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Ike Lasater has offered workshops around the world based on his book *Collaborating in the Workplace: A Guide for Building Better Teams*, published by PuddleDancer Press in 2019. With the onset of COVID-19, Ike shifted his teaching to take place in a virtual environment, launching an asynchronous online course based on *Collaborating in the Workplace*. Participants use the book as a course manual in conjunction with videos of lessons, videos of demonstrations of exercises, and offline practice. Ike recorded the demonstrations with NVC colleagues in China, Poland, Italy, the Netherlands, South Korea and the United States.

We recently sat down with Ike to learn more about the new course and what the PuddleDancer community, in particular, can learn from it.

**Many people enrolled in *Collaborating in the Workplace* are encountering NVC for the very first time, and yet, despite being “newbies,” they can integrate the lessons you offer. Why do you think that is?**

To begin with, I integrate the distinctions of NVC (Observations, Feelings, Needs, and Requests) into the flow of the workshop in such a way that it does not come across as “jargon.” In terms of how I teach, I focus *first* on the process and *then* introduce each new distinction at the point in the process when the new concept will have meaning and relevance to the student. This is a very different approach than the traditional way of teaching NVC, which introduces the OFNR distinctions early on and *then* begins to work with those distinctions in their process.

**Why will this course be of special interest for people already familiar with NVC?**

Those participants fall into two categories: those who offer NVC trainings, and those who do not.

A difference in my training that will hopefully be of interest to both trainers and non-trainers is the use of a series of “maps,” made up of concepts that both groups will recognize. These concepts are, however, named, explained, and organized in a new way.

There are three fundamental maps: Preparing For A Difficult Conversation, Practicing A Difficult Conversation, and Debriefing A Difficult Conversation. Each contains 3-5 straightforward steps.

I propose that if you practice these maps repeatedly, that repetition will help you form the habit of embodying the OFNR distinctions. Once you establish this habit, you will use the OFNR distinctions automatically and unconsciously.

The maps tell you where to direct your mind’s attention and what conduct to engage in. Those are the only two things that you have conscious control in order to make change your life, and using these maps is a way to produce the kind of change in yourself that you want. When I first articulated this insight, it was revolutionary to me, and I think it might be to other people. I hope that trainers will find the way I present OFNR to be an impactful addition when they lead their own workshops. In other words, that they will see the value of introducing distinctions *throughout* the training process rather than at the *front end*.

**Lastly, why do you think it is important to share and NVC skills with the business community?**

I’ve got to go back a little bit to answer this one. Willis Harmon was a late 20th-century author and futurist, and he had an important insight. In the Middle Ages, and even the Modern era, monarchs, and kings were the centralized authorities and decision-makers who chose the course society would by, for instance, funding the expeditions of many explorers who traveled to North America in the 1600s. In contrast, today, the most powerful deciders and

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influencers are big multinational companies and businesses, and the top 10 or 20 people who run each one. That's a thousand people you can target to promote the change you want to see.

So, when Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft, has his top executives read Marshall Rosenberg's book *Nonviolent Communication* and says publically that NVC is a useful and effective way to create a culture of empathy, this is when we start to see NVC take hold and spread on a large scale beyond Microsoft.

For me, instead of having one-off trainings around the world trying to influence 20 or 30 people, I have shifted to business settings, where, for instance, I partner with Giovanna Castoldi in Italy and do a workshop for executives at an athletic company where a workshop with 20 executives has the potential to impact a hundred and eighty thousand employees and their families.

Taking it a step further, if it can be established that the increase in Microsoft's market evaluation is in some part a result of Nadella introducing NVC, then other major companies will begin to adopt NVC as well. This is the case at China's Dongfeng Nissan, where I have been leading training for several years. At their facility in Guangzhou, they have 20 NVC trainers and a large room devoted exclusively to NVC. In discussing one of my upcoming NVC workshops, the head of the training facility told me, I don't just want my employees to be happy. I want their families to be happy, and I want their communities to be happy.

This is what motivates me to work in the business community -- this potential to transform culture so that NVC becomes mainstream. Ultimately, my hope is that as a global society, we can use the insights of NVC together to address existential threats to our planet like climate change and nuclear weapons proliferation. Historically, nations have identified some other group to struggle against. The kinds of global challenges that I am concerned about do not have an enemy. We, humans, are all in the same boat. We will need to learn how to collaborate with each other,

without creating an "out-group" or an "other" to struggle against. As a grandfather of now 9 grandchildren I have a dog in this fight, as we used to stay and say in Texas. By that I mean, I am viscerally driven to contribute to making a better world not just for my grandchildren, but for all children.

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Ike Lasater, J.D., MCP, Author, Mediator, Trainer, and Speaker helps organizations and individuals develop the capacity to collaborate to clarify their objectives more effectively and achieve them. He also acts as a private mediator, facilitating conversations and connections among people in conflict.  
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