

lebensdienlich



organisch



Die Sprache der freien Menschen



Agile Kommunikation

für Paare, Gruppen und Teams

kooperativ



selbststeuernd



Gabriel Fritsch

The language of free people

Agile communication in partnerships, groups and teams

Gabriel Fritsch

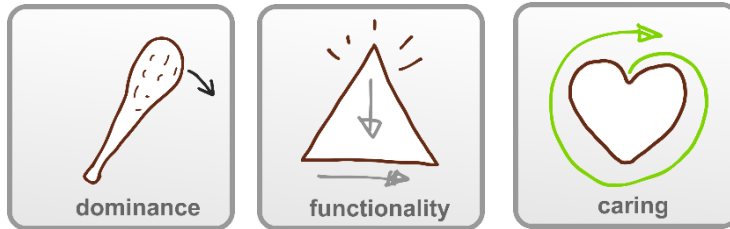
[*www.nvc-plus.net*](http://www.nvc-plus.net)

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Agile communication – the language of free people

Agile communication – a new buzzword? Far from it. Agile communication is the answer to the demands that arise in any team where all participants want to operate on an equal footing.



In dominant systems, a language of domination automatically develops. As soon as a dominance system evolves into a functional system, the language of domination changes into a functional language, which largely corresponds to the current state of our coexistence. But if language is not only supposed to regulate our behavior, but

also to connect us holistically, then neither the language of dominance nor the functional language will be able to lead to the desired success.

With the development of Nvc-plus.net (www.nvc-plus.net), the next steps towards agility are now possible. In truly agile teams, all people are important in relation to the task at hand. Due to the great flexibility of such teams in connection with their complex tasks, communication on a new level is required – *agile communication* or the language of free people. This will be our topic on these pages.

The two faces of agile communication

Marshall Rosenberg has impressively demonstrated that the syntax of our everyday language has decisive weaknesses when we want to convey not only information but also ourselves to another person. Communication is often understood as a pure exchange of information. Especially when it comes to controversial topics, the success of classic non-violent communication clearly shows that if we want to find a shared understanding, we cannot proceed purely logically and functionally according to a set formula. Even though classic NVC provides us with a clear methodological core in the form of its four steps, solutions can only be found by engaging in a joint process, i.e. by connecting with each other. In-depth communication creates a space for interpersonal understanding.

The four steps of classic NVC

1. Observation: What specific issue is at stake?
2. Feeling: How does this make you feel?
3. Need: What quality are you lacking in this situation?
4. Request: What specific things can we do differently?

A language for connecting people and a language for organizing projects

In classic NVC, we relinquish the one-dimensional control of the mind that is still inherent in functional information management. Who then controls communication? If the connection is successful, then it is the compassionate heart. However, the powers of the heart must be accompanied by sufficient understanding so that we do not think and act naively. What we are looking for, then, is the wise heart and the warm mind.



Unfortunately, classic NVC is of very limited use to us if we want to build common structures and organize ourselves. With *agile communication*, we want to describe the communicative interaction that can perfectly support the self-management of agile teams. This is quite important, because the limits of communication are the limits of interaction. We need classic NVC to build connections of the heart between free individuals and to resolve conflicts. *Agile communication* is necessary so that free individuals can organize themselves effectively in joint projects.

The ifs and buts in self-managing groups and teams

In a team that operates on an equal footing, everyone's ifs and buts count. They are incorporated into joint decisions. If you work alone or as a single boss, you decide for yourself what needs to be done, when and how. This means that the effort required to reach viable decisions and thus remain capable of acting is usually manageable. Decisions are made alone and communicated as instructions or commands. This could be simplified in the following diagram:

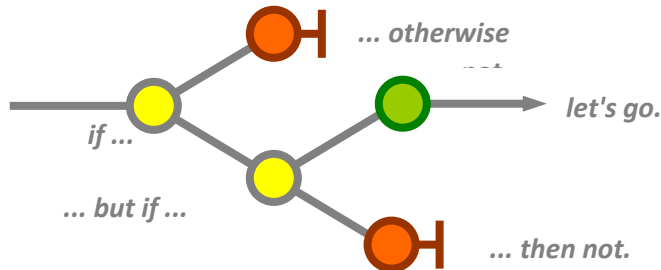


Fig.: We start the project from the left and come to the first if objection (**yellow dot**), for example. If we refute this objection, we move on to the next objection in this example, which is a but objection (**second yellow dot**). Only if we can branch off correctly at both forks can we reach **the green dot** and get started.

But even for two people with equal decision-making authority, it becomes much more difficult to pull together effectively. Most parents can tell you a thing or two about this. A simple example shows that when several people interact, the ifs and buts that stand in the way of decisions don't just add up, they multiply or even square:

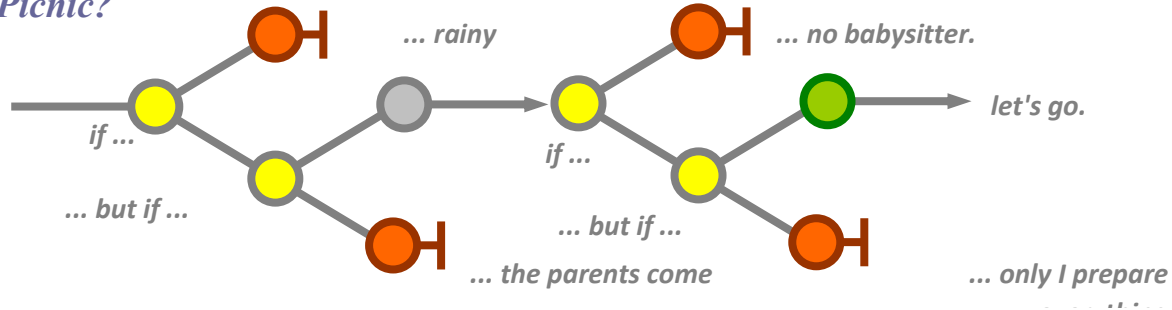
A small example – a picnic for two:

Person 1: *If the weather stays sunny, I want to go on a picnic with you at the weekend, **but** not if my parents are coming over.*

Person 2: *If we can find a babysitter, the picnic is fine, **but** not if I have to do all the preparation myself.*

Taken together, this means the following: *If the weather stays sunny, but only if the parents don't come over and if a babysitter can be found, but only if Person B doesn't have to do most of the organizing, then we can have a picnic.*

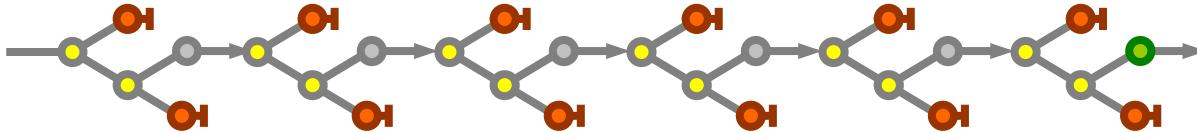
Picnic?



So there are already four reservations that act as forks in the road (yellow dots). Each one reduces the chances of reaching an agreement. We have a combination of four preconditions that all need to be considered. Other people involved include the parents, the babysitter and the children. What if they all contributed their own ifs and buts?

The ifs and buts in the team

In a self-organizing team of six, eight or ten people, everyone naturally has a say. But what does that mean in terms of everyone's objections? Doesn't the common path become increasingly complicated?



If you imagine a team of six people on an equal footing, with only two preconditions per person, you already have 12 options that all have to be set to "go". It's like rolling a dice with 12 sides. How long will it take for the team to get moving? And just around the corner lurks the next decision that needs to be made together. If it's a really important situation, decision-making processes can be extremely lengthy, and in the end, it may only be enough to reach the lowest common denominator of a team completely worn down by tough negotiations.

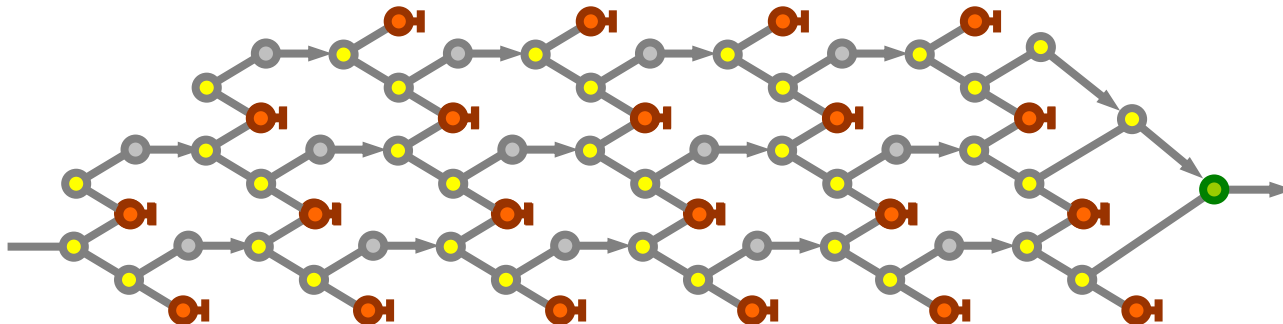
In teams like this, it is not surprising that some people long for the quick



decisions of a superior boss. Sooner or later, they offer to make an important or urgent decision for everyone and over everyone's heads, while others, despite the difficulties, want to continue discussing the best solution together. Resistance arises and dark clouds gather. From this point on, peace and thus the basic structure of the team are in jeopardy. The problem does not necessarily lie in the characters. Even if everyone is willing, they need an approach that is effective and efficient, i.e. one that can produce good decisions with little communication effort.

