

*Meditations for*  
**MARCH**



## MARCH 1

*To bring forth the soul of our being, we must be in our bodies, rooted to Earth, able to draw from the universal source of energy.*

—Diane Mariechild

### ***Connecting to Self***

Have you ever tried to engage in a conversation with someone, but had to struggle to stay present? Or have you tried to resolve a conflict with someone, but spent most of the time dealing with the chatter in your own head? In my experience, what we do in these situations is get stuck in our own chatter. When this happens, we cannot heal or resolve the issue. I spent years in anguish, and it wasn't until I learned self-empathy in the Nonviolent Communication process that I started to experience relief. At first I wondered if empathizing with myself would be a never-ending procedure. What I learned, though, was that I had years of unresolved issues to acknowledge and heal. Eventually, through consistent self-empathy, I healed enough to allow myself to be present in interactions with others. The chatter quieted. It is such a relief to be present to myself and to the people in my life. I wish everyone knew how much connecting to and healing ourselves can improve our relationships with others.

The four steps to self-empathy are:

**Enjoy the jackal show**—acknowledge the judgments you have in the situation.

**Feelings**—connect with how you feel.

**Needs**—connect with the universal needs that are unmet in the situation.

**Request**—notice whether you would like to make a request of someone else to help meet your needs.

Through self-empathy, you will be more present to yourself and to others in your life.

Take a moment to empathize with yourself today.  
Notice how you feel afterward.



## MARCH 2

*All you need to do to receive guidance is  
to ask for it and then listen.*

—Sanaya Roman

### ***Know Your Truth***

Many people let others' opinions determine how they judge their own actions. Some people think it's OK to take pens from the office because "everyone does it." Or they think that it's OK to keep the extra change that the cashier gave by mistake because "it was her error, not **mine.**" Integrity is about showing up day after day in harmony with our own values. **I** don't want to kick my dog even though **my** neighbors might think it's OK. **I** don't want to spank **my** children just because **my** parents spanked **me.** **I** want to decide what is in harmony with **my** values and act accordingly. Only then is **my** need for integrity met. Social

norms no longer matter to **me** or influence **me**. My values guide **my** behaviors and choices.

What are your deepest values? Are your actions in harmony with them?

Notice if your actions are in harmony  
with your values today.



## MARCH 3

*Knowing is not enough; we must apply.*

*Willing is not enough; we must do.*

—Goethe

### ***Become Willing to Express Appreciation***

Many of us are reluctant to express appreciation because we think that means we are brown-nosing, or because we think the other person doesn't want to hear from us. Indeed, if you use appreciation as a manipulative tool to get what you want, you are misusing it. But if someone has enriched your life in some way, **I** suggest you tell **him** about it. Your appreciation might be just the gift **he needs** to brighten **his** day.

A few years ago, **I** received a phone call from someone who had attended one of **my** trainings. **She** told **me** that **she** **was** moved to call and tell **me** how the training **she** attended had changed **her** life. **She** expressed hope and joy, which **she** hadn't felt for several years. We both cried on the phone: **she** because **she** was so full of love, and **I** because **I** felt such appreciation that **she** had gone out of **her** way to tell **me**

how I had touched her life. I have yet to meet one person who doesn't want to contribute to another's life, and I have yet to meet one person who doesn't enjoy hearing how he has done so.

Express your appreciation to at least one person today.



## MARCH 4

*By developing a vocabulary of feelings that allows us to clearly and specifically name or identify our emotions, we can connect more easily with one another. Allowing ourselves to be vulnerable by expressing our feelings can help resolve conflicts.*

—Marshall B. Rosenberg, PhD

### ***How to Express Feelings***

Expressing how we feel about something gives the other person an idea of how important it is to us. It lets them know how we feel: for instance, mildly annoyed, angry, or deeply hurt. Perhaps you think people will know this simply from your tone of voice, but feelings of hurt, anger, fear, and resentment can often sound alike. Fear and excitement have the same physiological effects on us, and are often expressed in the same body language. It is our responsibility to express ourselves fully, rather than expecting the people in our life to guess how we feel. When we are explicit, we have a much greater opportunity to get our needs met.

For today, fully express to at least one person  
how you feel in a situation.



## MARCH 5

*Any change in one part of your life  
affects all other parts.*

—Gloria Karpinski

### *Enjoying the Jackal Show*

When I am emotionally charged, my brain can begin an internal chatter that keeps me from focusing on the situation I'm in. Before I learned Compassionate Communication, I tried to ignore this chatter or censor it by thinking: "Oh, Mary, you shouldn't feel that way. Don't be so impatient. She's not feeling well, you know." My self-censorship kept me frustrated and agitated. Now, when I allow my inner jackals to have voice and I listen to what they need, I can feel calm in a few seconds. In Nonviolent Communication, this is called *enjoying the jackal show*. In this instance, "enjoying" refers to the kind of pleasure we get from peacefulness, calm, or clarity rather than the kind of fun we might experience eating an ice cream cone with a friend.

