

GAZE AT – new ways of communication

Target group:

Migrant children and teenagers in elementary and vocational schools

Method

Theatre pedagogy:
Using games and activities that focus on students' body language, self-expression, and creativity to train their Nonviolent Communication skills.

Required time

180-270 min

Background information for the teaching session:

In this module, a challenging situation serves as a basis for practising Nonviolent Communication (NVC). The situations represent possible conflict situations that the students of a vocational and a primary school class may encounter. The students first act out the respective situation. On this basis, the steps of NVC are practised with activities and games. This way the students will practise transforming typical conflict situations into connective solutions. For this module it is crucial for the teacher to be familiar with the four steps of NVC. You can find short introduction videos and in-depth material below, in the chapter “Additional information”. Note: In the additional material for Group 3, you will also find a teaching series available in the English language that introduces the 4 steps of NVC and includes vocabulary work and various activities. It would be ideal, but not a must, if the students could go through such an introduction first.

Background: NVC offers the possibility to understand even when not approving the actions of another person. This will help to develop tolerance and empathy toward other people's needs. NVC and other communication skills are crucial when adapting to new surroundings. It is not only essential to learn a national language but also to enhance one's body language as well as the language of movement and space. The



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connection of body-speech usage is a figure within theatre methods that can help to improve the understanding of different behaviours within new cultural contexts. Theatre methods help the participants to develop their ability to express themselves and improve a relaxed body awareness and communication behaviour. For these reasons, this module uses theatre play to train communication and understanding of communication (i.e., situations in the classroom).

Aim: As students of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds are taught together, it is crucial for all of them to learn how to communicate with each other despite their possibly different perceptions. By using their own bodies and voices in theatre pedagogical games, the experiences and learning outcomes are perceived in a particularly powerful way. This allows the students to holistically practise the NVC steps learned in this module. This enables them to apply what they have learned in their relationships at home and to look at conflict situations from a different perspective in the future.

Learning Outcomes:

Self-competence:

- students reflect on personal interpretations in social situations
- students improve their body- and self-awareness and thus gain self-confidence

Social and intercultural competences:

- improving communication behaviour
- students improve their appreciation/ respect towards different cultures and human beings
- promotion of group joy and group work competence of the participant's self-confidence in a group context

Professional competence (teenagers):

- students reflect on cultural and social differences in professional situations

- students improve effective communication at work: Ability to give and accept feedback

Communicative and language skills/competencies:

- students will use vocabulary regarding feelings and needs
- students will learn discussion rules based on NVC
- teenagers: students express themselves professionally within their workplace settings and listen empathetically to colleagues

Short description of the lesson:

In this module, students practise reflecting on their own perception in relation to (body) language with the help of NVC. They will discuss difficulties they may encounter when practising NVC and find solutions to solve these difficulties by using a connecting, non-violent language. The students will do so by practising the steps of NVC and applying them to a difficult situation relevant to them.

To practise these steps, students should be offered the vocabulary and possible phrases to talk about their feelings and needs. We have prepared a vocabulary and guide (little card with the 4 steps of NVC) which can be used for any age group. However, be sure to select from the prepared material the emotions and needs that are relevant to the age group you are teaching.

Welcoming the class

Introduction:

- Inform students about the aim of today's class:
 - Learn and practise a new form of communication,
 - Deal with conflict situations in a fruitful and peaceful way.
- For this purpose: Act out a possible conflict situation,



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- You either choose a specific situation that has occurred or might occur in your specific learning or professional environment or choose one of the following two examples.

Activity 1: Conflict Situations

Primary school: While playing, two or more students get angry with each other. One of them uses a racist insult referring to one of the student's skin colour or origin and tells him/her to leave the country instead of dealing with the real issue that has caused the fight.

Vocational school: A student arrives 10 minutes late at his/her workplace. The supervisor greets him/her with the words: "Have you looked at your watch?" The student replies in amazement: "Yes, I did, so what?" The boss gets angrier: "You are too late. We start here at 08.00 o'clock sharp. Don't you realise that?", -"Yes, ok, but it's only 10 minutes."

Activity:

Select the students to play out the situation. The rest of the class will be observers. Tell the students that all of them should be attentive and able to explain the situation after.

Feedback:

- Ask the students to describe the situation without making a judgment.
- Possible questions:
 - What happened in the situation?
 - Have any students been in a similar situation before?
 - How did the students playing out the characters feel while playing?
 - How did the conflict make them feel?

Take some time to reflect with the students on the situation and then briefly give some information about the concept of NVC as a new way of communication. Let the students know that within this module you will go over the steps of NVC, using games and activities. At the end of the module, you will collectively try to resolve

the discussed situation using the NVC steps. The steps that the students will be introduced to are observation, feelings, needs and concrete action.

