You're okay!

Understanding feelings
&
expressing needs

working alone, working over large distances, communicating asynchronously, and over text interfaces

makes our communication harder, decreases empathy, can lead to false assumptions about others, anger, and conflict.

I want to talk about... a framework
to get to know yourself better, to learn to communicate clearly about what you need, and better understand other people.

(derived from NVC, but own lecture)

Aaaaaah, please don't tell us about yet another neoliberal tool of self-optimization so that we think more „positively"!

No, I won't. Because:

Conflict, anger & crisis happen

and they are chances to grow.
Don't ignore what makes you unhappy.

Understanding myself → communicating my needs → connection with others through empathy → finding common ground →
from domination culture to partnership culture

While each of us is unique,
we all share the same feelings and needs,
in different intensities
at different moments.

Let's talk about **what we need rather than what's wrong with one another** and find ways to meet everybody's needs.

This is also the basis to
consensus-based decision making in groups.

But let's focus on understanding ourselves first.

Why am I so angry today?

I get angry sometimes.

triggers: patronizing, belittling, exclusion, ignoring my boundaries, ignorance.

Anger triggers are often rooted in past experiences.

I think I smash buildings because my father was distant.

You've certainly already tried to
get rid of anger

by crying, breathing deeply, physically running away, mentally running away, writing things you later regretted, shouting, hitting something, hitting somebody, ignoring it, denying it, suppressing it ... ?

Anger is a feeling

Similar to a warning light in a car...

Feelings

Feelings let us feel things.

In „emotion" there's motion.
Something's moving inside.

In „sensation" there is „sense".
Feelings are manifestations in our body.

All feelings are okay.

Feelings tell us that our needs
are (not) being met.

Feelings are a need monitoring system.

**Feelings we may have when
our needs are not being met:**

afraid, annoyed, angry, aversion, confused,
disconnected, disquiet, embarrassed, fatigue,
fragile, pain, sad, tense, vulnerable, yearning...

**Feelings we may have when
our needs are being met**:

affectionate, confident, engaged, inspired, excited, exhilarated, grateful, hopeful, joyful, peaceful, refreshed...

Ignoring feelings reduces our ability to acknowledge who we are and what we want.

Being blinded that way, we cannot shape our lives and relationships with others.

Other people's behavior can
trigger feelings, but
their behavior is often not
the **direct** cause of our feelings.

experiences
↓

trigger → thoughts, assessments → feelings

Some real life examples

I'm cutting onions on a plate at a friends place because I could not find the cutting board. They tell me: „Hey, the knife will go blunt!" I'm troubled because it doesn't seem very problematic to me that a knife goes blunt because worst case I'll sharpen it again. I feel patronized and intimidated for making a mistake. I'm reminded of my father talking to me when I was a child.

I'm baking a cake. A friend rings the door bell, I open and we greet each other. The friend says: „What's that smell?" I think she's again critizing me and I become very angry immediately because I believe that she's always trying to be better than me. I tell her to leave if she doesn't like it. The friend tells me that she simply meant to tell me that she did not know the smell of an ingredient I had put in the cake..

In these examples,
their behavior is not
the **direct** cause of my feelings.

Parenthesis:
Violence & Power

If I punch you, my behaviour is directly causing feelings in you.

I am responsible for my feeling (that led me to punch you) and my action (I punch you) and also for the result of my action.

I cannot control your feelings though and there might be other feelings coming up than the feeling of being hurt by my punch.

We are responsible for our
own feelings and actions.

There is no:

„I was so angry, I had to destroy all your toys.“
„I had to hit you because your (insert behaviour
pattern) made me do that!"

We are not responsible for
other people's feelings as in:

„I'm sorry I made you so mad."

Well, that's highly controversional.

If we **know** that things we do are violent or hurtful to others, we ought to take responsibility for our behaviour.

But we are not required to ignore our own feelings and needs - just because someone else doesn't like them.

(I can dress how I want, regardless of what other people think about that.)

There's a thin line.

Any kind of power structure & oppression (gender, race, age, abilities, skills etc.) results in dominating, and sometimes violent, behavior.

The feelings/needs framework cannot solve such issues. It can only make it clearer what we feel, think, and need. And hopefully what we should do about it.

It can help us find ways to escape in particular if we have learned to ignore our feelings and needs or cannot get away from a situation.

(abusive relationships, domestic violence etc.)

It can help us formulate a request to act ourselves if we have repeatedly communicated our feelings and needs but other people keep crossing our boundaries.

It can help us identify that others **are** actually crossing our boundaries which might have ignored until now because we believed that we should suppress strong feelings like anger.

/end of parenthesis.

Back to our feelings.

Pseudo-feelings

Words and statements that describe thoughts, opinions, assessments, and interpretations are **pseudo-feelings.**

Pseudo-feelings as **assumptions**

"I have the impression that ..." (there is a conflict)

"They give me the feeling that ..." (I am incompetent)

"I am convinced that my colleague ..." (is talking about me)

"I conclude that I ..." (am right)

"I take them for ..." (stupid)

"I feel they ..." (just want the heritage)

Pseudo-feelings as **interpretations about myself**

"I (don't) feel ..."

aggressive, fearless, arrogant, loved, dominant, egocentric, evil, great, ignorant, hysterical, interesting, powerful, brave, normal, useless, useful, tolerant, stressed, inadequate, belonging, dignified...

Pseudo-feelings as **interpretations about others**

"I (don't) feel ..."

abandoned, excluded, blamed, betrayed, observed, mobbed, misunderstood, wronged, violated, abused, judged, rejected, accepted, confirmed, taken seriously, seen, listened to, loved, liked, appreciated, wanted, respected, understood

To find the feeling behind a pseudo-feeling, we can ask ourselves

"How do I feel when I think ... ?"

„I feel betrayed because you lied to me again.“

„I feel grief/miserable/lonely when I think you betrayed me.“

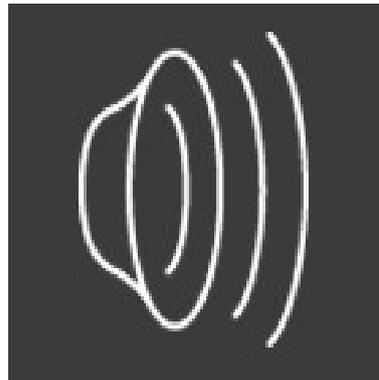**Possibility to get in contact with your feelings**

put all your attention into your belly and chest and ask yourself: „*Do I feel ...?*"

Go through the feelings lists, and try to feel body resonance (yes/no?)

Putting a hand to your chest/heart can be helpful.

Needs

I want cookies.

There are needs at the root of our feelings

All humans (and possibly non-human animals)
share the same universal needs.
Having needs is okay :)

Needs are independent from
PLACE, TIME and PEOPLE.

for example: "well-being" is a need.

Many people do/did not learn how to articulate their needs.

We learned it is not okay to express our needs at all. That our needs are not important, and perhaps that no one cares about them anyway.

When a need is satisfied,
we have a pleasant feeling.

When a need is unsatisfied,
we have unpleasant feelings.

CONNECTION: acceptance, affection, appreciation, belonging, cooperation, communication, closeness, community, companionship, compassion, consideration, consistency, empathy, inclusion, intimacy, love, mutuality, nurturing, respect/self-respect, safety, security, stability, support, to know and be known, to see and be seen, to understand and, be understood, trust, warmth

PHYSICAL WELL-BEING: air, food, movement/exercise, rest/sleep, sexual expression, safety, shelter, touch, water

HONESTY: authenticity, integrity, presence

PLAY: joy, humor

PEACE: beauty, communion, ease, equality, harmony, inspiration, order

AUTONOMY: choice, freedom, independence, space, spontaneity

MEANING: awareness, celebration of life, challenge, clarity, competence, consciousness, contribution, creativity, discovery, efficacy, effectiveness, growth, hope, learning, mourning, participation, purpose, self-expression, stimulation, to matter, understanding

Matching feelings with needs

Sometimes we don't really know why we feel a certain way. Maybe we are not enough in touch with our feelings yet. We can take time to find out by asking ourselves which of our needs is (not) being met.

Loneliness

contact, friendship, closeness, intimacy, esteem, love, understanding, acknowldegment, community, care, being important for somebody, belonging, attention

Anxiousness, insecurity, sorrow

physical security, emotional security (esteem, belonging, understanding, support, care, contact) clarity

Jealousy

Security, esteem, uniqueness

Fragility

Security, protection, respect, boundaries

Helplessness, resignation

Agency, Respect of boundaries

Impatience

Effectiveness, rapidity

Disappointment

trust, security, fairness, justice, reliability

Alienation, strangeness

Closeness, connection, contact, understanding, intimacy

Guilt

(Guilt generally indicates that we have crossed a moral boundary (our own, or that of somebody else, or society) or ignored a rule.)