Some time ago, a sick friend asked me to take her mail to the post office. She proceeded to tell me how to separate local and out-of-state mail and exactly which mailbox to use for each. I had gone through a particularly tiring day and had a need for ease. When she started with the specific instructions, my inner jackal started in with: "Has she noticed that I am

forty-six years old? Am I the only one who notices this? Really, I have mailed thousands of letters during my lifetime all by myself. No wonder she doesn't feel well; she spends so much time controlling every detail of her life!" My jackals can be very biting and judgmental. After hearing this for a few moments, I began to empathize with myself by thinking: "Mary, are you tired and want ease? Are you annoyed and want your friend to respect your ability to figure things out on your own?" Connecting to myself in this way only took a few seconds and helped me to become more present to the situation at hand—my friend's illness and my own need for ease. So I said to her, "You know, I'm noticing how tired I am and I'd like ease with this situation, so would you be willing to trust my ability to mail your letters without further instructions on how to do it?" She said: "Oh! Sure." Off I went to the post office, still feeling tired but less agitated.

Enjoying the jackal show is being present to what the jackals are telling you, including the underlying needs they are trying to meet. Our jackals hold wisdom and relief for us if we listen to them.

Be aware of your inner jackal chatter today and  
make a commitment to listen for the underlying  
needs they are trying to tell you about.



## MARCH 6

*Just as splinters get embedded in our body, old emotions and beliefs can act like toxins and become embedded in us, too. Now is a time of cleansing.*

—Melody Beattie

### ***Life-Alienating Communication***

We have all learned patterns of speech that keep us separate from other people. These patterns can look like judgments, criticisms, and blame, and they are prevalent in our society. In each case, the speaker separates herself from the listener by preoccupying herself with moralistic judgments. She categorizes others as good or bad, right or wrong. She makes comparisons, denies responsibility for her actions and choices, or makes demands of others, threatening them with blame or punishment if they fail to comply. Marshall B. Rosenberg, PhD, who developed the Nonviolent Communication process, call these speech patterns tragic, life-alienating expressions of unmet needs. In each case, we do things in an attempt to meet needs, but because of our communication technique, we rarely meet them.

Life-alienating communication may seem easy sometimes because it's familiar, but the results are also painfully familiar. And when we engage in it we miss opportunities to meet our needs for caring, love, nurturing, honesty, intimacy, and many others.

Be aware of times when you are judging others, making comparisons, or denying responsibility for your actions.

Notice how these communication patterns affect your connection with other people.



## MARCH 7

*The only way to master love, is to practice love.*

—Don Miguel Ruiz

### ***Every Angry Message Is a “Please”***

Sometimes it is hard to remember, but every time someone speaks or acts in anger or frustration, he is saying “Please!” Consider the please when your child says, “We NEVER get to do what I want to do!” The child is saying: “Please, I want fairness and fun. I want to know that you care about my needs, too.” How about when your wife says to you as you walk in the front door: “Where have you been? I’ve been waiting for you for an HOUR!” Perhaps underneath this statement, she is saying, “Would you please consider my needs for predictability, respect, and trust?”

OK, maybe these are too obvious. What is the “please” behind your boss’s statement? “This presentation was deplorable. The computer didn’t operate properly, the graphics were juvenile, and the timing didn’t work. I was embarrassed to present this to the Board, and it must not happen again.” Maybe she’s saying “please” to higher-quality presentations and maintaining a certain image with the Board.

The next time someone expresses their disappointment, frustration, or anger toward you, take a moment to consider the “please” behind their words. When you do this, you have a much greater opportunity to resolve conflicts peacefully.

When a person’s communication is difficult to hear, notice the “please” behind it. When you can hear it as “please,” does it shift how you feel?

## MARCH 8

*We cannot defend freedom abroad  
while deserting it at home.*

—Edward R. Murrow

### ***Interdependence vs. Dependence/Independence***

Interdependence, in a Nonviolent Communication process, assumes that each person is autonomous. It refers to a consciousness that values everyone's needs equally, recognizes that all people have choices and are responsible for their actions, and focuses on abundance rather than scarcity. Autonomous people come together because they recognize that by doing so, they have more abundance and strength. This applies to intimate relationships, businesses, church groups—any people who come together to achieve a greater goal.

The dependence/independence paradigm assumes that either we have to be with someone else to be whole, or that we don't need other people at all. This fosters the beliefs that we are dependent on others to achieve happiness, that everyone is responsible for others' actions and feelings, and that we must focus on scarcity rather than abundance.

