

The Beginning of Good Communication

KNOWING WHAT YOU WANT

by Marge Murray

When I started in my training to become a Facilitator leader, I had the very special privilege of having part of my training come from Carrie Thie. Carrie shared her skills as a communicator with us. She also shared the idea she had had at the birth of Touch for Health -- that Touch for Health would not just include the manual skills we have all found so effective, but would also include the skills that are so necessary to get along in love. These were the communication skills she introduced to us. I am going to be presenting them to you each year in their simpler form.

Communication is the process of passing information and understanding from one person to the other. Communication is only effective when we get the results that we want from the other person. Before we can get the results we want we have to know what we want.

This seems like a silly thing to be addressing. After all, we all know just what we want, don't we? I thought I did until I began looking at this information. I discovered that all along I had been running in circles and acting on childhood impulses and misconception. Once I figured out what it was I wanted. (This changes as we grow.) I became quite organized and efficient. Others understood and supported me more.

When we talk about knowing what we want, it is helpful to know that communication has five levels. Each one represents the amount that one person is willing to let another know who he is. Generally, this also translates to how well a person knows what he wants.

The first level is called "Chit-Chat". If there is any sharing here, it is only by accident. This is the "Hi, how are Ya?" level. The attitude behind chit-chat is selfish. We use it when we are too busy or really don't care about the other person. It includes cliches, idle chatter about the weather or sports, controversy that can't be laid to rest, abusive

language, gossip, and flattery. How many other things can you think of to include here?

The second level includes the exchange of facts and information. Even though this still does not tell much about ourselves, it is a step higher in that it presupposes truth, trust, and acceptance. Often we give this trust to strangers before we give it to someone close. Those close to us seem more likely to challenge us with their own facts or play, "I've got a better one". It is no wonder people do not take time to notice what they want. As children, our facts were usually contradicted by the bigger guys. We came to believe that the way we saw things was not true. We began to accept others knowledge over our own. To be able to communicate on this level, we have to develop self esteem to consider ourselves credible.

As we feel acceptable giving facts, we might venture onto level three. Now we will have to risk sharing part of ourselves as we tell our feeling about others. Even though what we say is truly how we are feeling, again, as children, we had been told we were wrong so often, many of us learned not to feel. We were "naughty" when we hated or were angry and there was something taboo about being in love. No one told us that after we were three or four.

So we become very cautious on this level. We watch others faces for their approval. On this level, we have to teach ourselves that we can have feelings for others and our feelings are legitimate. It doesn't matter what others say about our feelings. After all, we are the ones having them!

The last two levels go together. They are sharing feelings about oneself and peak communication. Peak communication is that rare time when two people know themselves and each other so well that they know what the other is feeling without using words. We will be staying with the fourth level from now on: Sharing feelings about one's self.

This is the mature level of communication. When we can talk to ourselves and others on this level, we develop good self esteem and encourage others to the same end. Believe it or not, it is also on this level that we have our greatest persuasiveness. When we can verbally admit our shortcomings, others begin to accept our influence for the better. This level takes a lot of honesty. It is so easy to be "honest" about others and so hard to be ourselves. Which of these five levels do you do most of your communicating on?

Now we are going to focus on what we really want. Obviously, this will all be done on the fourth level. It will have a lot to do with who we are. Most of us have heard of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It describes the most demanding need as the one NOT met. The most important is SURVIVAL. When that is met, we seek PHYSICAL SAFETY. When we feel safe, we explore how we FIT IN. When we find how we fit in, no matter how poor our interpretation, we develop SELF ESTEEM. Our self esteem is based on our interpretation of how we fit in and comes from our interpretation of the things that are said and the things that happen between ourselves and others. The last step is SELF ACTUALIZATION.

Most of us get stuck trying to figure out how we fit in. When we do not get clear signals, we go back to those old childhood misconceptions:

1. I need attention to fit in, so I order, direct, command, interpret, analyze, diagnose, advise, give solutions and suggest. This makes me feel good, even if they don't take my response. Others are not encouraged. They want to find their own answers.
2. I need power to fit in so I moralize, preach, implore, persuade, lecture, argue, probe, question, and interrogate. This gives me a feeling of power. Others feel helpless, frustrated and put down. They want you to feel that they are ok and these techniques say that you want them to change.
3. If I can't get attention or power, I attempt to fit in by not fitting in. I take revenge. I judge, criticize, disagree, blame, call names, ridicule, shame, warn, admonish

and threaten. I may feel fulfilled in revenge, but others feel rejected, maybe even hated, "Who wants to listen to this?"

