

# 1. Mindful listening & speaking: 4 levels of Listening



## 1a. Mindful listening.

Many management gurus point to the importance of deep listening. In his book “7 habits of effective leaders”, Stephen Covey describes habit 5: Seek first to understand, then to be understood’. In habit 5, we recognize three levels of listening, of the four distinguished by Otto Scharmer (Theory U). The 4th level he adds is called Deep Listening.

Through various mindful listening exercises in dyads, participants learn to become aware of fixation on own thoughts and beliefs and learn to open up to others: redirecting their attention to become deep listeners.

## Otto Scharmer: 4 levels of listening



**Listening 1:**  
'Autopilot  
downloading'

Listening from habit reconfirming old opinions & judgment → Focused on your own thoughts and ideas and filtering out only the confirming data



**Listening 2:**  
Factual  
listening

Listening with open ears and mind  
→ Suspending your own judgments and ideas and becoming genuinely curious towards perspective of the other person



**Listening 3:**  
Empathic  
listening

Seeing through another persons eyes  
Emotional connection: open heart  
→ Noticing the non-verbal, listening with the heart for feelings: not making them bigger or smaller



**Listening 4:**  
Energetic,  
generative

Listening with your whole body/energy  
Connection to stuck places and openings  
→ Sensing the energetic curve in a story, where does it feel stuck? Where are the openings to discover an emerging future self/whole?

Inspired on: TheoryU, Presencing institute, MIT, Otto Scharmer



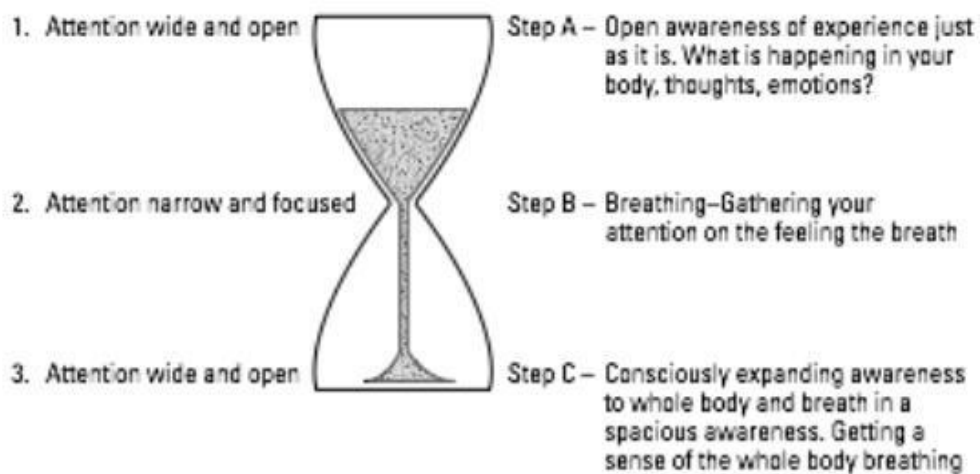
## 1b. Mindful speaking; aware of your own quality of speech.

Can you be present and aware of what goes on inside yourself and others when speaking? Are you aware of your own emotions, judgments, body language? Is your tone and choice



of words friendly, judging, forcing, insecure, questioning? Mindfulness of speech requires a base level of self-awareness IN the moment: of thoughts, beliefs, conditioning, stress triggers, emotions and reaction tendencies. AND an ability to PAUSE, reconnect to yourself and notice the inner place you are speaking and interacting from.

## Three minute breathing space exercise



### In mindful speaking exercises, we practice:

- Noticing what your true intention is when speaking. Look deeply and honestly: is there judgment towards the other or yourself, can you be open and curious towards the other?
- Noticing the balance of attention and 'airtime'
- Noticing flow, energy and fusion in conversation: do you tend to fuse and agree with the other, or oppose? Can you walk a middle path and stay both true to yourself and open to the other?
- Awareness of how a conversation affects your energy, body and thoughts. Consciously choosing what to say and not say: where to respond to adjust the flow of a conversation.
- Observing moments of leverage to turn conversations around, deepening or lifting it depending on what you feel is needed?
- Being assertive to trust what you sense in a conversation and speak up: appointing your feelings and allowing the right words to come up.

## 2. Genuine Connective Communication – why it is so difficult

The practice of Connective Communication starts with understanding WHY it is so difficult in the heat of the moment to genuinely stay in connection with yourself and the other person.

