

Compassionate Communication For Activists in the Web of Life

Over the years we here at UFETA have shared how we might live out our lives authentically and lovingly to all beings, including our fellow human species. Some of the specific challenges we have heard are:

1. Clearly articulating our thinking on diet choices and welfare issues in a nonblaming, nonjudgemental fashion.
2. How to put forth a clear argument or foundation for our ethical choices with the hope of being understood, or getting information to others without us or them becoming defensive or argumentative.
3. How to grow our relationships with others – family, congregation members, coworkers, and family even though they might have vastly different ethical guidelines regarding nonhuman animals.
4. How we might achieve our goals of reducing animal suffering without compromising our ideals and always living authentically to our values.
5. How to make connections with people and deepen relationships even when you think they are not listening to you or empathizing with you.
6. How to empathize with yourself when your own actions might not be in line with your values for the well-being and flourishing for all life.

During the phone conversation we will generally focus on:

1. How can we honestly express ourselves in a way that does not require that other people agree with us? We will concentrate on how we feel and the deep universal needs for which we yearn.
2. How can we clearly articulate what we want from the other person in such a way that they can meet our requests? We will concentrate on how we can stay connected to the other person so that they are ready to hear our requests by knowing that we are not judging them.
3. How can we stay present in a conversation even when our needs are not getting met (such as empathy from the other person)? We will concentrate on our own feelings and needs and the life giving connection that can occur when we connect to our universality with others of own species, and with other species.
4. How can we listen empathetically to others, even when their actions and values seem so far removed from our own? We will focus on what is going on for the other person by looking for universal needs and yearnings behind the words and strategies they are choosing.
5. How we can grow our deep knowing and acceptance that all humans have inherent worth and dignity in such a way that we offer healing to others as we heal ourselves, and still speak and act authentically? Our focus will be radical acceptance of the “other” and of ourselves as we investigate sociobiology and evolutionary psychology.

What kind of preparation do I need before the phone call?

1. Though not necessary, if you have no experience with nonviolent communication, you may wish to read, “Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life” by Marshall Rosenberg. There

are also many resources on the web, including: www.uuspeakpeace.org/web, and <http://www.baynvc.org/reference.php>.

2. In each phone call we will work with a few individuals on issues that are alive and current. If you'd like to share we'll ask you to say briefly what happened and then work through how you might speak with more clarity, authenticity, compassion, and empathy. We'll be looking for situations where people have trouble responding compassionately. In addition we'll offer empathy to one another.
3. During each call there will be the chance to review nonviolent communication techniques.
4. Depending on the numbers of people, each person will have the chance to say their names. You do not need to say your name in response to the recordings request for your name as this might interrupt a conversation already in progress.