4. I fit in by giving up. I praise, agree, flatter, reassure, sympathize, console support, distract, divert and kid. These may seem like effective techniques, but they often hide true feelings. Others recognize them as insincere when they are used often.

Most of these techniques fit in on the chit-chat level even though we get a sense of power when we use them. None of them makes the other person felt heard or accepted for who he is. They all leave the impression that we want the other to change. Words are exchanged, but no understanding, closeness or growth is accomplished. Those techniques most often end up separating people.

To change our communication behavior, we start with our beliefs. Excellence begins when we admit that we can choose what we believe. All beliefs you now hold, you chose at one time or another. The choice may have been subconscious, and subconscious choices build the strongest beliefs. Choice gives power. Power is the ability to change.

What might have shaped the beliefs we now hold about ourselves and the way we communicate?

1. **Environment:** Our position in the family, what happened to us, how we interpreted what happened to us left us with beliefs about ourselves and our abilities. Our parents actions toward us and how we felt about how we were treated also had an effect. What others reenforced by noticing developed our beliefs about how we should act.

Most often our belief was that we were not enough. Others ideas were better than ours. We needed others approval to be ok.

2. **Events:** How we interpreted the things that happened to us gave us beliefs about the world, others and ourselves.
3. **Knowledge:** As we learned, we formed beliefs. Knowledge did not have as much influence as our experiences, but now we can use knowledge to bread the shackles of our limiting beliefs. With this new

knowledge, we can create in our minds the experience we desire as though it were here now. Belief creates potential. Potential helps us take action. Action gets results. If the results come close to the ones we believed they would be, we will develop a stronger belief. If we don't like our results, we can take a different action.

What do you believe about yourself? Here are some helpful beliefs for communication. How do you feel about them?

1. Whatever happens, you are in charge. Taking responsibility is the best measure of power and maturity. By retaining the responsibility, you retain the power to change the results you produce.
2. There are no failures, only results.
3. People are your greatest resource. Serving others first will serve you best.
4. One does not lack resources, but control over them. Effective communication is the best way to control both yourself and others for the benefit of both.
5. Success at anything takes practice and commitment. See if you can think of other beliefs that can be helpful to your growth as an effective communicator.

You are beginning to see who you are. From your list of beliefs, you will take action. The first step is to set goals. These goals will be aimed at who you are, so you will start by determining your purpose. Why were you born? What are you going to contribute to life? What are your talents and shortcomings? What do you want to see as the outcome of your life?

Priorities show our value system. They also help us to know who we are. What is most important to you? What, in your goals, will you work on first? On the conscious level, priorities truly show us how we feel about things.

As children, we chose priorities based on wants. The thing we want most, we want first. As we grow up, especially after we become spouses or parents, we choose priorities based on how they might affect others. This is more of a community

approach and begins to foster effective communication.

As we mature, our priorities become based on our purpose and the goals we set in harmony with that purpose. Here we value every person for the good he has to offer. Our values reflect material success less and acceptance and character building in ourselves and others more. We begin to make choices that delay gratification now for things that bring larger success later.

Human tendency is to feel suspicious and uncomfortable with those who have values that are different from ours. It is as though we have come to think that our values are the only ones worth having. Most of life's conflicts, especially wars, grow out of the differences of values. Improving our communication is going to reduce the number of conflicts in our life since improved communication means more understanding of others, more acceptance of others despite their values and more giving of self.

Letting others know our values will be difficult since no one else has quite the same values. We can make it easier by adopting the attitude that their values are as good as ours. Then we will allow them to be responsible for the judgements of our values knowing that our differences do not devalue either of us. These are the attitudes that are useful for trouble free problem solving.

Values are the most powerful motivating tool we have. There is no close way to bond people other than to align them through their highest values. Common values form the basis for the ultimate rapport.

Thinking about your beliefs, goals, and values is going to give you a good start on knowing who you are. Just thinking about them and becoming clearer as to what they are creates a subconscious directing of self towards them. As we think and meditate on the deeper things in our being, even our impulsive communication begins to build others up. When we build others up, we also build ourselves up.

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(This is questionnaire to be handed out during the presentation at the annual meeting.)

The Beginning of Good Communication - Knowing What You Want

1. What do you believe about Touch for Health?

2. What do you believe about yourself in relation to Touch for Health?

3. What can you do for Touch for Health?

4. What can Touch for Health do for you?

5. How will you personally accomplish what you want to see happen?

6. What are your personal goals by priority?

7. Any other helpful questions we come up with between now and then.