



How to Communicate without Violence

TOOLKIT FOR PREVENTING THE USE OF
VIOLENCE IN INTIMATE, ROMANTIC,
MARITAL, AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Via l'Anse

How to communicate without violence



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VIOLENCE IN INTIMATE, ROMANTIC,
MARITAL, AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

— *Via l'anse* —

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Table des matières

Introduction	7
<i>Recognizing the Issue</i>	9
Distinguishing between violence and conflict	10
What is violence?	18
Why change?	23
Challenging our false beliefs	28
<i>Initiating Change</i>	35
Where to begin?	36
Managing my frustration and dissatisfaction	38
The process of frustration	42
Interpreting situations more effectively	44
Recognizing our feelings	48
Identifying my needs	52
Recognizing my vulnerabilities	57
Choosing a strategy	61
Non-constructive strategies	64
More effective self-talk	68
<i>How to communicate without violence</i>	73
Functional communication	74
Conflict without violence	77
Active listening	81
Using “I statement”	84
Taking care of yourself and others	90
Conclusion	93

Introduction



An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind..

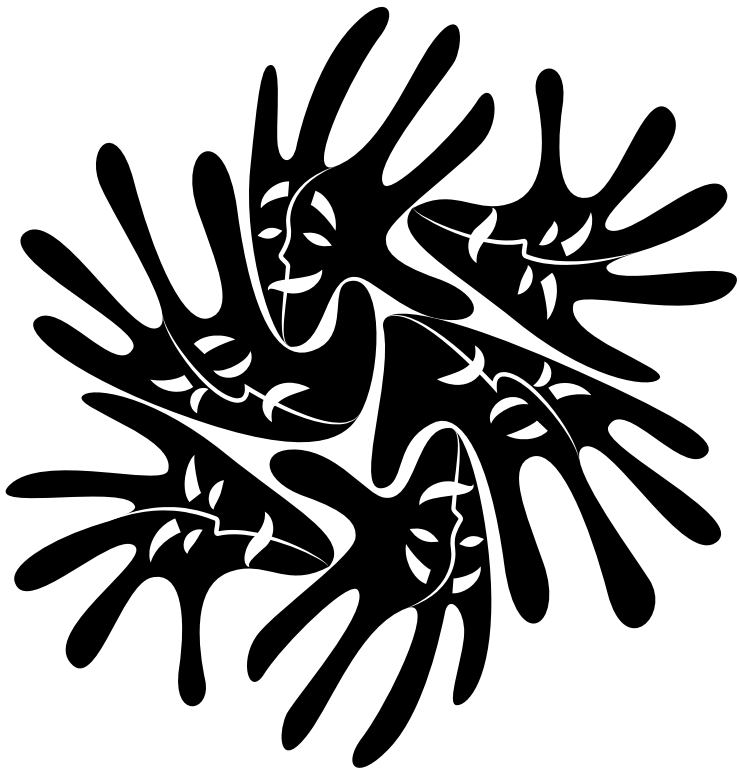
— MAHATMA GANDHI —

Every human being wants to be joyful and proud, experience amazement, and enjoy life. Yet none of us gets to escape suffering, pain, fear, anger, illness, mourning, and death. **Nonviolence is voluntarily refraining from attacking others when we are experiencing difficulties.**

The objective of this toolkit is to help people who exhibit violent behaviour to choose to refrain from using violence. This document draws on stories, shared with Via l'anse, by several thousand people who have worked to stop abusive behaviour in their intimate, romantic, marital or family relationships.

We have selected information we believe is the most useful for raising awareness of the problem, inspiring decisions to change, and practising non-violent communication.

*Recognizing
the Issue*



— *Via l'anse* —

Distinguishing between violence and conflict



Attachment needs and desires in partners are essentially healthy and adaptive. It is in the way these needs and desires are expressed in a setting of perceived insecurity that generates problems.

— MARIE-FRANCE LAFONTAINE —

Through our relationships with others, we meet many of our own needs. Insofar as we do not have the same priorities or value certain needs in the same way and insofar as we are not always prepared or willing to mutually meet each other's needs, dissatisfaction in interpersonal relationships is inevitable. In relationships, since we have many expectations of our intimate partners, which cannot all be met, frustration, too, is inevitable. Conflicts arise when one partner expresses a dissatisfaction or expectation, and the other partner does not respond in a way that is deemed satisfactory.

TOOL

What are the main points of contention in your relationship?

LES SUJETS	NEVER	SOME-TIMES	OFTEN
Relationships with friends and family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sharing of responsibilities and chores	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Each person's financial contribution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Intimacy and sex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drug use and alcohol consumption	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Time spent together	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conduct in public	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physical appearance and dress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Candour and honesty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Possessiveness, jealousy, and infidelity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Political views	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rumours and comments from friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Displays of affection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Status of the relationship (exclusive or not, serious or not)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

One-off or chronic conflict?

Conflict situations can be a way of getting to know each other better and enriching relationships. Ideally, following a disagreement, one person revisits a situation that has caused anxiety, pain or embarrassment; expresses his or her needs and feels accepted by the other person, enabling him or her to regain a state of balance (one-off conflict). Conflict situations can however also lead to a negative cycle of frustration, reactions, and behaviour that do not allow for mutual understanding, leaving the subject of conflict unresolved. Over time, the same issues come up regularly and one-off conflicts become chronic conflicts.

WOULD YOU SAY THE FOLLOWING?	NO	YES
Conflict situations can sometimes escalate into personal attacks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The same issues tend to come up over time, without being able to find a satisfactory middle ground for both.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conflicts regularly lead to ideas or threats to break up.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is never any conflict in my relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conflicts are settled quite easily, through listening and mutual respect.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The role of emotions and communication styles

Any event of conflict is stressful. Your heart beats faster, your throat tightens, there is discomfort in your stomach and chest, you feel tensed, etc. Typically, the person who adopts a «pursuit» style, i.e., one who wants to be heard in expressing dissatisfaction, disappointment or frustration, will feel angry, confused, excluded, abandoned, abused, invalidated, hurt or ignored. The person with an «avoidant» style, who fears conflict and the emotions associated with it, will feel threatened, fearful, confused, guilty, intimidated, stifled, vulnerable, overwhelmed or controlled.

Communication dynamics

Various communication dynamics (or patterns) have been observed within couples during disputes.

RETREAT/RETREAT DYNAMIC

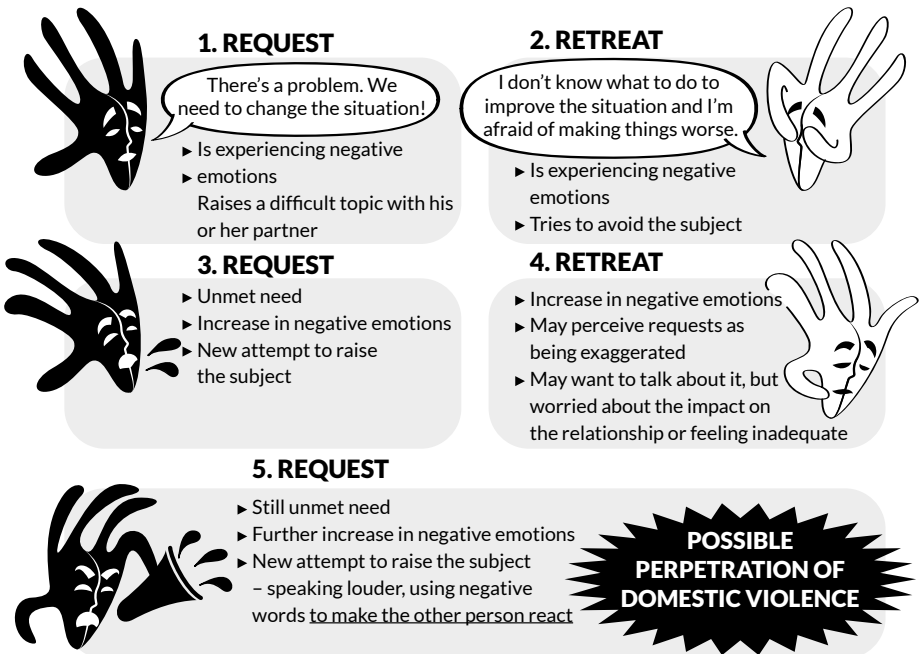
In some couples, neither partner expresses emotions and needs openly. Some topics are avoided, in particular, when they are highly emotionally charged. The thought of having to talk about these issues provokes panic. For fear of being poorly treated, judged or rejected, we close ourselves off. We may also be afraid of hurting or disappointing.

As a result, we deprive ourselves of support, of care; the couple does not work as a team. With time, the partners get further and further from each other.

PURSUE/RETREAT DYNAMIC

In other couples, one partner tends to express dissatisfaction and the other feels very uncomfortable in the exchange, with a tendency towards passivity.

Over time, the person making the requests and not getting an answer may become repetitive, insistent, and impatient. Typically, he or she tends to feel angry, excluded,



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- ▶ Retreating partner may explode (feeling of being backed into a corner)
- ▶ Retreating partner may retreat further

abandoned, mistreated, undermined, hurt or ignored, while the person retreating, on their side, feels more and more overwhelmed and powerless. The relationship is generally unsatisfactory for both partners.

Controlling and abusive behaviours are common in couples with this communication pattern.

- Violence may be used to impose a point of view or a behaviour on the other partner.
- Violence may be used to force the other partner to stop making demands or requests.

