

# TOOL BOX

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THEATER BY NATURE  
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# TOOLBOX

with 5min practices for developing an honest connection with myself and other people.

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This toolbox has been created in the frames of “Theater by Nature” Erasmus + project, which aimed at developing inner peace and a peaceful attitude towards communities and the natural environment. The “Theater by Nature” training course took place in Guía de Isora, Tenerife, from 9 to 15 March 2020, and has brought together 24 leaders and youth workers from 10 different countries. The core elements of the course were the Nonviolent Communication model (NVC) and the biocentric approach present in the Steiner education model. The toolbox is a resource, complementary to the training course program, with easy to practice activities which may help to develop an honest connection with oneself and other people.



# PRACTICES OPENING YOUR SENSES



## MY NAME AS A SOUND OF NATURE

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Put yourself in a comfortable position. Close your eyes. Breathe in... and breathe out.

Imagine different sounds from nature. Maybe some of them you can hear right now. Maybe some of them you remember from the time you were outside in nature. What are the sounds? Now imagine that you hear your name. If your name would be a sound of nature, what would it be? a sound of an animal? Sound of a tree, a plant? Sound of the water? Sound of the wind?

Define how your name sounds and where does it come from? Now that you already know where the sound of your name comes from, try to answer the question: when can you hear it? What does it mean when you hear it? Follow the story that starts emerging in your imagination... Breathe in... and breathe out. Feel the natural environment from your story around you. You are part of this environment. This is your home. What are you grateful for being there? Breathe in... and breathe out. Feel your fingertips and toes, and move them slowly.

Now you can stretch. Make sure that you feel again all your body.

Open your eyes.

# OBSERVING THINGS FOR THE FIRST TIME

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We invite you to use this practice every day for a week and see how your observations develop.

Choose one object, whatever is there next to you, can be a pencil, can be a book, can be a mug... Make sure it will last for the next couple of days and be available for the exercise. Take a look at it and write down what you see. Repeat this activity during the next few days. Be as specific and detailed in your observation as possible.

When the last day notes are done, read all of them and notice what has changed in your descriptions?

Which of the notes are recorded facts about the object? And which are your interpretations, assumptions, stereotypes, judgments? Circle those which are not pure observations of facts.

When you follow your notes, can you recognise a pattern or any specific tendency in your thoughts?





# MINDFUL EATING

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This activity, based on the raisin meditation by Jon Kabatt Zin and mindful food contemplation from Plum Village tradition, will help you to connect with the present moment to practice your factual observation and curiosity as well as opening yourself to sensory perception to different senses. For this you need a piece of ideally locally sourced fruit, otherwise you can use a piece of chocolate or a raisin. Find a place where you can sit comfortably and stay calmed and focus for 15-30 mins approx. Then repeat the next steps: **1. Holding.** Hold the piece of fruit in your hand. **2. Sensing.** Take time to really focus on what you are holding. Look at the piece of fruit with full attention - as if you came from a faraway planet and it's the first time you see this object. Explore every part of it with your sight first, taking a closer look at every part of it. Using the sense of touch, explore the texture of the fruit - you may want to close your eyes for this one. Explore the smell, aroma, any fragrance that arises. Notice what's going on in your body as you do it. **3. Contemplating.** As you hold this piece of fruit in your hands, become aware of the journey it took in order to be here for you to eat and nourish your body. From the seed that has been planted in the fertile ground, the sunshine, rain that supported the plant to grow, the amount of time and energy from the farmers who looked after the tree as it was growing, workers who picked it, transported so that eventually it can be here with you. Connecting to the sense of gratitude for all the conditions that helped for this food to be here for your nourishment. **4. Tasting.** Now, when you feel ready, put the piece of fruit in your mouth. Without chewing yet, just noticing sensations in your body for a few seconds. Now begin to bite into it, noticing the sensations of taste and texture in your mouth and how these may change over time, moment by moment. **5. Swallowing.** Notice if you can observe the moment of intending to swallow, so also this part is experienced consciously. **6. Continue eating** in this way the whole piece of fruit, taking the time to sense and contemplate each piece. If any feelings are coming up, notice them and let them pass as you bring your awareness back to the bodily sensations of eating mindfully. **7. Observing.** Sense how your body as a whole is feeling after you have completed this exercise. How do you feel now? What could you observe from the fruit, from the process, from yourself? What has changed?

