

# Skilled Communication

- Assertiveness Options

We all benefit by having the ability to communicate our needs and ideas calmly and effectively. Clear communication avoids conflict and moves people in a positive direction. Balancing that social tightrope takes self-control, good communication techniques and some understanding of human behavior.

- Conflict Management Choices

There are different approaches you can choose when conflict occurs. There is a time and a place for each of these styles, depending upon what consequence you can live with or the outcomes you are hoping to achieve. Learn how to turn conflict into opportunities for communication.

- Disc Personality Temperaments

## **Applications of Temperament Diversity Will Help You:**

- To understand your natural tendencies and to see how they may compliment or contradict your personal goals and objectives.
- For those in management to better understand how to best address the needs of your team members.
- For those in work teams to better embrace the differences that make up the strength of the team.
- For those in sales to better understand how to communicate your ideas and services to your prospects and clients.

## **Effective Communication Techniques**

We all benefit by having the ability to communicate our needs and ideas calmly and effectively. Clear communication avoids conflict and moves people in a positive direction. Discover the art of active listening.

We all have a great need to be understood as well as the need to understand others. Throughout our lives we continue to learn how to get along with all types of people in various situations. With the appropriate “people skills”, we don’t need to be known as an aggressive rascal or a passive wimp. To be effective with your communication skills, it’s best to utilize techniques that are somewhere in between the two. Sometimes we may

have a right to be angry, but it doesn't give us the right to be cruel. We are responsible for what we do and say no matter how we feel. The key is to be assertive without being too aggressive or too passive. Balancing that social tightrope takes self-control, good communication techniques and some understanding of human behavior.

Assertiveness gives you the ability to communicate at a more effective level, one that benefits all concerned. It means expressing your feelings directly, asking for what you want, and being able to communicate what you don't want. It means being sure and confident. Assertiveness is sometimes confused with aggressiveness, but they are very different. Assertiveness is sharing your own thoughts and needs while having empathy for the other person's feelings. When someone is aggressive, they are usually hostile, one-sided, or destructive.

The exception would be when you're dealing with a bully; you may have to be aggressive. Calling a bully's bluff may be the only way to get him or her to back off. To paraphrase a locker room slogan: The best defense is a good offense. Sometimes you must take the offense — be aggressive — to defend your rights and to curtail even fiercer confrontations. Although in doing so you want to be very careful not to "push their buttons" and possibly exacerbate the situation.

You also want to avoid being overly passive; you may have a real need to share feelings or information, but you are just not comfortable doing so. When someone is too passive, he can get his feelings hurt, can become anxious at the time and possibly angry later. The Indirect Extroverts and Indirect Introverts both struggle with being too passive when their need for harmony is over-riding the more important need for communication.

The exception would be if you're in an auto accident and the other driver appears to be drunk and belligerent, you might decide to be low-key in that situation. You're being passive, but smart. There are circumstances when choosing passivity is to have the ability to know where and when to choose your battles.

Then there is also the strategy of *Passive Resistance*. When it is used carefully, it can be more effective than the aggressiveness of bullets or brawn. It is "passivity with a purpose." People all over the world have found that being passive is sometimes a way to show great strength. There are times it has helped countries win freedom in the face of powerful oppressors. Mahatma Gandhi counseled his followers in India to remain calm and passive when the British threatened to shoot them. (The British *did* shoot, but that incident ultimately helped the people of India win their freedom.) The great leader Dr. Martin Luther King told his people to not retaliate when police tried to keep them

from segregated lunch counters and schools. (Some went to jail, but they eventually won equal access to private diners as well as school cafeterias.)

There is also a destructive behavior style that takes on the worst aspects of both passivity and aggressiveness. It is the less than noble practice known as *Passive Aggressive* behavior. This behavior has an individual choosing not to communicate his true thoughts and feelings, but rather, they connive or concoct vengeful ways to be deceitful or destructive. For example, a retail salesclerk is somewhat pressured by his boss to work on Saturday which is usually his day off. Instead of being assertive about not being available that day, he comes in and ignores customers or purposefully loses sales opportunities for his employer.

