

HOW WE COMMUNICATE - “ARE YOU TALKING TO ME?” Part III

By Abby Anderson, MS, CEAP, LPC



Well, so far we’ve talked about the first three steps in effective communication; formulating the message, sending it, and checking to see how it was received. The final step is to adjust things to be sure the intent of the original message is received.

Adjusting the message is something we do every day in lots of different circumstances and we do it automatically. It can be as simple as when we are ordering in a restaurant and we ask for a steak to be well done. If the wait staff looks stricken, we may need to clarify that we don’t want it totally charred. When telling your teenager they need to be in the house by 11 after a party, if they begin to jump for joy and hug you, you may need to clarify that that means PM, not AM the next day.

In business it is the same. Have you ever gone to look at cars and been approached by a sales person who immediately begins to counter all your rationalizations for not buying a new car until you find yourself with a new car? This is the art of adjusting your message.

It involves all three of the previous steps and then reformulating the original message until it becomes clear that the receiver has heard you in the way that you intended. The process may go back and forth several times as you probably have experienced many times. Working in a group or as a team, with a common goal, sharing ideas often requires this part of the process more than the average as you try to be sure several individuals really understand your idea or point of view.

This is where being clear about what specific words mean to us and others is important and not making assumptions is key. Asking clarifying questions or for feedback can make adjusting the message much more effective.

Effective communication and following this whole process through may take effort and can feel uncomfortable at times, but the pay off is less conflict and misunderstandings and that can be priceless.

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