MUTUAL BLAME

In yet other couples, the requests and demands from both partners tend to create oppositional and defensive reactions. Each partner is certain to be right and that the other person is at fault. The smallest issue can lead to an escalation.

The relationship stops being a safe place. The need for affection, support, and warmth are not satisfactorily met for either person. Once again, violent behaviors can rise: trying to impose by force the satisfactions of our wishes, expectations, and needs.

MUTUAL SUPPORT

Other couples manage to resolve their differences without too much difficulty. Both partners can express their disagreement, on a case-by-case basis (on a specific

issue), and put forward their point of view. The discussion enable both partners to reach a satisfactory common-ground. Conflicts do not turn into fights or power struggles. They are resolved without violence. Each partner is happy to contribute to the satisfaction of the needs of the other person; both benefit from the other person's support and recognize its value.

WOULD YOU SAY THAT:	NO	YES
When something does not suit me, I express my dissatisfaction openly and directly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is hard for me to remain calm. I tend to express my dissatisfaction by blaming and criticizing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I rarely feel understood by my partner when I express my dissatisfactions and frustrations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I tend to try to impose my way of seeing and doing things.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conflict situations tend to escalate into mutual blaming and retaliation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We both try to be right and win, without really listening to each other and feeling understood.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't express my needs and emotions easily. I prefer to avoid topics that can lead to conflict.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When my partner expresses dissatisfaction, I quickly become defensive; I try to change the subject, use humour or downplay the situation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We never experience conflict.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We are both able voice irritants and resolve our differences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

CONFLICT OR VIOLENCE?

Conflict is an opposition between parties over a particular issue. As for violence, it is a way of imposing one's way of seeing or doing. It can, of course, arise in the midst of conflict, in a quest for gain. Over time, as a result of the intimidation it engenders, violence can also act, beyond conflict, to limit the ability of one of the partners to express his or her own desires, expectations, and needs, while often leading him or her to modify his or her ways in an attempt to avoid displeasing the other person.

Violent behaviour is particularly common in couples experiencing request/retreat dynamics.

- Violence may be used to impose a point of view or a way of doing things on the other person.
- Violence may also be used to force the other partner to stop making demands or requests.

Violence is also very common in couples with mutual blame dynamics: both partners try to use force to fulfil their desires, expectations, and needs, without coming to an understanding of each other.

What is violence?



[It is important to] recognize people's need for protection without victimizing them and without considering weakness as a failure.

— FRANÇOISE VERGÈS —

*V*iolence is acting against other people, using force, to compel them to do something. Violence is the opposite of kindness.

Violence in intimate, romantic, marital or family relationships may take many forms, including verbal, written, and physical, and hurt on several levels: psychologically, socially, economically, sexually, and physically.

Violence violates human rights. Every person has the right to life, security, integrity, dignity, and honour. In fact, many violent behaviours are criminal acts. This applies to all forms of physical and sexual abuse, stalking, threats, kidnapping, theft, and defamation.

Recognizing the issue

It may be difficult to acknowledge our use of violence due to efforts to protect our self-image or to avoid the consequences of our violent conduct. It is never easy to acknowledge our wrongs or bad habits. As a result, we may be tempted to deny the problem or minimize it, particularly if we consider our use of violence as legitimate or necessary. Meanwhile, as long as we do not recognize a problem, it will continue to be part of our life. Consequently, an overview of violent and controlling behaviours should be carried out at the beginning of the changing process.

AUTOÉVALUATION DES COMPORTEMENTS DE VIOLENCE ET DE CONTRÔLE

I'VE BEEN KNOWN TO...	NEVER	ONCE	SOME-TIMES	OFTEN
Use a dismissive, arrogant or aggressive tone of voice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"Freak out" whenever something upsets me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"Throw a fit" whenever I am rebuked	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Express anger or frustration by shouting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Criticize and put them down	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make threatening gestures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Give orders and be demanding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I'VE BEEN KNOWN TO...	NEVER	ONCE	SOME-TIMES	OFTEN
Make racist, sexist or homophobic comments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sulk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make decisions that involve the other person, without his or her consent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Try to impose my point of view through force	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ridicule or publicly belittle the other person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Slam doors, bang on objects or walls	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Try to prevent the other person from doing activities that are important to them (hobbies, work, going out) or from seeing whoever they want	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Try to control the other person's appearance or attire	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Search through the other person's text messages, apps, e-mail accounts, personal items	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stalk, follow or spy on the other person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prevent the other person from freely disposing of his or her property or spend as he or she wishes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appropriate the other person's things "	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Push or shove	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I'VE BEEN KNOWN TO...	NEVER	ONCE	SOME-TIMES	OFTEN
Insist on unwanted sexual behaviour (including watching pornographic material)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Force sexual acts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Threaten to release intimate photos/videos of the other person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Release intimate photos/videos of the other person"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Damage a person's reputation, spread rumours or make false accusations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Throw objects at the other person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Threaten with an object or weapon (including driving in an unsafe manner)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Push, hold or shake the other person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Slap	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Punch	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grab by the throat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strike with an object or weapon	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prevent the other person from leaving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make a death threat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Threaten suicide (for example, in the event of a break-up)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I'VE BEEN KNOWN TO...	NEVER	ONCE	SOME-TIMES	OFTEN
Not respect the other person's desire to leave or break up; send repeated messages or showing up knowing that the other person does not want to see me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Threaten to self-harm (or display my self-harm so they feel guilty)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have sex with other people as an act of revenge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Results

If you have answered “never” to all the questions: you do not use violence in your intimate and romantic relationships.

If you have answered “once” to one or more questions from 1 to 18: caution is recommended! You may have already caused your partner anxiety, and the relationship may already be contaminated by violence.

If you have answered “sometimes” or “often” to some of the questions from 1 to 18, we advise you to strongly consider engaging in a change process. Unless you stop using violence and controlling behaviour, your relationship is likely to deteriorate, and the bonds of trust may be irreparably harmed.

If you have answered “once,” “sometimes” or “often” to one or more questions from 19 to 35, your partner is in danger. We advise you to take immediate steps to ensure his or her safety and yours. From a legal standpoint, your partner could already press charges.

Why change?



To love is to open up to the reality of others, as they are, without trying to make them conform to our expectations, it is to encourage them in their path, even if it is not our own, while respecting and expressing our own needs, of course.

— ISABELLE FILLIOZAT —

*V*iolence always has negative repercussions, even when we don't see them at first. The wounds it inflicts create a state of unease in the people who suffer it, sometimes even trauma, which in turn affect us in one way or another. While violence may provide short-term gains, the price we pay is always a loss of trust and respect from those around us.

The use of violence prevents us from being proud of ourselves, confident, at peace, from knowing that we deserve the respect of others, and that we can arouse their benevolence and affection. Instead, violence creates a cycle of frustration and fear.

Failure to respect the fundamental rights of others is against the law and can lead to serious legal consequences. Physical and sexual assault, threats to safety and life, unlawful confinement, harassment, and defamation are criminal acts.

We often can be blind to the consequences of our actions. Either we consider such consequences only in the short term (immediate apparent results) or consider only their effect on us, not taking into account how others may be impacted (in the short and longer term). In an effort to provide a full picture of the situation, below is an overview of the consequences of violence.

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF VIOLENCE IN MY LIFE

NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR MYSELF

When I think back on some of my violent behaviour, I feel ashamed

I am unable to repair the harm caused by my violent behaviour

I realize that some people I love are afraid of me

I realize that some people avoid me or act in an unnatural way in my presence

I realize that violence does not solve my problems in a sustainable way

I fear legal repercussions for my behaviour

I become obsessed with the other person's behaviour (jealousy, spying, and so on)

I regularly hold on to anger and hostile thoughts about others

I don't feel enough affection, gentleness, harmony, warmth, recognition...

I cannot accept criticism and, as a result, the other person does not feel understood or respected

NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR MYSELF

I regularly fear being rejected or abandoned

Sometimes I am afraid of myself

NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE PEOPLE AROUND ME

As a result of the violence, my partner...

reacts with hostility or resentment

is anxious, worried, sad, and depressed

treads lightly around me; does not trust me anymore

filed a complaint to assert his or her rights

is getting further and further away from me

has suffered trauma

has disengaged or is considering ending the relationship

always takes a back seat and gives up activities for fear of my reactions (friends, contacts, hobbies, socializing, family, work or other)

does not express feelings fully in my presence, for fear of my reaction

IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN...

NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE CHILDREN

The children...

mimic my violent behaviour

experience anxiety and insecurity

fear me

feel ashamed or become withdrawn

have experienced trauma

have physical health problems (stunted growth, allergies, headaches, stomach aches, and so on) that may be caused by violence

have psychological problems (sleeping or eating disorders, suicide attempts, low self-esteem, learning difficulties, concentration difficulties, school difficulties, and so on) that may be caused by violence

have behavioural problems (drug abuse, delinquency, alcohol abuse, running away from home, prostitution, foster care, behavioural problems or other) that may be caused by violence

Results

If you have not checked any boxes, good, but remain cautious. It is likely that you underestimate the effects of your violent behaviour on others. When your partner tries to tell you how he or she feels, you must listen!

If you have checked off one or more boxes, you should consider acknowledging your wrongdoing and allowing the other person to fully express how they felt as a result of your abusive behaviours. You should also take steps to ensure that your needs are met in ways other than violence.

Challenging our false beliefs



The ability we have of manipulating our own selves to ensure that the foundation of our beliefs is not shaken is a fascinating phenomenon.

