

Text of the Compassionate Communication program presented at the Sunday service of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Elgin www.uuce.org January 8, 2006 by Anne Ward and Bob Sandidge

Portions of the following were edited from Kelly Bryson's book, "Don't Be Nice, Be Real: A Handbook to Nonviolent Communication," and from articles by Kelly "Compassionate Communication: Confessions from a Cling-on" and "The Price of Nice." Both full articles and many others are available on PDF for free at www.NonviolentCommunication.com - "I don't want to be a Good Baby Anymore" by Anne Ward. Structure and continuity words by Bob Sandidge.

Introductory words:

Anne:

I'm old enough to have watched two generations of babies come into this world. And to have listened to two generations of people talk about those babies.

I was quite young when I became aware of a primary distinction among the babies that were the subject of those conversations. There are "good babies," and there are ... all the other babies.

Now, I don't know if your experience is similar to mine, but when my relatives talk about a "good baby," they're talking about a quiet baby. This baby will sleep through the night BEFORE the baby books say that's likely to happen.

She doesn't cry unless it's for a good reason, and she stops crying instantly when that reason is taken care of. She smiles often and makes only "nice" noises.

The study of Peace and Nonviolence has educated me in the ways that nonviolence is institutionalized in our lives ... almost from the moment we are born.

What I've learned from Speaking Peace has allowed me to make a radical and, until now, unimaginable decision:

I don't want to be a good baby anymore.

Song: Sing - Elly K - Listen and download - www.NewSongsOfPeace.org

Bob:

Anne... If a man is walking in a forest and makes a statement, but there is no woman around to hear it, is he still wrong?

Anne:

If a woman is walking in the forest and asks for something, and there is no man around to hear her; is she still needy?

Bob:

These Zen koans maintain their mystery when applied to the opposite gender.

Anne:

And when does it change from someone simply having a need to someone being a needy person?

Bob:

IS it written in Heaven somewhere? What is too much need, too little need and just right amount of need for the “normal person”?

Anne:

Ask Dr. Laura, Sally Jesse, Dr. Phil or any number of experts who claim to know for sure, for some very different answers.

Bob: (To audience)

Isn't it fun the new sophisticated ways our advanced culture has developed to make each other wrong?

Anne:

You'd better keep up with the latest technology and fashion trends or you'll be at the mercy of those who do.

Bob:

Of course, whoever has read the latest, most recent self help book has the clear advantage. For Example:

“Get real, would you?! Your Venusian codependency has got you trapped in your learned helplessness victim act and indulging in your empowerment phobia again.”

Anne:

“When you call me codependent, I feel (notice the political correctness of the feeling word) that you are simply projecting your

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own disowned, unintegrated, emotionally unavailable Martian counter-dependency to protect your inner two-year-old from ever having to grow up. So there!”

Bob:

A moment of silence please for The codependent’s prayer

Anne:

Our authority, which art in others, self abandonment be thy name, codependency comes when others will are done at home as it is in the workplace.

Give us this day our daily orders (Give us this day our crumbs of love), give us a sense of indebtedness as we try to get others to feel indebted to us.

And lead us not into freedom but deliver us from awareness.

For thine is the serfdom and the weakness and the dependency for ever and ever. Amen.

Bob:

I’m reminded of junior high where everybody was afraid of the really cool kids because they knew the latest, most potent put-downs and were not afraid to use them.

Anne:

But there must be another reason that the bestselling book in the history of the world is Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus by Dr. Grey.

Could it be that our culture is oh-so-eager for a quick fix?

What a relief it must be for some people to think, “Oh that’s why we fight like cats and dogs, it’s because he’s from Mars and I’m from Venus, I just thought we were messed up in the head.”

Bob:

I am worried that simply becoming more educated or well read is just “chopping at the leaves of ignorance but is not cutting at the roots.”

Anne:

What if there was a language designed not to put down or control each other but rather to grow and nurture what’s alive in each of us?

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Bob:

What if you could develop a consciousness of expressing your feelings and needs [What's Alive In You] fully and completely without having any intention of blaming, attacking, intimidating, begging, punishing, coercing or disrespecting the other person?

Anne:

What if there was a language that kept us focused on what is truly alive in each us ... right now, and prevented us from making moralistic judgments like mini-Gods?

