation
2. observation
3. observation
4. observation
5. evaluation
6. evaluation

**Feelings**

1. opinion
2. feeling
3. feeling
4. opinion
5. opinion
6. opinion

**Needs**

1. NVC
2. NVC
3. blaming
4. NVC
5. vague

**Requests**

1. vague action
2. negative request
3. NVC
4. NVC
5. NVC
6. negative request

## COMMUNICATION THAT BLOCKS COMPASSION

**Take responsibility for your thoughts, feelings, and actions. Don't judge, be clear with what you want, don't give orders.**

**Diagnosis**

- judgement, analysis, criticism, comparison  
*The problem with you is that you're too selfish.*  
 Replace diagnosis with observation.

**Denial of Responsibility**

*I cleaned my room because I had to.*  
 Replace "I have to" with "I choose to", and "I should" with "I might".

**Demand**

*You have to do your homework.*  
 Replace demand with request.

**"Deserve' oriented language**

- reward and punishment  
*People who hurt others deserve to be punished.*  
*I deserve to win the competition.*  
 State your needs (values) without hurting or blaming others.

## ROLEPLAY INSTRUCTIONS

Your task is to create a roleplay according to the description of the situation below. You need to remember your lines because you will need to act out the situation several times.

The roleplay can be **maximum 3 minutes** long. Do not try to solve the problem! You have **6 minutes** to prepare the play.

### ROLEPLAY I

*A and B are flatmates. B just moved in and wants to have a housewarming party. A has an exam tomorrow and wants to go to bed early. A gets angry at B for being disrespectful.*

You can use these lines as guidelines to your roleplay:

- A:
- You don't respect me.
  - I feel you are doing this on purpose to annoy me.
  - You should go out to celebrate.

- B:
- I deserve to have a party.
  - You're completely ruining the mood.
  - You work too hard, relax.

### ROLEPLAY II

*A and B are preparing a national dish for their foreign guests. A has never cooked the dish before but wants to follow their grandmother's recipe. B has cooked the dish many times and likes to improvise. A is not happy that B doesn't follow the recipe.*

You can use these lines as guidelines to your roleplay:

- A:
- I want you to do as I say.
  - My grandmother deserves to be honoured.
  - You never listen to me.

- B:
- I feel there is no point to follow the recipe.
  - You shouldn't worry so much.
  - Why don't you respect my choices?



## TEA MEETING

The second try was at the end of May at the Tea Meeting. There were 12 participants, a significantly larger group, but I was prepared and confident. I was on time, it was exactly 45 minutes long, excluding the discussion and questions that continued after the official ending of the workshop.

## FIRST TRY AT THE OFFICE

The first try was at the end of April in the office with four people. I was quite nervous at the beginning and forgot to explain some things properly. However, overall the workshop went quite well.

The theory was a bit too long and complicated so later I made some changes in the wording of the definitions and simplified the examples. The roleplay part was the most fun and interesting part of the workshop. This time, there were two scenarios for roleplays and both of them were performed. Then, we chose one of them to work on. The necessary time I had estimated for the preparation of the plays was a lot shorter and also the play itself was rather improvised so it was difficult to replay it in the same way as before. I added this instruction for the next time.

This time I decided to use only one roleplay situation. Three people were preparing the play and with the rest of them we were discussing the examples. The roleplay was great, although three people were too many for it.

I got great advice and tips on how to choose the right people for the roleplay without making it seem obvious. I was also told I still needed to make the theory clearer and perhaps dedicate more time to it in the workcamps.





We finished with six participants, performed one roleplay, followed by a bit forced discussion. I can only hope that some of them got something new and interesting out of the workshop.

