Emergence of NVC a Life-inspired, self-organizing vision to support learning, living, sharing, and evolving Nonviolent Communication

about this notebook (edited 2008-4-8, created 2006-10-24) |

This notebook has both an interactive version and a print version.

In the interactive version, you begin with one or very few sections visible. When you see some **text like this**, it means you can click on it to open up another section, which will appear in addition to the already open sections. In this way, the visible notebook grows as you read it. You can also **close a section** at any time.

Other links are to external sites, such as The Center for Nonviolent Communication. If you click one of those links, you'll get a new web browser window showing the external site.

The print version of this notebook is made for sequential reading and printing. It has main sections open and an order that I hope is easy to read. When you see some **text like this**, you'll know that there's a section elsewhere by that title. Please note the **related documents**, which are linked to but not contained in this notebook. There is also a PDF version of this notebook, ready to print.

If you're looking for recent changes, see the **change log**. If you make a nontrivial change, please add a comment there with date and pointer.

I encourage you to join the discussion group at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/emergence-of-nvc. There is also a slide presentation.

New (March 2007): See the blog "NVC Evolves" and the discussion group of the same name.

plan (edited 2006-12-4, created 2006-10-19) |

Our goal is to support learning, living, and sharing of **NVC consciousness**. We see tremendous potential for growth, and so we want to create a system that nurtures that growth. The main parts of the plan are as follows.

- Create a web-based **matching system** that helps connect people sharing and seeking NVC.
- Focus on **supporting rather than evaluating**.
- Create and nurture a **learning community**.
- Enable rapid growth of **NVC consciousness** by replacing **the top-down assessment bottleneck** with **self-supporting community feedback**.
- Support the continuing **evolution of the NVC process**.

This plan has some **background**, **benefits**, and **principles**. People have asked some **questions**.

background (edited 2006-11-16, created 2006-10-21) |

The original impetus for this exploration came from a re-examination, begun in August 2006, of the certification process used in PSNCC. We began this process in response to dissatisfactions with our current process and the desire for more support, inclusion, efficiency of people sharing NVC, as well as more harmony with NVC consciousness. Meanwhile, it is became clear that the some of our difficulties are also experienced with the CNVC certification process.

benefits (edited 2006-10-31, created 2006-10-19) |

- Enable the **exponential growth** of **NVC consciousness**, while nurturing its health, by means of **self-supporting community feedback**, replacing **the top-down assessment bottleneck**.
- Greatly increase the learning resources available to everyone by evolving from a mostly closed and individual learning process into a **learning community**.
- Provide much more useful information than certified/non-certified.
- Operate more in harmony with the values of NVC. Some of the people who are disturbed with the current certification process see hierarchy, right/wrong, and demand in it.
- Meet the **needs behind the certification strategy** at least as effectively as that strategy.

principles (edited 2006-11-16, created 2006-10-19) |

- Top-down quality control inhibits growth, as in **the top-down assessment bottleneck**, while a bottom-up system can support quality and growth.
- Like sociocracy, our plan is based on the principles of cybernetics, the theory of adaptive, self-organizing, evolving systems. The key ingredients of such systems are shared goals, individual creativity (chaos), and effective feedback.

needs behind the certification strategy (edited 2007-2-22, created 2006-10-23) |

What needs motivate organizations like PSNCC or CNVC to offer certification? The closest I have found is the following statement of "goals" from CNVC, on [the purposes for cnvc trainer certification](#):

> CNVC has two long-term goals for the certification process. One is to ensure that the next generation and succeeding generations are taught NVC in a way that preserves and protects the integrity of the NVC process. The second is to create a community of trainers who want to work with CNVC to fulfill our vision.

I'd like to connect deeply and clearly with the needs here and am puzzled.

- One might read "Integrity of the NVC process" as a need for *Integrity*, but I don't think that's it. In my understanding, the "of" in "Integrity *of* ..." signals a mixture of strategy with need. If the need were Integrity, then it might be better served by everyone following their own creative impulses. Perhaps the needs are *all* needs, given that **NVC consciousness** and "the NVC process" support people thinking and communicating in ways that are more likely to lead to all needs getting met. (See also thoughts on **evolution of the NVC process**.)
- The second goal is perhaps aimed at a need for Effectiveness.
- The second goal could also relate to needs for companionship (on the part of people in CNVC), and contribution (from the idea that working with more people would enable greater contribution).

Next, what needs motivate people to pursue certification? The same CNVC [statement](#) has a few guesses at "goals":

> We assume that the goals of certified trainers include: connection to CNVC, contribution to our vision, credibility, mutual support, and personal growth.

