

13. Communication

Communication analysed

What precisely is communication? Communication is the imparting or exchanging of opinions, thoughts or information by speech, signs or writing. Communication is not just verbal. The Alan Pease book, Body Language, quotes Professor Ray Birdwhistell:

“the verbal component of a face-to-face conversation is less than thirty-five percent and that over sixty-five percent of communication is done non-verbally”. (7)

You will spend most of your life involved in some form of communication. When you walk down the street, even on your own, you are communicating by your presence. Watch others as they pass and you will see that they are communicating with you. Although people often wish to disguise information about themselves, and they all have the ability to do that, it is also possible to communicate a lot of information to others. You have the ability to communicate your gender, financial status, health, marital status, age, and even your general happiness by your appearance, without saying a word, if you so choose.

Do people give enough importance to the study of communication? Perhaps not. Provided you can accept that you are communicating with everybody you interact with, even if you don't say anything, then it is extremely important. To accept the value and importance of effective communication requires you to determine your role as an effective communicator. Appreciating the value and significance of effective communication requires you to ask yourself if you have made a difference to, and improved the communication skills, of those with whom you interact.

What you will read about in this chapter is just the essentials. There are volumes written on communication interactions between children, peers, friends, family, work associates etc., and if you were interested, you could find a lot of information and advice on

all of those communication subjects. You only need to concentrate here on communication of the person you have become because of the direction of the path your Vision Statement is showing you.

Communicating a new attitude

Communication of your Vision Statement, your purpose and your growth in self-confidence become self evident in your treatment of both yourself and others on a day-by-day basis. Yes! It is about your new attitude. Please do not slip back at any time into believing that your new attitude is there merely because you chose to have it. This has not been brought about solely by a trait of your personality.

It is important to remember how you gained and then kept that attitude. You adopted that attitude when you determined to follow the critical steps that not only reinforced your real importance but also encouraged you to look within your conscience for your own ethical values.

When you used the very depths of your character ethic to determine the principles of life that you know are the foundations of your singular existence, that was when you further reinforced that new attitude. When you used those principles to provide yourself with a Vision Statement to guide your life was when you made the choices that decided your ongoing future attitude. That attitude determined the goals you set, how you viewed yourself, and how you interacted towards everyone else.

Of course it is that attitude that everyone else, as well as yourself, has acknowledged as a growth in your self-belief and thus in your self-development. You have already commenced the process of communicating your Statement, your aims and your growth in self-confidence to the rest of the world.

Ask questions and listen

Although everyone is different, it is not unreasonable to make a few generalisations. Firstly, everyone likes to be liked. Shouldn't that mean you should treat everybody you meet respectfully? There may already be a requirement in your Vision Statement that you do just that. What would be a good way for you to signal your respect to others? Maintain eye contact and listen carefully; you will get much further than if you're looking away and not listening.

Effective communication requires you to be both a sender and a receiver of information.

The two biggest lessons for senders and receivers to learn are:

1. Be prepared to ask questions and
2. Be prepared to listen.

Perhaps you should look first at the importance of asking questions. If you're asking someone to do something, including the simplest inconsequential requests, you're a sender. If the message you're sending has some importance, then you should be asking the receiver if your information or request is clear. If you're being asked by someone to do something, you're a receiver; you should still be inquiring as to whether or not you have comprehended them clearly by repeating their request.

You now need to look briefly at how senders and receivers need to approach communication. As a sender, you need to be certain that the information you're transferring is clear and unambiguous, so you need to ask if you're being understood. As a sender you should attempt, where possible, to ask open-ended questions. Depending on your measurement of your request or order you could simply ask, "got it?" or you could choose to ask if you've been clearly understood. That gives the receiver the opportunity to comment if your information has appeared to be vague. As a receiver, to ensure you have comprehended the information, be prepared to repeat what's being told or asked, even if you choose to use a

different set of words to repeat the request. Be prepared to say, “so if I understand you correctly, you have said...” A good communicator is an accurate communicator.

Six important points to asking questions

Having agreed that you need to ask questions, as both a receiver and a sender, you will appreciate the purpose of asking questions. They are:

1. To get information,
2. To give information,
3. To make the other person feel good,
4. To keep a discussion going,
5. To clarify information and,
6. To gain insights.

The only way to be certain that there is comprehension is to ask questions. As your Vision Statement gives you a determination to choose an ethical path, you will find that you’re going to ask more questions than you used to ask. Your Vision Statement will drive you to ask more questions than you used to, because you will increasingly feel a need to satisfy the requirements of your conscience when making decisions. That of itself will make you more curious, and feeding curiosity requires you, once again, to ask more questions.

