

## **The Art of Effective Communication** *Top 10 Things NOT to Do in Communication*

There is incredible power in the words you speak; like a chemistry project in which you add a little bit of this mixed with a little bit of that to see what kind of reaction you will get. In communication, you select a few words, combine it with tone of voice, energy, body language, and eye movement and voila... a powerful elixir creating the potent dose of connection and understanding or the most explosive encounter imaginable.

In theory, communication seems like the easiest, most simple thing you would ever do. You say a few words, make a few points, wait for a reply when necessary, and proceed with your day. Equally, someone speaks to you and their words register easily and effectively, you reply if needed, and go along with your business. Yet, we all know it doesn't really happen like that. The simplest conversation can lead to deep confusion, jumbled plans, hurt feelings, and betrayal of safety and trust. So, what happens that derails communication? Why in the world does communication become so challenging and ineffective? Where do things go dreadfully wrong?

During this course, you'll gain insight into some of the communication patterns that contribute to this derailment. You'll likely spot some of your own behavior. You may use these patterns with strangers, co-workers, family members, friends, and intimate partners. Perhaps these are the only ways you've ever known to express yourself. Further, you may detect these patterns in others personally, professionally, and socially.

Often times, these styles of communication are habitual, well-rehearsed, and deeply ingrained in your lifestyle, thoughts, and words. Though these strategies are the norm of communication, they contribute to conflict, misunderstanding, and overall hurt and frustration.

Awareness is your starting point. Pay attention to your approach, word selection, and feelings that are driving your conversations. Learn to tune your ear to recognize the following patterns will empower you to change these destructive styles. Awareness keeps you in the driver's seat to take responsibility for your needs, be intentional about the message you are conveying, and effectively navigate the course of communication.

**Top 10 Things NOT to Do in Communication:**

|     |   |
|-----|---|
| 1.  | <b>Criticize and Attack</b>               |
| 2.  | <b>Demand, Guilt, and Impose</b>          |
| 3.  | <b>Hinting, Passivity, and Suggesting</b> |
| 4.  | <b>Always and Never</b>                   |
| 5.  | <b>Judgments, Labels, and Scrutiny</b>    |
| 6.  | <b>Personalize and Assume</b>             |
| 7.  | <b>Jump to Conclusions</b>                |
| 8.  | <b>Assign Motives</b>                     |
| 9.  | <b>Complain and Criticize</b>             |
| 10. | <b>Sarcasm and Humor</b>                  |

## Criticize and Attack

Words are the weapons you use to get a point across. You deliver your message with daggers by pointing out someone's faults and mistakes, stating your displeasure and disapproval, going over the details of what someone did or didn't do, using threats or profanity, and highlighting the things that are wrong are all behaviors that launch conversation into a hostile, threatening exchange. Your words are critical, perhaps demeaning, heated, and disrespectful.

| <b>I let people have it when I get mad or frustrated.</b> |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| <b>It's not uncommon for me to have heated exchanges with people.</b> |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| <b>I raise my voice to get through to people.</b> |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| <b>I make threats, call names, or use profanity in arguments.</b> |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| <b>I use this pattern because:</b> |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|                                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## Demand, Impose, and Guilt

Being asked to do something is very different than being told to do it. Demands introduce obligation, necessity, and responsibility to others. The use of guilt and shame add heavy energy to a conversation. Words such as *should*, *have to*, and *ought to* are suggestive of onus and requirement. Making a demand on someone, trying to make them responsible for something, or imposing your will, suggestions, or opinions on someone else is a form of control and manipulation. You try to get someone to do or not do something and use these tactics to get your way.

|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| <b>I have a lot of thoughts and expectations of what people should and shouldn't be doing.</b> |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| 1  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| <b>I tell people what they should or shouldn't be doing.</b> |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| 1  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| <b>I use words like have to, need to, and ought to when talking to others.</b> |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| 1  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| <b>Guilt is a motivator and a way to get things done.</b> |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

|                                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>I use this pattern because:</b> |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## Hinting, Passivity, and Suggesting

Your words are vague, allusive, and unclear. You are indirect, use hints, or make suggestions to get what you want or need. Your point is easily missed and you may be over-ridden in conversation. Your passive approach allows others to dominate, decide, and have their way. You avoid conflict, assertion, and difficult conversations by using these imprecise ways to deliver your message.