Needs underlying these assumed goals might include the following.

- Community
- Contribution
- Support
- Growth

We've heard a few others from certification candidates. Some might be heard as strategies, rather than "needs" in the NVC sense. I'd like to get help in indentifying the needs more deeply and precisely.

- Structure, such as requirements and deadlines, to help the candidate get through the process, step-by-step. *(Underlying needs: Effectiveness?)*
- Community. *(How does certification help? Are there NVC sub-communities that exclude non-certified folks?)*
- Contribution. *(Hmm. Is the connection to Contribution that if people get better support, they'll be better able to contribute?)*
- Credibility. *(Underlying needs? Contribution? Self-respect?)*
- Support. *(How? Discounted IITs? Visibility on cnvc.org?)*

exponential growth (edited 2006-11-16, created 2006-10-19) |

A population grows by reproduction. The more members there are, the more reproduction goes on, so the faster the population grows. Unless stopped by scarcity of resources, such as **the hunting-gathering bottleneck**.

The understanding and acceptance of powerful ideas also grows by reproduction and so follows this same pattern of growth.

NVC is such an idea. In this case, the resource scarcity is **the top-down assessment bottleneck**. This **plan** suggests removing that bottleneck and restoring its benefits (meeting needs differently).

evolution of the NVC process (edited 2007-10-27, created 2006-11-28) |

Integrity
One question that arises is

> *How do we preserve the integrity of the NVC process?*

Our answer is that *we don't need to*. The NVC process is a living system that has evolved for decades. For instance, it did not originally contain the Needs component, which is now central. The richness and effectiveness that we love in the current NVC process (four steps, key differentiations, etc) derive from that evolution. Imagine our loss if the process had been frozen decades ago. For this reason, we want to share the process, *while encouraging* its further evolution into yet richer and more effective forms. As inspirations yield new variations in theory and practice, I trust our feelings (feedback) to continue steering us toward living more in **NVC consciousness**. Meanwhile, the current NVC process is the most effective means we currently know, so its practice and theory will continue until something more effective comes along.

Here is another perspective on integrity and evolution.

supporting rather than evaluating (edited 2006-10-31, created 2006-10-19) |

We assume that people who share NVC *want* to improve their understanding and skills. So rather than defining requirements and methods of evaluation, we want to see energy invested in supporting their development.

We take inspiration from the Maryland Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO). Here is a comment from Ramona Buck, MACRO's Public Policy Director and wife of John Buck (emphasis hers):

> One of the most interesting things about the Maryland Program for Mediator Excellence is that it is not a certification program, nor is it a program to ASSURE excellence - it is a system to promote and support excellence. It is predicated on the hypothesis that **given the opportunity, people want to continue to improve forever - to be a better mediator tomorrow than they were today - to become more reflective and thoughtful about the craft of mediation all the time**. So the MPME is a program to support people in the effort to constantly pursue excellence. It is a wonderful grand experiment really testing whether our hypothesis is correct.

Along these lines, we want to replace training *prerequisites* with *advice and support* for learning, living, and sharing (including training) Compassionate Communication. As an example, we recommend these revisions of PSNCC's current

prerequisites.

learning community (edited 2006-11-6, created 2006-10-19) |

Here are some ideas about how members of the NVC community can all support each other's growth. Many of these ideas support learning by the *community itself* rather than the individuals, in that information is made accessible to everyone, including people who arrive in the community later.

- Attend each other's offerings (practice groups and workshops), take notes, and discuss.
- Presenters can record workshops and invite others to watch with them, pausing and discussing.
- Similar, but put the recording on the web in a way that people can easily pause and contribute comments. Comments can be free-form but also chosen from lists of feelings (maybe shown as icons) or needs met or unmet. Everyone else can see the comments as well, so all will learn. That shared learning provides more incentive to leave comments.
- Shared space for guessing needs & feelings, starting with a statement or dialog.
- Organic FAQ (frequently asked questions list).

matching system (edited 2006-10-31, created 2006-10-19) |

We envision a rich, open, and conveniently searchable repository of information about people sharing NVC, including the nature of their offerings (e.g., teaching, coaching, mediation, empathic listening) as well as their location, background, interests, and feedback.

