

Pathways to Liberation Self-Assessment Matrix	Unskilled No knowledge of the skill. Unconsciously Incompetent	Awakening Becoming aware of the skill. Consciously Incompetent	Capable Able to use the skill, with effort. Consciously Competent	Integrated Naturally uses the skill with ease and flow. Unconsciously Competent
Presence: Being attentive to what is happening right now. Not lost in thinking, emotional reactions, etc.	Unconsciously lost in the past or the future; identified with thinking and doing.	Becoming aware of the difference between being alert to what is actually happening and being lost in thought.	Able to witness thoughts and feelings, and to respond rather than react; able to bring oneself back to alertness when aware of having been lost in thought.	Relaxed alertness to what is happening in each moment, with a deep sense of purpose and choice; openness to what is, with resourcefulness, interdependence, and a perspective of past and future.
Observing: Noticing (and possibly describing) our sensory and mental experiences, and distinguishing these experiences from the interpretations we ascribe to them.	Habitually confuses interpretation with observation; assumes that evaluations and interpretations are facts.	Becoming aware of interpretations as distinct from observations when reviewing past events; little skill or clarity of this distinction when interacting in real time.	Increasingly remembering and making the distinction between observation and interpretation.	Effortlessly able to distinguish observations from interpretations.
Feelings awareness: Ability to identify and experience our physical sensations and emotions.	Little or no understanding of emotions; identifies with and/or resists emotions.	Beginning to notice and have a sense that feelings have value.	Able to recognize, accept, and allow emotional experience, with effort.	Effortless recognition, acceptance, and allowing of emotional experience.
Self-acceptance: Accepting oneself with unconditional caring.	Habitual reactive patterns of self-judgment characterized by shame, self-blame, self-criticism, defensiveness, or self-aggrandizement.	Noticing self-judgment, and realizing the costs to one's own wellbeing; yearning for self-acceptance.	Increasing acceptance of, and life-enriching response to, what one feels, thinks, needs and does.	Being clear and caring with oneself.
Taking ownership of one's feelings: Living from the knowledge that I alone cause my emotions - my emotions are not caused by others.	When one's feelings arise, one credits or blames self, others, or external circumstances.	Sometimes observes oneself blaming and criticizing, and unclear how to take ownership of one's feelings.	Capable of noticing when triggered, and uses that as a signal to self-connect.	Living from the understanding that our emotional experience emerges from the state of our needs and the quality of our thinking.
Needs consciousness: Awareness of (and the willingness to honor) needs, the essential universal elemental qualities of life (like sustenance, love and meaning).	Not aware of universal needs; treats strategies like needs, resulting in attachment and resistance.	Intellectual understanding of universal needs; confuses need with strategy, thinking one must have a particular strategy.	Sees difference between needs and strategies; has a vocabulary to express feelings and needs; connects feelings with underlying needs (sometimes with effort, particularly when triggered).	Living from the awareness that everything we do is an attempt (effective or not) to survive and thrive.
Reconnecting to self & recovering from reactivity: Reactivity is internal resistance to what is. Recovery is letting go of that resistance. Reconnecting to self is being with one's own experience with presence and compassion.	Mostly unconscious of habitual reactive patterns.	Sometimes notices habitual patterns and remembers empathy and/or honesty were options.	When triggered, generally remembers there is a choice; first response is typically empathy and/or honesty.	Notices internal constriction and naturally opens.