| It's hard for me to be direct with others. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| I drop hints or make suggestions to get what I want. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| It seems as though people don't hear me. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| I keep my feelings and needs to myself and hope others will know what I want. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| I use this pattern because: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|                             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## Always and Never

You're trying to make a point, your frustration level is high, or something is really important to you so you use words such as always and never to emphasize the extremes of what you're experiencing. These are terms that push your point to an exaggerated level and also dilute your message because they are rarely accurate or factual. They promote absolutes and fuel rigid thinking of all or none.

| I use terms like always and never. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1                                  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| My words and thoughts are extreme. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1                                  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| It's important that people understand, so I add a little emphasis to my point. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| People have called me rigid or extreme. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1                                       | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| I use this pattern because: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|                             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## Judgment, Labels, and Scrutiny

You see people through a predetermined lens based on perception, past experiences, or belief systems. You overgeneralize people, places, or situations. You have preconceived notions and that perspective provides a theory about someone and their behavior. You are critical in your observations and have a discriminating nature in relating to someone. There may be history or specific occurrences that fuel these views and you react from this perspective.

| <b>I have a set view of how I see certain people.</b> |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| <b>I don't need to check things out or inquire about what someone intended. I already know where someone is coming from.</b> |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| <b>I call names and make references to people. (Lazy, just like your father, alcoholic, etc.)</b> |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| <b>I express criticism as a way of getting my point across.</b> |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| <b>I've been accused of being too critical.</b> |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| <b>I use this pattern because:</b> |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|                                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## Personalize and Assume

You get your feelings hurt easily and take things personally. You fill in the blanks and create a story in your mind about what's happening. You make assumptions about people or situations and predetermine what someone did, meant, or intended without clarifying or checking your perception. You take ownership for things that aren't yours. You make other people's feelings, behaviors, or moods personal and think it's your fault or responsibility.

| My feelings get hurt pretty easily. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1                                   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| My mood and feelings are easily influenced by others. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| I tend to take things personally. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1                                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| I often make assumptions about people and situations. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| I make up scenarios in my mind and add details to things without checking them out. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| I use this pattern because: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|                             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |



## Jump to Conclusions

You are reactive and develop contempt prior to investigation. Though things can have lots of different meanings, you assign a specific importance. You make up your mind before you have all of the details and facts. You lock in on a certain version of the circumstances, draw conclusions, and believe you know fully what's happening or what someone intended. You mind-read and fortune-tell without sufficient information.

| I can be pretty reactive to things that happen. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| I often have a gut reaction to something and regret it later. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| Sometimes I "pre-decide" without checking things out first. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| I've been accused of being close-minded before. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| I use this pattern because: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|                             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

### Assign Motives

Someone does something and you assign it meaning without knowing for sure why they did what they did. You're certain you know the reasons someone did or didn't do something. You surmise that someone was trying to hurt, manipulate, trick, or deceive you. You tend to find fault or place blame with others and their reasons or intentions. You believe people cause you to feel or act certain ways and you assign specific intent to what they are doing. You have a critical view of others and believe they are working against you.

| I sometimes think people are out to get me. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| Most people are up to no good. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1                              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| When something happens, I usually think people are doing it on purpose. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| I use this pattern because: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|                             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## Complain and Criticize

Like Eeyore weighing in on the day's events, you focus on the things that are hard, have gone wrong, or frustrate or disappoint you. You are irritated and annoyed easily. It's easy for you to find fault in people and situations and that becomes the point of your conversation and interactions. You have a critical view of people, places, and things and vocalize that to others. Though you may see it as venting, you aren't always aware of how this impacts others.

| I express my frustrations and annoyances to others. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| I can't help but notice the things that are wrong in certain situations. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| People annoy me and I usually tell them or someone else. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| I've been accused of being too negative or critical. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| I use this pattern because: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|                             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## Sarcasm and Humor

You poke and make fun of people, even when you care deeply about them. You make jest and use humor to relate and discuss things. In your eyes, there's nothing wrong with delivering a message with a dose of sarcasm, after all, you're just *kidding*. If things get too serious or uncomfortable, you try to lighten the mood by being funny, making a joke, or clowning around. You think people are too serious or sensitive and should be able to take a joke.

| Life's too short to be serious all of the time. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| I like poking fun and making jokes about things. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| It's hard for me to have serious conversations. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| Sarcasm is a consistent way I relate to people. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| I don't see why people get their feelings hurt so easily. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

| I use this pattern because: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|                             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

