

# April 17, 2015: LWL – Composting Dissatisfaction: Attending Fully to Your Needs

## Preparation Notes

### **A. Orientation**

Each week, for the duration of this course, I am planning to send you materials to engage with before the class. These include readings (usually blog pieces) and/or reflection questions. The more you engage with them ahead of time, the more able you will be to participate. At least that's what I believe...

During the live time, the sessions I lead are highly interactive and responsive to what you and others bring. Some part of each session is devoted to small group interaction that allows everyone to participate and give and receive support for learning and integration.

I do not generally participate in conversations that take place in the virtual classroom. However, the NVC Academy people forward to me questions and comments that might directly affect the flow of the calls.

### **B. Preparing for the Class**

The focus of this session is on preparing the foundation for creating the relationship you want with a person of your choice. This means two things. One is embracing the willingness to take 100% responsibility, and getting truly clear about what you want for the relationship. This is what I intend for us to do during this first session.

#### **Initial Thoughts**

What I mean by 100% responsibility is taking on doing whatever you can to make the relationship work as well as it can. 100% is quite different from the illusory, if compelling, 50%. 100% is about not giving up on you and not giving up on the other person – holding on to the faith and commitment to make things work for both of you. If you're not getting from the other person what you want, taking 100% responsibility means finding a way to ask for it that is neither a judgment nor a demand. A judgment or a demand are just about the best way to ensure that the other person won't give you what you want... Even more significantly, 100% responsibility also means taking care that you don't get what you want at the expense of the other person's, as that is invariably a short-term, costly solution.

This is a radically different way of living. It means putting aside "fairness" – the basis on which we have invented the 50% responsibility myth. As deeply seated as this notion is, I believe it gets us in trouble, such that 50% + 50% often adds up to 25%. I want us to transcend fairness and focus on what's needed and what's possible.

For example, if you take 100% responsibility for your experience without putting any of it on the other person, it leaves more room for them to find their spontaneous care towards you; certainly more so than if you complain or blame them. If you can be clear and relaxed about your needs, it makes it easier for the other person to tolerate your needs without thinking they are responsible to meet them. If you are open to their needs, then they can have more room to be open to yours. In all these ways, which we will look at more closely over the coming weeks, taking 100% responsibility for the relationship is a dance that you can lead.

The first step is to make the choice to focus on what you truly want for you, for the other person, and for the relationship – all of which are needs of *yours!* – and commit to attending to those needs.

Since the entry point into this transformation is an experience of dissatisfaction (or else you would choose a different relationship to focus on...), the core challenge you will face in doing it is on letting go of blaming, nursing a righteous victim consciousness, or helplessness, and choosing to look at your dissatisfaction as an opportunity to learn more deeply about what you really want, and to go for it.

This is not going to be an easy choice for most, because we all are hungry for being received in the way we want to be received, without any effort, without ever having to ask for it. There are remarkably few people in the world, if any, who have been received, to their satisfaction, consistently, and yet that's what our organism is expecting when we come into the world. This hunger is the biggest challenge to overcome: to find a way to hold that hunger tenderly and still choose to take 100% responsibility for your relationships.

### **Blog piece**

<http://thefearlessheart.org/behind-every-complaint-theres-a-vision/>

Although the above piece is about workplace situations, the process it describes about finding the vision behind the complaint can be of help to you in finding your true dreams that are embedded in your unprocessed dissatisfaction.

### **Reflection Questions**

Think of a relationship that you would like to focus on. Ideally, this will be a relationship that you will stick with for the entire 4 weeks. Pick a relationship that you are pretty confident you want to keep and that is significant for you. It's less important whether it is a romantic partner, a work colleague, or a friend. Pick based on your level of commitment to the relationship and your desire to have it work better. Then answer the following questions.

#### **1. Engaging with your dissatisfaction**

You may want to use the table at the end of these questions to help you organize your thoughts. Feel free to take each item from Q#1 all the way across, or go through each of the questions for all the items first. Choose based on how you anticipate you will get more benefit (and feel free to change your mind midstream, too).

- a. What are the sources of dissatisfaction for you in this relationship? Start by listing one or more in the most spontaneous way that comes to you. If you feel unclear, you may want to give closer attention to the dynamics of your interactions in the coming few days and take notes that can help you in this activity.
- b. Now look at each of the statements that you wrote, and write, next to it in the table, your inner response to each of these items: What meaning do you assign to it? What thoughts do you have about it? What judgments arise about the other person or yourself? Be as honest with yourself as you possibly can, since these will provide raw material for the next segment of your work.
- c. Now take each of these thoughts and judgments and write, next to it, the emotional flavor of your feelings as you contemplate these thoughts and judgments? For each of the feelings that you write, take a few seconds to aim to open yourself to the feeling instead of contracting away from it. Your willingness to be with this feeling is the act of “composting” instead of attempting to “throw it away.”
- d. Now take any part of what you wrote, for each of the sources of dissatisfaction, and find the vision or dream that is hidden within it. Remember: each of your dissatisfactions is a potential seed of transformation if you dig into it deeply enough to know what you want *instead*. Often enough, your first approximation would be the opposite of your judgments, though further refinement is likely to take you to a deeper understanding of yourself.

As much as you possibly can, stay away from shooting down your dreams by your resentment or discouragement. Let yourself dream in full, to imagine what would really make this relationship work, even if you think it's utterly impossible.

Source of Dissatisfaction	Meaning, Thought, or Judgment	Feeling	Dream or Vision

## 2. Committing to attend to your needs

Now that you know your deepest dream for the relationship, your next step is to consider whether you have the willingness to take responsibility for creating transformation in the relationship.

- a. When you consider taking 100% responsibility for this relationship, is there any concern or hesitation? If not, you're done for now. If you do, continue with the remainder of the questions.
- b. Write down the various obstacles that keep you from wholeheartedly embracing this responsibility.

- c. Look through the list. If you find any item that speaks about the other person, replace it with something about yourself. For example, if your initial item is: "I can't take responsibility for a relationship in which the other person won't speak to me," you might want to replace it with: "I am overwhelmed by the challenges in the relationship, and I don't have enough faith and skill to transcend them."
- d. What kind of support would you need in order to engage with the obstacles you have identified?

Note: if you have enough obstacles for which you don't see getting sufficient support and skills *on your own*, without requiring something upfront from the other person, it may be to your benefit to pick another relationship with a level of challenge that is more of a match for your resources, and redo this entire exercise.