What can allies do? Possibilities from an NVC perspective of what non-targets can do.

By Kristin Masters

- Set your sincere intention to be an ally
  Give yourself the gift of checking in with yourself and set your intention. Anchor it in your body, mind and spirit.

- Base this intention on your own benefit (what needs of yours met)
  Notice that you do this for your own sake (to meet your own need for justice) not to meet theirs, nor to gain their approval, friendship or appreciation.

- Self-empathy – an essential ingredient
  Take a chunk of time to write out self empathy about your own actions as ally that week. Did anything trigger you as you tried taking some action? Any jackals to follow up with, so you can see what beautiful human need might be calling in this venture?

- Celebrate tiny successes wildly
  Allow yourself visits/regular check-ins and assessments with your intention to act as ally? Allow learning to come from this visit. Do I have incidents I’d like to celebrate? Do that! Celebrating small successes can be essential to activism of all kinds, and they can also meet needs for gratitude, joy, fun.

- Mourn regrets with self or others who are compassionate, reach for learning
  Do I have mournings and regrets to notice? Can I do that in the service of learning, instead of being mired in self-criticism or guilt? Take a risk to ask for empathy from someone (you can trade, too) about your own thoughts and blocks to taking actions as an ally. Be as honest as you can, as transparent as possible. Give yourself a gift of recording requests of self and of marking learnings so you remember them tomorrow.

- Empathy for those in target group
  Especially when your empathy battery is full enough, offer to empathize with someone from the target group about what it is like to live in a world that doesn’t meet their needs for justice, inclusivity, belonging and mattering.

- Talk to other non-target potential allies, support them
  Talk to others in the non-target group about the issues you understand, about your own desire to act for your own sake, for justice. Tell them about the satisfaction you feel in acting as ally. Ask them what it is like to hear about this. Ask them if they have a wish to do similar things, and then empathize with them as they talk about their thoughts, blocks, wishes, etc.

- Develop your capacity to empathize and use it often
  Interrupt “oppressive” acts or comments, translate into observations, then meet them with empathy, if you’ve got it in you, and if not, meet them with honesty in the spirit of NVC consciousness. Transform your enemy images.

- Be visible and audible as an ally
  You may want to use visible signs (buttons, signs, bumperstickers). Notice what its like to do this even when it is awkward. Consider letting people you know (who are in a target group) know of your intention to be an ally, of your own needs met by the actions you take toward this. This may strengthen your own resolve to act.

- Approach individuals in institutions, make requests
  Go to an institution that has policies that reinforces exclusive or oppressive actions. Strategize with a fellow ally, or perhaps with someone(s) from the target group about requests to make, about who within the organization to make those requests to. Practice empathizing what their concerns might be in the face of your request. Make an appointment, follow through and don’t try for perfection, instead, go for presence and heartfelt connection.

- Strategize with others, think big and small
  Think with others (people from non-target and target) about strategies to meet needs for justice, peace, connection, community, etc. Come up with requests and action plans, try experiments, see what works. Collaborate!

- Connect to the beauty of the needs calling in all of us, visit with that energy often as you keep stepping forward.

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