- Everyone is welcome to create a profile with photo, bio, training, and experience.
- Everyone is welcome to provide feedback based on their experience of attending someone's trainings, receiving individual help, mediation, being in a practice group together, etc.
- The matching system collects information from profiles and feedback, and makes it convenient for people to search for the help they want.

self-supporting community feedback (edited 2006-11-16, created 2006-10-20) |

Bottom-up systems do address "quality" (or "health") issues, but do so without centralized authority. We envision the NVC community supporting quality through feedback, as recorded in the **matching system**. Certified trainers are welcome to participate in giving such feedback, as are others. Everyone in the system is free and encouraged to provide information about their experiences with others.

A fundamental question about supporting quality is whether to go for a control/power-over strategy or a connection/power-with strategy. This **plan** supports the latter. There are many expressions of NVC I don't agree with (and some of them come from CNVC and certified trainers). If I'm agreeing or disagreeing, then I must be in my head, so I'd like to shift back to feelings and needs, and share them together with clear observation and request. And breathe deeply and remind myself that I'm okay even if other people's ideas don't match mine.

the top-down assessment bottleneck (edited 2006-10-22, created 2006-10-19) |

There are many fewer assessors than candidates for NVC certification. Also, those assessors are very busy and get paid very little for their assessment work. Availability of assessor time and attention is a bottleneck in the growth of the the population of certified trainers. Similarly, certification candidates depend on mentorship from certified trainers, for both learning and approval. These mentors are also busy, paid little, and fewer in number than the candidates. So mentorship is another bottleneck.

These bottlenecks limit the spread of NVC, just as **the hunting-gathering bottleneck** limited the spread of humanity.

the hunting-gathering bottleneck (edited 2006-10-26, created 2006-10-19) |

When people lived by hunting and gathering, the growth rate of the human race was limited by the rate at which nature fed them. ("People are made of food", in the words of Daniel Quinn.) The agricultural revolution removed that bottleneck

and enabled the human population explosion (**exponential growth**). Why? Because the people made their own food, so the more humans there were the more food they could produce.

slashdot <small>(edited 2006-11-6, created 2006-10-20) |</small>

[Slashdot](#) is a web site featuring technical news submitted and rated by users. (See [Wikipedia article](#).) It is notable for early experimentation in community-based quality management. Participants take turns rating ("moderating") articles, and cumulative ratings are used to filter what readers see (according to threshold chosen by the reader). Members who accumulate high ratings (creating "positive karma") get to moderate more often, and their posts have higher initial rating. There are some fine points to keep the system healthy and prevent abuse of power. See the [Slashdot explanation](#).

questions <small>(edited 2007-10-27, created 2006-10-19) |</small>

Question: Can't we eliminate the bottleneck by adding more assessors?
Answer: I don't think so. One of the key insights I came away with from reading "Emergence" (by Steven Johnson) is that *any top-down* approach to quality is in direct opposition to growth. When I consider what will happen under the current certification scheme if we come up with more assessors, here's what I expect:

- More assessors lead to more certified trainers and more trainings of the quality that certification is intended to support.
- Then more people who learn and love NVC and who want to get certified and thus rely more on assessors.
- Again, the assessor supply lags behind the demand, so the bottleneck is back.

Given the effectiveness of NVC, I do believe that **exponential growth** is possible. To support quality, we'd need corresponding exponential growth of the assessor pool. The only way I know to do that is to replace the top-down approach with a bottom-up one, as **slashdot** did. Specifically, this plan recommends removing the distinction between assessors and assessees, empowering and encouraging everyone to assess.

Question: How does the plan support the development of people wanting to share NVC?
Answer: The same means of support we have now still apply (as resources rather than requirements), such as Marshall & Lucy's books, practice groups, workshops, personal mentoring, and IITs. For more specific suggestions, see the final paragraph of our thoughts on **supporting rather than evaluating**. Beyond the current methods, see our ideas for nurturing a **learning community**.

Question: I am comfortable with self governing chaos as a way to bring forth new energy and evolution. Are there ideas/principles/tools that can help support those who may not be as comfortable with the chaos?
Answer: Whatever nurtures trust in Life, since Life works through chaos and evolution. For instance, empathy or meditation.

Question: Notice that 31% of our recent survey participants are over 55 and wondering if they will use an online feedback system?
Answer: The matching and feedback system can be as easy to use as our current web site. People who don't use the web could phone someone (volunteer or paid person) who would help them do simple online searches. The results could be conveyed by phone or printed & mailed.

Question: Will the **matching system** be on the PSNCC web site?
Answer: I'd prefer it be on a separate site, fluidly linked to from PSNCC's. I see PSNCC as the original incubator in which this plan sprouts, evolves and demonstrates its effectiveness. Beyond incubation, I envision the system serving people globally.