— MURIEL BARBERY —

At the beginning of a relationship, we want to be in harmony with each other. Over time, frustrations or dissatisfactions occur in all relationships. The desire for harmony may then give way to a desire for control; rather than finding ways to meet each other's needs freely, we may set up ways to try to impose our views and desires. Over time, the desire for harmony becomes increasingly difficult to satisfy, as violence causes wounds that in turn lead to mistrust and estrangement. The desire for control takes us further away from satisfying our needs for harmony, tranquility, and trust. Violence becomes cyclical.

The excuses we create for ourselves (and for others) as a result of our violent behaviour sustain the belief that violence can be justified. Accordingly, as long as we believe our behaviour is justified, we don't change. Our beliefs that violence is justified, however, are almost always the result of misinterpreting reality.

The next set of questions aims to challenge the main beliefs held with respect to the use of violence.

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF BELIEFS ABOUT THE USE OF VIOLENCE

FOLLOWING AN ACT OF VIOLENCE, I SOMETIMES THINK THAT...	NO	YES
It wasn't a serious issue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was reacting to the other person's attacks; I had to fight back.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This was the best way, or the only way, to have my needs met	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was the other person's fault ("he/she provoked me" or "he/she caused this")	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Violence is normal in certain circumstances	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was necessary to avoid losing face	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was too angry, it boiled over	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was because I'd been drinking or using drugs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was due to a health problem (physical or mental)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This is a normal way of enforcing order and discipline	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had to make the other person feel what she - or he - made me feel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was an overload, things piling up	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was an impulsive reaction, beyond my control	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Results

If you answered “no” to all these questions: all the better! You are already aware that there is no excuse for using violence.

If you answered “yes” to one or more of these questions, we invite you to consult the tool for reflection below. Also, we encourage you to talk about this with people whom you value, trust, and admire for their calm and caring nature.

A TOOL FOR REFLECTION

Sometimes our beliefs are not based on a fair assessment of reality. The excuses we make for ourselves, whether in an attempt to limit the negative consequences of our behaviour or to protect our self-image (“I’m a good person”), can significantly hinder our ability to adapt well to situations. In fact, acknowledging our faults facilitates our ability to view ourselves as “a good person” and to be regarded as such by others.

FALSE BELIEF	REALITY
As long as I get what I want in my relationship in the end, I am satisfied.	The outcome of my violence will never satisfy my need for love, security, and affection. Fear is not love.
Admitting mistakes makes me weak	Being controlled by my shame is a weakness. Admitting my mistakes shows that I am responsible, honest, and allows me to improve.
I can't control myself when I'm angry / I have the right to be angry so I have the right to act that way.	Anger is an emotion, violence is an action. Controlling our impulsiveness is something that can be learned.
I am not responsible for what I do when I am angry.	Everyone is always responsible for their actions (except for serious neurological or psychological disorders)
I'm just angry, there's nothing to figure out.	Anger is a secondary emotion, which almost always hides something else: sadness, shame, fear, guilt. It also hides a need, which I need to identify to feel better.
I was drunk/high, it's not my fault.	Everyone remains responsible for their actions, even under the influence. Millions of people use drugs every day without becoming violent.
If I am violent, he/she will eventually understand.	Violence is not a means of communication. At best, violence communicates intensity, but without any indication of the feeling that is so intense (sadness, fear, jealousy, shame) or a description of the need I am trying to fulfil.
My mother/mother/parents were like this and no one died.	Is this the couple you want? The life you want for your children?

Summary

Our beliefs are mental habits. It may take some time to break these habits. The thoughts that justified our use of violence in our view will return regularly in the weeks and even months ahead. Every time they arise, we need to take a step back and continue to challenge ourselves. Talking to someone you trust can go a long way toward nurturing the critical thinking required for change.

Lessons learned...

What I can begin to do as of now...

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF THE MOTIVATION TO CHANGE

WHAT WOULD BE THE POSITIVE IMPACTS OF PUTTING A STOP TO MY VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR?

I'd receive more love and affection

My loved ones would feel more secure

My loved ones would no longer fear me

My relationships with people around me would be enhanced

I'd set a better example for my children

I'd feel pride

I'd be at peace with myself

I'd feel guilty less often

My life partner would feel better

Our relationship as a couple would be more harmonious

I wouldn't have any trouble with the legal system

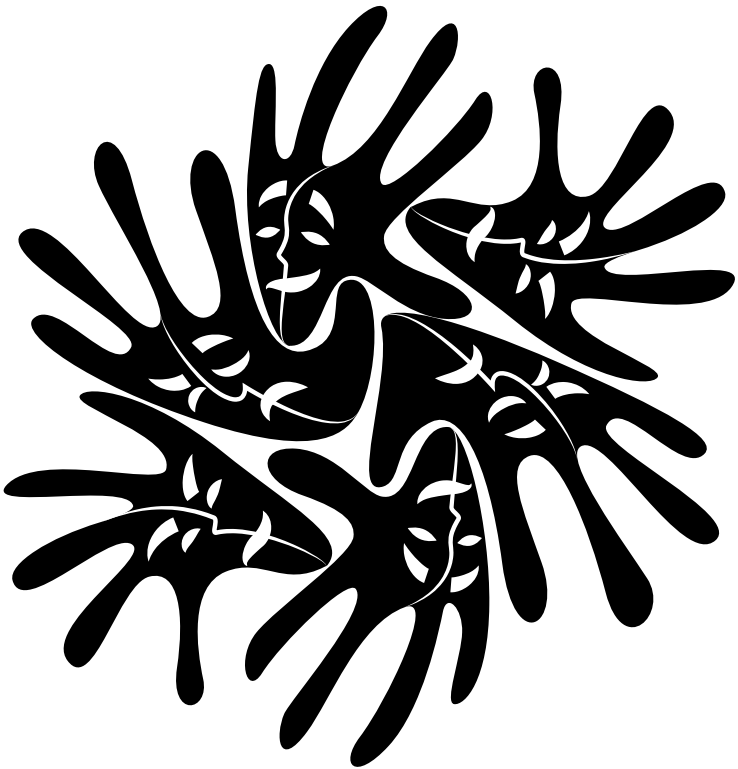
Reflection

Are you ready to change?

What do need to do to get there?

What help would you need?

*Initiating
Change*



— *Via l'anse* —

Where to begin?



If you can manage to appear to others as you would wish to be, that is all that can possibly be required by the judges of this world.

— ANNAH ARENDT —

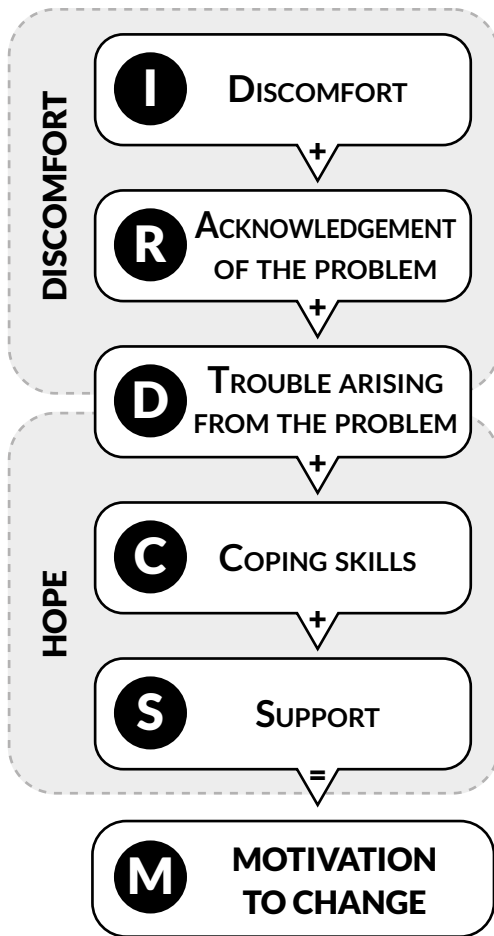
Changing behaviour that has become a habit is never easy. We tend to repeat the same actions again and again whenever we are faced with similar situations or emotions.

At the beginning of any change process, we recognize the discomfort that stems from our behaviour. Then, we gradually recognize (sometimes suddenly, following a significant incident) our behaviour as being, in itself, a problem. The more the problem bothers us, the more we will choose to act to stop it. Then comes the decision to change and to tell ourselves: “I forbid myself from using violence from now on.”

This decision is followed by an exploration of new forms of behaviour and allows for the progressive development of new skills. We know that we can undertake this process on our own, but it is more easily achieved with help from others. Talking to someone you trust and being supported in this process can be extremely helpful to you.

Change process

In the beginning, any change requires effort, but does not produce satisfactory results quickly. You need to persevere. The more you practise, the easier it becomes. Over time, results become increasingly satisfying, and less effort is required.



Managing my frustration and dissatisfaction



*What troubles men are not things, but the judgments
they make of things.*

— EPICETUS —

*W*hen we choose to put an end to the use of violence, the first step is to learn to break the cycle of our habitual response to frustration.

Anger is one of the emotions we feel when we are dissatisfied. It is always directed against what appears to be, rightly or wrongly, the cause of our dissatisfaction. On its own, anger doesn't engender violence. If, however, we choose not to manage our anger effectively, by remaining respectful of others, violence is likely to recur.

Think before you act

Sometimes our emotions can be so intense that we feel a sense of urgency. Reacting impulsively prevents us from taking time to consider the situation properly and make constructive choices. The more intense the emotion, the more difficult clear thinking becomes, hence the importance of giving ourselves some time to recover our full capacity for judgment.

