

## Walk Your Talk (The Heart Dance) and Inner Life Map: Companion Tools for Self-Connection

Walk Your Talk / The Heart Dance is a variation on the “Dance Floors” commonly used in Nonviolent Communication, developed by Dr. Marshall Rosenberg. One purpose of the Heart Dance is self-connection. It supports a person in their desire to connect with what’s really going on inside oneself. This is especially important when emotions are high. The Heart Dance can support a person in shifting from disconnection, isolation, or confusion, back to a sense of being settled, resourced and self-connected. The Inner Life Map serves the same function in a journaling format.

A second purpose of the Heart Dance (and Inner Life Map) is to move deeper into one’s own inner wisdom. This tool points the Heart Dancer toward their own Heart - to their core, to a felt sense of what is truly important in any given situation. The dance directs one to one’s own Longings or Needs, as they are rising, in order to best discern a life-giving response.

In the Heart Dance the person dancing connects to their inner life by moving, taking steps, from one element of their experience to the next. The movements aren’t linear and can go back and forth. The steps taken correspond to cards with key elements of the inner life written on them. Four of these cards are the four key components of Nonviolent Communication. These are Observations, Feelings, Needs or Heart’s Desires, and Requests. Three additional steps are a) Thoughts, often preceding Observations; b) Physical Sensation, often extending the experience of connecting to one’s Heart’s Desires; and, c) Listening to the Request of the Heart / Prayer. The last step, Requests is renamed: Choosing / Acting. The steps as they are often laid out are:

Thoughts

Observations

Feelings

Needs  
(Heart’s Desires)

Physical  
Sensation

Listening to the  
Requests of the  
Heart/ Prayer

Choosing / Acting

A person who is dancing the Heart Dance stands alongside one of these steps and connects with what is alive in a given situation related to the component/ step they are standing near. Below is a naming of the steps and a little more detail about the steps.

- Thoughts** - any judgments, opinions, evaluations that come up
- Observations** - the facts of a given situation
- Feelings** - Feelings always point to a Need. They are indicators of how well our needs are met or not met... We connect to our feelings in the present, rather than report feelings we remember feeling.
- Needs, Heart's Desires  
Longings, Yearnings** - we name the Needs that arise in a situation as they come up
- Physical Sensation** At this step we deepen our allowing the body to lead, connecting to one's body and sense of how the Longing is living in us in this moment. We tune into the "Living Energy of the Need" as Robert Gonzales suggests. This is tapping in the sense of how this Needs lives in one's body is its fullness, not the sense of lack / deficiency of this need. Reporting on one's physical sensations here is often helpful. This may involve reporting on at least three areas:
- Tightness or looseness (constriction or expansion) in a certain area of the body
  - Movement of energy or stillness in a certain area of the body
  - Temperature (warmer or cooler) in a certain area of the body.
- We bring our awareness to the body and the Life in it.
- Listening to the  
Requests of the  
Heart / Prayer** This step invites a turning to the Heart for direction and guidance. It involves attending to the Longing as it lives in the body. This is a tuning into the Physical Sensation connected to the Need. Then, this step invites a willingness to come to the Heart willing to serve, listening for the Heart's direction. This may involve asking something like, "Heart that longs for \_\_\_\_\_ (Need), is there anything I can do for you?"
- We may be asking our higher power to reveal to us what our calculating mind cannot. The Dancer listens to the longing of their heart and notes any Requests they arise.
- It often helps to have a scribe nearby who can record the Requests that arise. The Heart is often grateful for our attention and has a lot to say. We may wish to follow its requests with an openness to hearing more. "Is there more?" is a question worth asking again and again, as long as the Heart has more to share. It may help to keep asking, "Is there more?" until one's gets a sense of completion.
- Choosing /  
Action** This may be the most challenging step. Now that our own heart has made a request, we get to choose. What is our response to the Requests of the Heart? Our response is how we en flesh, or incarnate, the desires of our heart.