



## Effective Communication.... News Article 1004

We live in what is termed the information era. Information is available to us in many forms. Newspapers keep us up to date with major events happening worldwide. Computers are jam packed with information; TV and Radio all play their part. For many, reading, listening to radio, watching TV and Surfing the Net has resulted in a life of isolation.

In this News article I would like to address the topic of **'Communication'**.

One of the problems many are encountering in today's modern society is that life is lived in the fast lane. We have fast food, microwaves, computers delivery information within seconds; we have mobile phones, fax machines, e-mail, and even fast service lanes in many of the department stores.

We all seems to be constantly in a hurry, families rarely get to sit and eat dinner together, due to either parents working late, children participating in outside activities or sitting at the computer playing games. The problem with all of this is some of us rarely communicate with one another and when we do, it usually is not in depth.



Before I begin to write on the topic of family communication, let me ask you a question or should I say a several questions. Now, no cheating, be honest with yourself when addressing the questions I am going to ask. Here goes....

### 1. If you are married or have a partner, do you know....

- a) What their favourite colours?
- b) Which type of music do they like listening to?
- c) What is their favourite song?
- d) What books do they like to read?
- e) Which brand of perfume or after-shave do they like best?
- f) Which fruit is their favourite?
- g) What do they really want out of life?

### 2. If you have children, do you know...?

- a) What is their favourite colour?
- b) Which type of music does like listening to?
- c) What is their favourite song?
- d) Who is their idol? And why?
- e) Which fruit is their favourite?

f) Which is their favourite subject at School? And why?

g) Which is their worse subject at School? And Why?

h) What do they really want out of life?

i) What type of movie do they like to watch?

The above questions seem simple enough, however it never ceases to amaze me how many people really don't know simple fundamental likes and dislikes of their partners and or their children.

If you are one of the parents who could answer all the questions, then I must congratulate you and say well done! For those who could answer only a few or didn't have a clue, don't despair you are not alone However, it does shed some light on just how little you know about the people you love and care about.

### Now let's begin..... So What is Communication?

Communication is the means through which humans let each other know about our physical psychological and social needs.

It can be both verbal and non-verbal. Babies usually communicate their needs by crying, banging their heads, making noises, wriggling their bodies and so on. Of course many adults may also use these means to express needs!

It is interesting that babies in Java rarely cry whereas crying is very common among babies in Western culture. Research has shown that in Western society babies, on average, cry for thirty minutes before they get a response. There is a misguided notion that picking children up when they cry serves to reinforce and increase the crying but nothing is further from the truth.

Most parents know that babies give a different type of cry for different types of needs; they have a particular cry when they are in pain, a different cry when they are hungry and yet again a different cry when they need affection.

Crying is only a symptom of a need; when the need is met the crying reduces not increases. Parents are also aware of 'pseudo' cry, when the child wants attention all the time and this kind of crying does not need an immediate response. It appears that in Java the parents identify earlier the different signals of need from their babies before they have to resort to crying. A Javanese baby is never allowed to touch the ground for the first six months of life and the close contact between the child and the parent's body enables earlier detection of needs. In this situation, needs, particularly love needs are being regularly met whereas Western babies have to sometimes shout and scream to get such attention. It is important within families to try to pick up on the verbal signals of need. This is essential up to the time of language development but even afterwards such sensitivity is wise and caring.

The primary function of the family is to facilitate the optimum development of each family member and this means being responsive to the whole host of needs which each person experiences. It may not always be possible to meet certain needs but the expression of all needs can be both actively encouraged and modelled by parents.

When parents themselves do not communicate clearly with each other about their needs or when one or both do not feel worth to even express their needs, never mind having them met, then it is unlikely that the children of these parents will learn to talk about their needs.

**There are many needs, which each person within a family may experience.**

- Emotional
- Occupational
- Social
- Financial
- Intellectual
- Recreational
- Sexual
- Spiritual
- Sensual
- Physical
- Behavioural Material
- Creative ‘ We all deserve and need to be - Happy - Understood - Safe - Hopeful-Important - Thankful’ Asking for what you want...

**There are four ways in which family members can verbally express their needs:**

- Directly and clearly
- Indirectly but clearly
- Directly but unclear
- Indirectly and unclear

In effectively functioning families direct and clear communication is common, whereas in ineffective or dysfunctional families one of the other three types of communication or some combinations of them is the more frequent mode of expression of needs.[http://www.lifestylepluscentre.com/\\_data/docs/how-to-survive-parenting-news1003.pdf](http://www.lifestylepluscentre.com/_data/docs/how-to-survive-parenting-news1003.pdf)

### **Direct and Clear Communication**

If, for example, you want to communicate directly and clearly an emotional need to be embraced by your partner then you might say, “Bill I am feeling vulnerable and need

to be held’ or ‘Bill, I’m feeling loving and would like to be hugged’ The message is direct because it is addressed to Bill and it is clear because it spells out how you are feeling and what your need is. The expression of sexual need in particular is difficult for many couples because a refusal by the partners is seen as rejection and becomes a threat to self worth. A partner or lover beats about the bush saying, for example “Are you staying up late tonight?” or “Are you feeling tired?” or “ Will we have an early night?”. To some it may feel too risky to say direct and clearly, “Bill I feel like making love with you now” or “ Bill I’m feeling incredibly sexy and would love to make love with you.”