Presuming you have your Vision Statement with you always, as you should, you may wish to refer to it during the day, as necessary. You will find that in difficult moments of communication, it will prompt you to make an inquiry, to be more certain of making the choices that you know are right. That is also why you may need to ask more questions than previously. You may need clarification on an order or request to determine if it complies

ethically with your values. You're going to find your new curiosity, like your convictions, both healthy and rewarding.

Listen twice

The fundamental nature of effective verbal communication is acquiring the art to observe, listen, think, ask questions, and listen again before speaking. Did you notice that listening was mentioned twice in that statement? That's because listening is far more important than anything else, including the asking of questions. Therefore you will need to be aware that for senders and receivers, the other side of the communication coin is listening. As most of you are gifted with two ears and one mouth, you should attempt to avoid behaving as if the ratio was the other way around.

As communication is a two-way process between senders and receivers, both have to carry the responsibility of the communication. Senders have the responsibility to see that their message is implicit. Receivers have the responsibility to ensure that they comprehend the message, particularly if they also have a message that they will later wish to communicate. The greatest breakdown in any communication is because a receiver has misinterpreted a sender's message. Mastering the art of listening achieves a lot more than just showing the effectiveness that a communicator will exhibit. Listening allows you to tap into the wisdom, knowledge, experience and individuality of others. Provided you're prepared to listen intently to others, you will find they will want to listen to you. Seek first to understand others so that you can then hope to be understood yourself.

Show you care and others will care about you

Keep in mind that the focus of this activity's message is self-confidence. That message encompassed in the five critical steps includes the recognition by others of your interest in life and them. Listening intently to others will be noticed by them and they will read the strength

of your interest and character, and they will reciprocate by showing interest in you. Your Vision Statement will have enhanced your respect for others, and so you will listen carefully to their point of view because you so choose.

The most perfect form of encouragement to your family, friends, and associates is to respond to their concerns by showing you care. It is the process of listening intently to others that shows that you care about their views and concerns. Put everything aside to listen. Concentrate on their words and body language.

Remain cautious when listening. Never underestimate your ability to cause others emotional hurt, which could be a result if you're not listening carefully to them. Remember it is those who love or admire you the most that you have the most power to hurt. As you care about them, you will want to know that they have the opportunity to express their views to you, and believe they are understood. You can do that by showing your attentiveness and by listening carefully. Concentrate on the words they're using and concentrate on their gestures and body language. That makes it a lot easier to reciprocate their expressions. Your smiling or frowning where appropriate, for example, are excellent signals to others that they're being heard.

Continue to trust yourself

If your own Vision Statement requires you to treat others, or just yourself, respectfully, how do you use it to show that respect? Just as it has been determined that you may be asking more questions, you may also be required to be listening much more attentively. Apart from the signals already mentioned that show others you are listening intently, there are a couple of skills that may help you as part of that process. Firstly you should attempt to remain calm if the conversation is emotive. Secondly you could take notes on appropriate occasions.

The first skill of remaining calm is not always easy. However, have trust in your Vision Statement, as it will give you not only the strength to remain more calm than you once might have, but also the patience and desire to want to understand the other person's point of view. You know you can trust your Vision Statement because it has been developed from the deepest insights of your character ethic.

The second skill is to make notes if appropriate. This is a very strong signal to others, that you identify what is being said by them, is also of obvious importance to you. Taking notes, of course, is usually reserved for work situations, although not always. You will be impressed by the look of surprise and gratitude on young adolescents' faces the first time you ever tell them to hang on while you get a pen and paper to make notes on whatever it is that they have decided to talk about. Just as you have listened carefully, so you will want to respond with empathy to whatever concerns they've raised. As you were taught to speak, so you can be taught to hear more carefully and precisely.

Never be afraid to enhance your ability to communicate by reading books on the subject. The purpose of discussing communication in this chapter has been to explain the importance of both asking questions and listening. That way you can better utilise your Vision Statement so that others will reciprocate your desire to comprehend them. Thus you can expect to be better understood yourself. This perception of yourself and others, with your Vision Statement in support, and with the targets you will set for yourself, will greatly enhance your self-image and your ability to accomplish. As it follows, the more you accomplish, the more self-confident you become.

The critical steps that have linked you to the *Cycle of Confidence* will ensure that your future communications will be more comfortable and rewarding because they have exposed your true character. Others will have noticed your strength and will, because of the self-fulfilling prophecy, treat you with more respect and as a person to be trusted.

Summary

- a) Communication is the imparting or exchanging of opinions, thoughts or information by speech, signs or writing.
- b) You have a new attitude that encourages you to communicate more with others.
- c) That attitude has come about because of an enhanced self-belief.
- d) You will listen more, and ask questions more, because you care more about others.
- e) Others are going to care more about you.

In the next chapter you will come to appreciate the importance of the fifth and final critical step to your self-confidence. You will then conclude how the five critical steps all work together to produce the desired results of your original objective to achieve, advance and maintain your self-esteem.