# WELCOMING

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This activity will help you to be present in the moment and in your body, to get grounded and to awake your sense of touch as well as it helps to connect with the person in front and develop empathy. You will preferably need a partner to practice this welcoming. In case you can't find any partner, you can also do it to yourself. There is a verse to be pronounced melodically and at a calmed pace (text in **bold**), connecting with some gestures you will be doing to the person in front (text in *italic*).

I invite you to read it several times before starting so you can be more focused on the actions than on remembering the words.

-Stand mindfully in front of your partner, hold hands, look in the eyes and the 'giver' can start saying:

" \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of the person you have in front*) **is here**

**With a head** *squeezing the head a bit*

**two eyes** *touching each contour of the eyebrows*

**and a nose right here**, *touching the nose*

**two ears** *touching each ears contour*

**and a mouth like this.** *Touching the mouth*

**Two arms** *you place your hands on the shoulders of your partner, and squeeze softly until getting to the hands*

**Two hands** *holding hands ,*

**Chest** *pushing softly on it*

**Belly** *rubbing it.*

**Legs** *same as with the arms but from the hips to the knees.*

**Knees** *rubbing them*

**And far below where you can hardly see**, *you continue from the knees squeezing down to the feet*

**two strong feet.** " *you touch them strongly imagining them as roots to the ground.*

The idea is that the person being touched feels each part of their body, for a sensorial awakening and safety presence while the person who is giving can transmit warmth and presence as well as empathy in the way of touching.



# MIRRORS

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This is a simple activity, which helps you stretch your body, as well as can develop your observation skills and your attention towards another person.

You need a partner. Stand opposite to each other. One of you will start moving. The other one should follow the movement, as if you were a mirror. You are both moving in the same time, one person introducing the movement, the other trying to follow as precisely as possible.

As the person who introduces the move - take care of your partner and check if the moves are not too demanding for them. At the same, we invite you to be playful, curious, and experiment with your bodies. Change the roles after 2 minutes.



# SPONTANEOUS DANCING

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You can use this activity to free your mind and connect to your body, to observe its needs and to release tensions. Choose a music that invites you to go inward and explore different rhythms or tempos.

We have used 'O-Daiko by Kodo'. Stand in a comfortable position, close your eyes and listen to the sounds. Notice your feet, legs, torso, arms and head as a quick body scan. Whenever you feel you are ready to move, start moving letting the motion come from inside. You can make random moves, there is no pattern to follow. Once you are connected to the music and your moves, start to observe your body parts. Which ones feel relaxed? Which ones feel tense? Which ones feel heavy? What is your body needing? How can you meet its needs with your dance?

Finish this activity by slowing down your gestures and your breathing. Stay calmed and in silence for some minutes noticing what has changed. Take a deep breath...



# TREE OBSERVATION

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With this activity you can practice your senses awakening, your connection with nature, and mirror your needs and feelings with the needs of nature.

Take your journal, a pen and some crayons and **choose a tree** that inspires you (it could also be a plant if you are not able to find a tree). Take a deep breath and connect to your body senses and sensations. If needed, you could do some tapping with your fingertips all over your body for the touch awakening. Find the position that suits you better to observe and interact with your tree/plant and start to build your relationship with it as you feel it.

Explore the sense of **touch** with your tree: you can start with your hands, your arms, your head, your back, touch it with your toes, do what your body needs to explore it. Remember all your skin is a sensory perceptor. What did you perceive of the tree/plant? which information can it give you? where are the limits of your body? and the space the tree/plant takes? You can write down your observations.

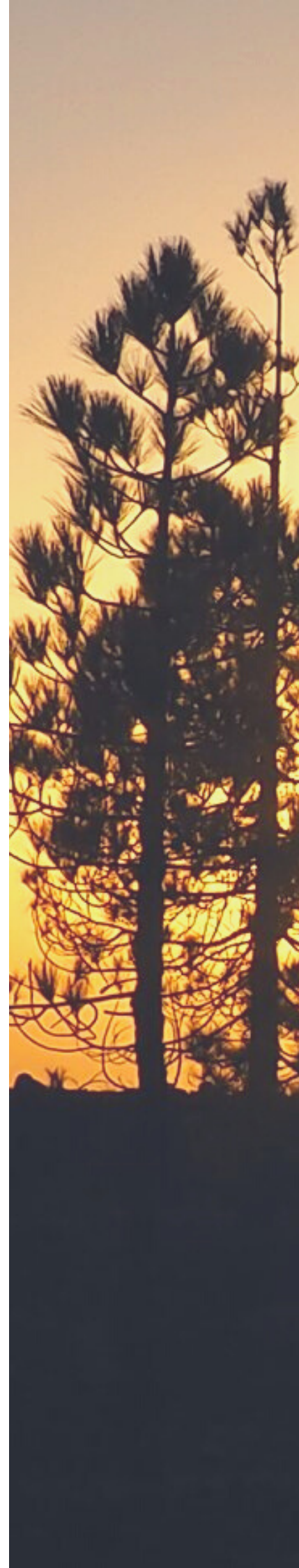
Then focus on the **smell**, pay attention to its **colors**; to the type of **movement** it has even if it's not easy for humans to perceive; notice the parts of the tree/plant that are fixed to the ground and the ones that move and change with time; what do you see? Do you perceive any **needs** of the tree/plant?

