

**Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) / Nonviolent Communication (NVC)**  
**My thoughts on similarities and differences:**  
**Cate Crombie 2006 (used by permission- ODC)**

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**The similarities:**

NVC and PET both offer a model of "power with" rather than "power over". They each make reference to Alphonse Kohn's work in the use of extrinsic motivations such as reward, praise or punishment which is not advocated in either model. Rather they are both underpinned by a humanistic, Rogerian, (Carl Rogers) empathic model using non-evaluative listening and non-blameful honest communication. PET is skills based and focused on parents using a no-lose method of conflict resolution and structured problem solving. With NVC, using similar skills as offered in PET, the aim is to establish a quality of relationship and connection where everyone's needs can be met joyfully and peacefully.

Both models foster the development of emotional or relational intelligence in all parties.

**The differences, in my opinion, are;**

- NVC uses a process and a four part model 1. **OBSERVATION** of behaviour or events (without interpretation or evaluation being mixed in). 2. Non-evaluative **FEELINGS** (feeling words such as '*ignored*', '*left out*', '*manipulated*', etc. are considered to contain thoughts and projection of responsibility for feelings onto the other person). 3. **NEEDS** (NVC includes a literacy of human needs and a listed itinerary of universal needs). 4. A clear, specific, doable **REQUEST** for connection or action is made as one step to meet those needs.
- These four pieces of information in NVC are applied in three modes: 1. Connection and understanding of self. 2. Expressing honestly without blame or judgment to others. 3. Actively, empathically listening to the other/s (child).
- PET uses a three part model a. Non-judgmental description of other's **BEHAVIOUR** b. **FEELINGS** and c. Identification of the **TANGIBLE EFFECT** of the [child's or other's] behaviour on the parent. There is no explicit **REQUEST** component in a PET 'I-Message' though it is implicit in establishing willingness for parties to engage in the problem solving process.
- NVC has the identification of '**NEEDS to be met**' at the core of the communication process. PET identifies the tangible or concrete **EFFECT** as a lead-in to problem solving or conflict resolution ( No-Lose Method or Method 111).
- Therefore, PET emphasizes a problem solving process while NVC focuses on getting to the quality of connection where solutions/strategies emerge naturally and organically. The **intention** in NVC is connection and the **attention** is specifically in the present moment.
- NVC is specific and detailed in the construction or deconstruction of the communication and takes care in seeking not to judge or blame even with the choice of feeling words. (IE as mentioned above words like *rejected*, *abandoned* which include an assumption of blame (or an analysis of the motivation behind the other person's action) are not included.)
- PET (in my experience) is more simple for people to grasp, specific, elegantly structured and graphically illustrated in offering distinctions on problem ownership (whose needs are not met), and actual skills training.

**Similarities:-**

**Background:** PET started in 1962 when Dr Thomas Gordon, in his practice as a clinical psychologist, noticed that most family difficulties were about (a) communication and (b) trying to 'make kids change' or (c) control their 'bad behavior'. PET advocates that children do not "misbehave" and does not put blame on them. Indeed, Tom Gordon said even parents are criticized; "Parents are blamed and not trained." and that psychology [and society] contributes to the blaming of parents, mothers especially. Both Rosenberg and Gordon studied under or worked with Carl Rogers. NVC, as we know it now, began around the mid 1960's according to Marshall Rosenberg in a conversation I had with him in September 2004.

The purpose of PET is to "help parents learn a philosophy and communication skills which will help them improve their relationships with their children and other important people in their lives". (PET Instructors Guide, 1989)

**PET Premise 1:** all kinds of reward and punishment can be discarded forever. Many parents are parenting as they were parented. Much parenting is based on the notion that there are winners vs. losers: authoritarian vs. permissive. (referred to as Method 1 = Authoritarian and Method 11 = Permissive)

**PET Premise 2:** PET offers a 'NO-LOSE' method of parenting. (Method 111 = Authoritative or Democratic) Parents are able to be real with children and remember their humanness (no requirement for false consistency or an artificial 'united front' between parents). Parents 'actively listen' {give empathy} to their children to understand the underlying need when children are giving clues and cues that they are upset (i.e. Owing a problem). EG Hitting siblings, saying things like "*nobody likes me at school*".

