

BLUEPRINT FOR CLEAR COMMUNICATION

The Power of Words

The following Blueprint For Clear Communication is based upon tried and true methods of communicating effectively, such as Non-Violent Communication and Clean Talk. If you want to find out more about either of these methods, see the resources page at the end.

It's important to note here that this way of communicating isn't necessarily the easiest. It takes time and patience to adopt new styles to speak to one another. The effort to learn and try on and sometimes make mistakes is SO WORTH IT, if what you desire is to build bridges in your relationships and mend tears that have formed.

This isn't about convincing or coercing anyone to see life as you see it. It's about finding new ways to relate and nurture harmonious relationships, DESPITE our differences. Learning to be in the world together even when we disagree - that's what it's all about.

That being said, let's jump right in, shall we?

STEP 1 - STATE THE FACTS AS FACTS ONLY

Think of a specific situation in your life recently that was particularly triggering or that elicited a strong emotional response.

What happened? Can you describe the situation as neutrally as possible? If you were to let go of all judgments about this person or situation, what did someone say or do that got you all fired up?

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For example: 'He walked out the door when I was speaking.'

'She told someone else about a private conversation we had.'

'He spoke to another person in the room without acknowledging my presence.'

Fact without judgment...Refrain from using language like, 'He abandoned, neglected, ignored, disrespected, insinuated, etc.' These all imply that you know the MOTIVATION behind someone's actions. For every person that was 'abandoned', this must mean that there was an 'abandoner'. These kinds of descriptive words are laced with judgments that make it difficult to continue conversing in respectful ways. For the sake of clear and clean communication, DO NOT ASSUME ANYTHING! Be curious and open to another possibility for someone's motives. This opens doors and builds bridges rather than tearing them down. I always assume the best and highest motives from another, until I'm proven otherwise.

STEP 2 - WHAT ARE YOU FEELING ABOUT THIS?

What emotions were stimulated in you when this event happened? This is where it can get a little tricky. We're often taught (usually through the modelling by our family, society, media) to express our emotions as a 'result' of someone else's doing.

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For example: 'He hurt me.' or 'I feel rejected by you.' or 'I was abandoned by him.' None of these examples are actually describing how it FELT to have had this experience. They are, in fact, a judgment about the other.

Most emotional models teach of 5 PRIMARY EMOTIONS (and many sub-emotions that describe these further). For the sake of clear communication, the 5 PRIMARY EMOTIONS ARE: Mad - Sad - Glad - Afraid - Ashamed. And that's IT!

Stop for a moment. Let that sink in. Think of all the times you've used the words "I feel..." and then followed it with something other than actual emotions. It may be a little staggering at first. That's ok. It was for me too when I first began exploring my own emotional intelligence.

These 5 Primary Emotions speak to the inherent personal accountability of owning your emotions AS YOUR OWN (again, this is about building bridges in relationships and it's not always easy nor pleasant).

Getting into the habit of only using real emotion descriptors after saying "I feel..." is a sure way to begin cleaning up your communication. It may feel a little clunky at first and it's so worth the awkwardness to get to a more empowered way to be in relationship with those around you...

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STEP 3 - NAME YOUR STORY

This is the part that has real potential for inner growth if it's explored thoroughly (I personally LOVE this part). It is the concept of projection and the notion that everything we perceive in the world around us is a direct result of the stories and beliefs we carry from our past. For example, you may believe that someone who raises their voice while talking wants _____ (ex. to do you harm in some way). Fill in the blank with whatever judgment you have about such a person. So where did that belief originate? If you were to look back on your childhood, what did it mean when someone raised their voice or yelled? What were the consequences of this kind of behaviour for you or others around you? Now extrapolate those early experiences to today and take a closer look at the reactions you may be having to someone raising their voice. If in the past, yelling meant violence was sure to follow, then a natural response to loud voices might be fear or a desire to run. These were normal responses for the experiences of your past AND might not be real within the context of today's situations. And yet you still may be reacting the same way you did when you were younger. (most of us do this in many different scenarios).

So the challenge and the gift in this part of the Clear Communication Blueprint is to **PAUSE & QUESTION ALL OF YOUR REACTIONS!**

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Chances are really high that they are a reflection of a past memory and not truly indicative of the other person in the current life circumstance, nor indicative of their real motives here and now. Once you've reflected on your story, it is immensely beneficial for healthy relationships to name this awareness to the other person involved in the dynamic. Fill them in on the insight.

"When you yelled at me in the board meeting, I felt afraid and angry. Growing up in an abusive household, yelling meant someone was going to get hurt." Clear, honest, real.

Give the other person context for your reaction. It builds trust and compassion and awareness for all involved.

Ok, thus far you've stated what made you upset just as NON-JUDGMENTAL FACTS, you've expressed how you felt about what happened (MAD, SAD, AFRAID, ASHAMED) and you've (hopefully) learned a little about WHY YOU REACTED the way you did.

So what now??

STEP 4 - STATE YOUR REQUEST

The last step in cleaning up your communication is to state a boundary or a request you have of the other person. This might be something like "I'd really like it if you would not raise your voice when speaking to me", or "I'd appreciate it if we could discuss personal information outside of group dynamics" or "I really just need a day to think about this before we discuss it" etc etc.

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How is it you'd like to be treated in the future? A good piece of advice I heard from my aunt long ago was "You are the one that teaches people how to treat you". It's stuck with me ever since.

So make the request. And know that everyone is at choice. They may or may not comply with your request and at the very least, you've spoken your truth in a clear and clean way. It does, after all, take both parties to cooperate for bridges to be built. Don't be too upset if the request is not met.

Continue to voice what's real for you, what stories you're carrying and how you want to be treated. Your heart and soul will thank you for your honesty, as the truth of what's inside will no longer be in hiding. Be brave. Speak your truth.



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The Centre for Non-Violent Communication

<https://www.cnvc.org>

Clean Talk Model as developed by ShadowWork TM

<http://shadowwork.com/cleantalkcd.html>

