

Session Outline Template

Session Title

“Better Conversations at Work and in Life”. Insights into empathic communication - workshop for adults.

Overview:

This interactive workshop introduces the basics of empathic communication, (based on NVC) and how it can transform everyday conversations. Participants will learn to express themselves honestly and listen with empathy—reducing misunderstandings and building deeper trust.

Duration

approx. 3 hours

Aim & Objectives

- Overall Aim: Discover how small shifts in communication can create more connection, clarity, and collaboration at work and in life.
- Learning Objectives: 4 steps of NVC, practical tools to improve or transform everyday conversations.

Target Group

Adults, age 18 - 99, group size 10 - 20 participants

Materials & Room Setup

- Physical materials: flipchart, markers, cards of needs, cards of feelings, sticky notes, list of feelings (copy per person), list of needs (copy per person), blank papers, pens, neutral sentences written down and cut for each participant, written sentence - once stated as a demand, once as a request
- Room layout: circle, sub-groups of three or pairs

Instructions:

Step by step Instructions: see the attachment

Evaluation & Follow-up

How will you assess learning? Personal reflection, group sharing, by incorporating real-life scenarios, role-plays group discussions

Will there be an action point or follow-up task? Follow-up email with reminders and reflection prompts.

“Better Conversations at Work and in Life”. Insights into empathic communication - workshop for adults.

Inspired by NVC

INTRODUCTION (35 min)

1. Warm-up & name sharing with movement (10 min)

- Invite participants to introduce themselves by saying their name **and adding a movement** that expresses how they feel or something about them.
- After each introduction, the whole group **copies the movement together**.
- Purpose: ice-breaker, create connection and set a playful, inclusive atmosphere.

2. Sharing expectations (10 min)

- Ask participants:
→ *“What are your expectations for today’s workshop?”*
- Collect responses on a flipchart or virtual whiteboard.
- **Clarify upfront** what the workshop **will** and **will not** cover, based on their expectations.
→ This ensures everyone understands the workshop boundaries and reduces potential misunderstandings or disappointments.

3. Brainstorming: What do you already know about NVC? (10 min)

- Pose the question:
→ *“What do you already know about NVC?”*
- Encourage participants to suggest ideas, associations, or concepts.
- Collect their contributions visually (chart, slides, sticky notes).

The project is co-financed by the European Union through the Erasmus+ Programme.
Project reference number: 2024-1-PL01-KA151-YOU-000230079

- Use this opportunity to:
 1. Identify misconceptions (and clarify them early).
 2. Create a **shared overview** of participants' current knowledge.
 3. Connect their input directly to the workshop content.

4. Outlining the workshop structure (5 min)

- Summarize by presenting the workshop's four key parts:
 1. Observations
 2. Feelings
 3. Needs
 4. Requests
- Clearly link these parts to the NVC process so participants see **how their input relates to the upcoming content**.

1. OBSERVATIONS (30 min)

Purpose:

To help participants recognise the difference between **observations (facts)** and **assumptions/evaluations**, because in nonviolent communication (NVC), the first step is to focus on what we *actually see or hear*, not our judgments.

Exercise 1: Assumptions in Pairs (5 min)

- Participants work in pairs.
- Instruction: *Write down everything you think about your partner. The trainers ask various questions about what you think about the person you are working with, examples:*
 1. *Who do you think they live with?*
 2. *How old do you think they are?*
 3. *Do you think they have children?*
 4. *What kind of work do you think they do?*

The project is co-financed by the European Union through the Erasmus+ Programme.
Project reference number: 2024-1-PL01-KA151-YOU-000230079

5. *Do you think they like to travel?*
6. *What hobbies do you think they have?*
7. *Do you think they are more introverted or extroverted?*
8. *What kind of music do you think they enjoy?*
9. *Do you think they prefer spending weekends at home or going out?*
10. *What do you think their favorite food is?*

- Then, each partner shares what was true and what wasn't.
- **Goal:** Experience firsthand how often our thoughts about others are based on assumptions rather than facts.

Exercise 2: Observation notes in plenary (15 min)

- In a big group, everyone sits quietly, observing the room and writing down **everything they see**.
- After a few minutes, the trainer collects and sorts the notes together with the group:
 - Use two circles on a flipchart labeled “*Observation*” and “*Assumption*”.
- Reflect together: What makes something a fact vs. an interpretation?
- Repeat the observation round: participants look around again and write **only real observations**, then reflect again.

Theoretical input: (10 min)

- Discuss why distinguishing observations from assumptions matters:
 - In communication, especially during conflict, it helps avoid misunderstandings.
 - Sticking to facts keeps conversations constructive and reduces defensiveness.
- Link to NVC: This is the **first step** in NVC — making clear, non-judgmental observations.