Integrity, belonging, self-worth

Irritability, edginess

here it's less clear... we can be irritable, because

something does not work (agency), we feel fragile (protection), we need space (space), our bloodsugar is low (food), we want to decide for ourselves (autonomy), we did not sleep enough (relaxation)...

Getting in touch with our needs

is also a way to get them met by others.

The alternative is to let them figure our needs

...and that rarely works.

How to find a need behind a feeling?

Put your attention to belly/chest and say
"I feel.... Could it be that I need ...?"

Use the needs list. Try to feel physical resonance (in/consistency) for each word. If there are many feelings and needs at once: Which feeling and which need is resonating most within yourself?

Hello, dear need!

When you identify a need:
Say hello & cuddle it.

It's more important to be in touch with and to acknowledge your needs than to satisfy them.

Acknowledging = accepting that you are okay.

We can feel that we are in touch with our needs when we sense less tension in our body and soul.

Exercise: getting to know our needs

Whatever we do, we do to satisfy our needs.

Because I need rest, I take a nap.

Easy!

Because I need peace I spend 3 months in a cabin in the woods.

Nice!

I experience burn-out and tiredness. But I ignore those feelings and continue to finish my studies because I have a deep need for recognition and esteem by my parents and other peers.

Oops.. complicated need fulfillment priorities.

Because I need harmony and ease I don't dare telling my partner/friend/parents/children that I … (insert whatever you're hiding from them but really shouldn't), because I want to avoid conflict.

Argh.

So, how do we satisfy our needs?

We call a **„strategy"** something that we do in order to satisfy a need.

Every time when we link a need to a place, a time, or a person, we are talking about a strategy.

Need: Well-being

Strategies to well-being: sleep, sauna, spend time with people we value and who like us, hug our pets, practise sports, go into nature, have a (sun)bath...

Violent strategies

- force or manipulate somebody else to do or to think something
- intentionally use power over somebody resulting in psychological harm, deprivation, maldevelopment, injury or death without their consent
- hurt ourselves

Sometimes we choose strategies that are violent to others or ourselves:

- need for calm → slap crying child

- need for esteem → bulimia, anorexia

- need to belong → crossing our own boundaries

Everything we do, we do to satisfy our needs.

Everything others do, they do to satisfy their needs.

Sometimes we use strategies that are placeholders for unidentified or ignored needs and feelings.

Everytime when I'm frustrated or anxious I eat.
A corresponding need may be: comfort, relaxation, warmth...
... and I could find other strategies to fulfill those needs than compulsive eating.

We learn to use certain strategies early in life.

How did/do our parents deal with
sorrow, anger, sadness, misunderstanding,
conflict?

Can you see a pattern
that you yourself repeat?

Exercise: Strategy sun

The aim of this exercise is to find strategies for a need you have yourself.

Strategies involving another person/friend/partner/co-worker/etc. can be discussed cooperatively.

Yay!

Now we have some tools to understand ourselves and our own **feelings, needs, and strategies** to satisfy our needs.

Later we'll look at how to communicate our needs to others. But now, let's look at how to deal with conflicts involving others and ourselves.

Conflict arises

...when strategies of different people for meeting individual needs clash

Ignoring conflict is like ignoring that somebody needs to pee: It'll just get messy.

Conflict is an opportunity

... to make improvements that make more people happy on the long run

Dealing with conflict

Evolutionary programmed response:
flight, fight or freeze

We have no choice over these
initial reactions.

We have a choice
over how we respond after
this initial split-second impulse.

Solving conflicts

- Acknowledge there is a conflict: stop.

- Take your time.

- Make space to solve the conflict.

- Listen (just listen).

- Practise empathy.

- Communicate cooperatively.

- Identify shared needs.

- Collaborate with each other to develop strategies that meet everybody's needs.

This also works for inner conflicts!

