

## Introduction

Have you ever noticed how at an omnivorous meal the conversation will suddenly grow quiet when someone mentions that he or she is vegetarian or vegan? If the conversation continues from there on food choices, there is often a great deal of discomfort, passion, and sometimes anger and hurt feelings? Perhaps you have been the one to be angry – at others for not listening well enough or for changing their food choices or for trying to change your choices. Perhaps you are mad at yourself for not speaking up when you thought you should? (or speaking too forcefully perhaps?). Perhaps while promoting nonhuman animal welfare you find that people relationships hamper justice efforts? Regardless of the scenarios you may have experienced, there is no doubt that all of us could use coaching on how to speak peacefully and clearly about what is alive in us. We need to learn how to engage with others our heart's desires and our mind's understanding, especially with whom we differ. We do this to grow in our deep understanding of our first UU Principle and to become more effective activists for all beings.

## What is Nonviolent Communication?

Nonviolent communication is a model for building peace in our daily

conversations developed by Marshal Rosenberg. He has used this model for over 30 years in schools, in families, in social justice activities, and in international conflicts. There is great hope in this method, for we can not only speak our hearts and minds in peace, but can actually achieve greater success in getting others to work with us and to even change their actions so as to meet our needs and the needs of the world's species and habitats.

## The Basic Steps of Compassionate Conversation

1. Describe what you observe without judgement
2. Say how you feel
3. Say your needs and tie them into your feelings
4. Make a request of concrete, doable actions

## Is Nonviolent Communication for Me?

We all have had enough violence in our life – in our homes, in our work places, and in the public sphere.

Nonviolent communication is a way to turn that around and nurture the well being of all those with whom we come in contact – and most importantly, to bring compassion and peace into our own lives. It is a spiritual practice and way of healing the world and ourselves.

*Out beyond wrongdoing or rightdoing  
there is a field. I'll meet you there.  
When the soul lies down in that grass,  
the world is too full to talk about. –  
Rumi*

## Spirituality

Spirituality is connecting to that which greater than ourselves and beyond our daily concerns

*Whoever you are, no matter how  
lonely, the world offers itself to your  
imagination, calls to you like the wild  
geese, harsh and exciting – over and  
over announcing your place in the  
family of things – Mary Oliver*

## The Merits of a Spiritual Practice

Connecting to life helps us to live more fully, to be open to growth and transformation, to deal with the paradoxes, loss, and injustices in existence, and contribute ever more greatly to our communities of mixed species.

*By ethical conduct toward all  
creatures, we enter into spiritual  
relationship with the universe –  
Albert Schweitzer*



*Feel the wondrous grit of life, less structured, find all wounds, debts stamped canceled, paid. I once asked a bird, how is it that you fly in this gravity of darkness? She responded. Love lifts me – Hafiz*

### **Unitarian Universalism**

Unitarian Universalism is a religious faith tradition deeply rooted in the North American experience of nature. Ralph Waldo Emerson, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Unitarian minister was the heart of the Transcendentalist movement and author of *Nature*. More than a century later, Unitarian Universalists lift up their connection to nature through their 7<sup>th</sup> Principle: *Affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.* Members of Unitarian Universalist congregations actively celebrate the beauty of existence while continually seeking better understanding of and justice for all beings.

*Until one extends his or her circle of compassion to all living things, humans will not themselves find peace – Albert Schweitzer*

### **About UFETA**

We of UFETA understand that we human beings are only a single strand in the intricate web of life. Like wolves and whales and hummingbirds, we are fragile and perishable, and each species depends on the earth for our survival.

While our Unitarian Universalist principles affirm the "inherent worth and dignity of every person" and call us to seek "justice, equity and compassion in human relationships," we extend those principles to include other species who also possess an intrinsic value—whose well-being is vital to the whole—and whose rights should parallel our own. We seek to reorient our human-centeredness so as to liberate not just other species, but our own lives.

### **For further information/practice:**

- Unitarian Universalists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals: [www.uua.org/ufeta](http://www.uua.org/ufeta)
- Center for Nonviolent Communication [www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org)
- Monthly facilitated teleconference for nonviolent communication for animal activists all over the country – Second Friday of the month, 6 p.m. EDT. Check the UFETA website for current phone numbers.

## **NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION For Activists in Ethical Eating and Animal Welfare**



Peacemaking while engaging in interspecies justice issues by promoting and affirming the inherent worth and dignity of every being

**Monthly Facilitated Teleconference**  
Sponsored by UFETA –  
**Unitarian Universalists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals**