

**Tool 5.4**

Mobilizing through art and dialogue

CLARITY Competence Area:

Taking collective action for climate resilience, ecosystem regeneration, and societal transformation

GreenComp Competence Area:

Acting for sustainability

Why use this tool?

This tool is about communicating about climate change and climate resilience, as well as engaging with a diverse audience, in ways that feel exciting, fulfilling and enriching for all parties involved. Some activities mobilize the arts to make environmental issues and climate change tangible, as well as encourage creativity and connection (with each other and with nature), so as to foster local action among the wider community. Other activities acknowledge the difficulty of tackling climate change in a polarized world, with multiple simultaneous constraints weighing on us.

Activity 5.4.2

Engaging in non-violent communication

Overview

This activity has been crafted to introduce learners to the concept of nonviolent communication. Nonviolent communication (NVC) is a technique that can help you and your learners discuss difficult situations and concepts in a respectful and empathetic way. As part of this activity, learners are prompted to respond to various situations using nonviolent communication, and invited to continue using nonviolent communication going forward.

Curriculum linkage

Language & Literature, Ethics, Religion & Philosophy and Civics & Social Studies (Psychology).

Competences built

Collaboration, accountability, perspective-taking, emotional regulation and active listening.

Prep Work

Make "situation cards": These cards can be made with paper or cardboard, and you should write or draw on them a negative situation that your learners might encounter – for example, not being taken seriously when you ask serious questions (e.g. about climate). Consider the lives and social dynamics of your learners. What challenges might they face? Try to use situations that are relevant to them. See some examples at the end of the activity card.



BASIC INFO

Age range:

7+

Duration:

40-60 minutes

Group size:

Small groups of 2-6

Level of difficulty:

Intermediate

Materials/space required:

10-20 situation cards, whiteboard and/or large piece of paper, markers

Location:

Classroom/Common area

Engagement of external stakeholders:

No



Competences/activities to practice first by the teacher

- Activity 3.3.1 “Active Listening” can offer a solid foundation for this activity, but is not required.
- Activity 1.1.1 “Climate Emotions Wheel” can be a good activity for learners who may not be used to expressing emotions in words.

Levels in the activity

1. Introducing Nonviolent Communication
2. New habits
3. Follow-up

Level 1: Introducing Nonviolent Communication

1. Begin the activity by asking the question “Have you ever been upset, and did someone make you feel worse because of what they said?” Give the learners time to share their experiences, if they feel comfortable doing so.
2. Introduce the concept of Nonviolent Communication (NVC). Make sure to emphasize how Nonviolent Communication helps people talk in a way that is understanding and empathetic, and can help resolve problems without hurting other people's feelings.
3. Explain the four key elements of NVC. It might be helpful to write this on a whiteboard or a large piece of paper and display it for the class.
 - a. Observations: Describe what happened without judgment
 - b. Feelings: Express how you feel about it
 - c. Needs: Identify what you need
 - d. Request: Make a kind request to meet your needs
4. Organise the learners in groups of 2-6 and hand each group 1-3 Situation cards. Each Situation card will have an emotionally difficult scenario on it that learners in your classroom might encounter. One card could be “Someone did not take you seriously when you asked a serious question (e.g. about climate).”
5. Get the groups to role-play these scenarios using nonviolent communication, with each learner getting their chance to express their feelings about the scenario to the others in their group. Reiterate the four core steps of nonviolent communication, and have the learners practice using the same structure. An example of this might be:



- a. Observations: Describe what happened without judgment – “I heard/saw that you did not take me seriously when I asked a serious question (e.g. about climate).”
 - b. Feelings: Express how you feel about it – “I feel sad, frustrated, unimportant, unheard.”
 - c. Needs: Identify what you need – “I need to feel that my questions are listened to and taken seriously.”
 - d. Request: Make a kind request to meet your needs – “It would make a big difference to me if you could take my question seriously. Could you do that?”
6. Debrief the learners after the activity. Ask them how it felt to use Nonviolent Communication. Did it change the way they thought about how they normally communicate? Did it make expressing their feelings easier? This is a good time to discuss empathy and explain that empathy is about understanding both your own feelings and needs as well as those of other people. A good way to finish is by asking the learners to reflect on how they will speak to each other going forward.

Level 2: New Habits

1. Challenge the learners to practice using Nonviolent Communication (NVC) for the next week. If applicable, have them record any attempts or insights in a journal.
2. When the week is over, invite learners to share their experiences with the class.

Level 3: Follow-up

1. Create a space in a common area of your classroom that can serve as a bulletin board. Label this space Nonviolent Communication Wall.
2. Next to the wall, place slips of paper that learners can use to write down situations and experiences they have solved using Nonviolent Communication and post them onto the bulletin board. Allow this wall to build with experiences organically.
3. Once a week (or month), as time permits, bring attention to the bulletin board and read out some of the situations that your learners have posted for the class to consider and reflect upon





Dos and don'ts

Do:

- Craft relevant and age-appropriate situation cards.
- Group learners in a way that allows them to broaden their perspective.

Don't

- Don't craft situation cards that could be traumatic or otherwise inappropriate.

Adaptations:

- If your learners are struggling to understand what to do, then inviting a pair of volunteer learners to model the activity in front of the class is a good way to get them started.
- If your learners already have a foundation in NVC and self-reflection, you can choose to invite them to create their own situation cards.
- If your learners struggle with expressing emotions, consider showing them the climate emotions wheel (see resources in 1.2.1) or doing this activity first.
- We invite you to adapt this activity to the specific needs of your learners, including by taking into account their neurodiversity. When adapting tools and activities for neurodivergent learners, please note it is not about treating others how you want to be treated, but how they want to be treated. Ask, listen, and stay open to different ways of learning and engaging.

Situation cards ideas relevant to climate change

Here are some examples of situation cards, which you can adapt so they are relevant for your learners:

Situation: Ideas about actions

You share an idea about climate change and how you would like to change things that you and others do, like starting a school compost, but someone laughs and says it won't make a difference.

Observations	Feelings	Needs	Requests
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Situation: Sad News

You feel sad after hearing about floods on the news, but when you try to talk about it, people change the subject.



Observations	Feelings	Needs	Requests
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Situation: Wildlife warrior

You talk about how worried you are about animals losing their habitats because of climate change, and someone says, "That's not a big deal."

Observations	Feelings	Needs	Requests
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Situation: A drawing of the future

You bring in a drawing of a green future city, and someone says it looks silly.

Observations	Feelings	Needs	Requests
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Situation: Nervous – and lacking support

You feel nervous talking about climate change, and someone laughs instead of listening.

Observations	Feelings	Needs	Requests
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References

This activity, designed by Legacy17, draws inspiration from Marshall Rosenberg's concept of Nonviolent Communication (NVC) and has been thoughtfully adapted to support learners in building competences for climate resilience. While it remains rooted in the core principles of NVC – such as empathy, clarity, and compassionate dialogue – it also applies these principles in the context of sustainability and education for climate resilience. Legacy17 has a long-standing commitment to integrating NVC approaches within Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), always with respect for the original NVC framework and community.

The Center for Nonviolent Communication. (n.d.). <https://www.cnvc.org/>



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