:)

Solving inner conflicts

- Acknowledge there is an inner conflict: stop.
- Take your time.
- Make space to solve this conflict.
- Listen to yourself (identify feelings).
- Practise self-empathy (don't blame, just acknowledge what you are feeling).
- Learn about yourself.
- Identify needs.
- Develop strategies that meet your needs.

Getting back to anger...

We need to take time to get back to ourselves.

When we're angry, we can't talk or think clearly.

We could leave a message to the person that made us angry (if it's an individual), or to our allies (if it is a system that made us angry):

„Dear/Dear allies,
I would like you to know that I'm angry.
I'm doing my best.
Please help me."

When we suffer or a loved one suffers, we/they might not have enough energy to overcome our/their bad feelings and need help.

What is empathy?

The ability to sense other people's emotions, coupled with the ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling.

With empathy we can
try to see things from the other person's point of
view & try to understand.

Understanding != agreement.

Through understanding we can see that others
have their **own reasons for their behavior.**

Empathy is not

Fraternization

"I am totally like you in thinking that..."

Playing down / soothing

"Oh, come on, it's not as bad..."

Theme stealing

"Yes, the same happened to me with ... when ...!"

Unsolicited advice

"You should go see a psychologist ..."

When I am being empathic with someone, I am not responsible to find a solution for them.

Exercice: Listening to each other

Find a partner. Decide who starts to talk. The other one just listens. Then change roles.

Solving conflicts

~~Acknowledge there is a conflict: stop.~~

~~Take your time.~~

~~Make space to solve the conflict.~~

~~Listen (just listen).~~

~~Practise empathy.~~

- Communicate cooperatively.

- Identify shared needs.

- Collaborate with each other to develop strategies that meet everybody's needs.

Communicating cooperatively

From blame to „I"-statement

„You never get to meetings on time, you just don't care."

→

„When meetings don't start on time, I feel irritated, because I have a limited amount of time that I can stay. I would like it if our meetings could start at the agreed time. How can we make that happen?"

„Why do you always critize me?"

→

„When you talk to me, I often think I'm being critized."

„Your (insert body feature here) is too big/small/long/short/ugly/wrong.“

→

„I'm not in the mood today.“

The four steps

aka „a simple algorithm"

1. Observation
2. Feelings
3. Needs
4. Request

When I (see, hear) ...
I feel ...
because I need/value ....
Would you be willing to ...?

When you suddenly take out your phone when you are talking with me
My need of connection is not being met.
Would you be willing to take phone time explicitly and tell me that you need to spend time on the phone so I can do something else in the meantime?

I had to solve 31 bugs this week

Now I feel burnt out and exhausted

Because I need creativity.

Could I limit my work time and be more focused so that I can enjoy another creative activity in my free time? <u>OR</u> Would I be willing to ask my co-workers/boss to share the work differently from now on so that I can work more creatively?

You were shouting at me at the diner yesterday. Now I feel petrified because I value equality, consideration and respect. Would you be willing to talk about this with me tomorrow evening? I'd also like to invite a mutual friend to listens to us. Would that work out for you?

Different means to communicate needs:

Because I need...

Because I value...

Because I love/like...

Because I long for ...

Because ... is important to me.

Because my priority is/was ...

The four steps
aka „a simple algorithm"

1. Observation

~~2. Feelings~~

~~3. Needs~~

4. Request

Observation

Observing a situation without judging or evaluating it.

„You fiddle with your phone" / „I had to solve shitloads of stupid bugs" / „You're treating me like a piece of shit."

→

„You take out your phone" / „I had to solve 31 bugs" / „You were shouting at me at the diner."

„You're always on the phone" „My co-workers are frequently uncooperative." = evaluation

always, never, ever, whenever,
often, frequently, seldom, even
= judgment words

Observation is
without comparison to the past.

Tell me what happened in your reality, and I tell you what happened in mine.

A: „I see that there are 2 sweaters scattered on the floor.“ (that should be washed)
B: „I have already put 5 T-Shirts into the washing machine and I was about to take care of the sweaters.“

The four steps

aka „a simple algorithm"

1. ~~Observation~~

2. ~~Feelings~~

3. ~~Needs~~

4. Request

Communicate a need with a request:

A request is positively asking another person - or oneself - to do something specific (concrete & fulfillable), without unnecessary emotion (such as sarcasm), while tolerating their answer, even if negative.

A request is different from a demand
In that you accept „No" for an answer.

