

## Soft Skills Training Event

***We can repeat the theory many times, but experiencing it at least once is the most valuable thing!***

That was the starting point for us to shape a series of training events for - in total - 7 modules. Each module reflected an area that should be covered while we were working in a Social Solidarity Economy milieu. These 7 modules are appropriate no matter where you are working or with whom, but especially for the communities where the model of organization is more horizontal than vertical, where all members of the community regardless of the task performed should be seen and heard. Such conditions are demanding and competence in how to listen, receive, and give feedback is key to preventing misunderstandings, resolving difficult situations peacefully, and ultimately growing in the community instead of descending into chaos. Such a cherry on the cake was the module on taking care of yourself. We came out of observing how the activist community is fragile and prone to burnout, so taking care of yourself is the first and necessary step to taking care of the whole team. We ended the training series with this module although you might as well take it as the first.

We wish you to set up your combinations in implementing the pieces of training. We have shared our comments at the end of this collection, hope you can find there some inspiration and worthwhile reflections.

Modules are as follows:

1. Nonviolent communication model
2. Active listening & giving and receiving a feedback
3. Organizing a successful meetings: facilitation & moderation
4. Inclusive decision making
5. Distributed leadership
6. Working with conflict
7. Self-care

## Module 1. Nonviolent Communication

Time	What	Content	Materials
25'	1.01 Introduction to communication	What is communication? Why do we communicate? Rain of ideas. Jakobson's scheme as a theoretical model of communication	Marker & flip-chart
40'	1.02 You are the rope.	Understanding the challenge of communication and experience the role emotions play in our communication.	Five ropes for each team
45'	1.03 What makes communication easier and what makes it more difficult? <i>World Café</i>	Work at 4 or 2 tables / flip-charts) In groups, what hinders and what facilitates verbal and non-verbal communication	Marker & flip-chart
5	1.04 How to build a message? <i>Introduction to NVC</i>	Introducing elements (bricks) from which a message can be built in a non-violent communication model	none
15'	1.05 NVC bricks: Facts	Distinguishing facts/observations from interpretations/opinions - "voting with your feet"	String, cards marked 'facts' & 'interpretations', list of facts & interpretations
75'	1.06 NVC bricks: Emotions	Part 1: Division of emotions, wheel of emotions - rain of ideas (15') Part 2: Positive and negative sides and consequences of all emotions - group work (30') Part 3: theory - with group activity (Emotions as rapid information and motivation systems, Cultural framing of emotions, alexithymia) (15') Part 4: Emotions and supposed emotions, different shades and intensities of emotions - Jigsaw (drawing lots or picking from scattered on the ground) (15')	Marker & flip-chart  4 emotion cards (attachment) presentation or Marker & flip-chart  Emotions on cards, 2 flipcharts - wheel of emotions + alleged emotions
30'	1.07 NVC bricks: Needs	NVC Bricks: recognition of needs - work in pairs. some theory of needs. Rains of ideas: Needs versus interests, needs versus values, needs versus strategies to meet them	none
20'	1.08 NVC in theory	Building blocks of NVC. Theoretical assumptions of NVC. Formal scheme of an NVC.	presentation or Marker & flip-chart
30'	1.09 NVC in practice	Street NVC (how can you say something in the spirit of NVC without using this formal scheme?). Conversion of non-NVC statements (4 categories of statements: moral judgements, comparisons, denial of responsibility, demands) into NVC	Examples of sentences to work on
45'	1.10 NVC in SSE, and	Discussion: Why we need NVC in Social	none

	limits of NVC	Solidarity Movements/Environment/Economy. Limitations and abuses of NVC.	
20'	1.11 Answers of a mime	Clarification skills exercise	List of topic questions

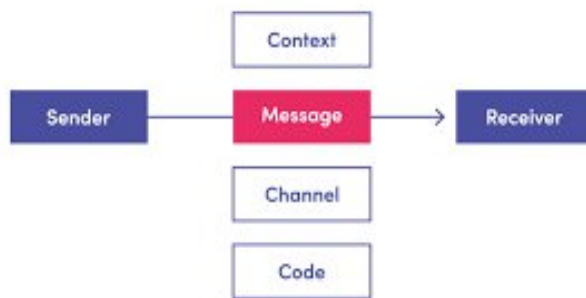
## 1.01 Introduction to communication

**Goal:** introduction to the subject matter

**Group size:** any | **Duration:** 25 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** both

**Description:** What is communication, why and what for do we communicate? Rain of ideas: participants answer, we write down slogans on a flip-chart.

