

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

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As we said last week, communication can be a tricky thing and there are four steps that we can take to help us be as effective communicators as possible. They are:

1. Formulate -What do you want to say and how.
2. Send - Give out the information either verbally or in writing.
3. Check - How was the message received and was it received accurately.
4. Adjust - Based on the reception, do you need to revise the message to get your point across accurately?

Let's look at the first two steps in some detail.

First, formulating your message needs to take into account several things. First, with whom are you trying to communicate? For instance, you'd use a different approach and/or language for someone new to this country than you would for someone whose family has been here for generations. Also, their state of mind might be important, if they are angry or distressed. It's important in this step to remember that language is a very personal thing. Words mean different things to different people. Joseph Salter said "Words are the Pavlovian bells of experience". We all attach words to our own experience and they are unique. We tend to assume others know what we mean, that they see it from our perspective, but we know what happens when we assume anything! So, be careful to be as clear as possible with your message.

Second, sending the message can be done either verbally or in written form. In this case, timing can be very important. If you want conditions to be optimal for the receiver to hear it, pay attention to other distractions they may have, their mood. We all can remember trying to time it just right when asking a parent for permission to stay out late, have a party, go to a party, etc. or telling our partner we've overdrawn the bank account.

Next week, how to check out how the message was received and how to adjust it accordingly will be discussed.

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