„You should attend the meeting now."
„No, I want to finish what I'm working on."
„You never do what you're supposed to!"
(demand)

words „should", „ought", „must", or „have to"
are often subtle demands

Positive

„Would you be willing to stop taking out your phone?"

→

„Would you be willing to tell me when you need time to make a phone call?"

Specific

„Would you be willing to stop taking out your phone while you are talking to me?"

→

„When you are talking to me, would you be willing to take phone time explicitly?"

**Kind, firm and clear
without unnecessary emotion**

Don't: *„I am so sick of you taking out your phone while you are talking to me, will you be less of a unempathic bear and stop wasting my time?"*

„I only had to work on solving bugs today. Would I be willing to talk to my co-workers tomorrow to propose that we share the work load differently?" (request)

Reflective request

„Would you please summarize what you understood?“

= asking for clarification & empathy and offering to listen. I want to know what you heard me say.

Different from screaming *„Did ou hear me?!“*

Great, but what about my own needs when somebody requests something from me?

Goal of request is connection, not compliance.

Idea: caring equally for everyone's needs, but:

You decide
what you want to do,
when &
under which conditions.

And you are allowed to change your mind.

And you're allowed to say no.

We don't want others or ourselves to do anything out of

Fear (of the reaction when you don't),

Hope (that you'll be loved more if you fulfill a request),

Insecurity (that we won't be accepted if we don't fulfill a request)

Shame/Guilt (for not complying with a request),

The idea that one MUST comply with a request.

Assertiveness

Expressing own feelings, needs, rights & opinions while maintaining respect for other people's feelings, needs, rights & opinions.

Assertiveness is also ...

encouraging others to be open and honest about their views and feelings, listening to them and responding appropriately, whether you're in agreement with these views or not.

Solving conflicts

~~- Acknowledge there is a conflict: stop.~~

~~- Take your time.~~

~~- Make space to solve the conflict.~~

~~- Listen (just listen).~~

~~- Practise empathy.~~

~~- Communicate cooperatively.~~

- Identify shared needs.

- Collaborate with each other to develop strategies that meet everybody's needs.

Identifying (shared) needs

The phone user	The friend
My priority is distraction.	I need connection and presence.
The bug solver	**The co-workers/boss**
I need creativity in my work.	We need to get work done. We want our workers to be happy and healthy.
The person shouting	**The person shouted at**
I need to be heard. I need to be understood.	I value equality, recognition and respect.

Solving conflicts

~~- Acknowledge there is a conflict: stop.~~

~~- Take your time.~~

~~- Make space to solve the conflict.~~

~~- Listen (just listen).~~

~~- Practise empathy.~~

~~- Communicate cooperatively.~~

~~- Identify shared needs.~~

- Collaborate with each other to develop strategies that meet everybody's needs.

Collaborate with each other to develop strategies that meet everybody's needs,

i.e. listen, identify, find common ground, find what is (un)acceptable and under which conditions.

What could the bug solver and their co-workers/boss do?

What could the person with the phone and their friend do?

What could the person shouting and the person shouted at do?

Feedback

„What do you think about this proposal?"
„Could we try that for a week and then check back in 7 days if it worked out?"
"How are we doing resolving this issue?"

Exercise from own experience & point of view

You can also do this exercise by trying to imagine how the other person experienced the same moment from their point of view.

Non Violent Communication (NVC) https://en.wikipedia.org/Nonviolent_communication
Feelings list https://www.cnvc.org/Training/feelings-inventory
Needs list https://www.cnvc.org/Training/needs-inventory
4 steps process https://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/aboutnvc/4partprocess.htm

Resolving conflicts https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/conflictbooklet.pdf
Active listening https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/activelistening
Active listening exercise https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/active_listening
Consensus based decision making https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/consensus
Giving feedback https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/feedback
Gaining perspective on an argument exercise
https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/gaining_perspective_on_an_argument

Thich Nhat Hanh: „How to Love"
„Praktische Selbst-Empathie" by Gerlinde Ruth Fritsch (German)

Gift of emotional courage:
https://www.ted.com/talks/susan_david_the_gift_and_power_of_emotional_courage

Image: „I think I smash buildings..." by Avery Monsen „All my friends are dead"
Music: Evolution Control Committee, Against (Plagiarhythm 2.0) Me: Regret (The Musical)