Then sit and **draw** its shape and your observations.

**Repeat** this activity at least 3 days, noticing what has changed in the tree (roots, trunk, branches and eventual leaves), in your senses, in the senses of the tree/plant, in your perception of it. Pay attention if some feelings are arising about your tree/plant. Take notes and draw (on a different paper) with the differences you noticed. The last day, after checking again what has changed, focus on the perception of possible needs of your tree/plant due to your observations, taking in consideration its movement, balance and vitality. Do you have any will in meeting its needs?

Sit and draw.

When your masterpieces are ready you can post them on your wall completing, visually, your tree/plant transformation.





# PRACTICES EXPLORING YOUR NEEDS AND FEELINGS

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## LEARNING THE VOCABULARY - FEELINGS AND NEEDS INVENTORY

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NVC is called “the language of life”, and I like to call it also “the language of choice”. This can give the idea of how the whole model sets a new perspective on the communication process. It uses specific vocabulary and structures, just like a separate language.

For some people it might be the experience of learning a completely new language, which might create a new reality around them. For that reason, we encourage you to learn and practice the specific vocabulary of feelings and needs, which are the core elements in the model. You can find different lists, in your mother tongues, which gather the variety of words to describe the feelings and needs which we might be experiencing as humans. We recommend the ones published by the Centre for Nonviolent Communication ([cnvc.org](http://cnvc.org)) or by a local NVC centre in your region.

# CHECK IN AND CHECK OUT WITH YOUR JOURNAL

## - Check in -

When you wake up in the morning, pay attention and observe the first thing you do or think when you open your eyes. Take a deep breath and have a quick check all over your body putting your attention on your senses, on the information you receive from your body. How is your breath? Are you comfortable in your skin? How do you feel the balance of your body and its organs? And your posture? Do you need to do some movement? How are your thoughts? how do you perceive your inner balance? Can you notice any need or feeling? (if it helps, you could take your list of needs and feelings and check them out). Is there anything you would like to change?

If you come to any observation you can write it down in your journal. If you feel like focusing on something, some practice, strategy or reflection you would like to add to your day, you can write it down too.

## - Check out -

By the end of the day (it could be while watching the sunset or just before going to sleep) take some minutes and think about the things you did during the day as if it was in a movie. What have you perceived? What have you enjoyed? What has triggered you? Have you achieved any of your intentions from the morning? Could you satisfy your needs? Now I invite you to sum up your movie in one short sentence as if it was the title. Here you could include some of your feelings, needs, observations and perceptions of the morning.

Feel free to write down the facts that especially took your attention, your reflections on what would like to change or develop further. You may want to write down what you are grateful for and take a moment to enjoy the feeling of gratitude.





# WHAT HELPS ME TO LISTEN FOR THE NEEDS AND FEELINGS?

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Keeping the metaphor of a new language, we can also translate how we speak and what we hear from other people into the feelings and needs vocabulary. There might be specific moments when this translation comes to you more easily or more difficult. Each person is different, and you are the only expert on yourself. When you practice the translations it is useful to notice the moments when it comes easy. You might also want to write down what helped you in that situation to hear the needs and feelings of the other person? Or maybe you were listening to your own feelings and needs? Writing it down will help you to remember what is important for you to be able to practice NVC.

## EMPATHY GUESSES

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This is a practice of translating the words of another person to the NVC vocabulary. By doing that you can help yourself to understand what the person is experiencing at the moment, and you can create a connection with them, even when the story they share is not relevant for you or sounds confusing. The feelings and needs might be something more relevant and interesting, something you have also experienced in a different moment of your life.