Well - we would like to welcome you to a world where everyone's needs can be met And what's uniquely alive in each of us is celebrated!

It's a world where communications skills become life-enriching tools and emotional intelligence is valued over intellectual analysis.

Welcome to the world of Compassionate Communication or Speaking Peace.

Bob:

With its focus on human feelings and needs, the practice of Speaking Peace is a life-changing way of interacting that facilitates the flow of communication needed to exchange information and resolve differences ... peacefully!

Anne:

With its reliance on objective observations rather than evaluations, Speaking Peace avoids making people defend themselves from value-laden judgments.

And by employing clear requests in place of demands, Compassionate Communication raises the bar for communication skills by allowing everyone to get their needs met on their own terms, without coercion, fear of retribution, or a loss of self-esteem.

Bob:

Compassionate Communication provides a wealth of simple principles and effective techniques to maintain a laser focus on the human heart and the other person ... even when they have lost contact with that part of themselves.

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You know how it is when you are hurt or scared, suddenly you become cold and critical or aloof and analytical.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if someone could see through the mask and warmly meet your need for understanding or reassurance.

Anne:

What we are talking about are some tools for staying locked onto the other person's humanness even when they have become an alien monster.

Bob:

Remember that episode of Star Trek where Captain Kirk was turned into a Cling-on, and Bones was freaking out? (I felt sorry for Bones because I've had friends turn into Cling-ons too.)

But then Spock was all like Vulcan cool and able to perform a mind meld to see that it really was still James T. Kirk trapped inside the alien form.

And finally Scotty was able to put some dilithium crystals into his phaser and destroy the alien cloaking device, freeing the captain from his Cling-on form.

Anne:

Great work Scotty! Wouldn't it be great if we all knew someone who could apply a little Compassionate Listening to free us from our Cling-on consciousness and communication?

Just to have someone see us as a being with human needs and feelings instead of as a needy Cling-on would be a refreshing breeze to my crusty soul.

Because most of us don't get that, it takes many years or lifetimes to learn to express our real needs and feelings to others.

Bob:

I have thought of myself as both parasite and host at different times in different relationships.

In one relationship I would be the parasitic, needy, begging puppy dog, desperate victim Cling-on and in the next I would be the

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righteous irritated, Vulcan aloof, sophisticated, space-needing, guilty abandoner.

Anne:

Both suck.

Let's see ... ?? Men are Vulcans, Women are Cling-ons?
If so - I think I'm androgynous.

Bob:

I remember being on the phone to a girlfriend who had been telling me her troubles for some 20 minutes.

I remember beginning to think "This is the neeeeeeeeediest woman God ever put on this earth!"

What I didn't know at the time was that "needy" doesn't exist by itself.

Needy is an inter-relational word. It describes what is going on between two people; not within one person.

When I am thinking that someone else is needy, it's because I have needs in conflict with the other person's needs.

However I am too scared to be conscious of what I am wanting so I cope with my fear by dissociating from it.

I dissociated from my needs by going up into my head and analyzing what is wrong with her for not using her intuition to know that I am tired and offer to get off the phone without my having to ask her.

Anne:

How sad that our culture teaches us to think in terms of what is wrong with the other when they don't give us what we want.

How sad that our culture teaches us "Judgment Games" -

Bob:

Who's right and who's wrong?

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Anne:
Who gets rewarded and who gets punished?

Bob:
Who is in the In-Crowd and who are the losers?

Anne:
Some cultures, like the agricultural Hopi's, teach "Compassion Games." Who needs what, to be nurtured and to grow? How can I make life more wonderful for you? Here's how you can make life more wonderful for me.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if our culture taught us that all of our needs are wonderful opportunities for others to fulfill their life purposes by giving to us?

Bob:
So here I am on the phone with this girl friend. She wants to tell me more ... and more! At that moment - the truth was that I was tired and wanted to rest but was scared to say so. I was scared because I knew how guilty I would feel when she interpreted my need to rest as a rejection of her.

All she would have to say is

Anne:
"I stuck my neck out and asked you for little support and now I feel abandoned by you,"

Bob:
and I would go straight to guilt Hell.

Are these my only options?

1. To violently stuff my feelings and needs and end up resenting myself for giving in and resenting the other person for oppressing me?

2. Or to tell the truth about what I am feeling and needing and watch the other person get so wounded that they withdraw from the relationship. Or they attack me with anger or guilt and I end up getting defensive or defeated with guilt. Yuck! What happened to the Yum! and the Yeah! of relationships?

Anne:
Speaking Peace teaches us how to use the essence of empathy to find and feel the heart of the other:

Bob:
As soon as I turn my attention to what my partner is reacting to, feeling, needing and requesting ... it's a different world.

Instead of being caught in the control of her Cling-on tractor beam about to suck me into the Black Hole of her endless need, I'm being invited into the Secret Garden of a beautiful wonderchild, to play, and to give and receive nurturance.

As I develop my skill to listen to and from my heart (my feelings and needs) I no longer see men and women, .. needy Cling-ons or detached Vulcans; only sweet sentient beings offering to meet my needs ... or requesting that I meet theirs'.

And when there is choice - all needs are beautiful!

Anne:
See me beautiful, look for the best in me.
That's what I really am and what I want to be.

It may be hard to find, and it may take some time,
but see me beautiful.

See me beautiful, each and every day.
Could you take a chance?
Could you find a way?

To see me shining through, in everything I do,
and see me beautiful?
- Red Barber

Bob:
Last year over 250,000 people were trained in Nonviolent communications in more than 35 countries.

Marshall Rosenberg is the originator of Compassionate Communication. He teaches over 250 days a year.

Anne and I, about three years ago, received a rather unassuming invitation in the mail to attend a session on nonviolent

communication in Naperville. Little did we know that we were being invited to change our lives in ways we could never have anticipated.

Anne:

Marshall Rosenberg was the presenter that evening. We had never heard of him so were not quite sure what had drawn us there. But something happened that night. The more than two hundred people in that room, by going through a simple process, knew that they had lived until that moment using and justifying violent language on themselves and others.

Bob:

Marshall's teaching style is intimate, powerful and unassuming. With a history of conflict resolution in some of the most violent corners of the world and a spiritual energy that fills a room, with guitar and puppets in hand, Marshall shows us how to create a world of loving experience that, until now, we could not even permit ourselves to imagine.

Puppets? Marshall uses a Giraffe puppet to represent Giraffe language because Giraffes have the largest hearts of all land animals.

Marshall uses a Jackal puppet to represent dominance and violent language.

Anne:

Jackals are creatures that live in my head.
And whenever they speak I start feeling dread.
There are many breeds from critic to "poor me"
Forever diagnosing what is wrong with me.

They are comparison Jackals all ten feet tall,
Pointing out to me that I'm relatively small.

They remind me I'm nobody, not famous like Amous.
It's not something I'm proud of, in fact I feel shamous.
That I haven't done more with the gifts I've been given.
I've hardly done nothing, I've hardly been living.

And I don't have much money, not one share of stock.
On Christmas I'll bet I get rocks in my sock.

No, comparison Jackals are a fast breeding lot
They never get tired of pointing out what your not.

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Even if you've won an Olympic gold medal
Will your Jackal be happy and finally settle?
No, it will scream, "What's the matter with you?
If you'd only tried harder you could have won two?"
So whether you try your least or your most
You can trust your Jackal to move the goal post.

So how do you win the comparison game?
You are going to lose if to win is your aim.

You must lose to win which is simply done
By refusing to play games that aren't fun.
To lose the fear to appear second rate
And be uniquely you is a new kind of great.
To lose yourself to selfless esteem
And think your own thoughts and dream your own dream.
And always to ask for 100 percent
Of what ever you want so you'll never resent.
That way you'll never miss out on a chance
To invite yourself to enter life's dance.

- Kelly Bryson, MA, MFT - From Non-Coercive Self-Motivation
available at www.NonviolentCommunication.com in PDF

Bob:

You know.. the more I study Speaking Peace the more I learn that it's not about being "NICE." Now... the more I care about someone the more painful it is to be "nice" to them or to allow them to accidentally oppress me.

For instance, the other day, Anne came bouncing in saying she was very hungry and did I want to go to breakfast.

Well ... I really wanted to keep reading but I was too humble to admit that. I wish I had remembered what Golda Meir once said: "Quit being so humble, you're not that great!"