On the other hand, if the parent is experiencing (owning) a problem (needs not met), then they use I-Messages without judgement or blame {honestly expressing} to express to children what is happening for them. When both sets of needs are expressed, through I-messages and active listening, then PET uses (in my opinion) a very clear and simple, six-step problem solving method (called Method 111 in PET) to find a solution {strategy} that meets everyone's needs.

This dance between expressing "I-Messages", and {empathy/receiving}' actively listening', in PET is called "**Shifting Gears**". In other words 'shifting' from expressing oneself to receiving the other, as is also advocated in NVC.

I believe this critical process of 'shifting gears' is understated even in the 2000 edition of the PET textbook and therefore easily missed. I find this surprising as Tom Gordon himself stated (at a conference here in Australia in the late 1980's) that this is the most important skill in PET/ET. There is a little more emphasis on 'Shifting Gears' in the new FET (Family Effectiveness Training) materials.

Like NVC, PET also focuses on relationships {connection} - with the child, between parents and extended family. PET also offers the idea that parents viewing children's behaviour will feel "accepting" or "non-accepting" of that behaviour. There are 3 factors that will influence the choice between the two positions (i.e. the behaviour is considered to be unacceptable or acceptable). 1. The SELF (how the parent feels in general at the time or the kind of person the parent is) 2. The OTHER (who the child is EG some parents may feel accepting of a particular behaviour of a particular child) and 3. The ENVIRONMENT (where the particular behaviour is occurring).

NVC has us identify what needs of ours are not being met by the other's behaviour or the situation and NVC views 'acceptance' as a need rather than a feeling.

PET offers 'appreciative I-Messages' as an alternative to the use of praise. NVC uses a three part message to express gratitude or appreciation. 1. Observation of behaviour. 2. Feelings. 3. Needs met by other's actions.

PET alerts us to 12 Roadblocks to Communication:- 1) Ordering 2) Threatening 3) Preaching 4) Advising 5) Persuading or arguing 6) Judging, criticizing, blaming 7) Praising or agreeing 8) Name-calling, labeling 9) Analyzing, diagnosing 10) Reassuring, sympathizing 11) Probing, questioning, interrogating 12) Changing the subject, ignoring or being sarcastic.

NVC's 4 D's of disconnection: 1. Denial of responsibility (you make me mad etc.) 2. Demand (you have to, you should/ought to, if you don't I'll... , 3. Deserve (reward/punishment, right/wrong, good/bad) 4. Diagnosis (analysis of motivation) There are many more similarities, too many to meet my need for brevity, here.

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## Five Premises of Nonviolent Communication

5 Premises from 'The Compassionate Classroom' by Sura Hart and Victoria Kindle Hodson

### Premise 1: We are all natural givers.

- We each have a lot to give. We each enjoy giving.

### Premise 2: We can give and receive to meet the most needs for everyone.

- Needs are universal and identifiable.
- Our needs are independent of specific people.
- We are always trying to meet our needs.
- Feelings are helpful messengers of met and unmet needs.
- Identifying our needs is empowering.

### Premise 3: To meet our needs we become more choiceful about how we think, listen, talk and act.

- We are agents of choice.
- There are many ways to meet needs.
- We can choose how we act.
- We can choose how we think.
- We can choose how we listen.
- We can choose how we talk.

### Premise 4: We can continually learn new ways to meet needs.

- We can refine strategies to meet needs.
- We can celebrate when strategies work.
- We can learn from strategies that don't work.
- People (including children) will have the energy and the clarity to find their own solutions and resolutions, once they have had empathy for their feelings and needs.

### Premise 5: By focusing on needs we can prevent, reduce, and resolve conflicts.

- Needs are never in conflict.
- Conflicts occur when a strategy chosen to meet a need means that some other important needs will not get met.
- For the most fun, we can find ways to meet everyone's needs.

### Five Major Differences:

A. The first difference (as I see it) is in the construction of the I-Statement (or 'I-messages' as they are called in PET). An 'I-Message' has three parts (not four as in NVC) 1. Stated BEHAVIOUR + 2. FEELINGS + 3. TANGIBLE EFFECT.

1. Description of the BEHAVIOUR of the other person in non-blameful, non-judgmental terms. EG *"my child left her Lego pieces on the living room floor"* vs. *"my child is messy and inconsiderate"*. The focus in PET/ET is on the other's behaviour.