Framework: Jakobson's communication model



**Why and what for we communicate?** Possible answers:

- to express your thoughts, beliefs, desires, feelings, exchange information, get help, acceptance, support,
- to meet your own and your partner's needs
- to give instructions, to perform common tasks, e.g. to agree with a partner on the division of responsibilities, to negotiate favourable terms of a contract, etc.
- to define one's own position, to express one's attitude towards
- to keep in touch

**Materials:** Marker & flip-chart

**Meta comment:** This part is not necessary, but it introduces the topic of communication.

## 1.02 You are the rope

**Goal:** To understand the challenge of communication. To experience the role emotions play in our communication.

**Group size:** any | **Duration:** 30 - 40 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** both

**Description:**

**Procedure**

Split the group into teams of about six people. All teams will have the same goal and but it is not a competition. If there is only small group of participants it is okay to have just one team. Ask members of each team to arrange themselves along the rope with similar distances between them. Then they can take a rope. Once they are in position, explain that they cannot let go of their rope for the duration of the activity. The team's challenge is to tie a knot in the center of their rope. Because this game is deceptively difficult, you may want to recommend that the team imagine themselves as one long rope — the team members are just extensions of that rope. If anyone loses contact with the rope, the team has to start over.

Observers can provide valuable perspective during the debriefing discussion for this activity. For anyone uncomfortable with the activity level, or if you have more people than required for the game, give them the Observer questions (see below) to focus their attention and keep them engaged throughout the process.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What did you notice during the challenge?
2. Was the activity more difficult than you anticipated?
3. How did the team react to the surprising difficulty or simplicity of reaching your goal?
4. Did you express any emotions (frustration, ...)? And how?
5. Did you notice emotions in other people in the team? Can you give examples?
6. In what ways did you and the team address emotions?
7. Do we face similar communication challenges at work?
8. What are some ways in which inaccurate assumptions lead to conflict?
9. What steps can we take to prevent this from occurring?

**Meta comment:** Intro to the following World Café - what hinders and what facilitates communication. Can be used in Module 6. Working with Conflict. Physical activity that works as an icebreaker and can be used as energizer/moving activity.

**Materials:** Five ropes (between 180 and 300 cm in length) for each team.

Knot It Observer Form handout:

During the activity, please take a moment to answer these questions.

1. Did the teams initially see this challenge as easy?
2. How did the team members react to the difficulty of reaching the goal?
3. Did the difficulty level result in conflict? If so, how was the conflict resolved?
4. How effective was the communication during the activity? Give examples.
5. What did the team do well?
6. Additional comments:

## 1.03 What makes communication easier and more difficult. World Café

**Goal:** identification of factors facilitating and impeding communication

**Group size:** min. 4, max 20 | **Duration:** 40 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** both

**Description:** What hinders and what facilitates verbal and non-verbal communication (including factors from Jakobson's scheme?)

1 table - verbal communication: what facilitates it?

2 table - verbal communication: what hinders it?

3 table - non-verbal communication: what facilitates it?

4 table - non-verbal communication: what hinders it?

In case of a small group it is possible to limit the number of tables to 2 (combine 1 and 2 or 3 and 4)

The group members are put together in 4 subgroups, from each subgroup a table leader is chosen. Each group starts work at one of the tables, after 10 minutes, all the subgroups change tables, except for the supervisors (they stay to report/explain what has been worked out so far). People add their ideas (5 minutes), after which there is another rotation (in total three rotations, so that everyone works at all tables - about 20 minutes with transitions).

