



Enhancing your Communication Style

by Chanon Collins

Webster defines communication as “the act or instance of transmitting information or the interchange of ideas and opinions.” Communication is an essential element of our daily lives, yet most have come to use communication as an opportunity to hear themselves speak. At some point, we have destroyed the purpose of communication and developed it into an oratory sport.

It is not just the verbose who have blurred the lines of communication. The very styles of communication themselves offer modes of destruction. Hippocrates identified four basic styles of communication: sanguine, melancholic, choleric, and phlegmatic. The connection to the human physiology is not coincidental. Those with a sanguine style have a confident cadence and an optimistic tone. The melancholic style presents itself in a sad and dejected manner, while the choleric is hot-tempered. One with a phlegmatic style speaks in a calm and steady manner.

All of these styles can be used for effective communication if the bearer of the style manipulates its form. The melancholic can transmit information just as effectively as the phlegmatic – it is all in the presentation and there is the rub. For some unknown reason, we choose to ignore the purpose of discourse and avoid assessment of the conversation.

When we speak, we want to be heard, but at times we do not concentrate on our message. We want to be understood, but we fail to see if our communication was successful. There are even those who are so consumed with proving their point, that their continued commentary destroys the purpose of the conversation.

Not only do we have issues with verbal communication, but the unspoken modes are as equally destructive. Some individuals believe that they are wasting their valuable time if they must explain what they are thinking. They believe that those in their discourse community should simply know what they want and should set forth to accomplish these unspoken activities. While the humor and idiocy of this belief is rather obvious, the practice of unspoken direction is employed on a daily basis in many discourse communities.

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In an effort to enhance your current style of communication, ask yourself these simple questions: does my message convey what I want others to hear? Am I respectful of other points of view? And do I allow others the opportunity to speak? If you respond negatively to any of those questions, you should examine your communication style to look for areas of improvement.

There are a few things that everyone can include in their mode of conversation that will increase its efficacy. When receiving information from someone, restate the information to ascertain if you understood the speaker correctly. Get into the habit of asking others for their thoughts on the current subject. This will open the lines of communication and possibly create solutions to other issues. Perhaps adopting the thoughts of Sydney J. Harris as a mantra would also improve communication styles – “Information is giving out – communication is getting through.”

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