

## Pathways to Peace

The movement is spreading across the country, gathering steam. Politicians, pundits and preachers have sounded the call to stop the Iraq War, take back democracy and create lasting peace. Losing our passion for warfare may not be an easy task, but there are paths to peace through nonviolence.

A positive approach, based on cooperation and empathy, will allow this endeavor to succeed. As we rise above our personal self-interest and our right/wrong mentality and work together for positive change, we will find peace within ourselves, with our children and with our neighbors.

It is with this intention we dedicate this issue of *EW* to the concept of nonviolence. Here we have space for just a few stories of hope, but there are many more to come.

— Aria Seligmann

## Statewide Action

In addition to his Eugene appearance, Marshall Rosenberg will travel throughout Oregon holding workshops. Of note is the May 5 Restorative Justice Community Conversation with Rosenberg and Dr. Mark Umbreit, founder and director of the Center for Restorative Justice and Peacemaking, from 9:30 am - 3:30 pm at Willamette University, Mary Stewart Rogers Music Center, Salem. This is a day of dialogue on the principles and practices of restorative justice to heal the entire community. Global change agents, grassroots organizations, mediation professionals and government agencies will share their perspectives. This workshop is co-sponsored by ORNCC and the Dispute Resolution Center of Willamette University. See [www.orncc.net](http://www.orncc.net) for full details on this conference and Rosenberg's schedule. —AS

# A Language of Love

Nonviolent Communication offers path to heart connection.

by Aria Seligmann

*Dammit! You left  
dirty dishes in the  
sink again!*

*So wash them.*

*You wash them!*

*I'm doing something  
else right now.*

*I'm not your maid!  
(Storms out).*

**S**cene sound familiar? Admit it; you know it does.

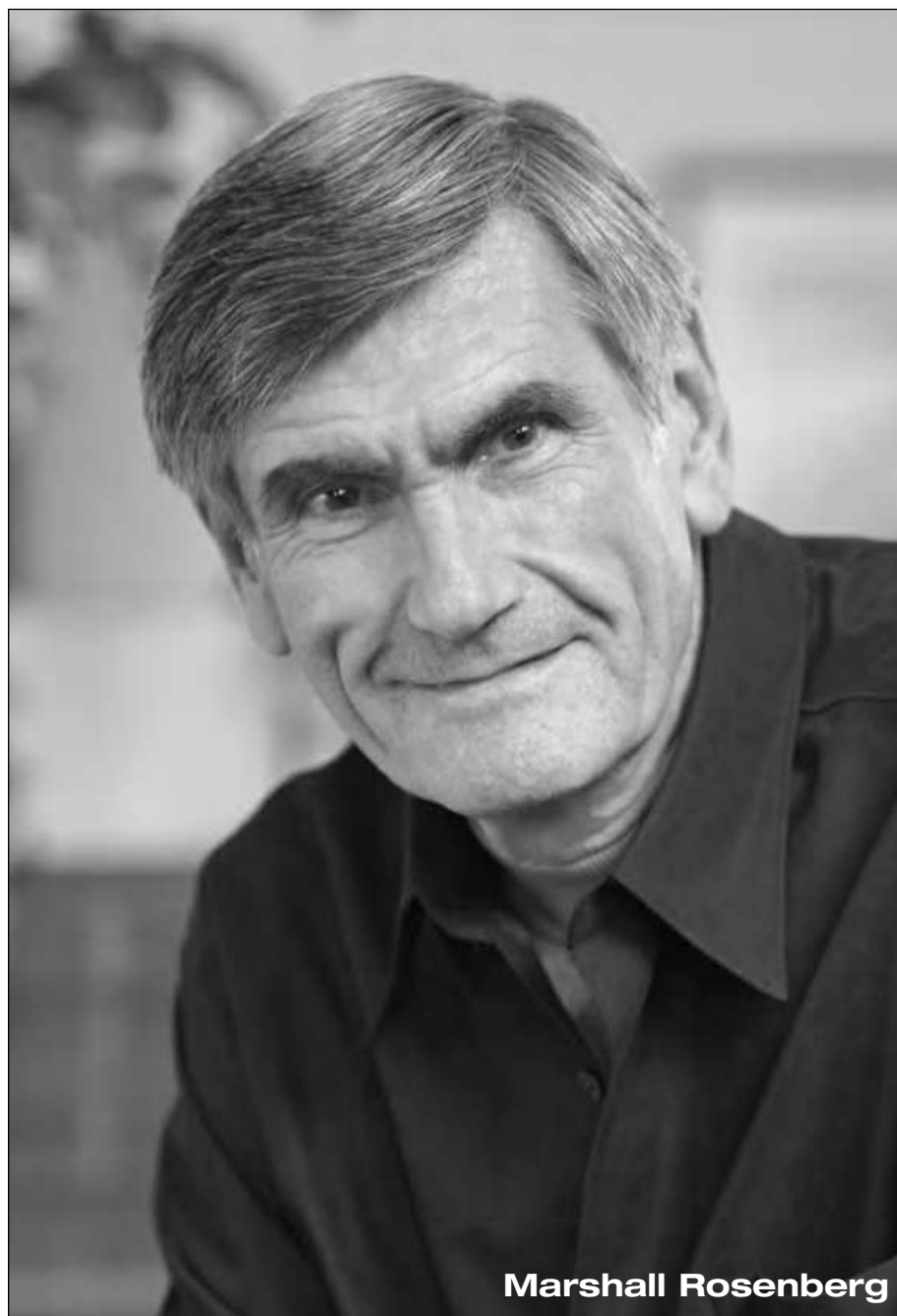
Let's reframe the preceding argument, using Nonviolent Communication (NVC). Here's how it might sound:

"I'm noticing the dishes in the sink and feeling overwhelmed and need a minute to just talk. Could you take a minute to talk to me about how we can do this dishes thing in a way that will work for all of us?"

Nonviolent Communication, a process developed and refined over a period of 35 years by Dr. Marshall B. Rosenberg, provides a path to the deeper connection. Is our anger really about the dishes or do we want understanding about how our needs for cooperation, teamwork and support are not getting met? The outcome may not be getting the dishes done at that moment, but the need for understanding, for shared responsibility in the house, may become clear. The tension will dissolve, and the conflict will end.

Ending conflict is the life work of Rosenberg, who grew up in a turbulent Detroit neighborhood. The quest for understanding violence led to Rosenberg's studying and earning his doctorate in psychology. But traditional psychology did not satisfy his desire to understand how to resolve conflicts among people, whom he believed to be inherently nonviolent.

Rosenberg founded the Center for Nonviolent Communication in 1984, and has since traveled the world, holding NVC workshops and training others to do so. He is the author of *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life* and *Life-Enriching Education*. He has worked with individuals, couples, corporations and nations. Recently, he was in Israel and Palestine listening to the concerns of people there. He has also had significant influence in the field of restorative justice and community restoration, bringing together perpetrators and their vic-



Marshall Rosenberg

tims to help them achieve mutual understanding.

Rosenberg will be traveling through Oregon in early May, holding a series of workshops throughout the state. He'll hold two workshops in Eugene on May 7. Those workshops offer an opportunity for peace activists and others to get training in conflict resolution and to apply NVC on a personal level, as well.

NVC centers around observations, feelings, needs and requests. For example: "I'm observing there are dirty dishes in the sink. I have already washed all of mine. I would like to make dinner, and I'm unable to do so without a clean sink. I'm feeling frustrated and irritated, because I have a need for order, respect and support. Would you be willing to help with the dishes?"

By identifying our needs, which include basic needs such as food, shelter and water, interdependency needs such as understanding, trust, respect and support, or broader needs such as celebration, we can understand where anger, or any emotion, ultimately comes from. "All violence," says Rosenberg, "is the tragic expression of unmet needs."

In order to check in with what emotions

we or others are feeling and why, NVC requires us to slow down, in our speech as well as reactive tendencies, and consciously become aware of what we are experiencing.

The techniques are not only suitable to interpersonal relationships, but apply to healing oneself, to working with contentious groups, such as gangs and police or labor and management, and ultimately can be used to resolve conflicts among nations.

One of the basic concepts of NVC is adopting a "power with" rather than "power over" structure. Rosenberg points to the domination structures humankind has been living under for the past 8,000 years. From the parent/child relationship to political forces, those structures defeat every human's basic need for autonomy. But how are we to undo what's been ingrained in us for so long?

Rosenberg, speaking from his home in Wasserfallenhof, Switzerland, says his approach is "radical." Beginning on the home front, he says, "get rid of the word 'child.' When I sometimes work with groups of parents I put half in one room and half in the other. Then we break down into smaller groups. We have a written role play of how they would communicate with someone