When we maintain an interdependent consciousness, we expand the possibilities in all our relationships.

Make a commitment to live autonomously today.

Notice where it is a challenge for you to  
maintain this consciousness.



## MARCH 9

*Judgments, criticisms, diagnoses, and interpretations  
of others are all alienated expressions of our needs.*

*If someone says, “You never understand me,”  
they are really telling us that their need to  
be understood is not being fulfilled.*

—Marshall B. Rosenberg, PhD

### ***A Focus on Needs***

Imagine that your wife comes home from work and you ask her to go dancing and she says: “Oh no, not tonight, honey. I’m just beat after a long week.” It sounds as if she might need rest and relaxation. Let’s imagine that your needs are for fun and physical activity. Can you think of another strategy that could meet both your needs and hers for the evening? How about you work out at the club and bring home a movie and dinner afterward? Or maybe you both stay home tonight and rest, but make a date to go dancing tomorrow night. Or your partner could take a nap, and afterward you spend the evening in bed making love. There are endless ways to meet our needs. Conflict occurs when we argue over strategies, like whether to go dancing or not. When we actively value everyone’s needs, we foster openness and deeper connection in our relationships.

Be aware of opportunities to focus on needs in order to  
resolve an issue with at least one person today.



## MARCH 10

*Why do you walk through the field in gloves  
When the grass is soft as the breasts of doves  
And shivering sweet to the touch?*

—Frances Comford

### ***Hearing a Yes Behind a Perceived Rejection***

It is often easy for us to hear rejection when someone says no to us. If we focus on the rejection, we may feel hurt and fail to take the time to understand what is going on with them. However, if we focus on their feelings and needs, we are more likely to uncover what they want and what prevents them from complying with our request.

Say you asked your partner to clean out the truck to prepare for your weekend trip. He says, “No, the game is about to start and I want to watch it.” You could hear this as a rejection, or you could hear the yes behind his no and say, “You’ve been looking forward to watching this game all week, haven’t you?” He may say: “Yeah, I have. And I’d like to watch the game without having other responsibilities. I really want this time to myself.” You could say: “I can really understand the need to relax. I’d like you to have this time to yourself and I’m also worried about getting everything done before our trip. After the game, would you be willing to brainstorm with me how we might get the truck cleaned?”

If we hear what the other person is saying yes to (in this case, a relaxing afternoon watching the game), rather than what he is saying no to (cleaning the truck instead of watching the game), we are more likely to succeed in getting our needs met and helping the people we love get theirs met

too. This is a way of valuing the other's needs as much as our own, and can be a powerful conflict resolution tool.

Be aware of at least one opportunity today to hear someone's yes behind their no.



## MARCH 11

*Avoid using the word to speak against yourself or to gossip about others. Use the power of your word in the direction of truth and love.*

—Don Miguel Ruiz

### ***Four Ways to Hear Any Message***

How do you hear other people? In Nonviolent Communication, we see four possible ways to hear any message:

**Judging or blaming others:** You never think about my needs, or You're always late.

**Judging or blaming ourselves:** I should be more loving and caring to others, or He's right, I am always late.

**Empathizing with ourselves:** I feel sad and hurt because I'd like her to understand where I'm coming from. When I show up later than I agreed to, I feel sad and disappointed because I want my friends to trust me.

**Empathizing with others:** Are you disappointed because you'd like to know that I value your needs as much as mine? Are you angry and wanting some reassurance that I'll show up when I say I will?

In every interaction, we have a choice of responding in one of these four ways. The goal is to make a conscious choice about our response. The more present we are to ourselves and our needs, the more likely we are to see our choices.

Notice the choices you have when you receive someone's communication today.



## MARCH 12

*A theme may seem to have been put aside, but it keeps returning—the same thing modulated, somewhat changed in form.*

—Muriel Rukeyser

### ***Defining Needs***

In Compassionate Communication, we define needs as resources that life requires to sustain itself. Our physical well-being depends on our needs for air, water, food, rest, and shelter. Our psychological and emotional well-being relies on support, love, nurturing, honesty, and care. All human beings have the same needs. Regardless of our race, spiritual upbringing, how we live, or where we live, we all have the same needs to sustain our lives. The difference is in the strategies we use to meet those needs. We all have a need for play, but we have different strategies to meet it. I like to ride horses, hike, and go to movies to meet my need for play. Other people might enjoy extreme sports, knitting, or scuba diving. The need is the same in all cases—play. The strategy is what we do to meet that need.

Needs are universal; everyone has the same ones. Strategies are specific; we all choose unique ways to meet our needs. The more we can separate the need from the strategy, the more likely we are to resolve conflicts with ease.

Be aware of the differences between  
your needs and strategies today.



