



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Julie Nelson, Phd



EFFECTIVE INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION



What is communication? Describe a good communicator.

What are your biggest communication challenges?

○



What are some of your communication strengths?



Howard Garner's theory of multiple intelligences

- There are different ways to be smart ... what are some of the areas that people can exhibit intelligence? Psychologist Howard Garner identified eight:
 - Visual-Spatial, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Musical, Linguistic, Mathematical, Naturalistic, Interpersonal and Intra-personal intelligence

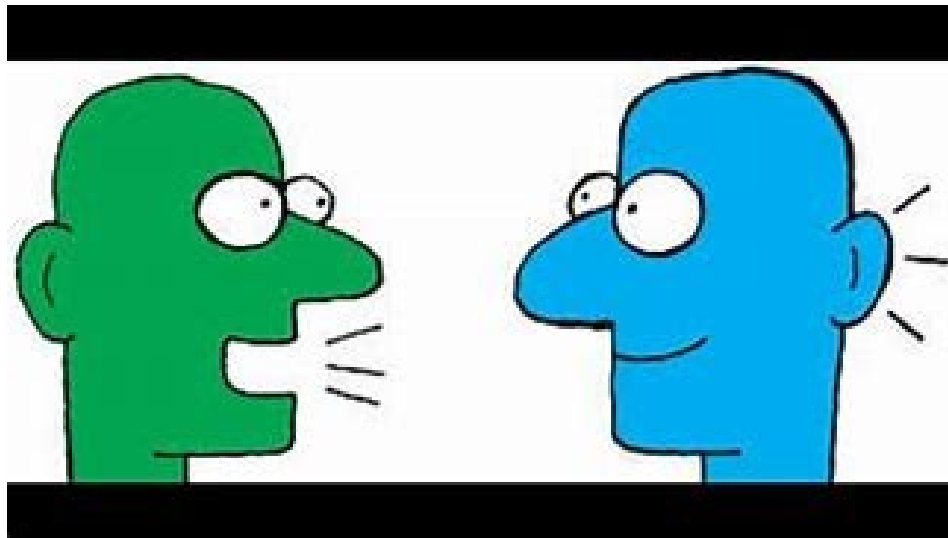


What is Social Intelligence? (Goldman)

- **Primal Empathy** - Feeling with others; sensing non-verbal emotional signals.
- **Attunement** - Listening with full receptivity in a way that establishes a sustained presence and facilitates rapport.
- **Empathic Accuracy** - Understanding another person's thoughts, feelings and intentions.
- **Social Cognition** - Knowing how the social world works, Understanding the unspoken norms that govern interaction across cultures.
- **Synchrony** - Interacting smoothly at the nonverbal level. Involves reading nonverbal cues instantaneously and acting on them smoothly.
- **Self Presentation** - Refers to presenting our self effectively, in ways that make a desired impression on others.
- **Influence** - shaping the outcome of social interactions with least force necessary. Combines self-control, assertion and empathy.
- **Concern** - Caring about others' needs and acting accordingly. Involves helping colleagues and group cooperation to meet larger objectives.

- **Choice Theory**: Meeting your needs without getting in the way of other people meeting their needs.