The first thing to do to break the habit of resorting to violence is to recognize our signs of aggression and stop ourselves from acting – by taking a Time Out.

In time, we may learn new ways of expressing our needs or letting go of unrealistic expectations, but for now, we simply have to withdraw and tolerate the discomfort we feel inside. Signs of aggression may differ from person to person. They can be emotions (unhappiness, distress), physical sensations (sweating, palpitations), thoughts (hostile, angry or rage) or behaviour (agitation, need to move).



Anger Management

I RECOGNIZE MY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. I use « I » statements ●
2. I AM OK AND YOU ARE OK
3. Handling conflict is possible
4. Objectivity
5. Being open

What I do:

When both I and the other person are OK, I communicate using those strategies:

- > Be flexible
- > Try to find a common ground
- > Make compromises
- > Give positive feedbacks

TAKE A STEP BACK

6. TENSION IS RISING ●
7. Harder to be objective
8. I tend to act impulsively
9. I project, I criticize, I blame, I accuse
10. Risk of dangerous behaviours

What I should do!

I use my coping skills to calm myself. I communicate my emotions and my needs. I listen !

CAREFUL: DANGER !

11. HIGH RISK OF BODILY HARM ●
12. Distortion of reality
13. Heightened and excessive anger
14. Lack of rational thinking
15. Control and domination

What I need to do!

I say NO to violence. I avoid making any decision. I remove myself from the situation and postpone any discussions. I use grounding and calming techniques. If needed, I call a crisis helpline.

Anger Management

What is happening inside my body?

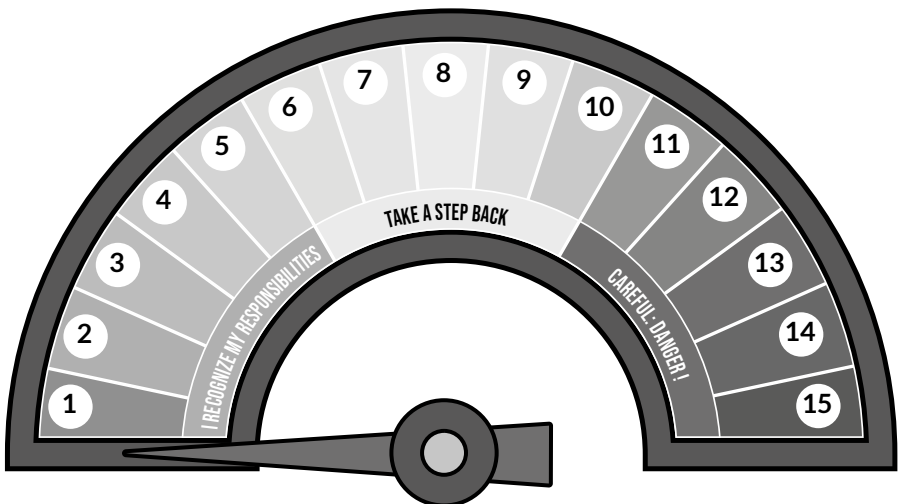
Identify signs of tension:

- > Boiling inside
- > Fast heart beat
- > Change in tone of voice
- > Shaking

TOOL

Imagine a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the most intense anger I ever experienced, and 0 being the most peaceful I ever felt.

- > What numbers correspond the danger zone for me?
- > At what number do I need to remove myself from the situation so I can calm down?



The process of frustration



Violence is rooted in the inner attitude we adopt when [...] a dispute arises; if our aim is to win out over others and not to seek a common position with them, violence emerges.

— ALBERT JACQUART —

To prevent violence more effectively, it's useful to understand the steps that can lead to it. Violence is not an automatic response or a behaviour set in motion without our being able to do anything about it. Let's try to see how the frustration process plays out.

The step-by-step of being upset

TRAPS

- *Jumping to conclusions*
- *Having unrealistic expectations*
- *Not differentiating between wishes and needs*
- *Believing others are in charge of our needs and emotions*
- *Believing our well-being can only come from others*

- *Having trouble tolerating contradictions or frustration*
- *Being attentive to anger only, without seeing deeper emotions (worries, shame, sadness...)*
- *Fostering anger through ruminations and resentment*
- *Not being able to identify our actual needs (safety, involvement, respect)*

- *Acting impulsively, based on emotion, without thinking of consequences*
- *Repressing any action, by fear of conflicts*
- *Choosing an strategy that is not appropriate to the context (escape, compensate, try to please, confront)*

- *Failing to evaluate long-term effects*
- *Focusing only on consequences geared towards oneself, while forgetting others*

OBSERVING THE SITUATION

We are always aware of what is going on around us. Our senses detect a lot of information that we quickly decode. We interpret the events based on our history, our learnings, and our perceptions. We use our memory as a guide to interpret what is happening around us and to classify information depending on whether they satisfy our needs or not.

EMOTIONS

When we find information which we deem, rightfully or not, as threatening to our well-being, our body immediately reacts. We then experience unpleasant emotions : fear, sadness, shame, or anger, at various intensities. These emotions act as an alarm telling us to act in order to regain our well-being.

CHOOSING A RESPONSE STRATEGY

We then select, amongst the response strategies we know, the one that seems the most appropriate to the situation in order to reestablish our well-being. Some may help us satisfy our needs (constructive), while other may not achieve that goal.

APPLYING THAT STRATEGY

We apply the strategy that seems the most appropriate to the situation.

REEVALUATING

We then evaluate the impact of our action on our needs. We however sometimes tend to not focus only on short-term results. Sometimes we also forget, and cannot evaluate the effects of those actions on others.

SKILLS TO DEVELOP

- *Recognizing my triggers and my vulnerabilities (abandonment, betrayal, humiliation...)*
- *Challenging my false beliefs*
- *Differentiating between expectations, wishes, and requirements*
- *Understanding others' emotions and perceptions*

- *Recognizing emotions I tend to run away from (sadness, shame, fear)*
- *Reconnecting with all my emotions*
- *Putting my needs into words*
- *Being able to stir away from rumination and resentment*

- *Recognizing my tendency to always react the same way, regardless of its efficiency or relevancy to the current situation*
- *Learning tools to control my impulsivity*
- *Improving my communication skills*
- *Being able to recognize what is within my power*
- *Grieving and letting go when the situation is beyond my control*

- *Learning to better recognize and respect my values*
- *Opening up to the others, listening*

Interpreting situations more effectively



*The brightness of the sun is never darkened by the
clouds hiding it from us.*

— MATTHIEU RICARD —

Disappointed expectations

We have a number of more or less conscious expectations of others. We expect others to act in one way or another in accordance with the function or role we attribute to them and by assuming that it is their duty to act in such a way.

Conflicts concerning housework or jealousy are examples of difficulties linked to expectations toward others. We expect the other person to take care of this or that task and carry it out in such way. We expect the other person to behave toward others and toward us in particular ways

SUGGESTED TOOL

Whenever I'm disappointed or shocked by the other person's behaviour, I can take time to reflect and ask myself the following questions:

Are my expectations realistic?

Do they take into account the other person's free will, capabilities, rights, and availability?

Is it something I can do on my own or something I can obtain by different means?

Unmet desires

Sometimes we expect others to fulfil our desires and even to guess what they are, without our having to tell them.

It's unrealistic to believe that others can guess our desires and expectations, for the simple reason that they are not us and that they have a different background and history. It's also unrealistic to believe that others are bound to meet our desires, expectations or demands.

Misunderstandings

Communication with the other person may be distorted by misperceptions and misunderstandings regarding that person's behaviour. It may happen that we develop ideas about a situation and that these ideas are, in fact, completely wrong.

SUGGESTED TOOL

Rather than interpreting the other person's attitudes or words unfairly, I can simply ask what motivates him or her. I can ask for clarification regarding the meaning of certain words or actions.

Another way to do this is to share our perceptions with the other person and ask if this is what he or she really wanted to communicate.

Prejudice

A prejudice is a way of labelling, generally in a negative way, a person and to view him or her only through this reductive perspective. Under these conditions, communication generally engenders incomprehension and conflict.

The tendency to point an accusing finger whenever we're frustrated may seem an expeditious way of settling a dispute. By attacking a person's image or values, however, we may trigger defensive attitudes, which will certainly not make that person more willing to help us.

Stereotypes

A stereotype is a prejudice toward a person pertaining to a particular social group. For example, it's stereotypical to believe that all women are emotional or that all men are insensitive. People and groups are sometimes subjected to stereotyping, often on the basis of age, gender, cultural origin, sexual orientation or social class.

Whether or not there are traits that are more specific to certain groups is not the point: what is important is to remember that each person is unique and cannot be reduced to a stereotype. Human beings are complex, and every person is unique. Stereotypes and prejudice share the same flaw in that they limit our ability to think for ourselves. Much injustice and violence in the world is often the result of conflict triggered by prejudice and stereotypes.

Recognizing our feelings



Contrary to popular belief, there is no danger in letting our feelings guide us. Relying on them ensures that we make relevant choices that take into account ourselves as a whole.

— MICHELLE LARIVEY —

*I*n the same way that our five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch) inform us about our physical reality, our feelings inform us about our subjective reality. We constantly feel emotions.

Too often, we are attentive to them only when they are very intense, sudden or unpleasant. Usually, these feelings inform us about the extent to which our needs are satisfied. Therefore, it is important to take time to experience and recognize them. Our emotions are a measure of the satisfaction, or lack thereof, of our needs.