I chose instead to go to breakfast and subtly resent myself for giving up my desire to read.

The tragic part of the story occurred, of course, a few days later when she once again asked me to go somewhere while I was reading.

I felt the resentment rise up from my belly - it was a ball of anger and resentment that surprised me - I caught myself before anything came

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out and I heard a little voice saying, “I don’t want to do that to me again.”

Then I felt the temptation to project it .. and blame her for asking ... for invading my private space. Finally I told her what was going on with me. How I had given up my need ... for the sake of her breakfast the other morning.

She teared up as she told me she never again wanted to be the stimulus for me resenting myself or giving up my needs.

Wow! I began to see in a very practical way how important it is not to be NICE and how we cannot really sacrifice our own needs for the other, lest we trigger pain for them (and ourselves).

Anne:

Whenever our niceness allows another to oppress us and prevent us from getting our needs met, we either resent ourselves, the other or both. Everybody Loses.

There is no doubt in my mind that this is a form of violence.

It is a violence of self abandonment and whoever we allow to oppress us, we will subtly hate and withdraw from.

In our schools and families we are taught how to think in terms of moralistic judgments instead of in terms of our needs and requests.

Our teachers and parents think it is their job to teach us right from wrong, appropriate from inappropriate.

Bob:

Sadly what we learn is to disassociate from our feelings and needs and express ourselves in judgmental terms of what is wrong with other people.

We learn to say things like “It’s not fair” instead of “I’m hungry, would you share the donuts?” Or “You’re rude” instead of “I’m feeling distracted, would you lower your voice so I can hear the movie?”

Instead of gaining successful experiences of asserting our needs and getting what we want ... we take righteous pride in collecting painful experiences.

Anne:

We ask for what we want in the only way we have been taught, through moralistic judgments of others, which gets perceived as an attack and provokes a counter attack.

Then we not only don't get what we want - we end up feeling fear, shame and guilt.

Bob:

No wonder that we learn to stop expressing ourselves early on in life. We get so wounded by others reactions ... to how we express our needs .. that we shut down.

We learn: "If you are going to get along you have to go along."

Anne:

The really catastrophic acts of violence in the world were passively condoned by the "NICE" majority of the culture.

Bob:

In WWII large numbers of people, particularly certain international religions, knew what Hitler was up to and what was happening in the concentration camps but chose not to make waves.

Even the Nazi's themselves were trying to flee their inner demons and avoid the inner conflict created by German child rearing practices.

They were taught to "knock on the door of love - through obedience to authority."

This is why all they could do was be nice, go along, and never be naughty by saying NO to "Heil Hitler der fuhrer" (the father).

It was out of this fear of coping with the inner conflict between their culture and their nature that they supported their government in attacking some "Evil Empire" .. out there.
In that case it was the Jews.

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Today? ... What has our niceness made possible?

Anne:

In a play called 1,000 Clowns the lead character, Murray, talks to several social workers who have come to compel his nephew to attend school

Bob:

“Before I give him over to you I want to make sure he won’t learn how to become one of the “nice” dead people.

I want to be sure he’ll know when he’s chickening out on himself.

I want him to get to know exactly the special thing he is or else he won’t notice it when it starts to go.

I want him to see all the wild possibilities and to give the world a little goosing when he gets the chance.

I want him to know the subtle, sneaky, important reason that he was born a human being and not a chair.”

Closing song:

I never feel more given to than when you take from me.
When you understand the joy I feel caring for you.
And you know my giving isn’t done to put you in my debt,
But because I want to live the love I feel for you.
To receive with grace may be the greatest giving,
There’s no way I can separate the two.
When you give to me I give you my receiving,
And when you take from me I feel so given to.
- Ruth Bebermeyer

You can hear Anne and Bob present this (or down load mp3) at
www.PerfectingTheProcess.com/mp3/UUCEPeace.mp3
This PDF is at www.PerfectingTheProcess.com/pdf/UUService-1806.pdf

Anne and Bob consult and present seminars and workshops on Peaceful Communication for business and non-profit organizations.

Other NonViolent Communication - Compassionate Communication - Speaking Peace resources www.PuddleDancerPress.com - www.CNVC.org - www.NonviolentCommunication.com