

Sharing Feelings & Needs with Family

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The first step to sharing your feelings and needs with the people you care about is to learn the tools to get in touch with *your* true feelings and needs. Many women, in particular, get the message directly or indirectly to suppress their needs to meet the needs of others, so connecting to their needs can prove quite challenging. This is where the skill of discernment comes in. It can catapult healing and personal growth to new levels. What's more, "just" connecting to your needs in a given moment can stimulate a wonderful sense of inner peace, even when you are unable to meet those needs in that moment.

Nonviolent Communication and Discernment

In Nonviolent Communication (NVC), there is a common misconception that judging or evaluating is wrong, but this couldn't be further from the truth.

NVC differentiates between:

- The moralistic judgments of others: when we judge what others are doing as right/wrong and
- Discernment, or judging what works and doesn't work for you - the way you discern is through your feelings and sensations.

To connect with others, discernment, not judging, is the way to go. What does that mean exactly? Let's explore-

Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation

Discernment feels challenging for most because our entire lives have likely been built on extrinsic motivation (determined by motivating forces *outside* of us) instead of intrinsic motivation (determined by what aligns with values *inside* of us). Parents, teachers, and bosses have told us what is "right and wrong" from childhood to adulthood.

The repair work or healing opportunity begins by identifying this tragic system's existence and that it is a way to most easily maintain order and control, not a way to make life wonderful.

To make life wonderful, we need the new skill of discernment.

This means we must learn how to start noticing **feelings and sensations** that, unfortunately in many people, have been living suppressed inside of us. Imagine feeling open and expansive, excited and inspired, sad or hurt, frustrated, joyful and satisfied - NOT as the result of the judgments of others, such as thinking you are being criticized, forced, rejected, or misunderstood -

but instead when your actions or the perceived actions of others align (or misalign) with your values. Identifying and then linking your feelings to your needs, met or unmet, gives you a sense of agency and freedom, without which you can experience everything from hopelessness and depression to even chronic inflammation!

Joy vs. Obligation

Understanding discernment means diving into the push and pull of obligation and joy.

Imagine a scenario where you are unhappy with your marriage. You have been doing many things for your family because you think you should, and you feel like if you dropped the ball, everything would fall apart. However, you have never actually determined what you *want* to do. Your partner is confused and wants you to be happy but doesn't know what to do, similar to the confusion that lives inside of you.

The bottom line is that you should not do anything you don't choose to do. But how does that really work?

The key is to realize that you want to care for people in your family and contribute with compassion and warmth. However, you also need to connect to your own needs and natural desires.

Enter discernment.

Think about it this way: you need to care for your family but don't NEED to cook dinner. And if you think you NEED to cook dinner and continually do it out of obligation, you will dislike (even resent) cooking dinner. Even worse, you may resent your family as you think because of them; you even have to make dinner.

Your thought process is: moms are supposed to make dinner, mom knows how to prepare dinner more efficiently than anyone else, mom doesn't have other strategies to care for the family if she doesn't make dinner, mom has made dinner every night for the last 10+ years.

You are not practiced at checking in with your feelings and needs and have not built trust that you can share authentically and be supported if, heaven forbid, you don't want to make dinner.

What if: You connect with your husband about wanting to build discernment into your consciousness to support connection and joy?

Let's look at the example of how we can learn to discern if an action will meet our needs to help ensure Life Is Wonderful:

Wife: You know, I have been reading these blogs on WeHeal's website, and they have gotten me thinking about something.

They are talking about discernment and doing things only when I discern internally what I am willing to do, not doing something just because that is what I have been doing for years or what others expect me to do.

Husband: What are you doing that you don't want to do? What is it that you want to do?

Wife: To be honest, I don't know what I want. That is the problem and why I do not feel as much joy as I could.

Husband: Well, I want you to be happy. I see how sometimes you are not, but I don't know what to do about it.

Wife: They say that this issue is common and that I would find more joy in my life if I practiced discerning my feelings and needs before I do something. For example, I don't know if I want to make dinner tonight.

Husband: So don't make dinner. I'll do it.

Wife: No, I don't want to strategize about who will make dinner; instead, I want you to support me in checking in with myself to see if making dinner meets my needs.

Husband: So how do I do that?

Wife: By taking a minute before I start making dinner to check in together and see how I actually feel about making dinner. This allows me to use my body to help me discern what I want versus just trying to think about what I want, which can be muddled with thoughts of obligation. I can also try to imagine you picking up dinner to see how my body responds.

Husband: So we need to feel this out instead of thinking this through?

Wife: Yes, and if my body feels relief and expansiveness when I imagine you picking up dinner, I will likely need support and desire another strategy beyond me cooking dinner. However, if I feel sadness or disappointment when I imagine you picking up dinner, I may want to cook and contribute joyfully to a family meal that night.

Husband: Interesting exercise. Do you want to do that every night?

Wife: Yes, I enjoy checking in with you daily as I build this new muscle around discernment. I particularly like doing it together and notice feeling tenderness and care from and towards you.

Husband: Yeah, I am enjoying this exercise with you too. I can see you light up, and you seem happier and lighter. Who knew such a slight shift in how we think could have such an impact?

Remember, it can be different. Use the discernment tool, share your feelings, and live a life with more joy!

Wellness to Wonderful

Wellness to Wonderful is the culmination of decades of research, learning, and experience to help people live a healthier, longer, and more joyful life. We share our 9 pillars of practice that include and go beyond diet and lifestyle, supporting healing using multiple modalities including conventional Western medicine, Chinese medicine, Lifestyle medicine, Nonviolent Communication, Polyvagal Theory, and Trauma-Informed, Somatic Principles & Pain Reprocessing.

<https://weheal.health/wellness-to-wonderful/>

Drs. Pulde and Lederman bring the book's principles to life in WeHeal, a virtual healthcare model built on their book's nine fundamental pillars of health: self, nutrition, activity, play, sleep, family & friends, work, spirituality, and the natural world. As evidence of the model's efficacy, the Florida-based physicians point to results showing reversal of chronic illnesses like type 2 diabetes and heart disease, weight loss, and increased overall well-being.

About the Authors

Dr Alona Pulde and Dr. Matthew Lederman combine conventional Western medicine, Chinese medicine, Lifestyle medicine, Nonviolent Communication, Polyvagal Theory, and Trauma-Informed, Somatic Principles & Pain Reprocessing to create their groundbreaking health paradigm. They have been successful corporate leaders, starred in the life-changing documentary Forks over Knives, lectured for eCornell, served as adjunct medical school professors and corporate medical advisors, and are NY Times bestselling authors. Additionally Dr. Matthew Lederman is a CNVC Certified Trainer.

They have most recently co-authored, "[Wellness to Wonderful](#)," interweaving medical science, psychology, spirituality, and life wisdom to help people achieve lasting health, vibrancy, peace, and joy.

WeHeal

The WeHeal platform is staffed by physicians and educators trained in nutrition, compassionate communication, and a number of complementary modalities, including Western & Eastern Medicine, Nutrition & Lifestyle Medicine, Mind-Body Medicine, Polyvagal Theory, Trauma-Informed Care, and Somatic Awareness & Pain Reprocessing. WeHeal offers virtual one-on-one physician consultations and health and wellness mentoring alongside cohort classes, sessions, and support groups.

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