Question: How to encourage people to visit the site and provide feedback?
Answer: I hope by inspiring them in terms of needs. May take some experimentation. Somehow, many people do leave feedback on review sites.

Question: I am curious if people with a less fulfilling experience tend to be more vocal on feedback sites than those with more fulfilling experiences, any data?

Answer: Nothing quantitative. There are a lot of popular review sites, and I see them as pretty balanced with satisfied/dissatisfied feedback.

Question: Does the plan include issuing a certificate?
Answer: No.

Question: Is the plan a replacement for certification?
Answer: Yes.

Question: How would people develop their skills in learning & sharing NVC?
Answer: Essentially the same as now — people attend workshops, IITs, etc. And they gather and apply feedback when they train, lead a practice group, etc.

Question: And how do they become visible and attract students & clients, without certification & endorsement?
Answer: Through the **matching system**.

Question: What happens when an organization wants to find a presenter? Without certification of some kind, how does the organization get assurance of quality of instruction?
Answer: They use the **matching system** to read customer feedback and make an informed choice. Sandy Fox illustrates with a story of her recent phone purchase. She was interested in a particular Motorola phone and read many customer reviews of it that complained of various problems. Instead of going with those reviews, she went with the label of "Motorola", i.e., "certified". After she got the phone, she discovered it has all the problems that the customers reported.
Answer: The **matching system** allows & encourages people who give and receive NVC help to provide lots of information, and then summarizes and presents that information automatically. For instance, clients might be looking for someone with special interest and expertise in divorce or grief work, or may want a giraffe who uses NVC intensively in their own primary intimate relationship.

Question: What about negative remarks?
Answer: They get thrown in the pot with all the others. Let system feedback sort out the "quality" of feedback, as on **slashdot**.

Question: Is Wikipedia still open? I heard that they had problems and closed access.
Answer: Yes. Quality maintenance in the face of biases and inaccuracies is a fundamental part of the Wikipedia ecosystem. It's handled by the users.

Question: How to fund creating the framework?

Question: Can this system encourage more feedback than the current one?
Answer: The new system would make better use of the current level of feedback, in that feedback becomes visible and searchable by everyone. It also motivates me more to get feedback from other NVC providers. And then I'm motivated to exchange observations and feedback.
Answer: As people get to see more information, they will become curious and are more likely to show up to see for themselves. Then they can give feedback of their own, stimulating more curiosity, and so on.

Question: Can we add recommendations for learning/development of people who train or want to train effectively?
Answer: Yes. Ask people who have been training what preparation was helpful to them. The main point here is that these questions are all about helping people get ready and to decide when they are ready. It's not an exam to be graded by an authority.

Question: What about the trainer development guidelines that some people have worked so hard on already?
Answer: Include some of them in our guesses about what would be useful to people who want to train.

Question: How do we formulate the list of questions that help people choose someone for an intro?
Answer: make a guess, and ask for feedback to improve the guess (as in empathic listening), and ask people to

contribute the questions that they would like to have answered.

related documents (edited 2007-10-27, created 2006-10-31) |

This notebook refers to some related documents:

- *A pathway for learning, living, and sharing Compassionate Communication*. A revision of the PSNCC website training path.

  http://nvc-evolves/emergence/other/RevisedWebsiteTrainingPath.doc

- *Emergence of NVC*. A PowerPoint presentation.

  http://nvc-evolves/emergence/other/emergence.ppt

- *NVC Evolves — Explorations in evolving the understanding, living, and teaching of Nonviolent Communication*. A blog.

  http://nvc-evolves.org

- PDF version of this notebook: http://nvc-evolves/emergence/other/emergence.pdf

change log (edited 2007-10-27, created 2006-11-6) |

Here's a list of nontrivial changes (substantive rather than spelling, punctuation, etc), in reverse time order, starting on 2006-11-06.

- 2007-10-27 the group-based TiddlyWiki software I was using no longer runs on this server, so I've reverted to a single-author setup.
- 2007-03-02: Added reference to the blog "NVC Evolves".
- 2007-02-09: Added two more guesses on underlying **needs behind the certification strategy**
- 2006-12-04: Replaced TiddlyWiki tutorial link in **contribute to this notebook** with this one.
- 2006-11-28: Added mention of the new discussion group at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/emergence-of-nvc. New section **evolution of the NVC process** (was in **questions**).
- 2006-11-16: Changed "proposal" to "plan" throughout, now that I have enough clarity & confidence to know I'm going to pursue realizing the Emergence vision.
- 2006-11-06: In **questions**, "Can't we eliminate the bottleneck by adding more assessors?"