When further levels of objection come into play

It is not always our own needs that are reflected in our ifs and buts. How many of the demands of others do we want to meet? The more empathetic and social we want to be, the more we carry a veritable encyclopedia of objections in our hearts, only a small part of which are really our own. In the above example, we would then try to integrate the ifs and buts of parents, children, babysitters, neighbors, conventions, traditions and religions, etc. In this way, our own vitality does not flow into inspirational and creative design, but into appeasing the ifs and buts of others. At least, this is the well-intentioned attempt. However, we rarely contribute directly to the happiness of these people. We may protect them from adversity and misfortune, but without increasing their level of happiness. Ignoring the objections of others is hardly a solution, nor can one make the objections of everyone the basis of one's own life. If we internalize the concerns and sensitivities of others and make them our guide for action, then the path to happiness looks something like this:



We all know people who ruthlessly go their own way, as well as others who care so much about the reservations of others that they have become entangled in the actual or potential objections of everyone, like a fly in a spider's web.

Conventional methods for considering the ifs and buts

In a hierarchical system, structurally supported decision-making on an equal footing is not provided for. Even in the more modern command structures of nice pyramidal dominance, free expression of opinion, free elections or some brainstorming may have been introduced, and the objections of all participants may be kindly listened to.

But as soon as one tries to make decisions on an equal footing, one will quickly face major problems. It does not matter whether one is actually the boss or an employee, or whether one feels like one or the other in an equal partnership. The nature of the system and the order of the system positions in relation to each other already determine the outcome.

How can it work?

If we focus too much on ifs and buts, we only invest in avoiding problems instead of achieving goals. The latter, however, would be essential for inspiration. Because goals connect, while excuses divide. So how can participatory decision-making succeed in practice? If a team wants to organize itself on an equal footing, the following points must be considered:

1. The first step towards genuine decisions on an equal footing must therefore be the introduction of a system structure on an equal footing. However, this also requires a trustworthy system mode, such as NVC-plus. After all, it is not the claim to cooperation on an equal footing that determines success. Participatory decisions must be practicable in everyday life. Someone once asked why the pyramids were built from thousands of stones, many of which were very different in shape, and answered: *because it was easy for the builders*. We need a kind of cooperation that makes it easy for us to integrate objections. So first of all, we have to decide on NVC-plus or another participatory form of cooperation.
2. Each team member is only responsible for their own objections. At the same time, the others are left with the responsibility and representation of their objections. Of course, this requires a team that is well connected in terms of communication. Concerns and reservations must be communicable. Animals, children, absent persons, outsiders

and less communicative individuals are, of course, covered by the principle of care if they are affected. When we pursue projects with our team, we do not want to harm others, either consciously or unconsciously. In the principle of care, we therefore consider the effects on others without necessarily representing their objections or reservations.

If the effects of our project have too great an impact on the lives of others, we can invite them to participate in the project design. Of course, they are not invited as critics, but as co-creators. As pure critics, on the other hand, we can listen to experts who talk about possible solutions and their consequences. However, they do not have any decision-making power over the team projects. They are only there to contribute their knowledge so that decisions are made with less naivety. We can also turn to teams that have completed similar projects for inspiration.

3. Objections are raised in five different ways in NVC-plus:

- Personal objections according to NVC-plus

1	Nvc-plus:	Keep the objection to yourself	Endure the tension and deal with the issue yourself.
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2		Identify the objection as a pain point. (Nvc-plus.net Elements: Identifying pain points, tool card Z2)	Provide others with the personal "GPS data" related to the problem for process control. Others are invited to navigate around the pain point. However, they are not obliged to do so.
3		Make the objection clear as a personal no-go or must-have. (NVC-plus Elements: No-Goes and Must-Haves, Tool Card T2.1)	Communicate your own limits and framework conditions to others. Such framework conditions must be observed by all parties. (Allow for mistakes, if possible).

4	Nvc-plus.net factual	Determine the actual need for a solution based on clear parameters (NVC-plus lists of needs)	What are the factual basis for a solution to be a solution? What are the technical contexts that are not dependent on opinion? (e.g. "Do these screws hold the shelf to the wall?") With requirement parameters, you can discuss facts precisely.
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- Personal objections according to classic NVC or another mediation method

5	NVC	Use classic NVC to sufficiently resolve the discord between individuals. (Classic non-violent communication according to Rosenberg)	Return to an appropriate or at least sufficient level of peace with others before moving forward creatively.
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4. Nvc-plus.net does not focus on problems, but on a shared vision of goals. Nvc-plus.net does not work if we focus too much on personal objections and dramas. As a basis for common ground, we need personal utopias that can be intertwined to form a shared vision. This creates a visionary field, , that connects the team members with each other. From this connection, the team reacts not like a bunch of cogs, but like a finished gearbox. Synergy, to give another example, quickly and organically finds its way through the rubble of objections and constraints to its goal with the least amount of effort. We suspect that even very complex problems can be solved through visionary cohesion. The solution is therefore developed from a common goal rather than from individual perspectives on the problem.
5. In addition, the tried-and-tested tools of consensus building and Nvc-plus.net consensus building (both Nvc-plus.net elements) are available for interactive, intelligent and rapid decision-making.¹

¹ How to reach consensus and Nvc-plus.net consensus is explained in the corresponding videos, which can be found in the Nvc-plus.net app (www.nvc-plus.net/app) and on YouTube.

Reservations and objections as routines of thinking

The objections of some people have little to do with the problem and its solution. Rather, they speak of these people themselves, who try to defend their characteristic way of thinking and acting against all logic. Not because they seriously believe that this would make the project easier to succeed. The person is more committed to their way of thinking and acting or not acting than to mutual success.

Our brain loves its routines of thinking and acting and is often unwilling to give them up. The formation of routines in the brain is not as individual as one might think, which is why different characters can be divided into a few basic types. This behavior is also well understood in the context of neuroscience. It only becomes unpleasant when the brain's attempt to confirm a developing neural pattern becomes an urgent necessity, i.e. when it causes greater stress. The patterns that emerge in play promote interaction. The patterns that emerge under stress, on the other hand, tend to provoke defense, compulsion and struggle.

Do ifs and buts indicate a hidden agenda?

Some people are unwilling to try out different approaches and test their effectiveness. Such people are difficult to convince with arguments. A team would be overwhelmed if it tried to force a solution without an external expert. But even for the expert, not everything is possible. The limits of cooperation must then simply be acknowledged.

In addition, there are also objections that are defended because, in addition to the common goal, there is a second, hidden agenda. Here, too, the aim is to establish common ground through open dialogue and to combine the different goals into a single vision.

Good luck!

Suggestions and requests in team communication

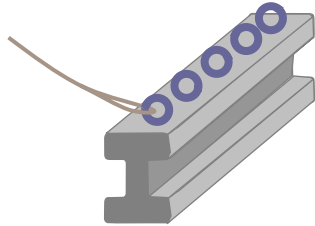
The similarity between positive and negative statements

We have already examined the ifs and buts elsewhere and clarified what they trigger in a team. Essentially, these are objections and reservations that can lead to endless and unproductive discussions. A couple, a team or a community has a serious problem if it has become entangled in a web of expressions of discontent. But what if we look not at the negative expressions, but at the positive ones, such as wishes, suggestions, encouragement, etc.? These do not make things any easier either. In both cases, a team member makes a personal connection to a situation. This creates a link between the issue and the person. The situation becomes associated with personal aspects: "10 people think this is good." Since all those involved can make complex connections to a situation, we quickly run into problems in organizational discussions. In a self-organized team, everyone's objections should be valid, but if they are, our meetings and discussions often become lengthy, tough and extremely unproductive.

The personal versus the factual situation

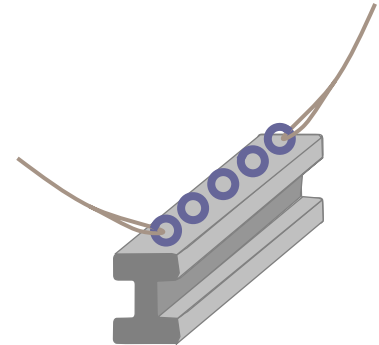
When we talk about a situation in our team, we present relevant facts as well as personal suggestions and wishes in our arguments. The facts are universally valid, but personal references are not at all. Of course, we mix in our individual expectations and fears of a factual situation, especially if it seems personally relevant to us. This creates a dynamic complex consisting of the factual situation plus the many individual interests. In order to resolve this, we need communication that can still lead to coherent solutions for all parties involved, even at this level of complexity. However, the time required should not increase excessively and the cost-benefit ratio should be positive. That would be our prerequisite.

In classic non-violent communication, we divide the discussion into four steps and, in the first NVC step, separate the factual context of the situation (the facts) from all personal content. These are added in a concentrated form in the second and third NVC steps. Instead of saying, "You're wearing a great T-shirt!" according to classic NVC, we say, "You're wearing a T-shirt that I've never seen you wear before. I like it. My need for beauty is fulfilled." The four steps of classic NVC have proven themselves when it comes to direct human relationships and conflict mediation. However, it does not offer us a method for the self organization of couples, teams and other communities, which is why we can resort to the four-step circle of NVC-plus.



How does such a mixture of facts and desires present itself to us? We can compare the actual situation to a steel girder. Things are as they are, there is no denying it. We can also back this up with facts. Facts are a solid basis for any discussion. In our image, we represent the facts with eyelets welded to the steel girder. The facts are not the thing itself, but they are almost as solid as the steel and connected to it. Each of us can individually select, analyze and interpret certain facts. We attach our rope to the eyelets of the steel girder that we have selected,

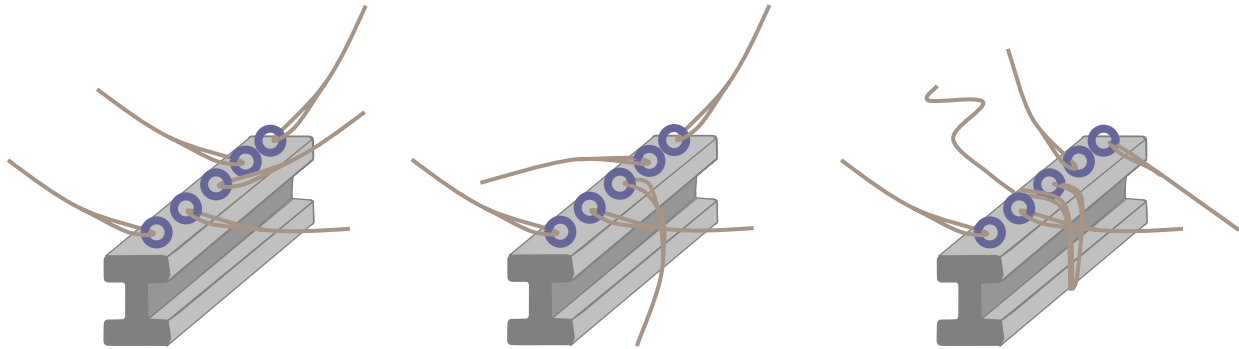
which now connects us to the girder. With this rope, we can pull the girder in our direction. The rope thus symbolizes our influence of will. If we pull hard enough, the girder will move towards us.



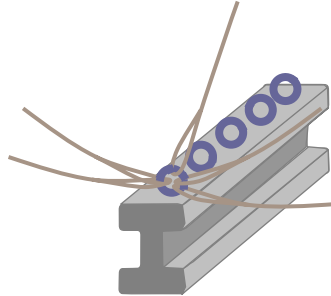
What happens when two people connect to the beam? Each person can try to pull the beam in their own direction with the force of their interests. Our image might then look like this:

The more people exert their will, the more difficult it can become. On the other hand, a team may be necessary to move this carrier at all. So we need the strength of those involved.

In a dominant coexistence, we organize with commands and the whip. In functional contexts, we organize ourselves through agreements, rules and payment. In neither of these two systems are the interests and concerns of all taken into account, and as a rule they are not even heard. In the functional system, people are brought into the performance processes without their diverse self-motivation; they are "bought in" and declared to be bound by instructions in order to keep the complexity of the process low. However, if the active interest of all those involved is needed to position this carrier correctly, we can no longer rely solely on instructions, regulations and sanctions. We need the right people in the right places, and they must also coordinate closely with each other at all times so that everyone does not contribute according to their own interests and chaos ensues. The following graphics are reminiscent of discussions and meetings in which everyone contributes without this leading to synergy.



If the team focuses on just one fact in order to reach agreement quickly, this does not necessarily help either:



How do we deal with such a situation within the framework of Nvc-plus.net? After all, we don't want to engage in a tug-of-war, but rather lift and place the steel girder appropriately. Nvc-plus.net brings together groups or teams that want to work on a jointly selected task in a self-organized manner. They meet, so to speak, to lift and move a beam together. The four Nvc-plus.net fields give them various opportunities to express their suggestions in a targeted and efficient manner and to exert influence within the scope of their wishes. It is important to always keep the following questions in mind:

1. What is the relevant system?

Choose the appropriate system for realizing your interests. This can be a partnership, a family, a team, a company, a community or an initiative. The system may already exist or may be formed on a project-specific basis.

2. What is your utopia within the system?

Find the utopian reason for your existence in the current system. In this way, get in touch with yourself and your life path.

3. What are the utopias of others?

Why are others here? Find out.

4. What are the no-gos and must-haves?

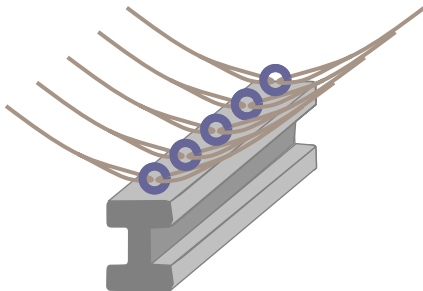
Share your framework conditions.

5. Is there enough common ground from which we can work?

Do we have enough peace and enough utopian potential for synergetic design?

6. What wishes and suggestions arise "naturally" within the common field?

The connection between individuals who are utopically connected to themselves and their path creates a synergetic field that has its own interactive intelligence. Relationship intelligence arises in NVC-plus field 3² and performance intelligence in NVC-plus field 4. The suggestions and desires that arise in this field connection can align synergistically, similar to how iron filings align with the field lines of a magnet.³



As soon as the beam is set in motion by a synergetic effect, someone might get the impression that the steel beam is actually quite light. However, this is deceptive, because even if each person contributes only a small part, the beam as a whole still has the same weight. Nevertheless, lifting it together is still the easier task. It is somewhat more difficult to position the beam precisely at a specific point when each person has only a small but very specific influence.

The Fröbel crane

There is a tool we can use to train this synergy in a team. It is the Fröbel crane. Using a crane hook with many ropes attached to it, a team attempts to stack wooden blocks into a tower. This only works if everyone is commit-

² The synergetic field of the team should not be confused with the "fields" of the four-step circle. The fields of the four-step circle are the four positions in the model. The synergetic field, on the other hand, actually forms between people who are in a systemic relationship.

³ To do this, hold the magnet under a piece of paper covered with iron filings. Sounds can also be used to create images in scattered sand, filings or even liquids if they are placed on a resonating plate or membrane.

ted to joint sensitive control, as the necessary control impulses of each individual cannot be dictated by others. Thus, success is always a joint control success.

The modal matrix

At NVC-plus.net, we have several tool cards that introduce the modal matrix model step by step. This model relates individual likes, wants and abilities to collective musts, shoulds and maybes. The shadow variant of the model considers dis-likes, dis-will and dis-abilities in relation to collective dis-allowance, dis-shoulds and dis-musts. We can see that positive expressions of will can be classified in the normal variant and the ifs and buts in the negative variant. The modal matrix serves to represent a meaningful connection between individual and communal aspects.

The liveliness comes from the individual aspects. The culture of togetherness is formed by the communal aspects. This develops, on the one hand, a lively togetherness and, on the other hand, an intuitive structure of order.



Aggressive and critical objections in self-organized teams

Much has already been written about anger. However, we do not want to examine the emotion of resistance from an individual psychological perspective here, but rather to understand the communicative dynamics that it reveals within the team. We therefore attempt to view the expressed unwillingness as systemically relevant, particularly with regard to communication in a self-organized team. Seen in this light, anger is a kind of objection that has not yet been sufficiently heard.

If a kind of resentment arises in a community, it can usually only be completely resolved there. Incidentally, a conflict is only considered to be truly resolved when all those involved say that it has been resolved. It does not make sense to view the resolution of resentment as the actual goal, because the emotion only reveals the significance of the problem and should not be confused with the problem itself. That is why we prefer to look for a solution to the problem itself, because then the resentment will automatically turn into gratitude, for example, and the emotional movement will be complete. From the V2 tool card⁴, we know that problems are always external and feelings are always internal. Once we understand this, it protects us from confusing the feeling with the problem. Unpleasant feelings are never the problem but rather indicate one. It is important for both the individual and the team to address the problems instead of focusing too much on the emotions of individuals.

⁴ The Nvc-plus.net cards can be found at www.nvc-plus.net and www.nvc-plus.net.app. They are described in the Nvc-plus.net book and are also available as working materials.

Core problem and problem axis

First, we look for the core problem that matches our feelings, the solution to which would alleviate the tensions and difficulties. Then we can ask ourselves who has this problem with whom (problem axis). Then we can use the positive energy and intelligence that want to manifest themselves in the emotions of resistance. So we are neither stubborn nor do we strive for our personal balance and relief, but rather utilize all the creative forces in the self-organizing team, even if they initially appear to be opposing forces. Opposition to something is always in favor of something else. With such an internal team strategy, we have better cards in our hand than if we were to psychologize the matter. If the anger has arisen within the team, then it also belongs to the team and should be resolved there. However, individual annoyances from different systems (partnership, family, circle of colleagues, etc.) sometimes accumulate into larger reservoirs of anger. If the agitation about a problem is greater than the problem itself, other problems from such reservoirs can come into play, but these must be solved separately, always within the systems to which they belong. Otherwise, we may try to resolve a relationship conflict at work or vice versa. This will almost certainly not succeed.

In this context, it is important that we have formed a self-managing and caring team in advance. This means, for example, that we have explicitly agreed on NVC-plus as a method of self organization. This is because teams in dominant or functional systems play a completely different game with different rules. In such teams, the inner impulses of those involved often count for little, and emotions have to be acted out elsewhere.

