

# **Guidelines for setting up and running an NVC Peer Practice Group**

## Have you had a taste of NVC and feel inspired to get more fluent by practising with other NVC enthusiasts?

Perhaps you've completed a Level 1 Foundation Training, read a book about NVC or watched some videos, and now want to get practising, informally with peers, but feel uncertain about how to set up and run a peer group?

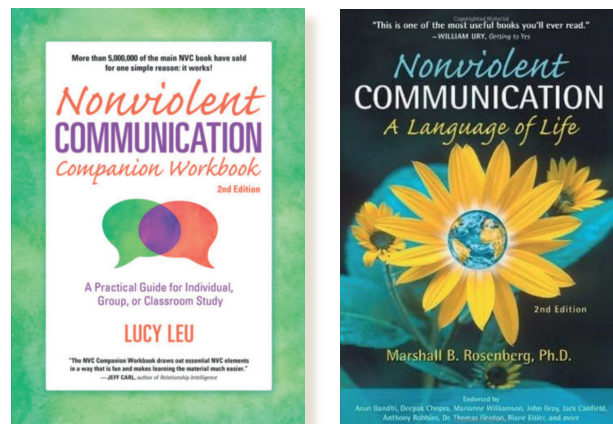
It could be that you don't have the funds for formal NVC training or a facilitated practice group, or maybe you're keen to learn independently with peers.

**NVC Matters suggests two ways to go about setting up and running an NVC peer practice group, whether in-person or online →**



## A- Workbook-Led Option

A peer group structured around Lucy Leu's 'Nonviolent Communication Companion Workbook' and Marshall B. Rosenberg's book 'Nonviolent Communication: a language of life.' Each group member will need to invest in these 2 books.



### The companion book gives you

- guidance in how to start a practice group
- content and structure for 13 sessions
- suggestions for forming a 'leaderful practice circle' and activities for ongoing groups
- support in identifying and addressing challenges often encountered by NVC practice groups

The 13 sessions encompass a curriculum for learning and applying the basic principles of NVC. One section of the book gives some really useful guidelines on running a group: for example, how to make rules; invite feedback; structure empathy sessions and role plays; and information about the kind of conflicts that can come up and how to handle them.

Each of the 13 practice sessions has individual assignments – based on Nonviolent Communication, a language of life by Marshall B. Rosenberg – to be completed in advance and guidelines for the group leader on how to run that session.

## B- Self-Led Option

A peer group that uses its own materials— see suggested resources below

Choose this option if you feel fairly confident about running a peer group, want autonomy, and the freedom to dip into a variety of NVC practice materials and source your own.

### Group agreement

When you first meet as a group it's important to make some group agreements, so you are on the same page in terms of how you want to work together. Here are some suggestions for you to discuss.

#### Our NVC Group Agreements

These agreements are intended to meet needs for our group space to be inclusive, respectful and psychologically safe for everyone. Are you willing to agree to them? Your suggestions of additions, deletions and tweaks are welcome.

#### Take responsibility for your own safety and learning

When you bring real examples from your life, choose situations / triggers that you feel emotionally safe to share; bear in mind we learn best when at the edge of our comfort zone, not when we're in overwhelm.

#### Confidentiality

Please don't refer to or ask questions of anyone after they've shared something about their personal life, without first asking for permission. E.g. "Is it ok if I say something about the example you spoke about?"

After the session it is ok to speak about another person's situation ONLY if you change key details so that person is unrecognizable e.g. age, gender, specifics about the situation. If you do this, please talk about what was meaningful for you about what you heard.

### Stepping forward and stepping back

We welcome as wide a range of people's voices in the group space as possible & value each person's input. If you easily speak into the group, allow space for others; some people need time to step in. If you are less likely to speak into the group, please know you're welcome to speak as much or as little as you'd like to. Bear in mind that:

- listening is active. It is not a lesser participation than speaking
- some people take more words than others to express what they want to say so please be patient with others
- English is not necessarily everyone's first language so allow for that by repeating or being patient if it's not so easy to understand someone else.

### Being sensitive to difference, vulnerability and triggers

If anyone voices a sense of not belonging, or gets triggered, please respond with empathic listening, even if you find it impossible to relate to or understand from your perspective. Empathy not education!

If you make a request for information about someone's identity in terms of culture, religion, age etc, please also make it known that it is truly OK for the other person not to answer the question. This is because some people feel uncomfortable with revealing aspects of their identity and would like to be welcomed as they are, and to choose what and when to share information about themselves.

If someone shares something vulnerable, respond with what is touched in you or what resonates in your own life, rather than giving advice or discussing content.

### Showing up

Please prioritize coming to every session if possible and respect another's choice to be absent.

### Punctuality

Come on time or a few minutes early to be considerate of everyone's time.

### Feedback

We will make time at the end of each session for reflection, mutual appreciation and feedback.

## Suggested outline for each group session

### 1. Roles

Clarify who is leading the session. This person uses the script below, works out timings and makes sure the group finishes on time. The leader might also choose to ask for a volunteer to set a timer for the various parts of the session.

### 2. Welcome and group agreements

Leader welcome and remind everyone of the Group Agreements

“Just reminding everyone of our agreements re:

- Confidentiality
- Stepping forward / stepping back
- Holding awareness of your learning edge / self-care when choosing what situations to work with
- Empathy not education if someone gets triggered

These agreements are to support needs for emotional safety, inclusion, care and consideration of each other.”

### 3. Silence (and a reading, if you like, that connects people to the spirit of NVC)

“Let’s begin with a minute’s silence so we can settle into the space together.”



#### 4. Check-in

“You’re invited to share what is alive in you. I’ll time everyone for 2 minutes. As we listen the purpose is simply to be present to and give each other our full attention and unconditional positive regard as best we can. Please allow a pause between each person’s check-in, so we can all be with what we’ve just heard, especially if someone shares something particularly vulnerable.”

#### 5. Practice

Introduce the topic and set up the practice activity. At this point it is useful for the time keeper to establish agreements about time. For example, asking the person sharing what kind of time alert they would like before the end of the agreed time slot. Or letting everyone know how much time there is for the practice activity.

Remind the group that if someone shares something vulnerable, to please respond with what is touched in you or what resonates in your own life, rather than giving advice or entering into content again.

#### 6. Harvesting / check-out

Using observations, feelings, needs and requests, take turns to respond to one or more of these prompts

What did you learn in this session?

What did you appreciate about yourself and / or another in the session?

About the leader’s facilitation: what worked / what could be even better?

#### 7. Requests and / or offers for next session’s topic and leader

“Who has a request or offer for a topic for next session?”