- **What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of each?**



Different Ways of Relating

Passive/
Submissive

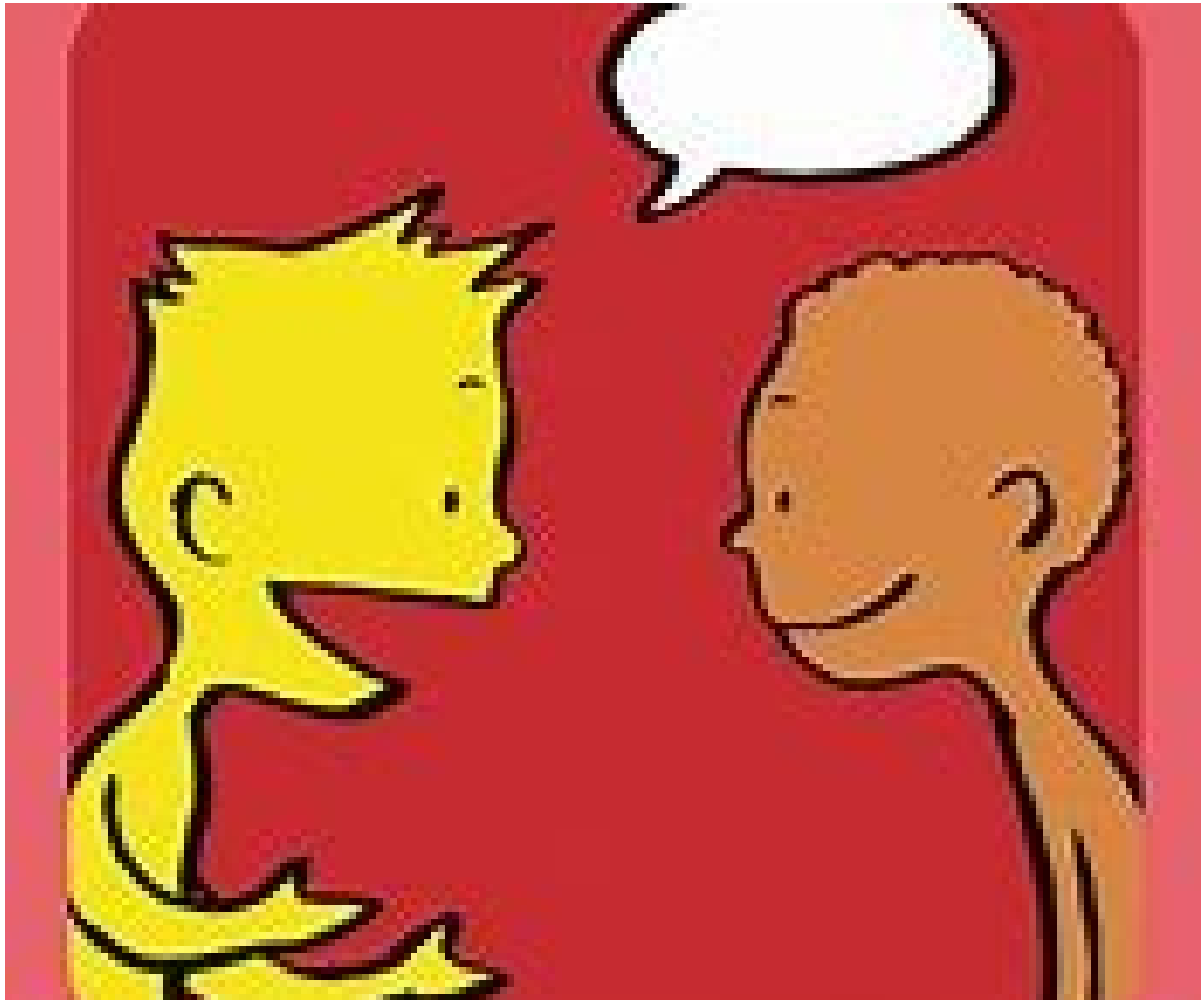
Aggressive

Assertive

LISTENING SKILLS

- **Listen with an attitude of curiosity only; with no desire to control or manipulate behaviors or outcomes**
- **MINIMAL ENCOURAGERS**
- **REFLECTION OF CONTENT (What are they saying)**
- **REFLECTION OF FEELING (Tentatively reflect what they may be feeling)**
- **OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS (With WHAT or HOW; not WHY questions)**
- **SUMMARY**
- “The major barrier to mutual interpersonal communication is our natural tendency to judge, evaluate, to approve or disapprove. Real communication occurs and this evaluative tendency is avoided when we listen only with the intent to understand.” Carl Rogers – On Becoming a person





Some of the skills
critical to successful
inter-personal
communication

Assertion Skills

Listening Skills

Conflict Resolution
and Collaboration
Skills

Skill Selection based
on Context



CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND COLLABORATION

WHAT DOESN'T WORK



What Blocks Effective Communication?

Verbal / Emotional Aggression

- **Abusive Anger** - "As long as I am scary and threatening to you, I can have my way."
- **Blame and Accusation** - "You are to blame for everything that isn't the way I want it to be, therefore I don't have to change."
- **Judging and Criticizing** - "I will put myself in charge of you and tell you what is wrong with your thoughts and actions".
- **Denial** - By denying ineffective behavior, the person says "I can keep everything as it is. I will not be held accountable."
- **Ordering and Demanding** - A direct display of control that says, "I have the right to assert power over you in an overt act of control."
- **Name Calling** - "You do not exist. I have the right and the power to tell you who you are."
- **Verbal Abuse disguised as a joke** - "I decree that my comments are humorous - I'm in control, I can say what I want."
- **Countering** - "What I think is right. What you think is wrong."

What Blocks Effective Communication

Verbal / Emotional Aggression

- **Trivializing** - Occurs when a person pretends that another's actions or perceptions or opinions or thoughts or concerns are less than they are. The message is "You are insignificant and unimportant".
- **Undermining** - to attack by indirect, secret, imperceptible or underhanded means. This can erode another person's confidence and lessen one's determination to succeed.
- **Blocking and Diverting** - Changing the subject, avoiding the subject or concern in any manner of ways. This action says, "You are not a rational person. I do not have to respond to you".
- **Threatening** - May be communicated in nonverbal terms that imply threat of harm. "Do what I say or else you might get hurt." Implies the right to control by overpowering.
- **Withholding** - Purposely withholding something you need. "I've got something that you want and I can withhold it from you, therefore I am in control".
- **Forgetting** - regularly forgetting appointments, agreements, or incidents. "I'm in control of your time, energy and your reality. I do not have to be accountable".
- From Patricia Evans, *Verbal Abuse Survivors Speak Out*
- Robert Bolton PhD, *People Skills* also lists: **Diagnosing, praising evaluatively, moralizing, excessive/inappropriate questioning, advising, and reassuring.**

What Blocks Effective Communication?