The following techniques are very helpful when communicating your thoughts, feelings and needs.

## Using “I Statements”

When it is time to confront another person with your personal thoughts and feelings it is a good rule of thumb to never lead with the word *you*, this creates the assumption of blame. “You” instantly puts the other person on the defensive because they assume blame is about to be put upon them and they will somehow need to defend their actions. The conversation may move into creating a win/lose scenario, which will most likely mean lose/lose. This is where we can benefit by learning how to communicate our feelings and needs instead of creating emotional upheaval and blame. This is accomplished by using the following four-step process called “I statement”. People who use “I statement” to voice their concerns can more easily communicate without sounding judgmental or appearing to place blame. They are more likely to be heard and accomplish their objectives. This technique has been used for years in teaching assertive training skills. I have no idea who invented it but this much I can tell you for sure. It works! Many times, in my own life I’ve witnessed its magic. I can’t count how many clients have gone back to their home or office and used this technique with amazing results.

**Step One:** “I feel...” (Express the feeling you have and yours only: “I feel upset...”)

**Step Two:** “when you...” (Describe the other person’s behavior: “when you put me down...”)

**Step Three:** “because...” (Explain the behavior’s effect on you: “it hurts my feelings.”)

**Step Four:** “I need... (State what you want to happen: “you to show more respect for me.”)

It is not always easy to introduce change into your communication patterns. In certain circumstances you automatically want to respond in ways that feel most familiar and natural. It is going to take some time and commitment to develop a different response or approach. The trick in improving your communication skills is to choose the response that will be most appropriate and effective. Being assertive takes practice. It works only when you come across as confident and caring — not when you are defensive or challenging. Then both parties come away feeling more valued and respected.

Think of a time when you were too aggressive or too passive, now visualize yourself using this technique. The next time you need to confront a tense situation, try it. First work out your statements on paper until you feel confident enough to use it. You may be amazed how warm and responsive people will be.

## Feelings Check — Your Ticket to Deeper Communication

Most women are innately in touch with their feelings and can express them more effectively than most men. To be a good communicator is to learn how to express how you are feeling, the first step in the four step “I statement” process. It is the ability to express to the person you are addressing what you are feeling and why. This may help with the process. The following checklist is designed to help you find, identify, get in

Feelings Checklist				
Abandoned	Criticized	Embarrassed	Insecure	Powerless
Abused	Crushed	Empty	Insignificant	Pressured
Accused	Deceived	Foolish	Isolated	Pulled Apart
Alienated	Defensive	Frightened	Insulted	Put Down
Aggravated	Demoralized	Frustrated	Irritable	Puzzled
Angry	Depressed	Furious	Jealous	Rejected
Annoyed	Deprived	Hassled	Lonely	Resentful
Anxious	Deserted	Helpless	Low	Restless
Attacked	Despair	Hesitant	Miserable	Sad
Belittled	Despondent	Hopeless	Misunderstood	Scared
Betrayed	Dirty	Horified	Nervous	Scorned
Blamed	Disgusted	Humiliated	Offended	Self-Conscience
Bored	Distressed	Hurried	Overpowered	Shattered
Bothered	Disturbed	Hurt	Overwhelmed	Shocked
Cheated	Doubtful	Irritated	Panicked	Shot Down
Confused	Edgy	Ignored	Paralyzed	Sickened

touch with and express what it is you are feeling. With a little practice, it will open channels of communication so all you guys out there can start impressing the women in your life.

