NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION

A Language of Life

By Marshall Rosenberg

Foreword by Deepak Chopra

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Remember the childhood retort to a taunt, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me"? And yet, we all can recite unkind words from the distant past, lobbed at us and by us, that sting today. Our character and our culture are partially shaped by these stories. In the foreword to *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, Deepak Chopra says, "All stories lead to conflict" (xv). Author and psychotherapist Marshall B. Rosenberg deconstructs our war of words, thoughts, and gestures, and offers a tool for compassionate connection. Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is the ability to express ourselves honestly and to receive empathically. The method is to 1) observe without evaluation, 2) express feelings, 3) acknowledge needs, and 4) make a request. The frame is basic: "When I see X, I feel Y because I need Z. Would you be willing to A?," but defining the variables can be messy. Citing examples from the counselor's office to the family carpool and quoting a varied cast including Dag Hammarskjöld and Buddy Hackett, Rosenberg demonstrates how to untangle observations from judgments; distinguish feelings, emotions, and sensations from thoughts; interpret negative messages as someone's needs or values not being met; reflect back statements to increase comprehension; use protective, versus punitive, force when warranted; and much more. NVC requires mindful presence and is a practice that can enhance clarity and foster peace on the playground and off. —Lisa Thaler, author of *Look Up: The Life and Art of Sacha Kolin*, 11 July 2019