

☞ **The Onlooker Matrix**

Often, however, we're neither present nor clear about these four aspects. It's as if we're embedded in a matrix of language that mixes and muddles these basic phenomena and we end up languaging what's happening in ways that separate us. We're 'born into' a matrix of language—our cultural default setting—where evaluations mix with observations, thoughts with feelings, strategies with needs, and demands replace requests. We end up with expressions that focus on right/wrong, good/bad, *spiritually tactful* appropriate/inappropriate and the love affair with being right, defectivism and pathologizing. We excel at diagnosing what's amiss, analyzing, labeling, blaming and criticizing. In the onlooker matrix we're often left with crippled understandings, sabotaged connections and the fractious friction of all against all.

☞ **A Participatory Vocabulary**

In being human, each of us is gifted with universal human needs. An awareness of these needs grounds us in our common human experience and offers us a vocabulary to unlock a hitherto hidden dimension of human experience. It is a vocabulary that reveals and celebrates that each of us is simply in the process of becoming, and doing the best we can.

Individuality is always in the process of coming to be. The closer we can get to this sense of individuality, the more possible it becomes to also experience the world as always in the process of coming to be... The challenge of encountering the world through individuality is to meet the world through what we are coming to be, not through what we already know. This challenge is particularly acute in the domain of relationships.

Robert Sardello, Love and the Soul

From our first breath to our last, these human needs are rising: the need for meaning, understanding, connection; for safety, autonomy, integrity; the need to matter, to be seen, to be heard, as well as the profound need we have to serve life, to enrich life and to contribute to others; and, of course, the need to play. These needs come to presence in, and form a vocabulary for our becoming. They are alive within us at all times and stir us to action. As we gain literacy in reading these needs, we see with new eyes.

Our feelings are rooted in our needs and let us know how our becoming is going. They ground us in the present and, with practice, can become cognitive, a way of self-knowing. Together with needs, they form an archetype of human experience. As we practice Compassionate Communication, we discover that when seen in terms of our feelings and needs, we feel understood and connected. In that, empathy awakens.