Understanding or acting

The connection between the different forms of anger is easy to see. Things always turn out differently than we wanted them to. Either they turn out differently than we can understand – in which case it is a problem of perception. Or we do not have sufficient control over the situation, which indicates a problem of handling. In both cases, our resistance will stir, but the reason is different in each case.

The closer you look, the more differentiated the different manifestations of resistance become. The vocabulary available is not purely synonymous: anger, rage, frustration, indignation, resentment, rebellion, fury or hatred are not the same thing. We get upset, rebel, get worked up, fly off the handle, hit the roof, etc.

Acceptance of what is

Things are as they are, and people understand what they understand. From what has happened so far, we see the world as it is at the moment. When we look at it, we almost always feel a tension that stimulates us to further insights and actions and thus to active movements in life. We experience the same thing on a good game night. Life is like an exciting game and we are the players. If it is a game that seems to be all about winning and losing, nerves quickly become frayed and we must ask ourselves not only whether we are good players, but also whether we can be good losers. Above all, we should question the game. Because the nature of the game also determines the nature of the tension we are exposed to in the systems.

As long as the emotional and cognitive abilities of the other players are weak or someone is currently overstressed, a simplified game structure is needed. To do this, we use dual perspectives: good-evil, right-wrong, friend-foe, guilty-innocent and winning-losing are such simplifications. Anyone who has lived long enough knows

that our perspective can be black and white, but life is colorful. This means that our world view contradicts the world. We then play a game for simple minds. Wars and enmities, for example, can be traced back to such an excessive simplification of interaction. *"If you don't do as I say, I'll crush you."*

In addition to such dualistic views, there is a natural duality that manifests itself in differences such as: alive/dead, inside/outside, forward/backward, life-affirming/life-denying, organic/inorganic, active/reactive, calm/restless, etc.

If we want to interact with each other in a loving and caring manner within the given framework, then we must abandon the enormous simplicity with which we describe people and things apart from their actual nature by imposing our evaluations on them. In a caring interaction, our fellow players are no longer friends and enemies, idiots, slackers or ignoramuses, no longer good or bad. Instead, we see them as people who make needs-oriented decisions from their position in the system, which we cannot always fully understand from our position in the system. Only when communication between us does not achieve what it is supposed to achieve, namely conveying our positions, does our differing understanding not lead to a favorable agreement on how to proceed together. Instead, we react with annoyance, distress or rejection.

Here we can glimpse what the philosophy of non-violent communication has already anticipated: positive change in our interactions is already dynamically embedded in our indignation. When such forces are mobilized internally, they are either used for joint positive transformation, which is what they are actually there for, or they are invested in individual acts of resistance, which can be very unfavorable in networks and self-organized teams and usually makes no sense.

In principle, we have three good options to choose from: "Love it, change it or leave it." We can accept the current situation as it is, initiate change or change the playing field. The fourth, but less sensible option would be to sulk, rebel or resign ourselves. Marshall Rosenberg talks about the four "alarm clock feelings": anger, guilt, shame and depression. When these feelings arise, we can be fairly certain that we have abandoned life-affirming coexistence. We then think about the situation and our fellow human beings in a way that alienates us from life. In doing so, we simultaneously forego our synergistic contributions to change and remain stuck in our tense emotions of change. Anger is pent-up energy for action. We often invest this energy in our resistance because we do not want to or cannot use it for synergistic development in the system concerned. In a "nice" culture of conformist people, only a few are able to deal with indignation well and openly. Our inner life calls for change through our emotions, but either we ourselves fail in our interactions with others, or the community refuses to look for a new and better option.

Guilt and obligation

In previous team situations in dominant and functional systems, it was important not to expose oneself. In a self-organized team that wants to work together in a way that is neither dominant nor functional, on the other hand, it is important to be sufficiently aware of the relevant weaknesses of one's teammates. Otherwise, we will be faced with unpleasant surprises when we least need them. I remember a moment many years ago when I was balancing on a roof structure with a friend, carrying a beam. In this critical situation, I told him that I was not particularly good with heights. That was clearly a somewhat belated confession. Fortunately, nothing happened.

When it comes to our personal weaknesses, on the other hand, there is no point in engaging in narcissistic navel-gazing. It's not about us, but about the joint project. Communications about our potential and weaknesses should be project-oriented.

For ever better teamwork, it is important that we recognize what is not helping us enough, what is not satisfying us and what is not working. We therefore owe it to ourselves to think about creative and constructive improvements. To do this, we need a sufficient understanding of the situation, what is happening and the relevant personal weaknesses of those involved. How can we ensure that our blunt view of the events and those involved remains benevolent? Care and trust thus become the core issues in a self-organized team. That is why it is also necessary to know whether we are operating in NVC-plus mode or whether we see ourselves as a functionally or dominantly organized team. Only in a self-organized and caring system is the relevant openness generally a good idea. In the other "variants" of community, openness, honesty, transparency, sincerity, comprehensibility, etc. become purely strategic issues. Since we are hardly used to acting in a self-organized manner in teams () and since our political, economic and social environment is not organized according to the philosophy and principles of NVC-plus, our caution is understandable. The Nvc-plus.net team will therefore have to earn internal honesty, openness and trust step by step.

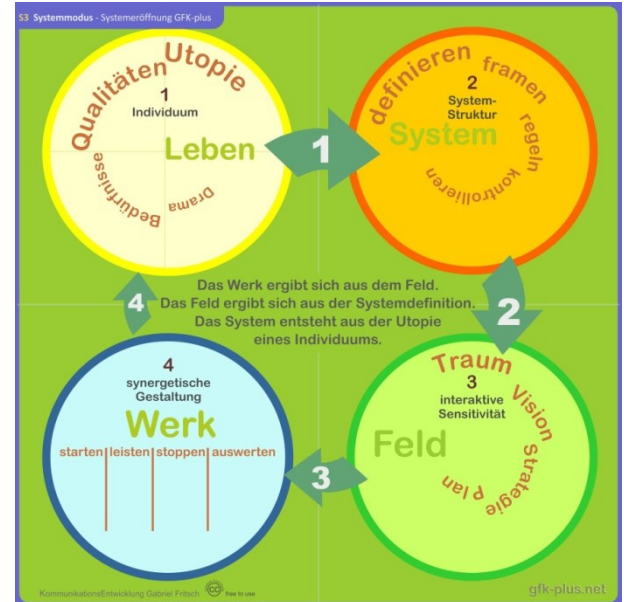
Critical objections to the Nvc-plus.net fields

Our natural emotionality will have an invigorating effect on NVC-plus field 1 without us having to do much. Related to this position is NVC-plus field 3, where we form a synergistic force field in our interactions. For these two positions in the four-step circle, being is more important than doing. It is about allowing emotions to have their effect according to their meaning (see beginning of chapter). Otherwise, sufficient emotional hygiene should be ensured, which is related to the individual's capacity for empathy, grief, gratitude and forgiveness. It is also important to have enough beautiful and resource-building experiences.

For critical objections, NVC-plus Field 2 is particularly useful when it comes to the strategic improvement of the organizational structure. NVC-plus Field 4 is directly intended for joint synergistic implementation, and here we can influence the specific actions very well.

When expressing criticism, it helps us to determine the following in NVC Plus Field 2:

- What is the core problem being criticized?
- Who has this core problem?
- With whom or what does this person have the core problem?



- To which system does this core problem actually belong? Where did it originate? Was it possibly imported into the team?

Various NVC-plus elements, such as ***must-haves***, ***no-goes*** and ***pain points***, also help us. We can also ask about the ***need parameters*** that would characterize the solution or success we are looking for.⁵

In NVC-plus field 4, we are left with the ***pain points*** and the ***need parameters***. We can always submit *no-goes* and *must-haves* later, but this would possibly lead to a step back to NVC-plus field 2, as this could change the system structure in the ongoing process. The ***NVC-plus discourse*** is used to clarify the basics of joint action in a targeted manner. So we have a number of options for proceeding effectively and efficiently.

Please, question or statement?

If we encounter someone who is angry or upset, the following supportive questions are useful:

1. Do you have a request, a question or a statement you would like to make?
2. Who is your statement directed at?

The most important rule here is: make your requests and ask your questions in good time. Make your statements in good time too. Once the train has left the station, there's no point in buying a ticket.

⁵ All Nvc-plus.net elements are described in more detail on the website and in the Nvc-plus.net book.

If we decide to openly address our relevant emotions within the team, to coordinate them with the team and the common task, and to creatively contribute the energies activated within us to the joint design, this will have a positive effect on our collaboration.

When everyone raises their objections – communication in agile teams

How can we understand and organize human interaction?

If we want to understand the behavior of people who have come together to form a partnership, a team or another community, then we should put on a systemic lens. What is a system anyway? It is, so to speak, the playing field together with the players involved. If we know the playing field and the game, then we also understand why the players behave the way they do. By designing the playing field, the rules of the game and the way the game is played, we can influence what happens and organize it wisely.

If several people decide to form a self-managing team, they need a simple systemic method that all players can understand. In order to avoid resorting to one of the existing approaches, which unfortunately are usually very functional in nature, we have developed NVC-plus and described it in a separate book. What we will be focusing on in these pages is specifically communication in a self-managing team. Agility is achieved when everyone helps to shape and steer the process. We can quickly communicate too much, too little, or too little that is meaningful. This book will therefore focus on some of the basics of effective and efficient communication, which will be of interest not only to Nvc-plus.net teams.