Even more difficulties may arise when someone is feeling angry or upset about some unmet need and they may want to communicate this dissatisfaction to a partner, friend or child.

For example, if your partner continually turns up late for meal times and you greet him with a burnt dinner, a hostile silence, a sulking face, a blaming statement ‘ you’re always late’ or a cynical or sarcastic remark ‘ suppose you’ve going to tell me that you had another busy day?’ this type of communication is unlikely to help you to have your need met and will probably not result in your partner being on time for meal s in the future.

Each of these responses will lead to some defensive reaction on the part of the person being addressed. He may just say nothing and emotionally withdraw, or he may respond with some remark such as ‘ you’re always complaining’ or ‘why would I want to come home to such a nag?’ Both partners now end up hurt and humiliated, communication has broken down, self-worth has been threatened and the relationship is strained. Your communication will be clear and direct if

you can own your need and say “Bill when you are late for meals, I feel frustrated and unappreciated and I need you to be on time or at least let me know when you are going to be late”

It must be understood that the more children observe their parents expressing their needs directly and openly the more they will learn to do so as well. It is important that adults and children alike realise that a request to have a need met is not a command. However, if needs are regularly not being responded to, then some definite action is needed on the part of the person experiencing the unmet needs. Adults can and are required to take responsibility for getting their needs met. But children have many needs that they cannot meet by themselves and they are therefore highly dependent on the adults who take care of them. This makes young children much more vulnerable than adults and to a lesser degree than adolescents. Where children’s needs are continually disregarded, the action needed to redress the situation may have to be initiated by someone outside the family, as the children cannot do this for themselves.

### Indirect but clear communication

Where communication is indirect but clear there is still the likelihood that needs will be unmet but the danger is less than with direct but unclear or indirect and unclear patterns of communication. In indirect but clear communication the person for whom the request or statement is intended is not directly addressed. Some examples of indirect but clear messages are:

- Nobody ever notices when I feel vulnerable and need some attention
- I’m really feeling very sexy
- Nobody does anything around here but me
- People who make decision about other people’s work make me angry
- The children are getting me down.

There is a protective purpose in sending an indirect but clear message; but not directing your request to any person you avoid the possibility of refusal or rejection. This strategy is subconscious but it is a clever way to protect yourself from hurt or humiliation unless you learn not to personalise the other person’s behaviour and to increase your own sense of self-worth it is unlikely that you are able to take the risk of direct and clear communication. Because the message is clear the sender may get some of his needs met by a discerning and sensitive listener.

However, there will be many un-met needs as well. The Person who engages in this type of communication is likely to have middle to high self-esteem and generally some gently confrontation will lead to more direct messages.

If you notice your child using this type of communication, see it as one indication of a developing self-esteem problem. It is import to help the child to communicate directly and clearly but it is even more important to pay attention to the emergence of her /his self-worth.

### Direct but Unclear Communication.

Direct but unclear communication is the most common means of expressing needs. This kind of communication is typified in the ‘you’ messages given in the following examples.

- You’re always late
- You only thing of yourself
- You’re so aggressive
- You think you know it all
- You’re a fool
- You think you’re perfect
- You’re a hopeless case
- You’re lazy

- You're always out.

Because the messages are unclear and because they blame the other person, there is little likelihood of getting your hidden, un-revealed needs met. It is easy to see how the blaming 'you' message, even though it protects the sender, leads to a quick breakdown of communication between sender and receiver, whether between parent and parent, parent and child, or child and child. It is less apparent how the praising/affirming 'you' message can lead to self-esteem protectors but it does so nevertheless. When you say to your child 'you're a good girl/boy' once again that reveals nothing of yourself and you set yourself up as a judge of another person's actions. The danger here is that the child will learn that the way to please you is through his/her actions. A more accurate message to send is 'I am impressed by that piece of work and I'd like to know how you feel about it?'

The problem with 'you' messages is that they say absolutely nothing about the sender or the sender's needs. They also judge, 'put down' or blame the other person, which generally leads to him/her to withdraw or attack back. Typical responses to the above remarks usually are;

- So what?
- Who else is going to think of me?
- I'd need to be to get anything done around here
- Well you certainly know more than you do
- You're right I'm a fool to listen to you
- Well you're certainly not
- You're so negative, how could I learn anything from you
- Usually responds using obscene language.
- Well why would I want to be here listening to you?

Direct but unclear communication may be regarded as negative but it serves a very useful purpose, which is to protect the sender from criticism and rejection. By putting all the responsibility for the situation onto the other person (for example, 'you're so insensitive' the sender of the message takes no risk; he/she is not revealing any need and is not making any request.