Common Cognitive Distortions

From "Self Esteem" by McKay and Fanning

- **Overgeneralization** - a person takes one fact or event and makes a general rule out of it without exception
- **Global Labeling** - stereotyped labels to whole classes of people, things, behaviors, and experiences.
- **Filtering** - See and hear only what substantiates your beliefs and you filter out the rest.
- **Polarized Thinking** - Divide all actions and experiences into dichotomies according to absolute standards; good/bad
- **Self-Blame** - incessant apologizing
- **Personalization** - Every communication is directed at me and is all about me
- **Mindreading** - "Everyone is like me, everyone thinks like me therefore I know what others are thinking"
- **Control Fallacies** - over control - "I can and must control everything and everyone"; under-control - "I am a victim and have no power to control anything"
- **Emotional Reasoning** - Relying on emotions ONLY to interpret reality - "It feels right and true therefore it is".

WHAT DOES WORK



Attitude Choices

- **Cultivating certain kinds of attitudes can enhance the possibility of moving beyond conflict in the workplace.**
- **Assuming a position of Mutuality (goodwill) VS Power Over (hostility)**
- **Assuming a position of Awareness VS Denial/ Avoidance**
- **Assuming a position of Passion/ Compassion VS Indifference**
- **Assuming a position of Celebrating/ Appreciating VS Tolerating Diversity**
- **Assuming a position of Professionalism VS Unskilled/ Untrained**
- **Dr. Gerald Jampolsky's Attitudinal Healing "We are all students and teachers of each other ..."** **compassion; forgiveness; focus on strengths**



Imagine and Practice Optimal (Work) Relationships

- *Hold in mind / visualize what you want more of. What you focus on gets bigger. You move toward what you focus on.*
- **Imagine and practice extending an attitude of good will toward yourself and toward others.**
- **Imagine and practice accepting support and extending support to others.**
- **Imagine and practice expressing your thoughts safely and extending safety as you hear what your co-worker is trying to say.**
- **Imagine and practice valuing yourself and your co-workers**
- **Imagine and practice being yourself and allowing those around you to be themselves.**
- **Imagine and practice learning and growing at your own pace and accepting the different growth rates and learning curves of your co-workers.**
- **Imagine and practice creating an informative environment with equal access to information.**
- **Imagine and practice realizing that each person has the right to respect, warmth, dignity, safety, acknowledgment, appreciation, empathy, accurate information, open communication and equality.**



Manage Your Own Thoughts and Feelings



- **HIGH ROAD EMOTIONS** - a level of emotional processing that involves complex perceptions and concepts.
- **LOW ROAD EMOTIONS** - initial sensations that occur out of awareness. These emotions bypass the pre-frontal cortex where higher reasoning takes place. Usually associated with learned fear responses.
- The thinking brain (high road) sometimes cannot intervene to stop triggered emotional responses coming from low road processing.
-
- Have a plan/ some practiced ways to self-soothe during communications. Have a way/ ways to recharge and restore your own energy. Take responsibility for your own thoughts and emotions ALL the time. Intentionally exercise your power to choose your response/ reaction.

Productive Conflict Management and Collaboration Ideas

- **Conflict management is complex; no magic gimmicks or pat answers. A goal is to analyze the situation and choose behavior appropriate to it without sacrificing one's own values and beliefs.**
- **Necessary components: Time, Willingness**
- **Is the situation one you wish to work out with the other person(s) or one you will resolve within yourself? Be aware of power differentials and possible consequences. Do you need to invite an advocate to meeting(s)?**
- **Choose an appropriate place**
- **Create a safe atmosphere of good-will, understanding and a realization of equal worth**
- **Clearly define the NEEDS vs. the SOLUTIONS, goals and options. Focus on the purpose of the meeting, the task and not the person(s). Be willing to listen and “experience the other side”, then state your own views, needs and feelings.**
- **Discover the commonalities and differences. Find common ground.**
- **Brainstorm about possible ways to meet the NEEDS identified; how can each help the other.**
- **Avoid heightened emotions and escalation; self-soothe.**
- **Set small reasonable goals.**
- **Select a solution.**
- **Implement the plan. Set a time in the future to re-evaluate.**

SKILL SELECTION

- We discussed a number of skills
- When to use what skills?
- Which style of communication is appropriate?
- When to listen, when to assert
- Is Conflict Management appropriate?
- Consideration of our own emotional management responsibilities; our own cognitive distortions
- Self-care - be intentional about recharging so you can reflect your best, ideal self, the true you in all situations.
- Healthy Boundaries - always ask yourself, "What is the purpose of this interaction?" Stay focused on the goal/ purpose.