Presentation and discussion of the work by the groups - approx. 15 minutes

**Materials:** Marker & flip-chart

**Meta comment:** the questions can be answered using a mind map and group work or rain of ideas as well (depend, how much time do you have).

## 1.04 How to build a message? Introduction to NVC

**Goal:** presentation of one of the communication models and its components

## 1.05 NVC bricks: Facts

**Goal:** Getting to know the first component of nvc, distinguish facts from interpretations and observations from judgements. Facts as a component of nvc.

**Group size:** any | **Duration:** 15 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** both

**Description:** we mark a line in the middle of the room (with tape or string). We stick a sheet of paper on the wall with "facts/observations" on one side and "opinions/interpretations" on the other. We read the sentences from the list (attachment), the participants "vote with their feet" moving to the side of "facts/observations" or "opinions/interpretations".

**Materials:** String, cards marked 'facts' and 'interpretations', list of facts and interpretations

## 1.06 NVC bricks: Emotions (75 min)

**Goal:** getting to know the second component of nvc. Differentiating between emotions. Emotions as information. Emotions as a component of nvc

### Part 1: Division of emotions, wheel of emotions - rain of ideas

**Goal:** recognise the different groups of emotions, the fairly common distinction between positive and negative emotions and the possible consequences of such a division

**Group size:** any | **Duration:** 15 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** both

**Description:** Question to the group: what division of emotions do you know? List the basic emotions

Write down on flipchart paper the circle of emotions with the 4 basic emotions (joy, anger, sadness, fear/anxiety).

Distinguish between positive and negative emotions can and often does have practical consequences for the willingness to experience them. Usually when I think something is positive I desire it, whereas if it is negative I feel it is better to avoid it.

What can happen if we avoid feeling, for example, fear or anger? See the following exercise

**Materials:** Marker & flip-chart

### Part 2: Positive and negative sides and consequences of all emotions

**Goal:** realise that all emotions can have positive sides/consequences, regardless of which ones we call positive and which ones negative

**Group size:** any | **Duration:** 30 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** both

**Description:** Work 4 in groups - what are the positive and negative sides of emotions (each group gets one of the 4 emotions to work on: joy, anger, sadness, fear/anxiety)

**Materials:** Pen, paper with names of emotion

joy	anger	sad	fear
-----	-------	-----	------

negative side	positive side	positive side	negative side	positive side	negative side	positive side	negative side

**Part 3: theory - with group activity (Emotions as rapid information and motivation systems, Cultural framing of emotions, alexithymia)**

**Goal:** present a certain theory of emotions, a cultural/gender framework of emotions, risks of relying only on emotions

**Group size:** any | **Duration:** 15 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** both

**Description:** Question to the group: What are emotions?

Theory: emotions as a rapid system of information about satisfied and unsatisfied needs and motivation to satisfy them or maintain the current state. They have a bodily component (somatic reactions, neurotransmitters, hormones) and a 'sensory' component. Their feeling and expression are culturally conditioned (e.g. by gender, class)

Question to the group: what could be the risks of relying only on emotions? Can emotions deceive us?(emotional justification: is the cognitive bias of believing something to be true based solely on emotions, without reference to facts or non-emotional reality). In addition to the stimulus itself, the emergence and intensity of emotions can be influenced by the following: factors related to the constitution and previous experiences of the subject (emotional reactivity, disorders of triggering and control emotions, need for stimulation, previous suppression of emotions, traumas and triggers); the state of the body (insomnia, hunger, fatigue, hormones); the state of the environment (heat, crowding, noise, air pollution); and others (cognitive overload, the emotional state of others in the environment - a phenomenon known as contagion of emotion or affect); prolonged stress; culture, and even less obvious aspects such as power relations, social class or gender, etc.).

**Materials:** presentation or Marker & flip-chart

**Part 4: Emotions and supposed emotions, different shades and intensities of emotions - Jigsaw (drawing lots or picking from scattered on the ground)**

**Goal:** distinguishing between different shades of emotion (weaker and stronger versions of the basic emotion), their mixtures of interpretations, which take the form of emotions

**Group size:** any | **Duration:** 15 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** both

**Description:** Exercise: Names of emotions and names of supposed emotions are printed on cards. The cards are scattered on the floor, the participants assign individual emotions to a) the wheel of emotions as subgenerations of different intensity and a mixture of main emotions, to b) the second flipchart with supposed emotions

**Materials:** emotion wheel from the first part about emotions, flipchart for supposed emotions, cut names of different shades of emotions and supposed emotions

## 1.07 NVC bricks: Needs

**Goal:** getting to know the third component of nvc

**Group size:** any | **Duration:** 30 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** both

**Description:** Sit comfortably, close your eyes or not, breathe. Become aware of your feelings. What satisfied or unmet needs are they telling you about? talk to your couple about it (work in pairs)

(in addition or alternative) - recall a person's behaviour that was unpleasant for you. What unmet needs might have been behind this behaviour? talk to your couple about it

### What is need? - theory

Need as a current state of a person or his organism, characterised by the non-fulfilment of certain important conditions (this is the most common definition in the literature);

need as a subjective feeling of lack, dissatisfaction of certain conditions (this definition used in popular literature and colloquial speech);

need as a permanent property (disposition) of a human being consisting in the fact that, without the fulfilment of certain conditions, a person cannot achieve or maintain certain important states or goals (this is how the term is used in psychology).

Theory: some theory of needs (choose one)

+ Manfred Max Neef's Theory of Fundamental Human Needs:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manfred\\_Max-Neef%27s\\_Fundamental\\_human\\_needs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manfred_Max-Neef%27s_Fundamental_human_needs)



## Human Needs Matrix After Manfred Max-Neef

	Being	Having	Doing	Interacting
Subsistence	Health, adaptability Sense of humour	Food, shelter, work	Feed, procreate, rest, work	Social setting, environment
Protection	Care, equilibrium, solidarity	Rights, social security, family	Cooperate, plan, help	Living space, dwelling
Affection	Self-esteem, respect, passion	Friendships, family, relation with nature	Make love, share, cultivate, appreciate	Privacy, intimacy, home, togetherness
Understanding	Critical conscience, curiosity, discipline	Literature, education teachers	Investigate meditate experiment,	Groups, community, schools, family
Participation	Dedication, respect, receptiveness	Rights, responsibility duties, work	Cooperate, dissent, agree on, interact	Associations, churches, family
Idleness	Curiosity, tranquility, imagination	Peace of mind, games, parties	Day-dream, relax remember, brood	Privacy, intimacy, free time, landscape
Creation	Passion, intuition, imagination,	Abilities, skills, method, work	Work, invent, build, compose, design	Productive settings, workshops, time
Identity	Sense of belonging, self-esteem	Language, symbols, religion, values	Commit oneself, grow, recognise	Social rhythms, maturation stages
Freedom	Autonomy, boldness, passion	Equal rights	Dissent, choose, disobey, run risks	Temporal/ spatial plasticity

Rain of ideas and discussion: Needs versus interests, needs versus values, needs versus strategies to meet them

**Materials:** none

### 1.08 NVC in theory

**Goal:** presentation of the nvc model

**Group size:** any | **Duration:** 20 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** both

**Description:** Basic principles of NVC (theoretical background for nvc)

At the core of NVC are, among other things, the following assumptions:

1. All people have the same needs and different favourite ways to meet them satisfaction.
2. The needs of all people are equally important and can be at least taken into account if they cannot be met.
3. People willingly contribute to the welfare of others as long as they do so of their own free will.
4. All action is an attempt to satisfy needs.
5. People do not act against us, but to fulfil their needs.
6. Every criticism, judgement, anger is a tragic attempt to satisfy your needs.
7. Feelings inform us about satisfied or unsatisfied needs.

