

Improving Communication Workshop: A 4-Step Process

Step 1: **Awareness**- being more aware of where we are at; based on 3 key elements

- **Assumptions**

- so many times conflicts are due to misunderstandings- how many times have you sent a text message and, when the person didn't respond, you have thoughts that start to snowball- what if they are mad at me? What if I said something wrong? What if they took my message the wrong way?

Another question to ask yourself is "what else could be going on here?"; "what are some other reasons they might not be responding?"= maybe they are busy and forgot; maybe they thought they responded but forgot to hit the "send"

Proverbs 25:8= Don't jump to conclusions- there may be a perfectly good explanation for what you just saw

- **Experiences**- we all have different experiences that shape us and these experiences shape us and make us who we are and it all starts with a belief

The Belief Cycle-

- Belief: something we have grown up with/ that has been instilled in us through others and we take it as our truth- maybe one of those beliefs is we are supposed to keep everything bottled up and not have those conversations, or maybe the belief is that whenever something is hard to talk about, it involves yelling to get our point across
- Thoughts- can't have those conversations because of the response we might get, or it is easier to keep thoughts to ourselves
- Emotions- we feel anxious at the thought of talking with someone about something for fear we will upset them/or it may hurt the relationship- frustration builds up
- Action- sometimes the action is taking no action; other times the action is the bottled up feelings explode like a soda can and come out at the most inopportune time
- Results- continued strain of relationship, feeling like our needs aren't being heard which causes frustration and, in some cases, a bit of resentment

Taking time to reflect on some of the experiences that have shaped us and creating new empowering beliefs about the importance of having the open communication is what will allow us to improve those connections and relationships!

- **Outside Stress**- maybe we have a bad day at work- come home and bring that stress with us- end up "snapping" at our loved one without meaning to

Before leaving work- ask yourself the 4 daily questions (link to reflection questions at the end of this summary) and saying a prayer letting go of the day and thanking God for it and asking him for peace and presence as you transition

*if you work from home, doing the same thing in the room where you do your work before leaving the room

Before go into house: take 5 minute walk/ do same thing with saying prayer and letting go of day and being grateful for what went well

Step 2: **Creating a win-win/ Mutual Benefit**- Asking yourself: what do I want for the relationship, not just from it? Am I going into this conversation to win, or increase our connection?

- 4 Levels of Listening:
 - Not listening- on phone, watching TV, multitasking while the other person is talking
 - Listening to Speak- listening only so you can respond with what you want to say
 - Listening to Disagree- listening in a way that your response is to disagree with what the other person was saying
 - Listening to Understand- this is the heart-centered, Christ-like approach that will allow you to improve communication and improve your relationships
- Throughout conversation- using my STOP™ Method, especially when emotions start to heighten
 - S= Stop (you may need to take a break from the conversation to allow each of you to collect your thoughts)
 - T= Take a breath (this will allow you to recenter yourself to allow you to respond with your heart)
 - O= Observe your thoughts- what about this is causing me to have the heightened emotions?
 - P= pray for guidance, understanding, a calm and honest heart-felt and Christ-like response

Step 3: **Heart-Aligned**- making sure we are leading with our hearts- 4 aspects

- **Wording**- there are ways that hinder our connection with others and ways that enhance our connection
 - instead of “we need to talk” (you might be struggling with something and the other person may not even realize there is a struggle) —> “Would it be ok if I asked your thoughts on something that has been on my heart?”; “there is something I have been praying over and I want to share it with you”
 - Also, make sure you are giving them time to reflect on the topic and what they would like to see come out of it
 - paraphrasing what the other person said- “what I heard you say was... is that correct?” “I thought you said... is that what you meant?”
 - use ‘what’ instead of ‘why’- when we ask someone “why did you do that?” it poses judgement as why is a judgement question. Instead, “what was it that you decided to do...”; “What were your thoughts when you did...”
 - use ‘and’ instead of ‘but’- when you use ‘but’, it negates whatever was said before and our brains focus on the negative that was said after the ‘but’

- use 'I' instead of 'you'- when we say "you did this/you did that/you didn't do this", it creates a wall for the other person as they feel they are being blamed (at the end of this summary are some examples of ways to use 'I' instead of 'you')

- **The 3 A's**

- Acknowledgement- of where the other person is at- challenges, struggles, successes; also acknowledging they may not even know there is an issue

- Ambition- working through the conversation in a heart-felt, Christ-centered way, will work towards improving the relationship

- Affect- we do things based on feelings and emotions; bringing in positive feelings and emotions

- **Tonality**- the way we use our voice- being cognizant of when emotions start to come into play; leading with our heart by approaching the conversation calm and curious

- **Body Language**- our actions speak louder than words (attached at the end of this summary is a link to a Body Language Cheat Sheet PDF)

Step 4: **Celebrate and Reflect**

- Not judging/celebrating by whether the other person agreed/responded- instead that we showed up, used our voice and honored the relationship with Christ-centered honesty, wrapped in grace

- Use journaling reflection questions

*Start small with someone you trust.

Links to handouts:

- [Tips for Having Difficult Conversations](#)

- [You vs. I](#)

- [Body Language Cheat Sheet](#)

- [Reflection Questions](#)