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Request consciousness & making requests: Willingness to ask for what one wants, with openness to any response; not attached to any particular outcome.	Demands what one wants or is unwilling/unable to ask for what one wants.	Becoming aware of how attachment, making demands, and failing to ask for what we want, are less likely to address needs.	Generally willing and able to make specific requests, and when noticing attachment to a specific strategy, strives to move from constriction to openness and creativity.	Willingness to ask for what one wants; has presence, creativity and compassion, even when the response is "no".
Mourning: Transforming the suffering of loss; letting go of resistance to what is, and being willing to allow our experience to unfold.	Blames self, others or external circumstances for loss; resists feelings of loss; tries to be "strong" or hide feelings from others.	Becoming aware of own tendency toward resistance or blame when experiencing loss.	Noticing avoidance or blame related to loss, one lets go of believing something is wrong and allows oneself to experience one's feelings, opening to a connection to needs.	Fully engaged in the wholeness of life in the presence of loss.
Empathy: Being present with another's experience, with unconditional acceptance of the person.	Habitually responds to others with sympathy, advice, criticism, shifting the focus to oneself, etc.	Easily gets lost in the story. Sometimes able to guess observations, feelings, needs and requests (with support of feelings/needs lists). Dawning intention to give others space, presence and focus.	Capable of being with another without trying to lead them, and able to reflect another's experience without affirming or adding opinions or evaluations.	Naturally focused and energized when being present with another's experience, with unconditional acceptance of the person.
Dissolving enemy images: Transcending one's perceptions that another deserves to be punished or harmed.	"Us versus them" thinking; "they" deserve to be punished or harmed.	Becoming aware of the costs of having enemy images, and the possible value of exploring alternatives to punishment.	When noticing one is holding a person or group as an enemy, one is able to reconnect to the humanness of all involved, dissolving the enemy image.	Holding everyone with compassion, with respect for the well-being of all.
Discernment: Clarity, insight, and wisdom in making life-serving distinctions and choices; recognizing one has choice.	Opinions and choices are based on judgments of right and wrong; one believes one's judgments to be facts.	Becoming aware of another way to make distinctions and choices based on serving universal needs, rather than based on judgments of good or bad, right or wrong.	Has increasing competence in making distinctions and choices with a broad perspective, understanding the deeper meaning and intentions beneath the surface.	Intuitively tunes into one's clarity, insight, and wisdom, to make life-serving distinctions and choices.
Living interdependently: Living from the knowledge that every individual is related to every other individual - every part of a system affects every other part.	Holds perspectives of independence/dependence, either/or and domination/submission without being aware of alternatives.	Aware of (and interested in) the idea that all needs matter; becoming aware of either/or thinking, and of desire to submit/rebel.	Generally considers the needs of others as well as one's own needs.	Consistently open to perspectives and needs of others; experiences others' needs as integrally connected to own needs.
Honest self-expression: Owning one's experience and having the willingness to express authentically without blame or criticism.	Habitually expresses with complaint, blame or criticism when upset; shares opinions and beliefs as certainties.	Developing an increasing awareness of how some patterns of thinking and expressing tend to lead to disconnection; starting to explore alternatives.	Usually capable of expressing authentically with an intention to connect, even when stressed.	Expresses with vulnerability, holding everyone's needs as precious; has openness to outcome.
Facilitating connection: Facilitating empathy and honesty in dialogue with an intent to create connection.	Speaks "at" rather than "with"; debates, convinces, or doesn't speak up for own needs.	Noticing life-alienated communication patterns and attempting to have more choice about how to support connection.	Conscious intention to connect; balancing honesty with inviting the expression of others.	Communicates with authenticity and empathy; assists people to connect.

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Patience: Remaining spaciously present when one feels stress. An ability to be with one's own reactions, without acting out of them.	Usually relates with an intention to get what one wants, and/or with submissiveness.	Impatient or distracted by own impulses; interrupts; tendency to act with reactivity.	Working to expand one's range of acceptance and the ability to pause in self-connection before responding to reactivity.	Naturally self-connects and opens when one experiences constriction or urgency, and has willingness to wait.
Responding to others' reactivity: Responding rather than reacting to others who are caught up in intense separating emotions.	Reacts habitually with defensiveness, submissiveness, or avoidance when others are triggered.	Increasingly notices one's own habitual reactions and their effect on connection.	Increasing self-connection and ability to choose empathy or honesty when in the presence of other's reactivity; opening to curiosity about others' perspectives.	Responds to other's reactivity with centeredness; accepts other when other is triggered; ability to be present.
Openness to feedback: Receiving other's perspective about our actions with equanimity and centeredness.	Feedback means something is wrong or right with self or other. Feedback is interpreted as criticism or praise.	Has desire to transform one's own reactivity around receiving feedback.	Understands that feedback from another is the other's perspective and connects it to the other's need; connects one's own reaction to feedback to one's own needs.	Receives feedback as information to be considered, with clarity of choice. Aware that others are speaking from their own perspective.
Beneficial regret: Acknowledging and learning from one's missed opportunity to meet needs, without guilt, shame, or self-punishment.	Takes responsibility for the feelings of others with guilt and/or shame, or defends oneself; apologizes to protect oneself by assuaging another's feelings.	Newfound awareness that others' feelings are caused by their needs, and may want others to "get over it". Heightened awareness of habit of self-blame.	Increasing ability to transform guilt into learning. Fostering willingness to seek connection with others (with empathy and honesty) when events did not work for others.	Consistent willingness to openly own one's part in outcomes that did not meet needs; willingness to feel and express regret; seeks learning and growth.
Flexibility in relating: Openness and versatility in interacting with others.	Habitually relates from a perspective of right/wrong, win/lose, "should", "have to", etc.	Increasing ability to distinguish between life-alienated communication patterns and NVC. Reactive communication patterns continue. Formulaic, self-conscious expressions of NVC honesty and empathy; thinks NVC is OFNR.	Willing and usually able to hear observations, feelings, needs and requests, no matter how they are communicated. Has started experimenting with "street giraffe", to speak in ways that are more likely to connect.	Relates naturally with authenticity and empathy. Expressions are attuned to the needs and styles of those involved, and may not "sound like NVC language".
Transforming conflict: Using conflict with others as a means to connect and create a mutual outcome.	Afraid of or addicted to conflict; unconsciously attached to opinions and strategies; takes sides.	Becoming aware of one's own reactive patterns in response to conflict; starting to notice one's attachments (to resolution, to conflict itself, to safety, etc.)	Willing to support all parties in being resourceful and creative, and to include the needs of all concerned, even in the face of one's own habitual reactions to conflict.	Has openness, curiosity, and creativity about different perspectives as an opportunity to expand awareness and take effective action.
Gratitude: Finding the value in, appreciating, and enjoying what is.	Focuses on what is missing and complains; uses and looks for validation through praise and reward.	Noticing that the strategies of praise/rewards and external validation do not support connection; starting to notice the value in appreciating met needs.	Willing and able to connect to, savor, and express the gift(s) in what is happening.	Lives in appreciation that everything can be a stimulus for enjoyment and/or growth.