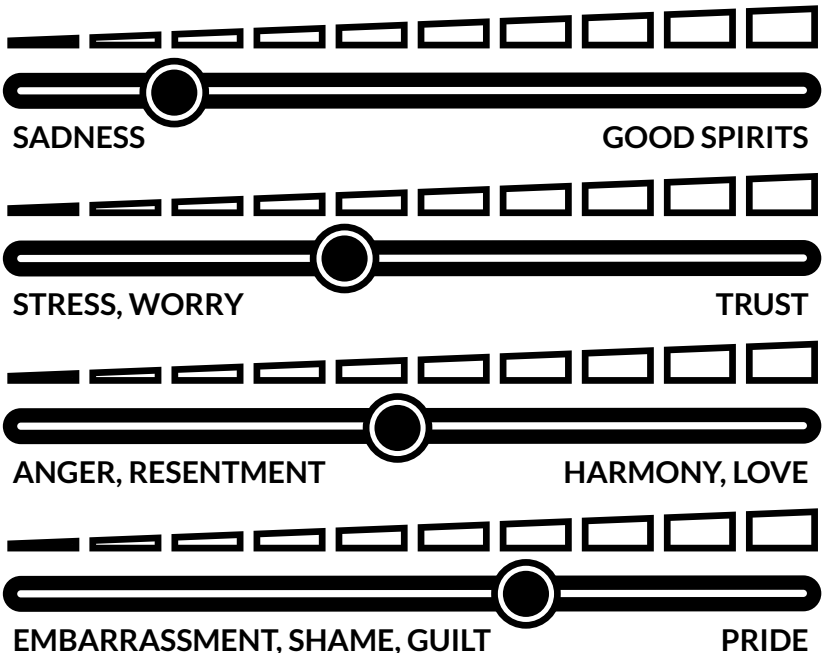
When our feelings reflect dissatisfaction, they are painful to experience. We may then be tempted to cut ourselves off from them or not take them into account. Nevertheless, these uncomfortable feelings are important. They reveal to us that something is not right, that our needs are not fulfilled in the way we want. By ignoring such emotions, we may transform them into physical discomfort, including agitation, tics, nervousness, fatigue, and tension.

There is also a risk of confusing our emotions with the judgments we make about other people's behaviour. This is what happens, for example, when we say that we feel abandoned, excluded, betrayed, cheated, mistreated, rejected, abandoned or neglected. We place the responsibility for our feelings on others without being able to recognize them in ourselves.

SUGGESTED TOOL

A single event may trigger several emotions. For each emotion, allow yourself some time to experience it, recognize it, and understand its meaning or message.

Recognizing our feelings



Emotions prepare us to respond directly to a situation (for example, fear in the face of a threat or grief following a loss) and make it easier to consider our needs.

We may have experiences where expressing certain emotions did not allow us to feel that we were heard. As a result, we may develop a habit of cutting ourselves off from these emotions. Take, for example, a situation that would normally make us feel sad or scared but which triggers anxiety or anger instead. This emotional shift tends to obscure and impede our recognition of our needs and what we can do to fulfil them.

We can learn to reconnect with our emotions at any age. Emotions allow us to understand our own needs – and meet them – more effectively. They also help enabling our loved ones to react positively and get closer to us.

Are there emotions that I tend to repress or hide from?

	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	ALWAYS
Sadness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Anger	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Guilt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fear	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

SUGGESTED TOOL

How can I feel more keenly the emotions I am used to cutting myself off from?

Identifying my needs



I have found time and again that when we talk about our needs rather than other people's faults, it becomes much easier to find ways to satisfy everyone.

— MARSHALL B. ROSENBERG —

When we are babies, we are totally dependent on others to fulfil our needs. With time, we learn to assume responsibility for our needs and develop the means to satisfy them. This learning process continues throughout life. With our talents and qualities, we have the capacity to adapt to life's various situations.

As human beings, we have many needs. Some are directly tied to subsistence, such as the need for water and sleep. Others are tied to affectivity, autonomy, creativity, and so on. Suffering emerges as soon as some needs go unmet. Hence, suffering plays an important role: it reminds us to act so as to stay alive and evolve.

Also, most of us are confused when it comes to identifying our needs, desires, and expectations. So, we all need food: to fulfil this need, we may want to eat this or that. We may, however, confuse needs and wants, which constrains our ability to act. For example, in a situation where children are very noisy, we may want them to be quiet. If we think about it in terms of need, we may understand our need for

quiet or rest. By reframing the problem in terms of needs, the scope for action is usually much broader.

Whatever difficulty we face, it is always possible to reframe it in terms of needs. In communication, this tool is all the more helpful as it allows you to express yourself clearly, without judging the other person. Obviously, hearing “I need affection” is easier than being told that “your friends aren’t the ones you’re in a relationship with!”

Identifying my needs

QUESTIONS :

What do I need in my life at the moment?

What am I trying to control, and what need is it related to?

In a relationship, what are the needs I am trying to meet?

Does it make sense to ask the other person to meet those needs? If not, could I also meet them in other ways, or accept that these needs are only partially met?

NEEDS TIED TO SUBSISTENCE

- ✓ Shelter
- ✓ Air
- ✓ Water
- ✓ Movement, exercise
- ✓ Food

- ✓ Security
- ✓ Rest, sleep
- ✓ Physical contact
- ✓ Health
- ✓ Sexual expression

EMOTIONAL NEEDS

- ✓ Belonging
- ✓ Attention
- ✓ Human warmth
- ✓ Comfort

- ✓ Ties
- ✓ Care
- ✓ Tenderness
- ✓ Touch

MENTAL NEEDS

- ✓ Learning
- ✓ Clarity
- ✓ Understanding
- ✓ Conscientiousness
- ✓ Challenge

- ✓ Discernment
- ✓ Information
- ✓ Reflection
- ✓ Diligence
- ✓ Stimulation

INDEPENDENCE

- ✓ Choosing goals and deciding how to achieve them
- ✓ Space

- ✓ Individuality
- ✓ Liberty
- ✓ Dreams
- ✓ Solitude

MOURNING

- ✓ For the deceased
- ✓ Unrealized dreams

- ✓ Our limitations
- ✓ Unmet need and losses

INTEGRITY

- ✓ Authenticity (be true to oneself)
- ✓ Consistency
- ✓ Self-confidence
- ✓ Self-esteem
- ✓ Honesty
- ✓ Purpose
- ✓ Respect
- ✓ Self-respect
- ✓ Dreams
- ✓ Meaning
- ✓ Vision

CELEBRATION

- ✓ Happiness
- ✓ Gratitude
- ✓ Humour
- ✓ Quiz
- ✓ Passion
- ✓ Pleasure
- ✓ Recognition
- ✓ Stimulation
- ✓ Vivacity
- ✓ Meaning

EXPRESSION

- ✓ Learning
- ✓ Skill
- ✓ Self-confidence
- ✓ Input
- ✓ Creation
- ✓ Creativity
- ✓ Growth
- ✓ Learning
- ✓ Change
- ✓ Achievement
- ✓ Healing
- ✓ Control
- ✓ Meaning

PHILOSOPHY/SPIRITUALITY

- ✓ Beauty
- ✓ Input
- ✓ Contact with nature
- ✓ Hope
- ✓ Harmony
- ✓ Inspiration
- ✓ Order
- ✓ Peace
- ✓ Meaning

INTERDEPENDENCE

- ✓ Acceptance
- ✓ Love
- ✓ Belonging
- ✓ Attention
- ✓ Human warmth
- ✓ Community
- ✓ Compassion
- ✓ Understanding
- ✓ Confidence
- ✓ Logging in
- ✓ Consideration
- ✓ Input
- ✓ Cooperation
- ✓ Listening
- ✓ Empathy
- ✓ Equity
- ✓ Feedback
- ✓ Honesty
- ✓ Inclusion
- ✓ Intimacy
- ✓ Freedom
- ✓ Mutual aid
- ✓ Predictability
- ✓ Proximity
- ✓ Reciprocity
- ✓ Respect
- ✓ Emotional security
- ✓ A sense of self-value
- ✓ Sincerity
- ✓ Support
- ✓ Stability

Recognizing my vulnerabilities



Sometimes the wound is so deep that no 'poor-me' story will suffice.

— TONI MORRISON —

Sometimes our previous experiences (especially in early childhood) leave painful marks regarding satisfying our needs. We may then react disproportionately and inappropriately and tend to misinterpret aspects of a relationship, especially in the midst of intimacy. Knowing how to identify our vulnerabilities can be very useful to identifying more effectively the needs we must address. We can, in fact, heal past wounds by connecting to present needs.

These fundamental wounds may be manifold: rejection, betrayal, humiliation, abandonment, and injustice. Activating fundamental injuries may result in many difficulties. Below is a brief questionnaire to help us recognize our vulnerabilities and related needs.

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF MY VULNERABILITIES

TO WHAT EXTENT DO I HAVE DIFFICULTY WITH...?	NEVER	RARELY	SOME-TIMES	OFTEN
Solitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Distance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being apart	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mourning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

These difficulties generally relate to the basic need for love (unconditional welcome, contact, care, attention, and so on).

TO WHAT EXTENT DO I HAVE DIFFICULTY WITH...?	NEVER	RARELY	SOME-TIMES	OFTEN
Being forgotten or ignored	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feelings of betrayal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The impression of being excluded	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

These vulnerabilities are linked to the need for recognition (listening, being seen and appreciated by others, appreciation of our skills, our value, our actions, and so on).

TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE I EXPERIENCED...	NEVER	RARELY	SOME-TIMES	OFTEN
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Violence and abuse

These experiences often make us vulnerable with regard to our need for security (trust in boundaries, respect for our integrity, rules, rights, values, and so on).

TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE I EXPERIENCED...	NEVER	RARELY	SOME-TIMES	OFTEN
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Humiliation

Oppression

Overprotection

Loss of freedoms

These difficulties are usually linked to the need for independence (freedom of thought, action, responsibility, commitment).

TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE I EXPERIENCED...	NEVER	RARELY	SOME-TIMES	OFTEN
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Alienation (rigid rules that don't make sense)

Lack of consideration for my point of view

Experiences of alienation deprive us of the satisfaction of needs associated with creativity (innovate, create, overcome constraints, and so on).

SUGGESTED TOOL

One of the most effective ways to heal past wounds is to confide in trustworthy people who listen to me and understand me.

Who can play this role in my life?

What professional resources would be of help to me?

Choosing a Strategy



You can't control your feelings, but you can control your behaviour.

— MARGARET ATWOOD —

As we have seen above, when we face a difficulty and feel frustrated, we choose an action strategy designed to restore our state of well-being and, wherever possible, prevent recurrence.

We have the capacity to find the best possible solution for any difficulty we may face in life. When we feel an unpleasant emotion, we must take time to calm down, breathe, and reflect so as to identify our needs and find a means of action. Sometimes, we may be on the wrong track, either because we remain centred only on what caused our frustration, because we only see the obstacles to realizing our needs, or because we do not take the necessary time to stay in contact and feel specific emotions. Typically, anger hide other emotions.

When the solution to a complex problem does not appear to us spontaneously, we can examine other strategies. No matter what the difficulty is, it is very likely that someone else has already gone through the same situation. Other people we know may even have a solution for the same

problem. Instead of isolating ourselves, turning to others for their wisdom can be very helpful.

The choice of strategy is often determined by our habits or default behaviour. For example, we tend to react in the same way when facing a recurring event. The first step to changing this response would be to become self-aware of our capacity of making decisions.

SUGGESTED TOOL

When reading the following strategies, which ones do I use frequently?

Do my reactions change from one situation to another? If so, does it depend on the type of person in front of me (age, gender, girlfriend/boyfriend, person in authority), the type of need, my physical or mental state?

Do I tend to alternate (e.g. try to please at all costs, devote myself, then end up trying to impose myself)?

Coping Strategies

COMPENSATING

Consuming
Releasing energy
Venting to people uninvolved in the conflict

PLEASING

Self-sacrifice
Not saying no
Forgetting yourself
Lacking boundaries

EXPRESSING ONESELF

Take a step back
Ask for help
Opening up about yourself
Listening
Letting go
Looking for a compromise

IMPOSING

Take a step back
Ask for help
Opening up about yourself
Listening
Letting go
Looking for a compromise

AVOIDING

Not expressing your needs
Minimizing problems
Ignoring the other person

Non-constructive strategies



The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.

— ALBERT EINSTEIN —

Some people do not easily express their emotions and needs, especially when their emotional load is high. For fear of feeling unwelcome, judged or rejected, or for fear of hurting or disappointing, they tend to want to please at all costs or flee to avoid the discomfort they feel in the encounter. Also, they may tend to develop habits of compensation for their states of unhappiness by seeking refuge in distractions.

Other people tend to try to impose their way of seeing and doing things. When they experience dissatisfaction or frustration, they consider that everything is the fault of others.

Pleasing others

Seeking to avoid conflict; devoting ourselves regardless of our actual abilities, keeping silent out of fear of upsetting others or being attacked, even wanting to save the other person...

Through this strategy, we try to satisfy our need for security as well as emotional needs, while denying other needs. Furthermore, since we are never responsible for the behaviour of others, this strategy does not really allow us to ensure our safety, nor generally to be loved for who we are.

Sometimes this strategy includes denigrating ourselves or others and low self-confidence that betrays our desire to attract the attention of others.

Flight

Avoiding facing the problem; pretending it doesn't exist; believing that things will work themselves out; procrastinating.

It is a strategy that may seem attractive, because it provides momentary relief from suffering. However, since we don't do anything about the problem, it is likely to continue and recur. Hence, by maintaining this strategy, we risk building up considerable tension

Compensation

Compensating is looking for a situation that gives us immediate pleasure so as to counteract our state of unease, without actually having to intervene in the causes of this unease.

There are a number of very lucrative companies that make a range of such products available to us: food, alcohol, drugs, pornography, games, and other consumer products. On its own, however, this strategy does not allow us to find solutions to problems.

Sometimes this strategy resembles that of flight and comes with passivity and the idea that things will take care of themselves.

Imposition

Forcing the other person to fulfil our desire and to stop repeating the behaviour we believe is at the root of our frustration.

Whenever we are frustrated and lash out at others, we seek to force them to fulfil our desires. This strategy sometimes has the advantage of allowing us to release certain tensions quickly. It may happen that others comply with our demands; as a result, we gain short-term advantages. In the long term, however, it does not allow us to satisfy our needs for security, affection, harmony,

esteem or trust. For those who experience it, violence always causes both physical and psychological injuries.

We may also seek to hurt others by wanting to punish them for the wrongs we ascribe to them. In this case, grudges and vengefulness are emotions that may be present indefinitely, because revenge does not allow us to heal completely from this kind of wound. On the contrary, it perpetuates the hurt and the hatred we feel.

More effective self-talk









Giving up all hope of a better past.

— JACK KORNFIELD —

Brooding is a mode of response to distress that manifests itself in repetitive mental replay of triggering events and their possible causes and consequences.

Brooding can lead us to a better understanding of situations. However, when it is persistent and pervasive, brooding on feelings, thoughts, and frustrations can lead to increased frustration, anger, sadness and fears, without allowing us to escape. In this way, it can lead to depression.

						
Anger	Annoyed	Frustrated	Exasperated	Resentful	Hostile	Vindictive
Sadness	Disappointed	Upset	Lost	Devastated	Desperate	Grieving
Fear	Fearful	Worried	Preoccupied	Nervous	Anxious	Panicked

SUGGESTED TOOL

1. Understand that I am brooding. Catching myself red-handed in brooding behaviour!
2. Allow myself a Time Out to calm down, breathe, and do something else pleasant and constructive.
3. Step back and stop asking myself the wrong questions. For example, am I:
 - > *Asking questions that I can't answer?*
 - > *Thinking that my viewpoint is the only possible way of looking at things?*
 - > *Making categorical and definitive judgments?*
 - > *Predicting the future rather than experiencing it?*
 - > *Setting up obligations or ultimatums?*
 - > *Refusing to accept things as they are?*
 - > *Punishing myself?*
 - > *Thinking there's nothing I can do to feel better?*
 - > *Considering fleeing, giving up, and letting everything go?*
 - > *Blaming someone else?*
 - > *Taking personally something that doesn't concern me?*
 - > *Condemning the other person?*
 - > *Condemning myself?*
 - > *Thinking I should be perfect? That others should be?*
 - > *Blaming myself without being able to do anything about it?*
 - > *Focusing on my weaknesses without seeing my strengths and qualities?*

These questions do not usually lead to a better understanding of what I can do to take care of myself. These are, in this case, the wrong questions, which lead me to go around in circles and remain in a situation where I feel powerless and unhappy.

4. Accept reality and ask myself new questions:

- > *It's normal, everyone makes mistakes*
- > *What can I learn from this situation?*
- > *Who can I talk to about it?*
- > *Do I still want to be in this relationship?*
- > *Is it worth it?*

5. Find the solution that best applies in this situation

Important reminder: when we share our concerns and emotions with safe and trustworthy people, we are more likely to overcome our problems

TOOL

Anchoring techniques may be used to put an end to brooding and let go of situations over which I have no control.

Grounding How to detach yourself from emotional pain

TECHNIQUES

MENTALS

- Reporting back to yourself
For example: location, date, time, first name, last name, want
- Describe the environment
Names, shapes, numbers, colours, and so on
- Read something
Say sentences, words or letters
- Describe an activity
Down to the smallest detail (for example, cook)
- Recite something slowly
For example: the alphabet, numbers, a sentence, a list
- Think about something funny
For example: reminiscence, a joke, a scene from a movie
- Play the categories game
For example: list cities starting with B
- Imagine yourself shielded from harm
For example: through a wall, guards, powers
- Link past and present
For example: think about successive birthdays

PHYSICAL

- Stretch as much as you can
Fingers, legs, arms, neck, and so on
- Feel the body's touch
With clothing, the chair, the ground, and so on
- Cling to your chair
As hard as you can
- Feel your breath
And repeat a word on each in-breath
- Have something in your pocket
Touch it and describe it
- Touch other objects
Specify their features
- Lean on your heels
Feel the weight on them
- Walk slowly
And think: left, right, and so on
- Jump up and down
And feel your weight, motion, and contact
- Put your hands under water
And feel them sink, but not too long

EMOTIONAL

- Say comforting things
For example: it's a difficult time, it'll pass
- Look at photographs
For example: loves ones and other people you value
- Think of a safe place
And describe it in the minutest detail
- Think of your favourites
For example: colours, dishes, series, artists
- Recite something inspiring
For example: a song, poem or quote
- Say something affirming
For example: I can get over this, I'm strong
- Plan for a reward
For example: chocolate, good meal, hot bath
- Look ahead
For example: upcoming movie night with a friend

To be more **effective**, practise:

OFTEN: the more you rehearse, the better it works

QUICKLY: the fewer the preliminaries, the better it works

ALONG TIME: the longer it is, the better it works

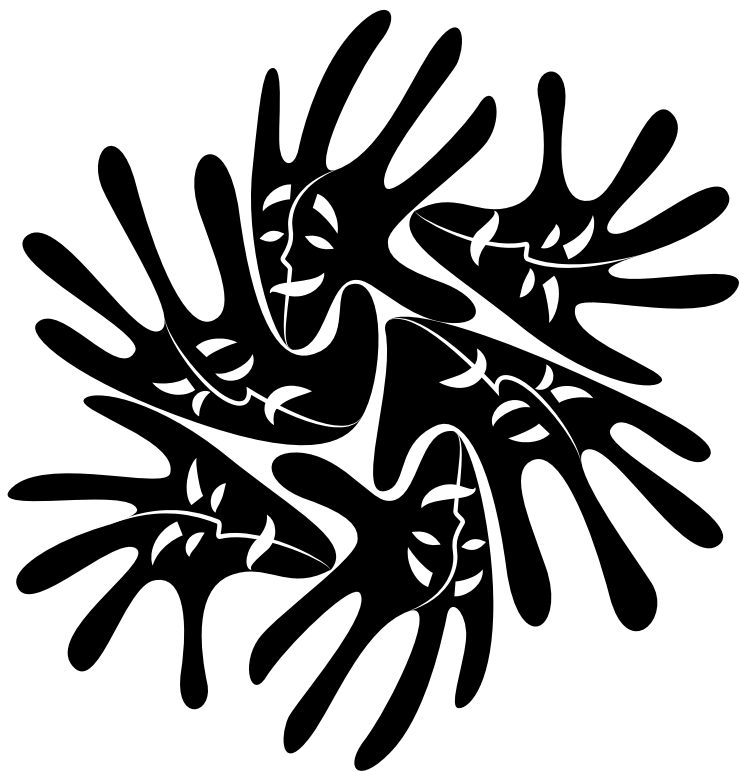
CONSCIOUSLY: the more aware you are of the benefits, the better it works

ORIGINALLY: the more personalized the techniques, the better they work

EARLY the earlier it is, the better it works

WHICH OF THOSE METHODS COULD BE USEFUL FOR ME?

*How to
communicate
without violence*



— *Ofia l'anse* —

Functional communication



Any human group's wealth lies in communication, mutual aid, and solidarity aimed at a common goal: the development of each individual while respecting differences.

— FRANÇOISE DOLTO —

We can learn to communicate more effectively. It is a skill you can develop, over time, through practice.

As not everyone's tastes, values, and priorities are the same, it is up to us all to express our needs and expectations clearly, in order to make them known to others.

In a satisfying intimate relationship, both partners freely and mutually help each other to meet their needs. To that end, there must be moments of interaction that allow each person to feel safe.

The more clearly needs are spelled out on both sides, the easier it will be to agree on what you want to do for each other to take care of each other. Let us recall, of course, that others do not have to meet our needs, nor do we have an obligation to meet theirs. Knowing how much each of us can contribute makes it easier to maintain our autonomy and not to harbour unrealistic expectations of the

relationship. We retain full independence over the needs that are not met in the relationship.

Emotions play an important role in communication. They allow us to make our sensitivity and vulnerability known to others. They very usefully indicate the value we place on things. Functional communication is a mixture of emotions and expression of needs.

T O O L

COMMUNICATION IS CONSTRUCTIVE WHEN THE PARTNERS...

- ✓ Listen when the other person speaks
- ✓ Take turns speaking
- ✓ Look at the person who is speaking
- ✓ Share their emotional experience
- ✓ Validate each other's feelings (for example: "I understand that you felt neglected")
- ✓ Are open to what the other person says (without having to agree!)
- ✓ Don't get defensive when they are wrong or have done something stupid
- ✓ Offer support
- ✓ Don't criticize or despise the other person
- ✓ Search for solutions in an attitude of cooperation
- ✓ Use humour

Are all these components present in my discussions?
Which ones are most often missing?

What should I pay particular attention to in future interactions in my relationship?

Is it difficult for me to deal with the emotions of others? If so, what can I do to overcome my discomfort?

Is it difficult for me to express certain emotions such as pain, worry or shame? If so, what can I do to overcome my fear of feeling unwelcome?

Conflict without violence



Human beings are not our enemies. Our enemies are the violence, ignorance, and injustice present in each and every one of us.

— THICH NHAT HANH —

Conflict is inevitable and its occurrence is not, in itself, a problem. Instead, it is our response to conflict that can be either dysfunctional or constructive.

Often, when one of us expresses a dissatisfaction, the other person may feel attacked. The risk of escalation following an incident may leave both parties deprived or annoyed. We can act as if the conflict has been resolved by one person's victory over the other. This would impact each person's trust in the other. We act as if conflicts can only be resolved by one person winning and the other losing. What happens instead is that the conflict persists and the rights and feelings of one party are not respected.

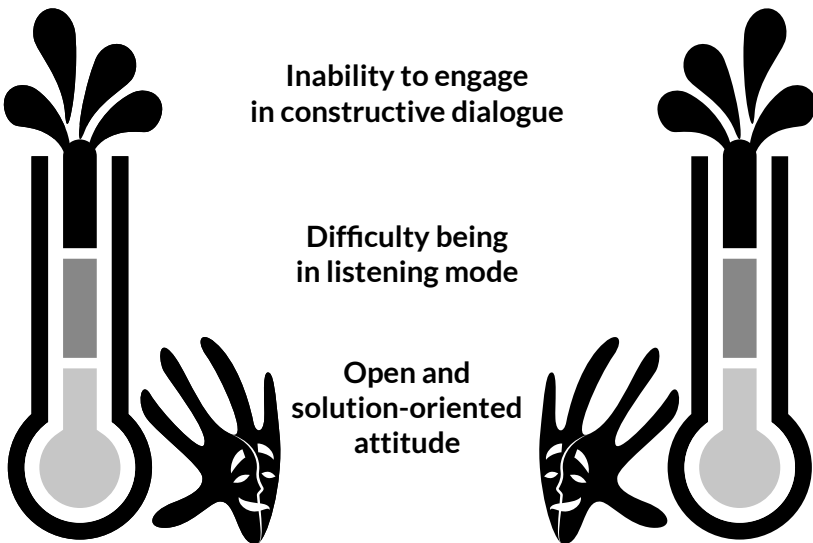
Indeed, to manage a conflict supposes that both persons can assert themselves without hurting – emotionally or physically – the other person. It is about being aware of what we say and, especially, how we say it. This also means not trying to **win**, but rather to **assert** oneself and, eventually, to **get along**. We can then negotiate a solution that suits both parties.

SUGGESTED TOOL

Once this is done, proceed in stages: first name what caused the frustration, the emotions and the needs, then ask for the other person's help. If the other person so wishes, a search for solutions is then carried out together (at this stage, all solutions may be suggested). Then, once several possible solutions have been found, we identify the solution that seems to bring everyone together.

This method may be repeated as often as necessary. Please note that this approach is possible only when both partners are comfortable with intimacy and feel confident.

When one or both partners reach a high level of anger, it may be necessary to take a break so that they can understand each other better.



Time Out

1) REALIZE WHAT IS HAPPENING

Whenever I am tense, irritated, and angry and I identify signs of tension in my body (tone of voice, heartbeat, trembling), I make the decision to breathe deeply, not attack anyone, and take a **Time Out**.

2) LET THE OTHER PERSON KNOW:

I tell the other that I need to be alone and that I will be back in about twenty minutes.

(it is important to warn the other person so they do not worry or think I am avoiding the situation)

3) WITHDRAW FROM SITUATION:

I may, for example, go for a walk or go somewhere where I can be alone. Physical activity such as walking can help me relieve tension. It only takes three or four conscious breaths to get back in touch with ourselves. During the Time Out, I can write what I need to express or simply say it to myself.

4) SELF-OBSERVATION

- When I am alone, I observe what is happening in my body: my muscles are tense; my heart beats fast, I need to release the energy that accumulated
- If needed, I use anchoring techniques

- Once alone, I try to better understand what made my react, I try to understand primary emotions, in particular, fear, shame, and sorrow.

5) AFTER THE TIME OUT

A productive time-out enables me to resume communication, whenever the other person is available. If my anger persists, despite the Time Out, I can continue my reflection (making sure to inform the other person) and, possibly, talk about it with someone who is not directly concerned by the problem and who will listen to me with kindness, without maintaining or feeding my anger, so as to help me find a solution. If needed, I can contact my local crisis center.

IMPORTANT: To ensure our Time Out is respected by the other partner, it is necessary to talk about it beforehand, preferably in a quiet moment. Explain to the other person that there may be times when you need to withdraw, to calm down, before you can pursue your discussion.

Active listening



We must be humble enough to listen to other people's voices, and rather than comparing their tone and melody with our own, we must hear what they say.

— JEAN-MARIE ADIAFFI —

Listening is about making a connection with someone. It means allowing others to reveal themselves. The better we know how to listen, the more likely we are to allow the other person to express him or herself fully and confidently. Being listened to attentively is always a pleasant and enriching experience.

Listening brings us closer to others. Attentive listening allows the other person to feel understood, reassured, and comforted. To be attentive listeners, we need to be empathetic and compassionate, that is, driven only by the desire to allow the other person to tell the story of what is troubling and affecting him or her.

However, we are not always able to listen to the other person attentively. We sometimes feel uncomfortable listening to others, especially when their emotions are painful. We may then respond in a way that shields us, putting up obstacles to hinder the other person, for example, by interrupting; by not allowing the other person to express themselves fully, by talking about ourselves, by

changing the subject, by lecturing, by looking for someone to blame, by blaming, by complaining, by suggesting solutions to the other person's problems, by trying to impose our own solutions, and by minimizing or ridiculing.

T O O L

To help our partner regain a sense of trust, we need to allow him or her to express in full what our behaviour has caused them to experience. Reproaches must be accepted without making excuses. We must allow ourselves to be moved by emotions without minimizing them. Our ability to acknowledge the harm we have done can go a long way to freeing our partner from the shame and fear caused by violence

Learn to listen (inspired by Dugal, 2021)

- I turn to the other person and look at him or her
- I maintain a relaxed stance
- I don't talk over the other person
- I avoid interpretation
- If needed, I ask for clarification, or confirmations that I understand correctly
- I offer support and empathy
- I encourage the other person to speak and show them that I understand ("Yes, I understand" and I nod)
- I observe what contributes (or not) to the other person's well-being, without interrupting.

- I am sensitive to what the other person is feeling, to his or her emotions and I show it.
- I try to understand, not merely prepare my response
- When the other person has finished his or her message, I rephrase what he or she said, to make sure I've understood: "Do you feel...?"
- I let the other person express his or her needs and formulate his or her own solutions: "You would like to..." or "You need..."

WHAT SHOULD I PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO?

WHAT WILL BE NEW FOR ME?

Using “I statement”



If with the best of intentions, we say hurtful things to someone and it does that person no good, our overly violent or direct manner will not have achieved its purpose.

— TENZIN GYATSO —

To express ourselves is to create a bond with someone; it is to reveal ourselves. Sometimes, however, when we express ourselves, we present an incomplete picture of who we are. The bonds we create are then superficial, distant, and unsatisfactory.

Closing up

Very often, it is the fear of being vulnerable, judged, and hurt that hinders our ability to express ourselves. To avoid being hurt, we isolate ourselves from others. We only allow to be seen what seems to us unassailable or invulnerable. In so doing, we leave many of our qualities in the dark. We hide our sensitivity, sorrows, worries, tenderness, remorse and even joy, gratitude, enthusiasm – in other words, many of the things that can make us sympathetic to others and that can elicit their benevolence and compassion.

If we are unable to bring about these qualities in others, we create only fragile bonds with them. Fear of showing vulnerability or seen in an unflattering light, ashamed of our feelings or needs, being silent, demanding, or trying to outdo others are all barriers to communication, intimacy, and harmony.

Seeking attention

Conversely, we sometimes seek attention from others, even – and especially – when they do not seem to be willing to give it to us. We communicate by imposing on others. We take up as much space as possible and cling to it. We are relentless and try to get the other person to change by repeatedly making demands, blaming or criticizing him or her, without considering his or her point of view.

Using “I statement” (inspired by Dugal, 2021)

- I turn to the other and look at him or her
- I maintain a relaxed posture
- I use a calm tone of voice
- I share one brief message at a time
- I describe a concrete situation: “I see...,” “I hear...,” “I recall...”
- I identify what I am feeling, my emotions. I stay in touch with what I feel and express it clearly: “I felt...,” “I feel...”

- I describe my emotions rather than criticizing what the other person has done, or not done
- I avoid expressing scorn or criticism
- I avoid using the words “always” and “never”
- I encourage the other person if he or she understands
- I try to express how I feel when something happens, not to convince myself that I am right
- I name the needs that arise from emotions: “Because I need...”
- I formulate (if necessary) a concrete, realistic, positive, and negotiable request (in the present tense): “I would like...,” “Would you like...?”

I FEEL...

I identify and express what I feel

WHEN...

I describe the situation (the facts) without judgment

I NEED...

I identify and express my need(s)

WOULD YOU...

If possible, I suggest a solution

- I try to express how I feel when something happens, not to convince the other person that I am right
- I describe my emotions rather than criticize what the other person has done or not done

- I avoid contempt and criticism
- I encourage the other person if he/she has understood
- I express a problematic situation, without saying that it is the other person's fault or saying that it is my fault. Nevertheless, since I put forward my emotions, I admit that my reaction may be part of the problem.

EXAMPLE 1

Alex is talking to Max about some issues they are facing, but soon Max is overwhelmed starts crying.

Ineffective communication:

«Come on! You're not going to start crying like a baby again? I'm just trying to explain myself. It's impossible to talk with you.»

Message transmitted: I'm not interested in your emotions, I am not interested in you.

Consequence: Max feels even more afraid and now feels rejected, which will lead to even more tears, and even more difficult communication.

Communication with «I» statements:

«I feel lost and trapped when you start crying like that. I want to express myself but I don't want to hurt you. I need us to find a way to talk without it getting so emotional. Would you like to take a break and talk about this later?»

Message transmitted: I am interested in your emotions, I am interested in you, I do not want to hurt you. At the same time, I also want to find a way to be able to talk with you, which I'm not able to do when I see you crying. (I am not saying it is your fault or my fault, that is not the point, but the bottom line is that it is not working.)

Consequence: Max feels that Alex cares about them and does not want to hurt them. This will probably calm their tears. Max understands that this is a situation to be handled as a couple, as two against overwhelming emotions, not against each other.

EXAMPLE 2

Max talks and laughs a lot with their friend Dom. Alex has been cheated on before by a previous partner and starts feeling jealous.

Ineffective communication:

«Having fun? Time of your life? Why don't you just go home with him if you like him so much. Have sex with him too while you're at it, just add him to your list.»

Message transmitted: I do not trust you, I prefer that you leave, you have no value except sexual.

Consequence: Max feels insulted and rejected. Max will now be afraid to talk to their friends in front of Alex, and may start to isolate themselves or hide their relationships. It is also possible that Max will actually end up cheating on Alex, because of these insults and lack of trust.

Communication using «I» statements:

«I feel insecure and afraid of losing you when I see you laughing like that with someone else. I need reassurance about our relationship.»

Message delivered: I do not want to lose you. I care about you and I have a hard time trusting anyone. I am not saying that it is your fault or my fault or even Dom's fault, but the bottom line is that I feel insecure.

Consequence: Max feels loved by Alex, which strengthens their relationship. Max may make more efforts to reassure Alex about their relationship. It is not a problem dealt with as a couple in trying to find a balance between Max's indisputable right to have friends and the impacts it causes on Alex's current trust issues.

Taking care of yourself and others



Only he loves us, to whom we can show weakness
without provoking force.

— ÉLISABETH BADINTER —

Here are suggestions of things to do that can help us improve how we feel, even when everything is going well:

- Become aware of my values and that of others. Recognize our good actions and our efforts.
- Do things that I like, that bring me satisfaction and pride. Let this be the case for other people as well.
- To be seen and welcomed, as I am, including when I suffer. Welcome others with kindness, without judging them.
- Approach my difficulties as challenges, give myself the means to respond effectively. Encourage myself and take a step back. Take the time I need to get there. Avoid imposing my way of doing things on others.
- Recognize and accept my limits. Accept limits from others. Accept the delay of gratification.
- Talk about my difficulties, my worries; ask for help; open up to others. Welcome others with benevolence, without judging them.

- Take advantage of the present moment. Avoid being bound by brooding (about the past) and anxiety (for the future). Offer my help to people who are suffering, without insisting, and respect their pace or rhythm.
- Practise creative or contemplative activities: physical activity, walking, reading, nature-watching, relaxation, meditation, do-it-yourself, music, painting, dancing, going to the theatre, writing... Allow others to do the same, while respecting their tastes and priorities.
- De-dramatize situations through humour.
- Fight injustice and violence without resorting to injustice or violence.
- Distinguish between love and possessiveness; engage freely and avoid trying to control others or to tie them down. Enjoy other people's happiness.
- Express my recognition.

SUGGESTED TOOL

Here are some pointers for refocusing and relaxing:

- Lie on your back, eyes closed, arms by your sides
- Breathe deeply, about ten times, concentrating only on your breath, and repeat to yourself: "I breathe in. I breathe out."
- Be aware of your physical state (bodily sensations); your psychological state (emotions)
- As you refocus, continue to speak calmly to yourself, for example, by repeating: "I let ideas and emotions pass and I return to the present moment."

You may find other mindfulness meditation exercises more suitable, such as body scan (focusing on sensations in each part of your body), sensory meditation (focusing on current information coming your surroundings, including smells, sounds, objects, and temperature), yoga (movement), and meditative walking.

Regular practice of these activities allows for quicker and more accurate detection of impulsive reactions and behaviour, helps you in the search for constructive solutions, improves communication skills (listening, empathy, acceptance of others, perspective), enables you to self-regulate emotionally, and helps you practise Time Out.

Conclusion

The difficulties we often encounter impede us from achieving our needs. We are sometimes wounded, and poorly healed wounds can lead us to isolate ourselves, to hold back on fulfilling our needs or to channel efforts in ineffective ways. These wounds may strip us of some of our qualities such as kindness, good humour, and our ability to adjust to all kinds of situations. To end our suffering, however, we need to call on all our qualities. We also need to recognize these qualities in others.

This toolbox does not contain miracle cures, nor is it an exhaustive resource. As you may know, a tool is not quite an action plan. To make things happen, we need other ingredients, including our choices, experiences, and efforts. Moreover, you need more than mere assembly instructions to build something. Of course, you need to practise and, at times, seek help from people with helpful knowledge and experience.



Via l'Anse

vialanse.com