



Communication - Helping myself

Communication is an interaction between myself and others. Here we look at some factors that can help a person get the best out of communication.

Awareness of self

A lot goes on within a person during communication. Being aware of this internal activity can help you manage your part in the conversation. Lack of self awareness can lead to unhelpful escalations, thinking, conclusions and relationship hurt.

Audit your heuristics

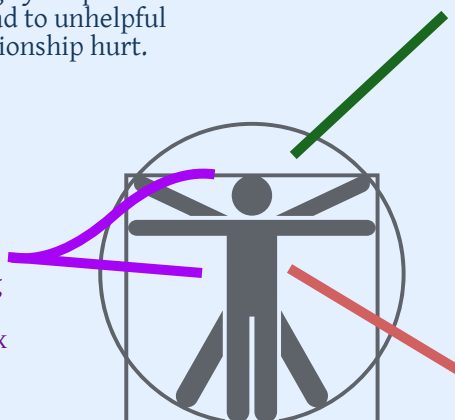
During communication we are using our heuristics. They are our shortcuts for reaching conclusions. We build them from experience to help us think quickly. They are sometimes called "System One" thinking and are good for everyday decisions. However, when dealing with new or complex issues, they can produce errors since they rely on habitual ("biased") ways of thinking. At times we need to adopt "System Two" thinking, which is slower, deliberative and cautious. This helps us get to reliable outcomes for sensitive or complex matters.

Stay open minded

An open mind is critical for effective communication. We have to be willing to listen and accept the possibility that what other people share adds to our pre-existing understanding. If we aren't open minded, we have shut out the other person and the dialogue becomes a power play. We are in the realm of manipulation rather than cooperation.

Attend to your emotions

Emotions affect how we think, how our bodies tense or relax, and spontaneous expressions. These can all help or hinder effective communication. During conversations or when composing a text, pay attention to your emotions. Notice what they are reacting to and what it is you believe is happening that is generating them. Then choose your actions carefully. Your goal is a successful outcome.



Focus, context and design



Language

Choose vocabulary that suits the setting and people you are communicating with. Is it formal? Will technical language be understood? Is it inclusive? Does it have double meaning or controversial usage? Your choice of vocabulary will affect how people respond to your messages.



Writing

Written communication is a particular context for communication. It has all the issues to consider that other communication does with some important extra considerations. It can be impersonal. People can interpret it without the author clarifying it straight away. It has a permanence unlike conversations where the exact words fall away, which means at a later date it may need to make sense to unforeseen readers. As such, written communication requires extra diligence, whether it is a briefing note, formal letter, report, email, or text message. Each has its own dynamics.



Medium

The communication medium matters. It has a huge effect on how messages are received and how people behave. When we use a lean medium (eg. a general email) or a fat medium (eg. face to face), we make decisions about the quality of communication and the level of risk in the process. Research has even found that online text chats are more likely to become aggressive simply because of the medium.



Presentation

How we present ourselves in communication is itself an act of communication. It tells others how committed, involved, or respectful we are. It also affects how easy it is for others to communicate with us.



Intention

Communication is intentional when we choose to share with others. However, our actions can lead to unintentional communication. This can be positive, such as when we are looking for something and people realise we need it and help. Sometimes it is negative, such as when we are irritable and don't manage our feelings, so people get the message we aren't safe to approach, keep away, and trust and productivity suffer.