Activity 2: Learning about observation

Introduction:

- Statement: Perceiving things without judging them is crucial to NVC.
- Allow students to define possible differences between observation and interpretation.
- **Observation** is a non-judgemental statement, based on at least one of the five human senses,
- **Interpretation** is the act of making sense of a phenomenon or situation as a direct consequence of an observation,
- Both are closely linked / sometimes hard to differentiate,
- Make sure that students do not feel like they are under pressure; they are not supposed to give exact definition about the distinction.

Activity:

Tell the students that you will practise with them to reflect on their own evaluations, which influence how they interpret their observations. Ask students to pair up and describe each other's appearance/clothes in turn. Thereby, the students get a first impression of how closely observations can be linked to interpretations (i.e., "You have beautiful long hair").

Feedback:

Give your students a little time to think about the activity.

Possible questions:

- Was it difficult to differentiate between interpretation and observation?
- Which interpretations are closely linked to observations?



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Activity 3: Learning about feelings

Introduction:

- Have feelings-cards printed out (use or add other feelings – depending on relevance for age group).
- Tell students that their interpretation of a situation is closely linked to their feelings.
- Ask the students about their feelings during the last exercise.
- Ask for more feelings.
- Use feelings cards as help.

Activity:

Let five or six students choose one out of the feelings-cards without showing it to the others. Ask the students who feels like acting to play a first scene. In the best case, at the end of the activity all pupils who wanted to play should have had the opportunity to do so. Explain to the students that they are going to act out an everyday scene (e.g., in the supermarket with the roles of cashier, shopper and shop detective) in which they will behave according to the feeling they have drawn from the card set. Distribute the roles among the students (or let them choose if you prefer). The other students observe the scene. After five minutes, discuss the scene.

Possible questions:

- *What feelings did the observing students identify?*
- *Was it difficult for the playing students to portray them?*
- *What difficulties arose “while shopping”?*
- *How could these have been avoided?*

Now have other students play so that other feelings and combinations emerge. You can also play another scene where interpersonal interactions are inevitable. For example, at the cinema (possible roles: cashier, ticket

taker, visitor) or at a football match (possible roles: player, fan, popcorn seller, referee).

Feedback:

Give your students a little time to think about the activity.

Possible questions:

- What did they learn about feelings?
- How do feelings influence their behaviour?
- How could the scene look if no feelings-cards were distributed beforehand?
- What would change if all students picked the same feeling?

Conclude with: Different people who are involved in the same situation might have very different feelings about it. In addition, feelings sometimes might be difficult to differentiate from thoughts. Give them the hint that feelings can usually be recognised by whether they can be put at the end of the sentence “I am...”.

Activity 4: Learning about needs

Introduction:

- Feelings are always the result of certain fulfilled or unfulfilled needs.
- To better understand our feelings, we need to understand the needs that underlie them.
- Use the list of needs which is included in the material for this module. You can adapt the list as required.
- Write the needs on the board or print them and hand them out to the class.
- Discuss:
 - Do the students usually know why they feel in a certain way?
 - Which needs do the students already know?



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- What are possible situations in which they are being fulfilled or unfulfilled?

Activity:

For this game, the students will play out a situation in which one person does not want to do something and a group is trying to convince them. One of the students will play the person that the rest of the group is trying to convince. The student prepares for his or her role by thinking of reasons why he/ she does not want to take part. The student should also make clear that they do not want to be convinced. The reason for saying “no” should not be the mere rejection of the questioners.

Now the group will try to convince the student. The student rejects and explains to the group his or her needs so that the group then can accept the rejection and not take it personally. The goal is that the student can stick to his or her answer because he or she will know that the group understands the needs lying behind the rejection and will not take it personally.

Note: In case the student saying no has difficulties to figure out the “good reason” (need), another student can support him in this role.

Possible situations:

Do you want to play hide and seek with us? (No, because I want to be alone/ need quiet/ want to relax)

Do you want to watch a movie together? (No, because I want to be active/ stay outside)

Can I copy your homework? (No, because honesty is important to me/ I want to be seen)

Can we forget about our fight? (No, because I want to be understood/ treated in a fair way)

Feedback:

Give your students a little time to think about the activity.

Possible questions:

- *What do you enjoy about the activity?*

- *What is difficult?*
- *What needs are particularly important to you?*
- *How do those needs make them feel if they are unfulfilled?*

Conclude with: Needs are less easy to be recognised than feelings. They are often subconscious and might make you feel vulnerable. For NVC, it is crucial to understand the needs that lay beneath feelings and to express them in a fruitful way to other people.

Activity 5: Learning about concrete action

Introduction:

- Aim: The students practise how to provide feedback in a fruitful, non-attacking way.
- Application of the NVC steps previously discussed.
- Materials:
 - A small ball to pass around among the students,
 - Cards with statements,
 - List of needs,
 - The little card with the 4 steps of empathetic listening.

Note: the list and 4 steps card can be used by the students during the activity.

Activity:

Idea: Two students will be the players; one will give a judgemental statement to the other student. The rest of the students stand in between these two as a protection wall.