8. Conflicts are born out of the belief that there is only one way to satisfy the need in question.
9. Making contact with the other person is the second step to a solution conflict. The first is to get in touch with your own feelings and needs.

We have the blocks, we understand the assumptions - we build the communication:

### **NVC - the formal scheme**

**Facts** - when I see/hear ...

**Emotions** - that's what I feel ...

**Needs** - because I need ....

**Requests** - so please ....

**Materials:** presentation or Marker & flip-chart

## **1.09 NVC in practice**

**Goal:** practising NVC

**Group size:** any | **Duration:** 30 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** both

**Description:** Question to the group: how can you say something in the spirit of NVC without using this formal scheme? (street NVC). Participants share their ideas.

Marshall B. Rosenberg distinguished 4 types of statements and messages, Which make agreement difficult:

1. moral judgements,
2. comparisons,
3. denial of responsibility,
4. demands.

Exercise 1: Try to change the sentences from each of these 4 categories (mentioned above) into messages in the spirit of NVC (individual work 15 minutes + discussion).

Exercise 2: You have four situations. People in this situations reacted very roughly. Try to change the reaction sentence in the spirit of NVC. (individual work - 15 minutes + discussion)

See Annex)

**Materials:** Lists of non-NVC statements, Papers and pens

**Meta comment:** participants' own examples can be used (e.g. you want to say something to someone, do it in nvc)

## 1.10 NVC in SSE, Limitations and abuses of NVC

**Goal:** make aware why we need good communication in activism, to recognise and understand the limitations of NVC and how it can be abused

**Group size:** any | **Duration:** 20 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** both

**Description:** discussion

- Why we need NVC in SSE and activism?
- Under what conditions does NVC work and under what conditions does it not necessarily work?
- What are the limitations of NVC and how it can be abused?

Possible answers:

- Skilled users of NVC can become prejudiced against those who are not.
- Learning NVC may be exclusive to those who are in better socio-economic background. This could lead to problems of accessibility for the underprivileged and favoring a higher [social class](#)
- NVC appears to favor the [well-educated](#), valuing those with more awareness of [grammar](#), word choice, and [syntax](#)
- People might hide their feelings in the process of empathy, subverting the nonviolence of communication.

**Materials:** none

**Meta comment:** This activity could be good as well as opening one to link the NVC approach to the SSE values.

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonviolent\\_Communication#Criticisms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonviolent_Communication#Criticisms)

## 1.11 Answers of a mime

**Goal:** To learn the importance of clarification questions to avoid inaccurate assumptions. To practice questioning and clarification skills.

**Group size:** any even number | **Duration:** 20 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** both

**Description:**

Many conflicts are based on inaccurate assumptions or perceptions. Although it is natural that our assumptions are inaccurate, the problem lies within our judgements that are based on them. Good questioning skills can help clarify things

and prevent conflicts based on wrong assumptions.

Ask participants to form pairs and spread out in the room. Each participant will get a chance to ask his or her partner a question. The person to whom the question is asked can only mime his or her answer. The questioner is invited to ask as many clarification questions to understand the other person's answer. Set a limit of 5 minutes and then ask people in pairs to switch their roles.

### **Sample Topic Questions**

- What hobbies you had when you were a child?
- What would you like to learn?
- If you had a magic wand, what would be the one thing you'd change in the world.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How do questioning skills help us understand?
2. In addition to questioning skills, what other skills are necessary to overcome assumptions?
3. How are the clarifying questions helpful in conflicts?
4. What gets in the way of our willingness to ask questions when we are involved in conflict situations?

**Meta comment:** Can be used also in the Module 2 and 6

**Materials:** A list of prepared topic questions displayed so everyone can see them.

---

This module is part of the Soft Skills Training for the social solidarity economy initiatives and organisations developed within the project Hard Times – Soft Skills. All other related materials can be found at the address: <https://www.socioeco.org/hati-SOS>

---

**Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or Erasmus+. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.**



**Funded by  
the European Union**