## Communication Tips

- Think about what you say before you say it. Make sure your brain is running when you put your mouth in gear.
- Use “I” statements when needed and speak clearly. (Keep them brief and to the point.)
- Highlight the content of the communication. Rephrase content and reflect feelings.
- Avoid autobiographic listening. That is when someone is sharing a thought or experience, and you jump in with a similar one of your own instead of letting the other person continue his thought process.
- Take into consideration the environment in which you speak and consider the audience to whom you are speaking.
- If you have the need to criticize, be sensitive to the other persons feeling and criticize ideas not people.
- Act like a good listener. Look at the other person. Then listen with your attention for content, with your eyes for body language and your heart for feelings.
- See an issue from another’s point of view. Have a sincere desire to first understand then to be understood. Remember, understanding is not the same as agreeing.
- Provide for and encourage “feedback”. Be comfortable with questions and ask appropriate questions without inappropriate probing.
- Really want to listen. Be open and avoid hasty judgments. When it is appropriate to do so concentrate and take notes.
- Smile. It sounds very basic; however, it’s amazing how people’s mood and words are misjudged because they look too serious or even angry. A smile is a very inexpensive way to improve your looks. If you want to strike up a conversation with a person, approach them with a smile. A smile shows the world that you like yourself, you like where you are, and you’re happy with the people you’re interacting with. When you enter a room, smile and look around at everyone. Those who don’t smile easily often seem unapproachable or confrontational, even though that may not be true. It could become a problem when expanding personal relationships and also become an obstacle to career advancements. Every time a person begins talking to you, look them in the eye and smile first, then get on with the conversation.
- When meeting new acquaintances ask an open ended question and let the other people begin talking. Listen sincerely to what the other person is saying. You’d be surprised how much you may discover about another human being or the situation at hand.
- Know when to be quiet. If you want to develop your people skills, you really don’t have to say much at all. Remember the rule of thumb, two ears and one mouth should be used proportionately.

- Make sure your words are matched by your actions.

## Conflict Management Choices

### Positions vs. Intentions

Obviously, the best case scenario is not to have conflict with anyone. Since we are only human, that is unlikely to happen. However, sometimes conflict can be avoided by being aware of the difference between *taking positions* vs. *explaining intentions*. People tend to take positions rather than explain their intentions. Positions are *what* you want while intentions are *why* you want it. When we take the time to explain our intentions they are usually well received. Often people will agree on intentions but sharply disagree with another's position. For example, you may disagree with your child's teacher on an issue. It may become more difficult to solve the conflict if the focus is on what position each one of you is taking rather than if the intentions are focused on what is best for the well-being of your child's emotional and educational development.

There are different approaches you can choose from when conflict does occur. There is a time and a place for each of these styles, depending upon what consequence you can live with or the outcomes you are hoping to achieve.

1. **Competition** — Children learn the importance of winning from a very young age. This often carries over to their life skills as an adult as the desired option in conflict. One must be careful of victory with a cost! Through winning, one risks destroying the relationship with the person who perceives himself or herself as the loser. Competition is good when principle is greater than relationship. It may be the right option if it is essential that winning, as well as being right, comes before the relationship.
2. **Avoidance** — This may be the most useful when danger exists. Pick your battles wisely. Some battles are not worth pursuing because it's just not worth the time or effort. It may also be politically advantageous to let certain things go without confrontation. This can also be appropriate when time is limited and a resolution is not really important. Be aware that the consequence is the same problem may resurface again and again; so avoiding it may come with a cost.
3. **Accommodation** — this is a kind of avoidance. It is commonly used when the need to have harmony is important. Accommodation may be appropriate when the needs of the other person are greater, or that person has the authority to pull rank. You may realize it would be in your best interest to accommodate because they really

- 'need to win'. Be aware, one runs the risk of enabling inappropriate behavior. This can result in harboring resentment and feeling like you are not being treated fairly.
4. **Compromise** — this involves the sharing of the prize. This is when individuals work things out, and can live with the solution (although not always the greatest results). This works when there is limited time to explore other options. Beware, this solution may only be short term, and could cause resentment in the future. Although it could also create the opportunity to gain what you want, avoid further losses, and move on.
  5. **Collaboration** — this requires more time, but creates a win/win situation. Collaboration produces most satisfactory long-term solutions. This is great for issues and relationships. It involves creative problem solving between both parties.

## NOTES

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