The project is co-financed by the European Union through the Erasmus+ Programme.
Project reference number: 2024-1-PL01-KA151-YOU-000230079

2. FEELINGS (30 min)

Purpose:

To deepen participants' awareness of the variety of feelings they experience and improve their ability to recognise and name them, since connecting with feelings is the **second step** of NVC.

Introduction activity: (5 min)

- Ask participants: *"How many different feelings do you think you experience?"*
- Collect answers.
- Then, hand them a list of feelings, showing there are far more feelings than they might think.

Exercise 1: Feeling cards in pairs (10 min)

- Participants pick feelings cards randomly.
- For each card, they share with their partner a situation where they felt that emotion.
- **Goal:** Help participants realise they experience many feelings they may not consciously notice.

Exercise 2: Expressing feelings with neutral sentences (15 min)

- In small groups:
 - Each participant receives a neutral sentence (e.g., *The penguin took the bus to work today.*, *Three lonely cucumbers are waiting in the fridge.*, *Yesterday, the neighbour taught a flower how to speak.*)
 - They pick a feeling from the list and read the sentence out loud with that feeling.
 - The others guess what feeling was being expressed.
 - Each participant does this three times with three different feelings.
- **Reflection:** Discuss how tone, body language, and words change the message; add theory about how judgments and feelings get mixed in communication.

3. NEEDS (50 min)

Purpose:

To help participants identify the **needs underlying their feelings**, which is the **third step** of NVC. By recognising needs, we understand ourselves and others more deeply.

Theory: (5 min)

- Introduce the **iceberg metaphor**.

Exercise 1: Need cards in pairs (5 min)

- Participants pick a need card at random.
- They share with a partner a story when this need was fulfilled.
- **Goal:** Make needs conscious and concrete by connecting them to personal experiences.

Exercise 2: Two-Icebergs: Anita–Sarka Scenario (10 min)

- Place cards on the ground to represent the situation: Anita comes and rearranges your cards.
- You say, *“It always has to be in your way.”*
- Participants guess:
 - What were **your feelings** and **your needs**?
 - What were **Anita’s feelings** and **Anita’s needs**?
- Discuss together how recognising both sides’ feelings and needs can shift the dynamic.

Exercise 3: Switching shoes (20 min)

Group setup

- Form **groups of three**:
 - One person shares a real-life conflict.

The project is co-financed by the European Union through the Erasmus+ Programme.
Project reference number: 2024-1-PL01-KA151-YOU-000230079

- The second person switches roles, stepping into the shoes of the other person from the conflict.
- The third person observes.

Sharing the situation

- The conflict-sharer describes what happened in detail: behaviours, words, dynamics.

Role switch

- The conflict-sharer becomes the other person in the conflict, aiming to **understand that person's feelings and needs**.
- Focus on embodying the perspective: what needs or feelings might have driven their words or actions?

Observation

- The observer notes how the interaction unfolds, including **body language, tone, and emotional shifts**.

Drawing the two icebergs

- Participants **draw two icebergs** on paper:
 - For each side of the conflict, write down the **feelings** and **needs** they discovered.
- This clarifies misunderstandings and the root causes of the conflict.

Re-Switch & Re-Act

- Participants switch back to their own roles.
- The conflict-sharer **tries to react differently**, based on the newfound understanding of the other's feelings/needs.

Reflection in triads (5 min)

- Discuss within the group:
 - What changed in their understanding?
 - What difference did it make?
 - Observers describe what they saw, including body language and emotional shifts.

Plenary reflection (5 min)

- Gather in plenary to **share learnings and insights**.
- Each group can highlight aha moments and what's alive in them after the exercise.

4. REQUESTS vs DEMANDS (30 min)

1. Volunteers & sentence practice (5 min)

- Pick two volunteers.
- One receives two sentences: one phrased as a **demand**, one as a **request**.
- The volunteer communicates them to the second volunteer.

2. Group reflection (5 min)

- Discuss how it felt to hear the demand vs. the request.
- What feelings arose with each?
- Collect these reflections and write them on flipcharts.

3. Pairs Practice: Turning demands into requests (15 min)

- Each participant recalls a recent **demand** they made in real life.
- In pairs, they **rephrase it as a request**, practicing:

The project is co-financed by the European Union through the Erasmus+ Programme.
Project reference number: 2024-1-PL01-KA151-YOU-000230079

- “I’m feeling ____ because I have the need for _____. Would you be willing to...?”
- Encourage them to stick to **I language** throughout.

4. Plenary reflection (5 min)

- Return to plenary for **group reflection**.
- Highlight key learnings, insights, and summarize the working part.

FINAL REFLECTION & CLOSING (10 min)

- Conclude with a reflection round where participants share:
 - Aha moments,
 - Insights they want to take with them,
 - Any shifts in their body or emotions connected to these learnings (e.g., “Where do you feel this insight in your body?”).