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Openhearted flow of giving and receiving: Transforming scarcity thinking into thriving creatively; joyfully contributing and receiving.	Resources are hoarded and/or used to control others; fear of loss or not having enough; money and things equated with security.	Becoming aware of one's fears associated with not having enough, and the value of contributing.	Increasing awareness of habitual programming, such as desire to hoard or difficulty receiving, and increased joy in the flow of contributing and receiving.	Joy and ease in giving and receiving with creativity and resourcefulness; giving is receiving.
Cultivating vitality: Tuning in to oneself to support balanced self-care; cultivating the energy to serve life.	Unconscious habitual patterns and/or restless mental activity result in decreased energy.	Becoming aware of own energy levels and what influences them.	Connected to needs as resources; motivated to seek ways to be resourceful and to contribute.	Energized by contributing to body, mind, spirit, and community.
Sharing power: Transforming domination; valuing everyone's needs with mutuality and respect; transcending submission and rebellion.	Relationships based on domination and submission; fear of, lusting for, or hoarding of power.	Becoming aware of domination and submission, and possibilities of relating with mutuality.	Aware of one's own submission or attempts to dominate. Strives to act with mutuality and empathy for oneself and other.	Acting from a valuing of everyone's needs, and honoring each person's autonomy; transcending domination, submission and rebellion.
Transcending roles: Aware that we are not the roles we play; having choice about what roles we adopt and how we respond to the roles others adopt.	Unconsciously stuck in reactions to roles, one's own and others.	Becoming aware of the suffering that can occur when we react to roles rather than responding to needs.	Able to respond with self-connection, empathy and honesty, rather than reacting based on the roles self and/or other are holding.	Gracefully and easily assumes, responds to, and/or refrains from roles; aware of our interdependence beyond our roles.
Awareness of response-ability: Freely choosing one's responses to what shows up in life, owning one's part in what happens. Not owning others' parts, and acknowledging that one's actions do influence others.	Victim consciousness: Lacks clarity about whose part is whose; perceives that one's experience and actions can be caused by others or external circumstances (e.g.: I caused yours, you caused mine, or it caused yours or mine)	Becoming aware of victim consciousness and its costs; relief and freedom in the awareness of our power, and still finding ourselves stuck in habitual patterns of guilt and blame; diagnoses others as stuck or blaming, and attempts to educate them to protect oneself.	Able to take ownership of one's experience and choices when one becomes aware of blaming, justifying, or minimizing, without trying to take ownership of others' reactions and responses.	Consistently able to respond with equanimity. Grounded and centered in authorship of one's own life. Clear about others' authorship of their lives.
Supporting holistic systems: Consciously participating in the creation and evolution of holistic systems that foster general well-being.	Rebels against or submits to structures; uses organizational structures to assert one's power or feels helpless in relationship to organizational rules.	Limited view, overwhelm, and/or hopelessness about effecting change toward systems that value the needs of those affected.	Aware of potential for systems to be organized around universally valued needs; willingness to contribute to general well-being, with growing creativity.	Engaging in creating and improving systems with the intention of contributing to general well-being with openness to feedback.

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