## MARCH 13

*With every choice you make, be conscious  
of what need it serves.*

—Marshall B. Rosenberg, PhD

### ***Saying Thank You Without Judgment***

In Compassionate Communication, we believe that everything a person says or does is either a “please” or a “thank you.” In our culture, saying “thank you” usually involves an expression of appreciation in the form of a judgment or evaluation. Remember, judgments and evaluations can create disconnection or tension in our relationships. This is true whether we judge someone as good or bad. Say your son mowed the lawn and you said, “Son, you’re great.” In this statement, you express appreciation by judging **him** as great. A way of expressing appreciation that is clearer and connects you to **him** is to tell **him** how **his** actions enriched your life. This could sound like, “Son, when you mowed the lawn as you promised, **I** felt such relief and appreciation because **I** really value follow-through and trust.”

When you hear “thank you” today, notice how your actions have enriched the person’s life. When you become aware of it, do you feel it differently?



## MARCH 14

*I'm no longer afraid of storms, for I am  
learning how to sail my own ship.*

—Louisa May Alcott

### *Achieving Safety*

I spent most of **my life** looking for **my** personal safety in other people. With this attitude, **I** spent a great deal of time determining whether someone was safe or not, judging other people as abusive, and blaming other people when **I** felt hurt or disappointed. The result was that **I** felt afraid because **I** depended on others to keep **me** safe, and **I** didn't feel empowered to manage **my own life**. Nonviolent Communication teaches that safety is not something that other people can provide. **I** can best meet **my** needs for safety when **I** gain trust in **my** ability to take care of **myself**. In this model, safety can come from such tools as learning ways to meet my own needs, speaking up when **I am** unhappy or worried, and trusting **my** own instincts. When **I** trust **myself**, **I am** empowered to stop looking to others for **my** safety.

Be aware of how you look to other people  
to meet your need for safety.



## MARCH 15

*Check with your body. It knows almost instantly  
if the connection is a good one.*

—Sark

### ***Empathy vs. Sympathy***

When we sympathize, we relate an aspect of someone's story to ourselves, such as when we say: "Oh, I know just how you feel. Last week he did the same thing to me." Another example is: "It's going to be OK. You'll see. I've been through this. Next week you'll feel much better about it!" When we empathize, we reflect the feelings and needs of the other, saying something like "So, you're really worried and want resolution soon?" or "Are you shocked and seeking clarity about why this happened?" Both methods have their value, but in a Nonviolent Communication process, we prefer empathy because it helps people connect more deeply to their own and other's pain, and helps resolve issues with clarity and ease. Empathy is a profound healing technique.

Be aware of when you are giving someone sympathy  
rather than empathizing today.



## MARCH 16

*Every thought is new when an author expresses  
it in a manner peculiar to himself.*

—Marquis de Vauvenargues

### *Idiomatic vs. Formal Compassionate Communication*

Do you sometimes feel awkward when you use the four components of Compassionate Communication (observation, feeling, need, request)? The four components are a tool to help people interact with others in a connected and compassionate manner. Formal use of the language is very valuable for people just learning the Compassionate Communication process. However, the true foundation of Compassionate Communication is to maintain a consciousness that values everyone's needs. If you can truly maintain that consciousness without using the formality of the four components, go for it! For example, formal use of the four components might be: "When you make applesauce with sugar, and I'm allergic to sugar, I feel frustrated and confused, because I value my health. Would you be willing to make another batch for me that doesn't have sugar?" Idiomatic Compassionate Communication could sound like this: "Your applesauce has sugar in it? Oh, I'm really bummed cause I was excited about having some, but I get sick when I eat sugar. How would you feel about making a small batch without sugar for me?" Both methods mentioned an observation, feeling, need, and request. To some, the second method would sound more fitting for everyday conversation. Both of them, however, are honest and connecting.

Be aware of when you are using idiomatic or formal  
Compassionate Communication today.



## MARCH 17

*It is tempting to sleepwalk through life.  
To tell half-truths, listen halfway, be half-asleep,  
drive with half attention . . . Wake Up!*

—Sark

### *Honesty Is the Key*

Do you sometimes struggle with honesty? Do you ever have something you'd like to say to someone, but worry about how **she** will receive it? In Nonviolent Communication, we see expressing honesty as a gift of our authenticity, and an opportunity for others to support us in getting our needs met. When we are honest with others, we give our relationships an opportunity to flourish and deepen. When we are not honest, we tend to create resentments and judgments, which bring discord and emotional distance to relationships. The four components to expressing ourselves honestly are:

**Observation:** expressing the facts of what happened.

**Feeling:** expressing how we felt about it.

**Need:** clarifying our needs that were met or unmet.

**Request:** making a specific and doable request.

Notice and act on opportunities to be honest  
and authentic with someone today.