## BREKOV

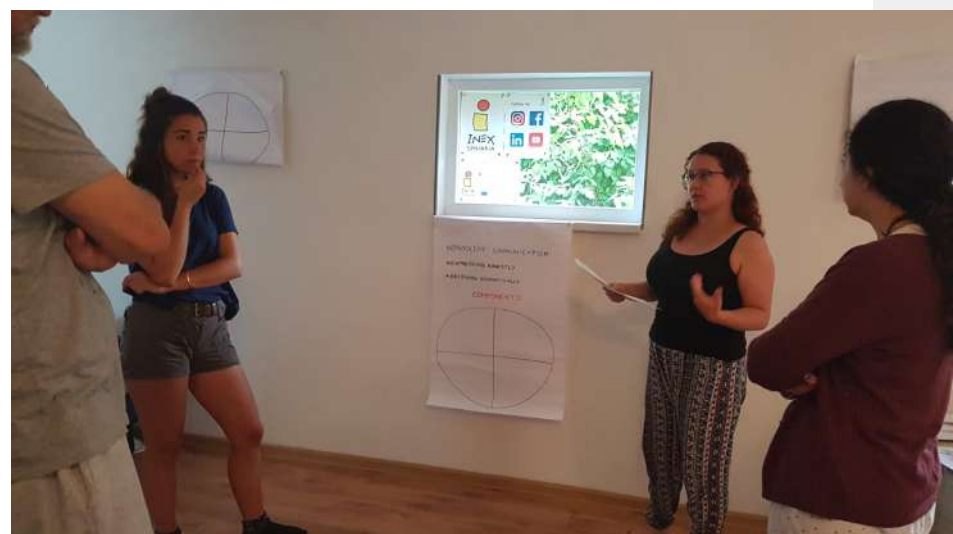
## ZLATNA NA OSTROVE

The first time trying out the workshop in a workcamp I decided to do it in the afternoon after work when the other leader of the camp was out shopping. At the beginning, I had eight participants. I soon realised had not chosen the best time because only after the second task, one of the participants had an emergency so I needed to leave the rest for a moment. This meant that the workshop was getting longer than planned.

I had also made the theory part longer as suggested, adding the "Communication That Blocks Compassion" part. The participants were quite tired after work so it was difficult to keep them focused and in the middle of the workshop, another participant left because of personal reasons. I had difficulty engaging with the group who wasn't preparing the roleplay.

In Brekov, I had again four participants. I had learned from my mistakes and scheduled the workshop on a Sunday morning. I had perfected the theory, it was supposed to be very clear with plenty of examples.

The participants were engaging and discussing a lot and gave great performances doing the roleplays. The only thing was that they didn't agree with the topic of the workshop. I wanted to give them time to express their views which led to the workshop being two hours long. Eventually, we discussed our personal ways to approach conflicts and agreed on what works on each of us in the context of the camp in order to get along.





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## FINAL THOUGHTS

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I like the idea of creating my own workshop because it forced me to do research on a new topic and to learn how to present my knowledge. I gained a lot of confidence with presenting and got more and more comfortable with each try.

With regard to the topic I chose, I realised that the it might be more suitable for a younger audience, such as school students, since adults have mostly already civil and peaceful approach to solving problems and conflicts, or have their preferred way of confrontation. The topic also needs more time to be discussed, in 45 minutes it is very difficult to convey a message and also put the new knowledge and strategies into practice.

One thing I still didn't figure out was how to most efficiently use the time with one group when the group is preparing the roleplay. With small groups, of four people, both pair can prepare simultaneously but with bigger groups it is more difficult. Discussing the theory is necessary when everyone is present, so perhaps the time could be used to make another energiser or something alike.

From the feedback I got, participants seemed to enjoy the roleplay part the most. It's a playful and visual method that can be incorporated to various topics. If I ever choose to create another workshop, it's very likely I will use theatrical methods again.



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## SOURCES

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<https://www.cdss.org/images/organizers-resources/4-Can-We-Talk.pdf>

<http://www.lindavanderlee.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/NVC-overview.pdf>

<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/education-and-peace-training-on-cultural-conflicts.2235/> page 39??

<https://organizingforpower.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/games-theater-of-oppressed.pdf>