Communication: What are we really saying?

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Disclaimer

• Not an expert
• Don’t have all the answers
• Do think about communication alot
• Deliberately try to be better at communicating
• Share with you what I have learned
The ability to communicate

- A critically important life skill.
**What we say to dogs**

Okay, Ginger! I've had it!
You stay out of the garbage!
Understand, Ginger? Stay out of the garbage, or else!

**What they hear**

blah blah GINGER blah
bleh bleh bleh bleh bleh
bleh blah GINGER blah
bleh bleh bleh bleh...
What we say to cats and what they hear
What do we say to our clients?
What do they hear?
What do we say to each other?
What was just heard
Are we communicating or just talking at each other
Communication

• What it is:
  • Sharing of information, feelings, values.
  • More than one person.
  • Two way interaction
  • Sending and receiving
  • Speaking, listening, reading, writing

• What it is not:
  • One way conversation
  • Telling
Good communication

- Contributes positively to the relationship.
- Clear, relevant, consistent, purposeful
- Honest
- Respectful
- Goal directed
- Creates a shared understanding
  - May or may not solve the perceived problem
- Builds trust, capacity
- Alleviates tension, conflict
Poor communication

- Unclear
- Unsafe
- Lacks honesty or sincerity
- No investment in the relationship
- Lack of trust
- Not goal directed
- No significant outcome
- May be satisfying for one party
It’s not about you

Don’t take it personally, but do think about what you can do
Our clients
W5

- Who
- What
- Where
- When
- Why
Who: Start with me

- Each of us is responsible for our own behavior
- Know where you are coming from
  - Are you making assumptions
  - Are you reframing through your own lens or agenda?
  - What are you feeling?
  - Are you afraid e.g. apology/disclosure
Who: Start with me

- Do you talk in the mirror?
- Can you see the future?
  - Anticipate in such great gruesome detail that you know what the outcome will be, in spite of your cutting witty repartee?
- Do you have history/experience?
Your goals

• Do you need to be the victor
• What do you want to happen?
• Get back, put someone in their place, catch someone red handed
• Short term win with a heavy price
The Outcome

• Three possibilities
  – Positioning
  – Compromise $1 + 1 = 1.5$
  – Win-win $1 + 1 = 10$
• Winning the battle but losing the war
Who are you attempting to communicate with

- What is the relationship?
  - With you, the client
- Power
- Authority/Decision maker
- Expertise
- Where are they coming from?
Making a Superhero out of an advocate

- Feeling protective is normal
- Need for reassurance, information, build trust
- An ally or an opponent
Multigenerational Workplaces
What are you saying?

• What is the issue?
• Why is it important?
• What needs to be said and to whom?
• What is the goal?
• What needs to happen to meet that goal?
• How does everyone win?
Verbal communication

- Words
- Tone
- Volume
- Style
- Syntax
Self Control

• A leadership attribute
• Your secret to success
Non verbal communication

• You are communicating even when you’re not speaking
  – 10% words
  – 30% sounds
  – 60% non verbal
• Facial expressions
• General huffing and puffing
• Behavior
• Body language
  – eye contact,
  – standing or sitting
Secret or telepathic messages

- The dangers of making assumptions
Not-so-secret communication
Risk

- Silence
- Paralyzed by anxiety
- Intimidation
- Cultural barrier
- Pride
- Mistrust
- Overpowered
How are you saying it?

- Language
  - Choice of words
  - Talking above someone
  - In a language only some understand
- Tone and syntax
- Making an accusation, assumption
The internet and email

- SUP
- LOL
- The writer wishes to withdraw the message previously sent........
Telephone communication

- No replacement for face to face.
- Must be careful of tone, choice of words, feeling of safety from the other side of the phone.
- May say something you would never have said in person.
- Don’t use it as a shield.
The Human Connection

- The power of touch
How is it being perceived?

- You can’t be right if you get it wrong
- Honesty
- Sincerity
- Respect
- Trust
- Pride
How is it being perceived?

• What are they hearing?
  – Is the other person able to understand
  – Are they motivated to communicate
  – Are they jumping to conclusions or making assumptions
  – What lens are they looking through?

• Seek to understand then be understood
The art of listening

• Ears
• Eyes
• Body language: conveying openness
• Attentive
  – No blackberry, checking the watch, putting on the coat
  – Asking questions, verifying, acknowledging
  – 6th sense
Where are you communicating?

- No audience please!
- Environment:
  - a private conversation in a public venue,
  - Across a desk
  - The interrogation light
What message is the setting sending?

- Privacy and respect
- Comfort and caring
- Patient centered versus provider centered
When: Good timing

- What is the most appropriate time to communicate
- Should meet the needs of both parties
- Ensure you have the correct information
- Is everyone present who needs to be there
- Is there time pressure
Why?
Communicating issues of concern

- Identifying issues can be difficult
- Many speak with emotion, identify and focus on feelings and impact on self
- Message received is that the person speaking is having difficult time coping
- Result is frustration, conflict and inaction.
Communicating issues of concern

• What is the issue?
• Why is it important?
  – Safety, standards, complaint
• How did it become an issue?
• What can be done about it?
• What do you want the other person to do about it?
Answering questions

• It is normal to have questions
• Do not be afraid
• What do they want?
• How are you reacting to the question (self awareness)
• The problem might not be the question, it might be the discomfort of the staff person.
Answering a question

- What is the question?
- What is the answer to the question?
- Are there any restrictions on what you can say?
- Do you have the authority to answer the question?
- Who else can answer it and are they available?
When things don’t go your way

- The difference between communicating disappointment and making an accusation
- Safe versus unsafe interaction
- Defensiveness
- Shutdown
Strategies

- Creating a safe environment
- Opening with mutual goals/values/understanding
- Sharing your observation or concern
- Asking
- Giving the person the opportunity to address the issue
- Developing a common plan
Outcomes

- Honest
- Clear
- Real
- Goal/value driven not emotionally charged
- Respectful
- Assumes the best of the person
- Allows each to leave with head held high
- Provides an opportunity for success
R-E-S-P-E-C-T
Understanding the importance and power of human interaction