Start: The “attacking” student picks one of the statement cards and reads it out loud (i.e., “You never choose me first for your sports team”). He / She passes the ball in the direction of the student on the other side of the wall. The students in the protection wall catch the ball and give it to the student being



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“attacked”. All students, except the “attacking” student, try to figure out cooperatively which feeling underlies the statement of the “attacking” student and which needs cause this feeling. The student who has been “attacked” then throws the ball back at the student and asks the group’s guess:

“Are you feeling (i.e., *sad*) because you want /need (i.e., *to be sure you belong to the group*)?”

If the idea was right, the “attacking” student replies by repeating his or her feeling and need. Now the whole group thinks of a possible solution/request (i.e., “would you want me to choose you earlier when we form a team next time?”).

If the student is wrong the “attacking” student throws the ball back at him or her and then they guess another feeling and need.

Feedback:

Give the students some time to reflect and discuss the difficulties they have had during this activity and the uncertainties they may have.

Conclude with: Try to focus on your own feelings and how they affect your perceptions but at the same time be open and attentive to the feelings and needs of other people.

Activity 6: Wrap-up

Introduction:

- Briefly summarise what you have learned to give your students an overview of their newly acquired knowledge. The students must have learned and practised so far:
 - The basis of how to differentiate observations from interpretations,
 - The importance of awareness of their feelings,
 - Which needs might underlie them,
 - How to express all this in a fruitful way, and how to resolve a conflict.
 - empathic guessing and finding solutions

- Final step: students apply their learning to a possible real-life situation.

Activity:

Ask the students to recall the first situation that they act out. Explain the situation you chose for the first activity again. Give the students ten minutes to think quietly about what may have caused the conflict.

Ask them if they have any idea of how to resolve the conflict with their newly gained knowledge. Give the students some time to share their ideas and make sure that every student who wants to participate gets to contribute to the discussion. Give the students feedback about their approaches repeating the steps of NVC with them (i.e., “What feelings are being expressed? What needs might they assume?” -Helping material: little card with the 4 steps of NVC). Encourage them to play through their approaches and see what reaction they might elicit. Now ask the students to re-enact the conflict situation from the beginning. Again, there will be a playing-group and an observer-group. When a student from the observer-group has an idea how to step into the situation in a fruitful, conflict-solving manner, the student can raise his/her hand say “stop” and the players freeze. Then the student says who in the playing group they want to exchange for. They exchange roles and continue the scene.

Feedback:

Give your students a little time to think about the activity.

Possible questions:

- *What feelings and needs did the students observe?*
- *Did the players succeed in expressing what they feel and need?*
- *Did they manage to understand the other person?*
- *Has a solution been found that everyone involved was satisfied with?*

Give the students some time to reflect on their observations and then move on to the final feedback session.



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Final Feedback of the project:

For the final feedback-round, have the reflection sheets printed out. Discuss the reflection sheet with the students. Give the students some time to reflect on what they have learned today and fill in the questionnaire on their own. Afterwards, give the students a short break and take some time to look over the filled-in sheets while noting down which questions you want to ask your students. Then come together in a circle and ask your questions. Make sure to also give the students the chance to share what is most important for them.

Equipment needed:

- Small ball (to pass around),
- Feelings-cards (see additional information),
- List of needs,
- Little card with the 4 steps of NVC,
- Cards with statements,
- Reflection sheet;

How to use:

Theatre pedagogical methods require a sophisticated pre- and post-discussion with all participants. Since the students' learning focus here is on communication, this must not be neglected. Take enough time between activities to talk to the students about how they felt during the play and what they took away from it.

Possible questions to include into the discussion / feedback-round after each game:

- Which aspects did you find difficult about the exercise?
- Did you have to pay special attention to something?
- What was easy for you?
- What helped you?

Engage all students to take part in the discussions. Any feelings and interpretations they might have are legitimate and relevant to the topic. However, be careful not to put pressure on the students to participate.

Additional information (pictures, links, forms etc.)

- The NVC Steps made simple:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYkgbrZSAY0>
- Nonviolent Communication with kids: 5-minute kickstart + demo:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sPxDB26nbss>
- NVC when your kid is triggered:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJgDKD_F6oc
- Nonviolent communication in a nutshell:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dm1aHU4SXXs>
- Gaschler, Frank & Gundi: I want to understand what you really need: Nonviolent communication with children. (English Edition). Books on Demand, 2017.
- Rosenberg, Marshall: Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life: Life-Changing Tools for Healthy Relationships (Nonviolent Communication Guides) (English Edition) 3rd Edition. PuddleDancer Press, 2015.

Source for **Learning about: Concrete action** and **Learning about: Needs**:

Kostyra, Karin: Die 50 besten Spiele für Gewaltfreie Kommunikation. Don Bosco Medien GmbH. München: 2021.

For a more in-depth look at NVC, please see our additional materials. These contain teaching units and materials that are important for developing the vocabulary and knowledge in the students.



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