When someone is telling you a story, try to rephrase it to them, putting into the story the possible feelings and needs you could hear there. Remember to ask if this is what they wanted to say? Stay open, curious and be prepared for a “no”. Be ready to stay humble and apologise if the person felt that you have crossed their boundaries. The point is not to show that you know better, but to create a connection and empathise.

# NEEDS VS. STRATEGIES

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We have our needs, and we find different strategies to meet them and feel satisfied. When there is a need that is very present for you in the moment, name it and write it down. Make a list of different ways you could imagine following in order to meet this need. We invite you to recognise your own strategies, and to notice how much they involve other people, and how much you can be independent with your needs. You may want to divide the list in two columns - with the actions you take on your own, and the actions you ask other people to do to support your need.

You may notice that some of the strategies serve you and open the door for being happy. Some of them might satisfy the need and at the same time feed other fears and hate. You are the expert and can decide which ones from your list you would like to keep in your life.

# SHIFTING FROM FEARS TO NEEDS

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How to know what are my needs? One of the clues can be my fears. We invite you to try to shift from the thoughts about fears to thinking about needs. When you notice thoughts which make you feel tense, afraid, panic, write down those thoughts and identify what it is that you are afraid of.

When you feel that the list is complete, read your fears again, and write down another column, or another paragraph, where you list what it is that you need to feel safe. You can use the list of needs for more vocabulary to help you identify your needs.



# (DAILY) SELF-EMPATHY PRACTISE

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This is a self empathy practice inspired by Marianne van Dijk and her “Cup of Empathy” video channel. An exercise you can repeat everyday to develop a habit of giving empathy to yourself. It takes you through all the steps of the NVC model: the feeling and thoughts, the observation, the needs, and finally requests. It can also help you create the habit of actually making a request. Once you are used to making it, it will be easier to express it in a conversation with another person. You may also become more aware of how much and when you are able to meet your needs by yourself, and when would you like to ask for action or connection from another person. For this practice you will need your journal, a pen and a comfortable and quiet place where to sit.

## 1. Feelings.

Close your eyes. Check your body and how does it feel? Which parts are tense, in pain? Which parts you don't usually think about? Take a breath. And do a scan of your body. From the tips of your toes, give some attention to each part of your body, going more up, the legs, the belly, the chest, and the spine, all parts of your arms and hands, the neck, to the head and face. Notice the feelings when you do the scan. Open your eyes and check on your feelings list. Write down the feeling or feelings you noticed. After writing it down, close your eyes again and take two deep breaths, just feeling what you wrote.



# (DAILY) SELF-EMPATHY PRACTISE

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## 2. Thoughts.

It happens that feelings are created by thoughts or the other way round, more thoughts come when a specific feeling appears. So now, give space and allow any thought, even if it is not nice, to happen. Now is the time to clean from the thoughts, all of them, so don't censor. Write them down next to the previous feelings, connecting a thought with a feeling.

## 3. Observations.

Any thought we have is linked to a real event in our lives. So at this step focus on what happened, which was the event that triggered your thoughts? This is mostly coming from something someone said or did to you. Write it down next to your thoughts and feelings.

## 4. Needs.

Behind any thought there is a need. Check the list of needs and try to find yours. Write it down. Close your eyes and connect to your need. What do you feel when you connect to it? Can you see its beauty? Can you see how this need manifests in the actions of the people around you?

## 5. Request.

This is a step to ask yourself for a commitment to take care of your needs. Write down a request you may have connected to your need, your observation, your thoughts and feelings. A request can be directed to yourself and/or to the other person whose action created the feeling and thoughts in you. Both are equally important and valid. Be as specific with your request as possible.

## 6. Closing.

Close your eyes one more time and check how you feel now. Is there anything new? Is there anything you would like to tell yourself?





# RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

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For other ideas how to practice and more theory behind the practices presented here, read and visit:

- “Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life” by Marshall Rosenberg
- “Nonviolent Communication Companion Workbook: A Practical Guide for Individual, Group or Classroom Study (Nonviolent Communication Guides)” by Lucy Leu
- The Centre for Nonviolent Communication: [cnvc.org](http://cnvc.org)
- “I am here now - A creative mindfulness guide and journal” by Mindfulness Project
- “Our Twelve Senses” - Albert Soesman
- “Rhymes and movement” by Tamara Chubarovsky - Waldorf pedagogy: [tamarachubarovsky.com](http://tamarachubarovsky.com)
- Resources on Waldorf Education and Anthroposophy: [waldorfanswers.org](http://waldorfanswers.org)

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