In NVC, however, the focus, OBSERVATION can be more general. EG *"When I see Lego left on the floor, I feel ..."* 2. Feelings.

3. Tangible or concrete EFFECT on me (what I am losing in terms of time, resources, energy, extra tasks to do). E.G. PET *"When you leave your Lego on the living room floor, I feel annoyed because (EFFECT) I don't want walk on it in my bare feet in the middle of the night (or I don't want to have to be the one to pick it up)."* In NVC *"When I see Lego left on the living room floor, I'm concerned because (NEED) I want to be able to walk safely through the room at night (or because I would like everyone's cooperation with keeping the living room tidy)."*

Where NVC focuses on the NEED and what we want to gain, PET identifies the EFFECT or what we might lose or don't want to happen or to continue happening.

B. The second major difference is that NVC uses a fourth step of making a **REQUEST** and PET doesn't. Having experienced the power, effectiveness and essential quality of the REQUEST in NVC, I mourn its absence in PET.

In my opinion the REQUEST meets a need for clarity and direction as to where the dialogue/communication will go next. PET assumes that the parent and child will go straight to problem solving. NVC stays focused on the connection and assumes that a solution/s (strategies) will flow automatically when everyone is heard and clear about the needs. The request provides the necessary tool for maintaining connection especially where the other person doesn't have the skills for listening.

C. The third difference is that PET makes a distinction between needs and values and offers different strategies for resolving a 'collision of values' to a 'conflict of needs'. Whereas, NVC says there is rarely a 'conflict of needs'; only a 'conflict in our strategies to meet those needs'. I really like the NVC view here and it is more in harmony with my own thinking and practice. The PET choices of strategies, however, for resolving a collision of values is enormously valuable, I think. I regret the absence of this distinction and process in NVC.

D. The fourth difference is one that I enjoy about PET (especially the course or program); it seems to me to be a very clear elegant model that uses effective graphic devices such as Tom Gordon's 'Behavior Window' for identifying 'Problem Ownership' (identifying whose needs are not being met), and what skills to use in what situation. Dr Gordon's 'Anger Iceberg' is also a very useful visual tool for understanding the concept of seeking to understand the primary feelings or emotions that lie beneath what we are telling ourselves when we manifest anger. The concept of 'modifying the environment' to more effectively meet needs and reduce conflict, is also very helpful in PET. And, the six step 'Problem Solving' model meets my needs for a structured process of getting clear on needs, generating an abundance of solutions and implementation of those solutions.

The problem solving process in PET is also helpful in identifying strategies for how we might 'modify the environment' as another means to prevent or solve conflict.

E. The fifth difference between the two models is that NVC receives by listening for FEELINGS and NEEDS with an emphasis on hearing needs, while PET advocates 'actively listening' by putting more emphasis on feelings and thoughts or content. EG Child asks "Will the test be hard?" PET response: *"Sounds like you're pretty worried about passing that test?"* My possible classic NVC response: *"Are you feeling worried and wanting assurance that you will have some ease in doing the test?"*

PET also has suggestions for making connection with 'acknowledgements' that we are listening - eg "Ah ha", "I see", "Hmmm" etc and then offering 'door openers' to the active listening process eg "Would you like to talk about it?" or "I'd like to hear more" or "Say more about that". NVC seems to suggest going more directly to hearing the feelings, needs and request (and maybe the observation) behind what is being expressed.

Finally, what I really enjoy about NVC is the clarity of using the same four components **Observations, Feelings, Needs and Requests** in the three modes:

1. Connecting with self; 2. Expressing honestly; and 3. Receiving empathically; this fulfills my desire for a holistic model. PET doesn't mention the value of connecting with self but the companion program and book "Be Your Best" or "Effectiveness Training for Personal and Professional Development" by Linda Adams suggests this, but not very explicitly.

Personally, I think self-connection is a crucial process for any parent to undertake to gain a better self-understanding and self-awareness and for changing old ingrained patterns and habitual ways of responding.

I hope you find this helpful and it meets your need for greater understanding of the similarities and differences of the two models. I'd love to have some feedback as to how it may have met your needs or if you have other requests.

Very warm wishes

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