**Genuine connection is not something we can fake.** When we experience judgment, disinterest or strong emotions in contact with another human being, we cannot truly hide or override this with ‘tools’ and tricks. We may try to smile and stay friendly but whenever this is not genuine, our tone of voice; choice of words; non-verbal communication and energetic communication belie our true feelings.

People naturally pick up on the dissonance between what is shown and what is hidden. Almost all of us do, we are social animals that unconsciously pick up many more cues than we consciously think we do.

So how can we learn to apply genuine connective communication?

1. Firstly: understanding the **neuroscience of Social Stress** and mind/body effects
2. Then: learning to observe social stress-related hormones storming in your body, mind and emotions – without acting out!  
Instead pausing to step back from that ‘neuro-biological stress storm’ – often called ‘the amygdala hijack’ to recognize which limiting patterns of thought, beliefs and emotions affect your ability to see yourself and other clearly.  
Learning to do apply all this IN THE TRIGGER MOMENT: requires **Mindfulness training**.  
to reconnect to self and other with genuine openness and curiosity.
3. Once you are able to reconnect to self and other with genuine openness and curiosity, you are ready to apply the steps of Non-Violent Comms. **(NVC)** together

Sounds like quite a skill-set to learn? It is! But it is fun and fulfilling: the more you practice, the more fulfilling your (work- and private) life and relationships become.

## 3. Connective Communication: Combining the Neuroscience of social stress + Mindfulness + Non-Violent Communication

*Based on Marshall B. Rosenberg’s Non-Violent Communication + Rock’s SCARF research + Mindfulness*



### Non-Violent Communication (NVC)

Marshall B Rosenberg defined **Non-Violent Communication (NVC)** as “communicating from a natural state of compassion when no violence is felt in the heart”.



The practice is based on learning to listen to the deeper inter-human needs that underlie all communications.

Each human being has a set of deeply seated needs\* and corresponding values in social interactions. These inter-personal needs - when unmet - unconsciously cause us to feel hurt and react to the other with a fight, flight or freeze related emotion (blame/anger, anxiety/withdrawal, numbness/hopelessness).

### **Neuroscience research on social stress**

David Rock (2008, SCARF model) researched social stress and found \*5 categories of basic needs in interaction with other human beings that activate the same neural threat circuitry as physical threats do. This explains why - even though we are typically not under threat of being hurt or killed at the office - our stress circuitry in the brain still gets activated when basic needs are perceived as not being met in 1 of these 5:

1. **Status:** how important, appreciated, admired we feel relative to others
2. **Certainty:** feeling able to see into, predict and control our future or plans
3. **Autonomy:** feeling in charge of own agenda, life, decisions (respected in autonomy and decision making, not bossed around)
4. **Relatedness:** feeling safety, inclusion and belonging with others/a group (not excluded/rejected)
5. **Fairness:** feeling exchanges/distribution of things between people happen fairly and ethically

Each human being tends to be particularly sensitive to 1 or 2 of these needs areas not being met due to experiences and conditioning from the past. Personal values are often linked to the same needs. For example: someone with a history of being treated unfairly will often value fairness highly.

Interactions with others that echo past experiences can trigger an overreaction to that situation. Just like a light stab accidentally placed directly on an old wound can trigger a lot more pain than the stab otherwise would have.

The SCARF model was researchable using these 5 dimensions. But of course, SCARF is just a model that will not cover all the nuances that exist in reality when it comes to interaction needs.

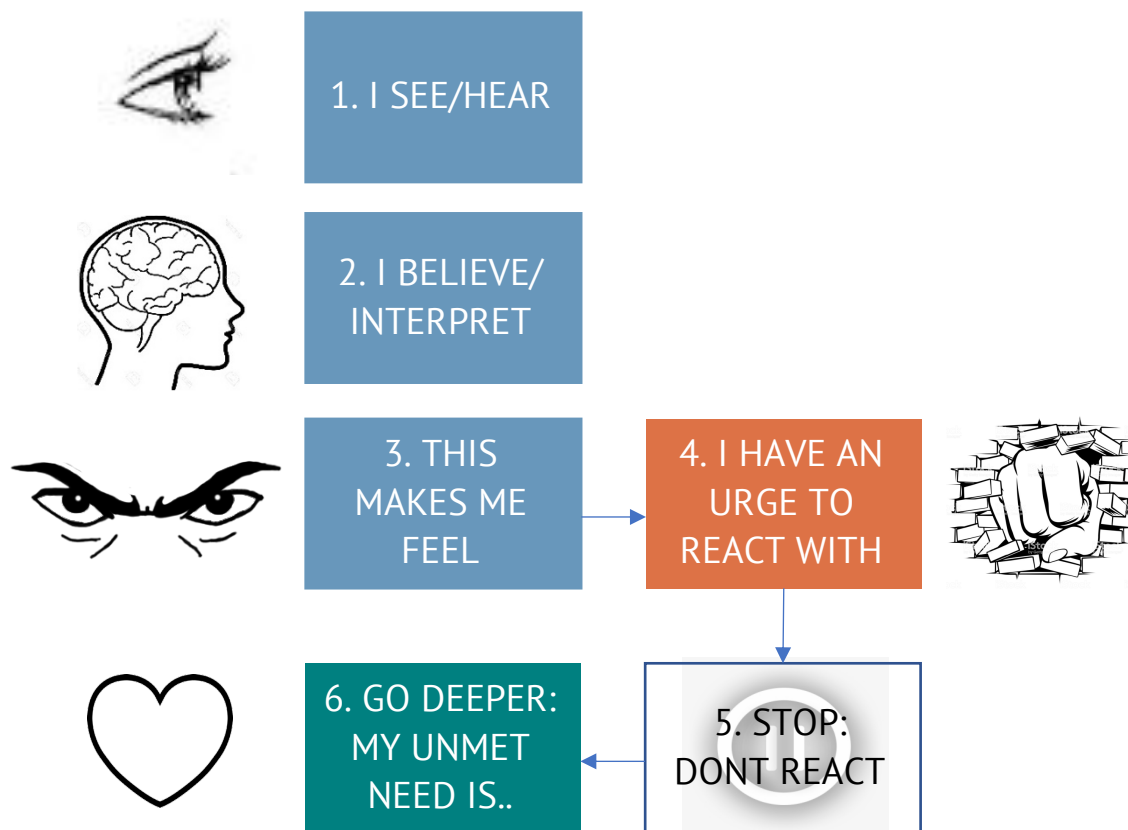
### **Mindfulness – the key for successful practicing of NVC**

Mindfulness training helps you recognize social stress as it gets triggered. We say Mindfulness TRAINING because it requires a strong attention muscle: you will need to gradually build up your awareness of social stress in mind, heart and body. And it requires attentional strength to and wisdom to stop acting out automatically during difficult communications. Stepping back instead to recognize your limiting thoughts, beliefs, sensations and emotions IN THE TRIGGER MOMENT.

Once you start recognize all this, start practicing the communication steps of NVC. Step by step – applying mindfulness as you go - you learn to identify fixed beliefs/perceptions and disengage from conditioned patterns of thinking, feeling and reacting when



triggered in an unmet interpersonal need. Instead tuning into the basic human unmet need that underlies our reactivity, following these 6 steps:



1. Stating objective **observations** using the 5 senses (I see, hear, smell, sense...)
2. Discerning observations from **interpretation** (I interpret this as ...)
3. Noting the **emotions** triggered by our own interpretation (this makes me feel...)
4. Noting the **'fight/flight/freeze' related urge to react** (If there were no rules of behavior I would...walk away, strangle him, ignore...)
5. STOP: don't react, instead **go deeper: what is my basic inter-human unmet need** underlying this interaction?
6. **Communicate from this need:** "I came into this meeting hoping to connect and brainstorm with you" **and request** what we want "instead I receive 'feedback', do you have mind space now or later to get creative with me?"

Through regular practice, people learn to identify and disengage from their emotions and perceptions when triggered. Tune into the basic human unmet needs that underlie their reactivity. And come back into the conversation from there: clarifying objectively what they are observing, what emotions they are feeling, what basic human unmet need underlies their emotions, and request they want without judging or blaming the other.

Want to learn more about Connective Communication? Go to:

<https://mindfulbizz.nl/team-building-days/>

Want to start training Mindfulness to support Connective Comms? Go to:

<https://mindfulbizz.nl/attention-training-for-presence-and-purpose/>

Free guided mindfulness and attention training audio's at the bottom of each page!