For Nvc-plus.net coaches, team communication is a particularly important topic, both in diagnosing the state of the team and in supporting a team to self-organize.

Despite all our varied and interesting considerations, we should not believe that we have to communicate perfectly. The topics of agility, communication, team organization and self-management are, of course, endless in theory. In practice, a team usually only needs a few small adjustments to mark the next step in communicative cooperation. In NVC-plus practice, "appropriate" or at least "sufficient" is the right measure. So you can calmly turn your attention to the few aspects that may be helpful at that moment. If necessary, a community can also turn to an NVC-plus coach for support.

System and positions

Every system structure provides the people involved with certain positions. However, a position in a dominance system is fundamentally different from a position in a functional system. For a self-regulating system, we have to go one step further. There, a position is determined by two factors: on the one hand, by the task to be accomplished and, on the other hand, by ourselves. Self-management therefore means that we align a system with its structure and positions to suit us, taking into account our current activities, inclinations and utopias.

The system structure means that individual positions are recognizably related to one another. By sensing these relationships, we develop our interactive sensitivity. We can now understand the positions and their relationships to one another in terms of their significance for us and others, and steer them with a view to our joint creation. In this way, a team becomes interactively intelligent.

If we were to give up our self-chosen position in a system, we would have to be assigned another one. If we were then to lose our sensitivity within the system, which can happen quite quickly in assigned positions, we would

have to be explained many meanings within the system. We would no longer be able to understand them ourselves. This quickly leads to self-alienation. You no longer even feel your own significance in the system you are currently in.

We live in mostly functional systems in mostly assigned positions and, logically, with little sensitivity. Functional is practical and not sensitive. Since it is difficult to perceive meanings under such conditions, missionaries used to swarm out to establish religious systems and explain the reason and meaning of life to the pagans who were to play a part in these systems. Today, propaganda and indoctrination are carried out by media corporations and marketing companies, among others. It has been recognized that every piece of information in the system has an influence. This means that the creative use of facts and data in a market economy system has immense business potential. It has proven effective to prepare and stage information, because we want to be entertained far more than we want to be informed. However, what we want least of all is to inform ourselves. To do so, we would have to gather facts, analyze them and check their sources. We would have to consider different perspectives and weigh up arguments for one point of view and another. We would become smarter step by step and understand more and more of the manifold significance of an event, without ever holding on to more than a momentarily useful error. This is time-consuming and laborious. So we prefer to ask an "expert", take a quick look at the newspaper or listen to a talk show. This is how we get our fast information, which, like fast food, has little real nutritional value but can still be addictive.

Data and information also open up various possibilities for programming functional systems. Without large amounts of data, for example, artificial intelligence would not be possible. Unfortunately, human interaction in too many systems is still in a simple functional mode, while technology can already offer us increasingly complex functional solutions. As a result, this does not logically lead us to refrain from wars, even though these cannot

produce positive results in a networked world. Instead, we carry out our systemically unwise military interventions with extremely elaborate technology. If this technology becomes cheaper and affordable for everyone, paramilitary actions will also be supported with miraculous devices, which will not, however, bring miraculous results, but only terrible consequences. The delusion lies in the community of people and not in the technology. We need a new and intelligent way of working together, and this is only possible through self-organized systems, self-chosen positions and jointly pursued tasks.

Our handling of facts, data and information therefore bears different fruit in different systems. However, if you are constantly within one system, this is difficult to perceive. We notice the air around us as little as a fish notices the water. But when we look at foreign systems, we see quite clearly. Without the influence of a system, we would probably not come up with ideas such as witch burnings, widow burnings, stonings, death penalties, child marriages, full veiling, circumcision of both sexes, etc. However, this is not because we are the only ones living on the island of the blessed in our current social system. Our system is normal for us, other systems are normal for others. Unfortunately, people are astonishingly system-blind in their own system. That is why we are accused of propaganda and indoctrination by outsiders and more or less isolated fringe groups, and we can return the favor to others. After all, we have recently proclaimed the post-factual age. What does that mean? We are abandoning a factually secure foundation for our arguments in debates. Terms are no longer designed according to their meaning, but according to their effect. Without wanting to criticize this game, it should be clear to everyone that we will not make progress with such means, either on a construction site or in a self-managing team. We should make our self-organized systems communicative and our communication effective.

Taking a stand?

"Is that necessary?", "I think it's starting!", "You've lost your mind!" Taken purely at face value, such sentences are not the personal objections they are usually meant to be. That is why they can only be effective to a very limited extent. Renouncing your own position in a personal message is like ordering a parcel but not providing a delivery address. How can we express our position truthfully and clearly in words, instead of growling, barking and screeching like animals with words that say too little?

In self-organized systems, it is important to take clear, organically flexible positions. This clarity can only be adequately conveyed through words. In order not to speak from a position of no one, a personal statement must also be formulated personally. This can be achieved with the word "I". The objection can take the form of a request, a question or a statement.

Collective fragmentation

Unfortunately, collectives that want to take action tend to form themselves as "We are all against it!" because "We are all for it" tends to immediately differentiate itself further in the next step. As soon as you get into the details, only a few are still in favor, while others see things differently and, strictly speaking, want to achieve something else. At the end of the day, everyone is striving in a different direction. This is why revolutionary movements find it so difficult to agree on a common constructive approach after their destructive phase. With NVC-plus, agreement is possible even without a destructive phase, and since we are striving for precisely this kind of common constructive approach, the collective "we", "everyone" and "all" are of limited value for internal communication in systems. In order to regain freedom and self-control in a system, it makes little sense to hide

behind a group. It is therefore better to represent oneself from a self-chosen position using understandable words and to listen to others when they represent themselves. If we want to form a self-organizing team, we are called upon to take a position and stand according to the current requirements.

Representing yourself

In collective movements, generalized positions are often used. Actually, it is an old rule to make statements about oneself. Especially in self-organizing groups, statements such as "That's how it's done", "Everyone does it that way" or "We've always done it that way" make no sense. It is not a matter of dismissing ideas from the team, but of using them. An idea can be used if it is relevant. An idea is relevant if it is relevant to someone or to the result. Thus, an idea can be personally or goal-oriented relevant. If we express personally relevant ideas as if they were universally valid truths, this clouds communication.

But and why

A popular strategy for speaking from the nobody position is the why question:

"Why were you late?"

"Let me think – was it my fate, was it your restless, urgent character that robbed me of the energy to be punctual, was it divine providence, the fault of my parents, the social aftermath of war trauma, my silent

rebellion against authority, my no longer concealable free artistic nature, the groundbreaking evolution of a new corporate culture with individualized time management, or simply the banal bad luck that my train was cancelled? And if it was the latter, then we should ask ourselves why the train was cancelled. Was it poor management, a backlog of investment, the flu epidemic, a desperate person throwing themselves on-to the tracks, human error or a technical malfunction? If it was the latter, then we can ask ourselves whether the technical malfunction was due to a material defect, poor engineering, cheap foreign suppliers of electronic components, or unexpected climatic changes for which the existing technology was not designed. If it was the latter, then we should ask ourselves ...".

The question of why is so open-ended that it cannot be answered. Questions of why are, by their very nature, transcendental questions. "Why are we here?" Whenever the path of inquiring questioning is already the goal, i.e. when we are looking for a variety of answers rather than a concrete answer, then we can make good use of questions of why. Otherwise, they would need to be rephrased: "What prevented you from arriving at the agreed time?" "What did you achieve by arriving later than agreed?" "Did something hold you up?" Or is what is on the tip of our tongue less of a question and more of a statement or a request?

The word "but" is also problematic. Two sentences linked by "but" often do not have the general, simple, linear and contradictory relationship that this word suggests. In most cases, the two statements can be easily separated and listed separately.

"You said you'd be here at 9:00, but then you don't arrive until 9:15."

Here, a statement becomes an accusation spoken from a position of no one.

"You said you would be here at 9:00 a.m. You arrived at 9:15 a.m."

The two statements create tension between each other. However, this tension only has meaning if it is meaningful to the communicator or someone else. This person would then have to take a personal stance in the next step: *"I don't like waiting and didn't know what to do with my time. Waiting is one of my pain points."* According to classic NVC, one would name the prevailing feeling and need and then make a concrete request. In NVC-plus, this solution is used when one has lost one's peace of mind. Otherwise, one has taken a position, communicated one's own pain point and not formulated one's own problem as the other person's problem. On the other hand, the other person now has the necessary information to act differently in the future if they wish. They can also ask, *"Do you have a request or question for me?"* Clearly, they are not to blame if we understand blame as *culpa* – moral guilt – and not as *obligatio* – (self-)commitment or the resulting *deber* – the obligation to deliver in a system. Even in a self-organized team, it is good to know the extent to which each team member feels committed to their own promises. And every team that is serious about shaping its own future will also have to clarify the issue of time management, among other things. In this respect, self-management means that each person is allowed to live punctually within the framework of their own chances of success, but this must also be clear to the others and therefore taken into account. We suspect that in a dominant or functional system, this would usually lead to chaos and thus look different than in a caring system. Self-organization therefore requires mutual caring relationships and a method such as NVC-plus to put this into practice.

NVC-plus and the both helpful and paralyzing power of routines

It is not as if we can complain about a lack of problems. This applies not only to us as individuals. Things also go wrong in partnerships, families, companies and society. In principle, all approaches to solutions can be divided into two categories: The first approach offers us insight into the underlying connections. A deeper understanding should inspire us to adopt a new logic in our actions. The tools on this rather abstract path are reflection, analysis and diagnosis. Let's call this approach "path A".

