

Introduction:

Giraffe & Jackal

The purpose of Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is to create a quality of connection that inspires a natural giving from the heart. The premise of this work is that the natural state of all human beings is one of compassion and connection.

Yet, your experience of life isn't always compassionate or connected. What gets in the way? Violent language is one obstruction. In NVC any language that stimulates disconnection from life is considered violent. In the framework of Nonviolent Communication, disconnecting language is referred to as Jackal.

Jackal language can be broken up into several categories. Jackal honesty is one. Jackal honesty refers to the expression of judgments, diagnoses, and analyses of yourself or someone else. It might sound something like this, "I just have to be honest with myself. I am a hot tempered person." This judgment doesn't connect us to what's alive in your heart. In giraffe this phrase might sound like this, "When I think about how I raised my voice at my kids last night, I feel regret and sadness, because my needs for self-awareness and consideration are not met."

While a judgment tells you what you are, a diagnosis tells you what's wrong with you. When faced with someone's pain, you might be tempted to think that if you can determine what's wrong with them that will alleviate their pain. As a friend tells you how irritated they are because they can't focus in class, you might be tempted to diagnose them with ADD and suggest some helpful herbs.

Analysis outlines a matrix of causality for someone's pain. It might sound something like this, "You know, Mary, you are having this trouble because the man you married is a replacement for your father with whom you have unresolved anger."

One of the most popular jackals is what I call the resistance jackal. This is the jackal that doesn't want to accept life as it is. "Should" is the favorite word for this jackal. "You should be working more." "You should have been on time to pick me up." Depression, anger, guilt, and shame are alarms that this jackal is howling.

The three D's make up the last of jackal language categories; demands, deserve, and denial of responsibility. Demands are anything that communicate that you are willing to meet your needs at the cost of others' needs. Deserve is most explicitly found in the practice of reward and punishment. Denial of responsibility is found in ideas of obligation and duty and is characterized by phrases like, "I have to." "Those are my orders." "I am just following the rules." "It's my duty to take care of my father."

Overall, Jackal language is characterized by attempts to push reality into static boxes of what should and shouldn't be, what is wrong or right, what people are or are not. It also tends to point away from the life of the present moment and point toward the world of ideas and analyses, of past causalities, or what should be in the future.

In giraffe consciousness the intention is to continually connect to what is alive in the present moment with acceptance and compassion and then take action from this connection.

Giraffe has two basic modes: receiving with empathy and expressing with honesty. When you are listening with Giraffe ears, you are listening for the speaker's feelings and needs regardless of the words they are using. You remember that everything anyone ever says or does is an attempt to meet or be in harmony with universal needs. Wearing Giraffe ears makes life a lot easier. You find that where you once heard criticisms or attacks you now hear someone expressing their needs. (See the Jackal Dictionary on page 20 for examples of hearing Jackal with Giraffe ears). Giraffe ears can also be turned toward yourself. You can learn to hear your own inner voices of doubt, judgment, and criticism as expressions of feelings and needs. With your Giraffe ears turned inward, you can be released from the constriction of heart and body that internal jackal talk can stimulate.

Speaking Giraffe means you are choosing words that reveal the contents of heart mind in a direct way. You are able to make five basic distinctions and your language reflects this understanding:

One, you distinguish what actually happened from your interpretations of it.

Two, you acknowledge that the cause of feelings is your needs by saying, "I feel sad because I need understanding." Rather than, "I feel sad because you won't give me understanding." The latter of these quotes blames the other for your feelings.

Three, you know the difference between feelings and interpretations. (See page 25 for list of interpretations commonly used as feeling words.

Four, you know the difference between universal needs and strategies to meet them. For example, "*He felt anxious because he needed efficiency,*" identifies a need. "*He needed to control everything,*" identifies a strategy.

Last, you express requests that are specific and connected to needs rather than vague invitations. For example, "*I need predictability in our work together. Would you be willing to let me know a day in advance if you won't attend the meetings on Fridays,*" states a need and specific request. "*Be more considerate*" refers to a need, but doesn't make a specific request.

The most important thing to remember about Giraffe is that it is about creating connection, by listening and speaking from the heart.

For a complete introduction to Nonviolent Communication (NVC), please read [Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life](#) by Marshall Rosenberg.