This type of protective communication is used by people with low to middle self-esteem. This influence of self-esteem is pervasive and affects all your actions whether these are towards yourself towards other adults or towards your children. When you have a poor sense of your own value as a person, unwittingly you will use unclear means of communicating your needs, even to your own children and they, in turn will develop the same apparently low risk communication strategies.

### **Indirect and Unclear Communication**

Indirect and unclear communication is the most protective kind; it seriously blocks the self-worth of the person receiving the message and leads to an immediate breakdown in communication. Cynicism and sarcasm typify indirect and unclear communication and their use reveals the low self-esteem of the sender of the message.

Cynicism and sarcasm focus all the attention on the person to whom the message is addressed and cleverly, takes all the attention off the sender. There is no risk of rejection for you when you send such messages, but your needs will not be met as nobody will have a notion of what your needs are.

For example, feeling lonely and in need of company and closeness you say 'you might as well be in a graveyard as living in this house'.

This message is upsetting for anyone listening as it is highly critical and it is indirect because no one person has been addressed. Most of all, nobody has a notion of what you are really talking

about and, in addition, they are probably busy protecting themselves or backing off from such a 'put down' message.

Most children are victims of sarcasm and cynicism within homes and classrooms. This form of communication closes the door on a child's self-worth and may also lead to the child using this type of communication. The child has no idea what the parents or teachers need from him/her when they use indirect and unclear communication. Examples of this kind of communication when it comes to children are;

- Is there a mouse in this house?
- Here comes Mummy's little boy/girl
- Look at the face of it!
- I might as well be talking to the wall
- Is everybody blind in this house?
- What kind of donkey have we got in this class?

Children need to be helped and encouraged to express all their needs directly and clearly. When a child uses any of the other three types of communication patterns it means that he/she feels threatened by the response of the parent or teacher and so to avoid possible criticism humiliation and rejection he/she uses a protective mean of expressing needs. It is vital that a parent notices where this symptom of the child's self-esteem protector occurs, so that immediate and continuous corrective action can be taken. It is also import that children are aided to observe and respond positively to the reasonable requests of parents and other adults. Children tend to believe the world revolves around them and even when it clearly does not, they still think it ought to. They need to be helped to see they are not the only ones with needs within the family and that each person's reasonable needs are accepted and responded to when possible.

### Confrontation on unmet needs

Many of us turn a blind eye when we witness children or adults being neglected and violated, because we find it all too confronting we rationalize that it is not our place to interfere. There may be some grounds for such rationalisation in the case of adults but where children are concerned, no excuse is strong enough for failure to act.

There are far too many cases where there are families Where an adult - parent, relative or outsider - witness Children being hurt, humiliated, physically and even Sexually violated and nothing is done.

So many unmet needs of children have gone un confronted Under the banner, 'for peace sake, don't upset your father (mother)' - It would also be true that there could be some teachers who see children being unjustly criticised, scolded, ridiculed and even in rare cases physically hit by a colleague in school but they do nothing.

The reason for inaction lies in the witness's own protective self-esteem and his/her fear of the response to the confrontation from the offending person. The problem is that everybody loses out when neglected needs are not confronted.

Clearly, the parent or teacher or other significant adult who mistreats a child or partner or colleague is in need of professional help, and failure to confront the neglect or mistreatment leads to perpetuation or even worsening of this problem.

You can probably see now how this becomes one vicious circle and the non-action creates a situation where the problem feeds off itself and becomes devastating. Unfortunately, this is the problem in our Society and it has grown to such mass proportion that it is now difficult to eliminate, however, if each and every one of you do your part, then there is a ripple effect and at least people in your circle receive the benefit.

Remember, that everyone loses out when unmet needs are not understood within families. Change is not possible and the sad process of gross emotional neglect, conditional loving, or physical or sexual violation continues, blocking the mature development of each member of the family.

If you feel that your situation is different and that it has gone beyond repair, then I would have you consider this, confrontation is not blaming, and really understand that for you to do anything about any situation that may be serious enough for you to act upon does not mean for you to add fuel to the fire. 'What do I do then?' you may be thinking.

Confrontation involves the direct and clear expression by a member of the family of his unmet needs. It cannot be an attack on the other person, as this attack assumes that the other person is deliberately neglecting her partner, child, friend, relative or colleague. This is not only a gross assumption but also a judgement and a criticism, and will lead to a strong defensive action the part of the person attacked.

It must be understood that people do not intentionally violate each other; but do so to protect themselves from hurt and rejection, then they resort to a range of behaviours that lead unfortunately to the other person being ignored, dismissed, neglected, judged, criticised, ridiculed and so on.

After having read this article I urge you to take a good look at the way you communicate, within the family and with your friends. Identify your strengths and your weakness in communicating. Then take action to turn your weakness into strength. Sometimes all that it takes is awareness. We are always in so much of a hurry that there seems little time to reflect on how we are really living our lives.

Should you find that you require any assistance please contact us by '[clicking here](#)' and we will be only too pleased to discuss resources available to help you.