The second path aims to achieve positive change in the problematic situation directly through changed behavior. The hope is that a new quality of coexistence will emerge purely from the change in behavior. We can call this practical approach "path B". Routines and patterns are useful for combining both paths. These arise from insight (Path A) and subsequently support practitioners (Path B), who can then act routinely according to the pattern. For classic NVC, this has resulted in the 4-step pattern, and for NVC-plus, the four-step circle.

In classic NVC, we use both paths. Some trainers focus primarily on the right attitude, while others focus on the exact choice of words in the sense of NVC.



In practice, however, both approaches are usually combined, even outside of NVC. Such a combination is not always beneficial in everyday life. If we have problems, e.g. with our partner, we sometimes choose the approach where we remain rather passive in our actions, perhaps because we think we are already doing everything right anyway. Instead, we hope that the other person will actively change their clearly unfavorable behavior. To ensure that our children, partners, team members, employees, bosses or politicians also do the "right" thing, we are prepared to provide them with our own analyses, diagnoses and insights and guide them towards the right routines. The idea is that you yourself take the abstract path A of insight, while the other people take the concrete path B, and that this form of cooperation enables everyone to make the desired progress together.

However, if you cannot reach others with your own analyses and diagnoses, it is advisable to bring them to a credible expert, be it an educator, psychologist, counsellor, advisor or judge. This person can offer conclusive explanations from a position of authority. Or they may refrain from explanations and directly dictate the correct behavior, which is ultimately what matters. When you are "at the top", you can determine rules and routines for the behavior of others, even without them necessarily having to understand them. Then the strategies of other people and the established rules and routines of a system control our behavior. We follow certain obligations, conventions and necessities and are supposed to do only what we are supposed to do, without mixing in what we carry in our hearts. In this way, we want to avoid communal and social chaos, which arises as soon as everyone does what they want without looking left and right. Interaction becomes automatic, verifiable and predictable. We also try to bring order to our everyday lives by schematizing them and inviting others to follow our rules. This is how the notorious hamster wheels are created, both privately and professionally. Our inner lives are not properly integrated into our external activities. Depression, burnout or boreout can be the result when we fail to fit in with the community or the community fails to fit in with us.

Incidentally, every solution to a problem will ultimately be achieved via path B. After all, we don't want to live in the architect's plans, but in the house built with them. Path A of recognition may give rise to a new abstract understanding, which in itself can be very relieving or satisfying. But it will hardly ever be the solution itself. A solution to a specific problem is experienced concretely and implemented practically. So we often prepare good solutions on path A. But we then work them out with our bodies and experience them with our senses on path B.

If we carry out concrete solution movements based on routines that we have not helped to design ourselves, that we may not even understand or be able to comprehend, then we are in pure training mode. This makes sense, for example, when children are mastering certain developmental steps. It is also a successful way to train movements in sports and for teamwork. But a routine remains a routine. How does our conscious vitality fit into an automated process? How do we ensure that it is not rationalized away in an increasingly regulated everyday life? When our inner life gives up on helping to shape things creatively and inspirationally, then we and our relationships have a real problem. We need our inner fire.

Alarmingly, in several NVC-plus seminars and coaching sessions, it became clear to me that the number of people who can easily produce creative utopias and joyful visions of the future as the precursors of their urge to expand into life is exceptionally small. They all want to see their needs met, get rid of their problems and have their requests fulfilled. But where should their journey take them? What is their daily, weekly or project utopia? What is their partnership utopia, their holiday utopia or their healing utopia? What are their anticipated positive impressions of the time ahead? Only by focusing on such utopias can we recognize a path as our own and walk our life's path in a self-organized manner. Today, solving problems requires less new routines and more inspiring utopian solutions.

Reactive actions are more practical than they are conducive to improving the quality of our interactions. If we work too much on mental autopilot, we will come up with fewer and fewer new and creative solutions. We ourselves become programmed autopilots. So, on the one hand, it's about conscious creative thinking on path A and conscious and self-determined action on path B, otherwise both are dead ends. This brings us to the crucial question: how do we return to an integral consciousness from which our thinking is creative and our actions self-confident? Especially for today's harried and stressed individuals, true sovereignty over one's own life is hardly imaginable. But self-determined individuals are necessary for sensitive and interactively intelligent coexistence.

	Path A	The bridge	Path B
Tools	Diagnosing and analyzing the situation. Assessing, planning, researching, observing, contemplating, classifying, considering, reflecting.	Routines, strategies Diagnoses, analyses, prognoses, plans, processes, ideas for order, rules, laws.	Experience and action, according to routines or strategies. Acting, shaping, exposing oneself.
Problematic	Brooding, quarrelling, criticizing, grading, devaluing, detachment from life, arrogance.	Overregulation, functional corset of rules and regulated processes, striving for dominance, lust for power.	Naivety, impulsiveness, mental laziness, mental inertia.

We can formulate different approaches to solving problems from these two paths and consider them all together, including for organizational development:

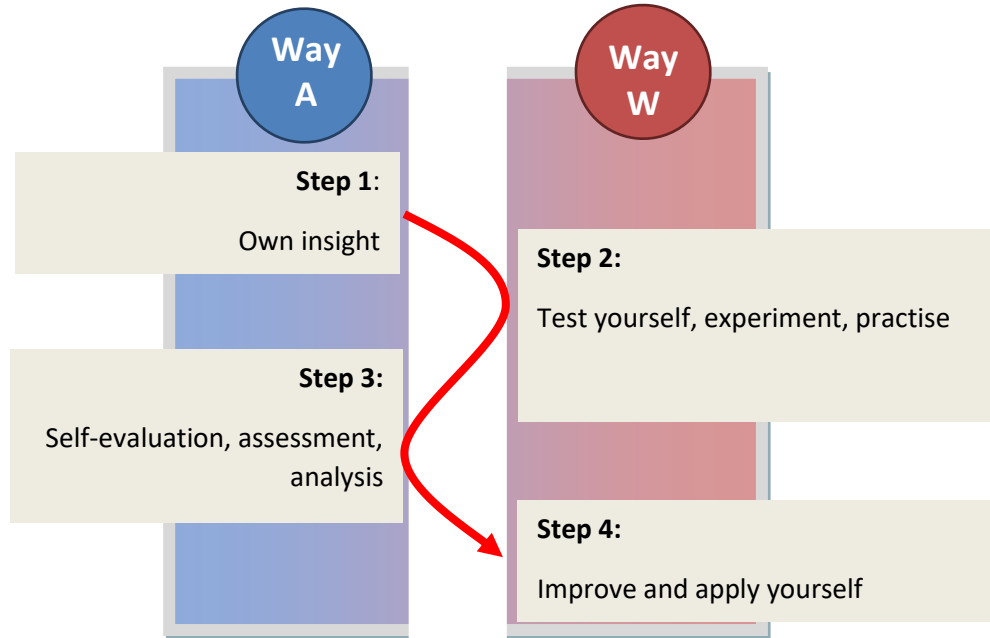
Path A:

1. Explore new abstract insights
2. Derive new strategies, routines and processes from abstract insights
3. Understanding the abstract background of strategies, routines and processes

Path B

4. Develop and test routines and processes in practice
5. Train other people in new routines and processes or prescribe them
6. Train yourself in new routines and processes

What does this mean for NVC-plus? Interactive intelligence arises from the interconnection of liveliness, not from settling into functional routines, rules and conventions. We are not machines or robots. It requires the free and forward-looking vitality of present and conscious people. Questions such as "What should I do?" are reserved for training phases in which others guide us in our actions so that we can learn from them. But once we know the game, we should play it our way.



The good news for NVC-plus is that we don't need to reflect much in order to put it into practice. We try to derive our steering intelligence less from detached functional knowledge about NVC-plus and more from interactive sensitivity. This means that we don't have to understand an awful lot (path A) in order to be able to apply NVC-plus (path B). A basic understanding of the four-step circle is sufficient. As soon as the interaction becomes unsatisfactory, you take out the appropriate tool card and learn the necessary step to deepen your understanding.

A great deal of practical application knowledge will – surprise, surprise – arise from the practical application of NVC-plus anyway. To ensure that a team does not have to figure everything out on its own, we try to connect users with their skills and questions via video conferences and hotspots, for example.

