

Small Group Ministry Session
Asking and Being Asked for Help
Unitarian Universalist Community Church, Augusta, ME March 2023

Opening Words:

An attitude is in the mindset, the core beliefs we carry with us into a situation. Compassionate Communication (or Nonviolent Communication) rests on the assumption that people's deepest satisfaction can be found in connecting fully with our own needs, including our need to be supportive of others in meeting their needs. Those who practice Compassionate Communication and many others see the most basic energy of the universe as one of cooperation, connection, and compassion – that our hunger to give and receive these is our core motivator. The complexity of issues in the world today seems to increase the request for help in many areas. This session focuses on support for ourselves as we engage in compassionate communication.

Check-in, Sharing: How is it with you today?

Topic/Activity:

This session is based on *Nonviolent Communication* by Marshall B. Rosenberg, 2nd edition, 2003. There Nonviolent Communication has also come to be known as Compassionate Communication. The session plan is a way of applying compassionate communication to ourselves when help is requested, regardless of the setting. We also apply the practice to those with whom we are interacting.

“O please help me discern what to do.

She asked me for help, not in so many words but by her countenance, in her tired demeanor, her sighs. Actually, that was probably a stronger ‘ask’ than just words.

And then she asked what she should be doing and whether she was doing things ‘right’.

O dear! I want to help. What does helping involve and what does it require? What does it mean about me if I help, or if I do not help? What do I have to offer?

O dear!”

Compassionate Communication supports *us* as we express ourselves and listen to others in areas of observations, feelings, needs and requests. The clearer these are, the freer we are to engage from our own perspective and in a way that increases understanding of ourselves in the situation with another person. This is an overview of four areas of awareness. Reflection questions follow.

**Observation:* description of what can be seen, heard, and felt without evaluation or judgment.

**Feelings:* name or identification of emotions. Feelings point to needs, met or unmet.

**Needs:* values and desires that are universal and not specific to individuals. The more directly feelings can be connected to needs, the easier it is to respond compassionately.

**Request:* action that is doable, clear, and stated in action language. There are *action requests* where someone is asking to have something done, and *connection requests* that ask whether what was said is clearly understood. A request means that there is a choice to hearing “No”, which signals an opportunity for further dialog.

Reflection questions: Share regarding questions that appeal to you, or to a situation in which you have been asked for help, using these or other questions that come up for you.

Compassionate Communication relates to me as well as toward another person.

Are my observations, pro or con, made without evaluation or judgment?

What impact does clear observation have on my communications?

Is what I think I am feeling an actual feeling? Or is there a 'feeling behind the feeling'?

Am I feeling my feelings or projecting the feelings of another person?

What need is a feeling pointing to?

How do my feelings and needs impact my ability in compassionate communication?

When people ask me for help, what are they asking for?

How do I set boundaries that permit me to continue engaging or to leave the situation?

Checking-Out, Likes and Wishes: How was the session for you?

Closing Words:

Compassionate Communication describes the basic energy of the universe as one of cooperation, connection, and compassion that relies on communication. Maybe the boundaries that help me keep in line with the vision are embedded within the four areas of awareness in Compassionate Communication.

May my *observations* be as objective as possible, and may I pause and rephrase so I can feel the clarity and possibly freshness of communication at the core of interaction.

May my *feelings* be my own, rather than how I think others perceive me. May my feelings and *needs* guide to what needs attention immediately or ongoing.

May my response to *requests* consider the multiple factors of my life so that I am able to balance my own energies and connect deeply with my own needs and those around me.

Likewise, may my own and other people's deepest satisfaction be found in supporting each other with compassion.

Helen Zidowecki

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