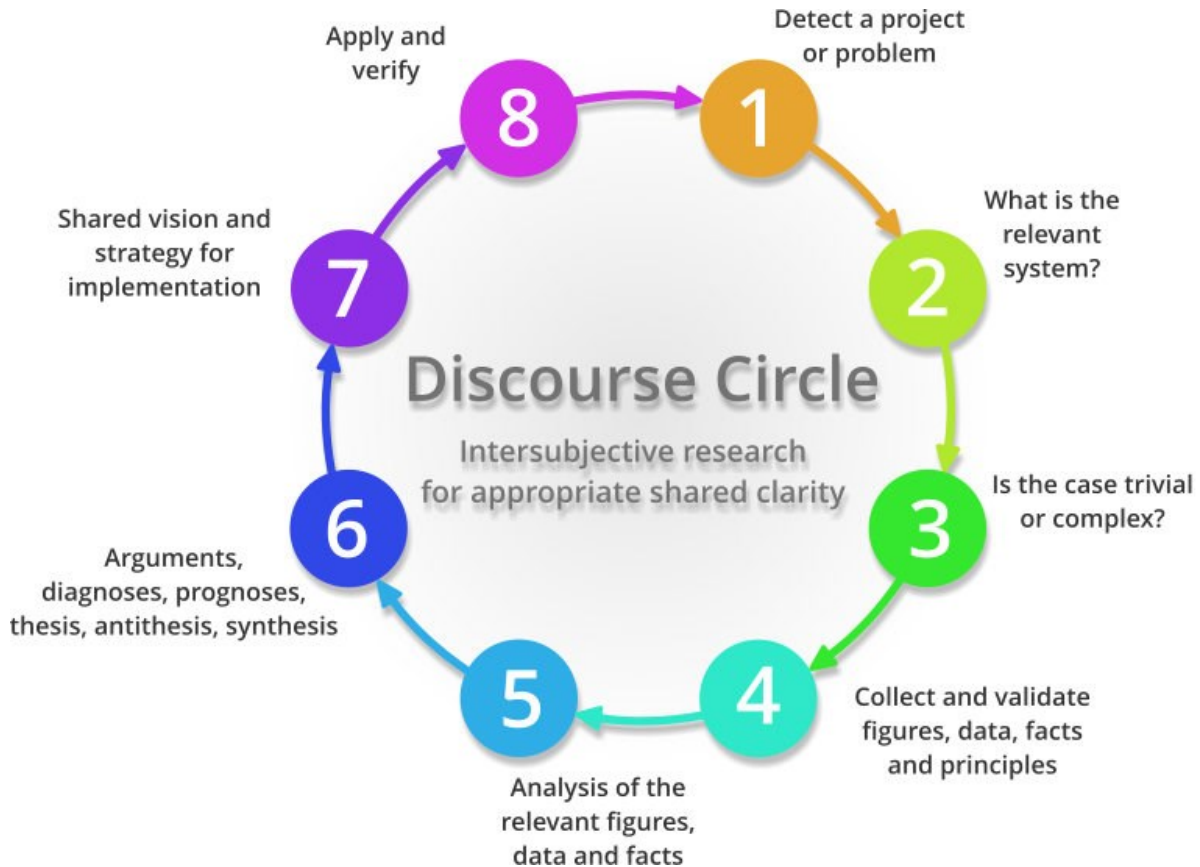
Of course, Nvc-plus.net also involves thinking, analyzing and formulating routines and rules. However, these are selected by those currently involved according to the task at hand and, if necessary, briefly trained. This means that the training is always linked to one's own life path. The vitality of the individuals thus unites to form an organically resulting forceful movement, instead of slowly suffocating in the corset of externally imposed system structures.

Discourse – bringing different things together

The discourse circle

In NVC-plus, factual discourse is just as important as personal conversations. For factual discourse, we can use the discourse circle to learn how to construct a discourse in a meaningful way. People believe that they know how to conduct a discourse. But this is usually an overestimation of their abilities. Discourse is a matter of practice. It is a meeting of people who are searching together, not a meeting of people who think alike. Talk, debate, exchange of opinions, etc. are not discourse.

You can see that the actual discourse in the discourse circle below takes place at position 6, but neither begins nor ends there. On the one hand, a good discourse is grounded in relevant figures, data, facts and valid abstract principles. On the other hand, good discourse is also grounded in a practical solution movement at position 8. After all, something should work better or come out differently in the end. To avoid working in a problem-centred way, the positive (solution) vision is added at position 7. A strategy is developed for this – ideally a NVC-plus strategy. A discourse is therefore a clarifying discussion with the aim of making a factual topic clearer. If personal concerns are involved, i.e. if needs are a driving force, then elements of personal mediation are required. Classic non-violent communication is ideal for this purpose. There is plenty of literature on the subject, and the NVC magic circle can also be found at nvc-plus.net.



The topic/project/problem should be relevant, and there should be a relevant system (e.g. topic: education, system: school) and relevant figures, data, facts and abstract principles. What is relevant is therefore largely determined by the topic/project/problem and by the system addressed by the topic/project/problem. The facts require sources and then an analysis of the facts by different experts, which may also vary. This then forms the basis for the discourse with its theses, antitheses and syntheses, which are supported by arguments.

The discourse is a kind of limbo. It is an attempt to jointly arrive at a thematic conclusion. Not because one has necessarily recognized "the truth". But in the discourse, a common field of consensus is emerging more and more. There is a momentary intersection of agreed points that is shared with others. The aim is to carefully expand this so that mutually acceptable strategies and solutions can emerge from the area of consensus.

Ideologies and conventions in team communication

Discourse and negotiation

In a discourse, the aim is to approach a jointly supported view, approach or solution option with theses, antitheses and synthesis. Unlike negotiation, a discourse therefore strives for consensus rather than compromise. The discourse is conducted with arguments backed up by figures, data and facts. The aim is therefore to find common ground. Assumptions in the form of theses and forecasts also play a role. When making assumptions, it is important to provide evidence. The arguments put forward in a discourse do not remain static but evolve into better arguments. In this way, insights are gained on which a joint approach can be built. Discourse is thus a shared creative state of limbo, even if its seriousness and intensity can resemble a struggle. However, it is not a struggle against each other, but a struggle for a deeper understanding. The participants are not committed to their own arguments, assumptions and predictions, but to the better common result. A distinction can be made between visionary, strategic and tactical discourses, which are based on different approaches to the world and, unfortunately, can only be combined to a limited extent. It is therefore advisable to combine these types of discourse as needed, preferably in the order mentioned above.

Negotiations, on the other hand, are based less on arguments and more on different points of view. Negotiations often dispense with figures, data and facts, as a point of view does not necessarily have to be substantiated and, if it does, it does not necessarily have to be conclusive. A point of view is stated. It does not need to change in a negotiation, because that is not the purpose of a negotiation. It is simply my point of view and I can insist on it.

However, juggling points of view can also achieve some secondary change. You can change an opinion simply by juxtaposing it with another. The tall person no longer seems particularly tall in a basketball team, without having shrunk. That is why the art of framing is so important today. The line between framing and manipulation is blurred. Negotiation is about maintaining positions and still reaching mutually acceptable agreements. Populist exchanges are a game of positions in which success is determined solely by the effect on the audience. It is by no means about finding the truth. Populist debates are not conducted on the basis of comprehensive transparency and complete figures, data, facts and related arguments. Selections are made, and thus populist negotiations or debates always arise on the basis of strategically expressed, suppressed or distorted points of view.

A community needs both discourse and negotiation. The more active and project-oriented the interaction becomes, the more discourse is needed. Passive interaction and coexistence, on the other hand, can largely be achieved through negotiation. However, only through active interaction and thus through honest and open discourse can a new vitality be brought to teams and communities, which is why both should be cultivated.

Discourse is not possible in ideologically influenced environments or in traumatized or mentally limited environments. The arguments of the other participants in the discourse must be taken on board, together with the underlying figures, data and facts. One must be willing and able to understand the different lines of argumentation without the annoying interference of one's own thoughts. Only in this way can one broaden one's perspective and form syntheses.

Blockages in discourse and negotiations

- Ignorance
- Ideological and technical blinders
- Lethargy and intellectual limitations
- Closed-mindedness
- Traumas
- Hidden interests
- Unfavourable restriction of discourse

Even in negotiations, a strongly ideological influence is destructive and quickly leads to intransigence. Inner and/or outer withdrawal becomes apparent, with the first step always being an inner blockage.

What may look like ideology is not necessarily so. It may also be the most complex world view to which a limited or untrained mind has resorted, or it may be based on trauma that blocks sufficient freedom of consciousness until it is resolved. Such blockages can also be limited to specific niches of everyday life. Hidden interests and unfavorable discursive frameworks can also lead to inexplicable stubbornness. We must always ask ourselves whether the relevant people are talking about what is relevant.

At its core, heart development is a development of consciousness in the sense of constant expansion. It is not possible without open discourse and mindful negotiation. Every person has a current limit of what is possible that needs to be accepted. Nevertheless, it is important to shift these limits during one's lifetime, and this requires a certain amount of willpower. Otherwise, a community's attempts at discourse will soon end up as mere negotiations of positions, which will become increasingly tedious as they are doomed to endless loops and can no longer lead to meaningful compromises.

The difference between personal, conventional and ideological objections

Nvc-plus.net is a method that couples, groups and teams can use to manage themselves without ideology. Why is it important for self-organization to come together beyond all ideologies? Even if we only consider the quality of the arguments used by a team to reach agreement, it quickly becomes clear that ideological influences can cause us major problems. Every ideology uses its own guidelines and dogmas, which can often only be justified on the basis of the assumptions of the ideology itself. They need their own ideological system in order to appear logical

within that system. Today, there are a multitude of ideologies with their respective guidelines and dogmas. Unfortunately, different ideologies often contradict each other diametrically and thus bring completely contradictory instructions into the discourse of self-organized teams. In various ideological systems, the following applies to partnerships, among other things:

- One should not commit adultery.
- One should not be unfaithful to one's current life partner.
- One should marry and have only one partner in life.
- Everyone should live freely and not be so uptight.
- One should first find out one's own gender, which has little to do with biology and physical appearance.

Will not all those who deviate from the precepts of the "true" religion or the "true" sect in their way of life fall prey to their "just" and relentless punishment? The true ideology is revealed in such a multitude of ways that these revelations as a whole represent a huge veil of concealment. So we cannot find the truth outside ourselves, but only within ourselves. However, this is not so easy for people who have lost their way. Therefore, the rule is: first find yourself, and then find the community that is right for you at that moment. Those who have lived long enough know that demands can be absolute, but life unfolds in a relative and relational way.

Today, it is fashionable to follow only your own happiness and do what you want. Some trends can therefore be seen more as a lifestyle than an ideology, but sometimes a lifestyle or fashion is also something like an *ideology-lite*. And even lifestyles can be represented very dogmatically. Today, even a technical device, a brand or an app can give rise to its own lifestyle, which is then less ideological and more technically based. Think of Apple, Instagram or Tinder. Even the climate, democracy and the market economy tend to be represented with almost

religious passion in some places. With all ideologies, problems in the formulation of intelligent concepts are predictable. Salvation is quickly sought in lame compromises, the formation of fronts, shielding and defamation. The necessary quality of discourse for interactively intelligent teams will thus not be achievable. The quality of organized cooperation can be measured quite well by the quality of the discourse and the constructiveness of the results.

Today, we find fewer and fewer ideologically uniform systems. What can be done when a discourse runs into rough waters due to the influence of multiple belief systems, lifestyles, traditions and conventions? So far, tolerance has been the order of the day. However, since ideologies cannot simply be mixed together, we will achieve little that is constructive with mere tolerance. Coexistence may still work, but what about active cooperation between partnerships, teams or communities? Even in an ideologically uniform system, this is difficult. An ideology or belief system is a closed control matrix with no logical connection to the team vision or the real facts. It works best for a while when a team has been formed solely to represent a specific ideology. However, this is a limited self-organized team, as all team members follow the ideological control matrix. Often, there are also hidden stakeholders in the orbit of the ideology, which does not make honest self-organization any easier.

Our current post-factual tendencies in argumentation open the door to old ideologies and allow many new ones to emerge. However, self-managing groups and teams can hardly do anything with a confused mixture of ideological impulses.

Conventions and traditions are similar to ideologies and even related to them. We know how to open a door and how to use a toilet because we have our own type of doors and toilets in our culture. I was quite astonished when I entered a Nepalese toilet. The back wall was missing. Instead, there was a slope down to the river. Humus toilets

are not necessarily self-explanatory either. In some places, there are no toilets at all. This is something you have to get used to if you have grown up with different traditions. Even toilet paper is not common everywhere.

Conventions are regional systems of order that are often better respected as framework conditions as long as there is no real reason not to. When different conventions clash, one can engage in NVC dialogue. But that is not always easy. I remember a program in which a clan member defended honor killings as an effective means of restoring honor. When asked what honor meant to him, he couldn't say. He didn't understand the meaning of the word at all. He only lived with a "feeling" of honor, evoked by an ideology that in turn gave rise to the convention of honor killings. How can this person stand up for himself or his sister if he does not represent his own position, but only an ideological one? He cannot. Like his ancestors and his sister, he will be exploited by the collectively recognized ideology. This is conveyed to him by people who are themselves already exploited. This naturally makes it difficult to live in honor, dignity and respect, but it is almost impossible to understand this as long as one is under the spell of ideology. The situation is similar with political movements. They too are ideologies with their own specific control matrix. But at their core, every ideology and convention attempts to solve relevant problems. However, this usually works much better in a self-organizing team than in a collective that is forced by ideology to adopt a uniform understanding and behavior.

Ideological objections should therefore be translated into personal objections and represented as such. The conventions of the team should be flexibly adapted to the needs of the team members and the respective goal.

Morality as a flank protection for ideology or even as an intangible form of ideology

In the functional, weak-hearted and uncaring niches of a system, moral rules help to define certain transgressions and establish exclusion criteria. However, this is done from a position of no one. "You should be vegetarian and not kill animals!" Says who? Morality and the associated guilty conscience are therefore created for the functional systems of coexistence and not for people. Strictly speaking, morality is needed for functional systems. It is not in great demand in dominant or caring systems. Dominant systems insist on obedience to arbitrariness and caring systems on interactive sensitivity. Ideologies, on the other hand, can hardly do without the functional stylization of "values" and moral rules, and ideologies give rise to illogical and unnatural conventions. Natural conventions arise from the "best practice" examples of a group. We automatically tend to derive exemplary behavior from what has proven itself. In this respect, conventions have something that ideologies and moral rules do not have – they are natural and we cannot do without them. Thus, naturally occurring vegetarianism is somewhat different from morally prescribed vegetarianism. As our interactive sensitivity expands, it automatically becomes more difficult to feel joy and pleasure at the expense of other living beings.

From morality to the Nvc-plus.net strategy

Morality is not an equivalent substitute for naturally arising loving coexistence. If morality were formulated not in the form of a legal text or house rules, but in the form of a questionnaire, we would be less called upon to follow an order and more to help develop one. This approach corresponds to the NVC-plus strategy. Instead of "Thou shalt not bear false witness," we write a strategic control question such as "How do we ensure appropriate or at

least sufficient transparency in the team?" In a permanent home team, people will adapt to each other differently than in a short-term, action-based team. However, this only applies to active cooperation. In passive cooperation, which also includes everyday life, it is much more difficult to establish adequate or at least sufficient transparency:

A: *"Where were you?"*

B: *"Why do you want to know?"*

A: *"To feed my mistrust with current data, uh, I mean, so I can trust you."*

If a team is sufficiently active, then passive cooperation, which always exists, will largely fall into place automatically. If it is not, then in many cases passive cooperation will slide into coexistence, as we know from many partnerships. The hope that all three forms – active cooperation, passive cooperation and coexistence – can be organized in an agile manner with a simple list of rules of conduct is naive. At most, this allows you to establish a framework.

In cases where people have lost their way but not their minds, functional moral guidance can sometimes help them to reintegrate with minimal disruption. As healthy social beings with a good sense of their own path and that of others, we should not be dependent on moral concepts. Why should we dictate a catalogue of moral behavior to an empathetic heart?

There is no question that this requires some basic skills, such as mindfulness, empathy, the ability to imagine utopias, and a tendency towards constructiveness and helpfulness. We should train and practice these skills together instead of formulating them as strange claims to values and morals. Values tend to be lacking wherever

they are needed anyway. And the danger of this leading to ideologically based wars, stonings, witch burnings or other predatory behavior is very manageable.

Conventions and the mainstream

The danger with natural conventions lies in their tendency to create a powerful mainstream that threatens to sweep all those who are less self-determined off their path in life. One's own vitality will have to prove itself with ly based on existing trends. In this respect, training is needed both for one's own path and for coexistence. In NVC-plus, this is already laid out in the four-step circle. Both the individual who has stepped out of the system and the different tasks of coexistence are represented there.

Everything has its place

Sometimes, dominant or functional cooperation is the best option. Not everything works best when it's self-organized. Ideologies, with their dogmas, are a great way to play and experiment. Conventions make our lives a lot easier.

The doubt objection

Professor Hermes Kick conceived the tool of the doubt objection. It is a means for psychiatrists to determine whether a delusion or just an unusual experience is present when a patient reports, for example, a UFO landing in

their own garden. This means that the doctor no longer has to decide whether it is a fact or an illusion. The real question of health is the patient's ability to be open with the doctor and their doubts. We can also use this tool in self-organized cooperation to identify ideological blinders or similar issues. You can respond to someone who believes that CO⁽²⁾ is a climate toxin or does not believe in with an objection based on doubt: *"I can see how concerned you are about the future of plants, animals and humans, but I don't believe that reducing CO⁽²⁾ will save the environment."*

It is now interesting to see whether our doubt is reflected in the other person or whether it bounces off them. Do we reach the person on an equal footing or not? Do we then have a conversation or do we listen to a sermon? If people are more open to their own concepts than to ours, it will be difficult to reach agreement, even if we cannot always really speak of delusion, but rather of passion. As soon as we realize that it is not possible to openly gather facts together, analyze them in a relaxed manner and verify their sources, there is little point in continuing to argue structurally. Sometimes the connecting field is too weak to find common ground on the topic. In this case, the team can first focus on connecting and synchronizing measures in NVC-plus field 3. Sometimes, individuals in NVC-plus field 1 first need to clarify their own position, which can be supported with empathy. In general, it can be said that when a team begins to organize itself with NVC-plus, many things will sort themselves out without having to pay too much attention to them. However, such considerations naturally make sense for professional NVC-plus diagnoses. Understanding the problem can therefore be more difficult than finding the solution.

More at www.nvc-plus.net

Gabriel Fritsch – passionate communication developer

Author, consultant, developer, designer, researcher and human being

When I met Marshall Rosenberg at one of his lectures many years ago, I was captivated by the topic of successful community and it never left me. Soon I became creative. I met exciting people, learned a lot and developed new models, processes and methods. Meanwhile, I observed the failure of community in many areas and on many levels. At the end of 2017, a small experimental team was formed to take the next step. Together with a trainer and two trainers for non-violent communication, all of whom were old hands, I envisioned and experimented. How can we turn a conventional coexistence into a teal organization that breathes the spirit of the new age? That was our question. With NVC-plus, we found an answer. As a communication developer – a profession I invented especially for myself – I derived the model and strategies from the experiments, formulated them and made them freely available. My hope is that my enthusiasm will spread to many people when they realize what is possible as soon as they live out their collective potential in organic networking.



This book is dedicated to free people and those who want to become free.

Freedom.

Clarity.

Kindness.