

Communication in the Face of Conflict

Marina Haase, SPA2014, Monday 30th June, 2014 10:00am to 12:30pm

Thesis: Communication is more about what you are than what you say.

Agenda

- Active Listening module
- Choose from 9 other modules

Rules

- Anything personal said in this room stays confidential
- When giving feedback, be gracious
- Anyone feeling uncomfortable can call a halt

Module Structure

- Subject connection
- Theory
- Practice
- Conclusion

Modules

1. "I Messages" – faux feelings
2. Empathy (Dalston: *Just Listen*) [winner with 7 votes]
3. Four sides of a message
4. Harvard Negotiation Project – steps to mediation
5. Non-Violent Communication [winner with 7 votes]
6. Self-Reflection (how do I deal with conflict, strengths, weaknesses, things to consider)
7. Analysing Conflict [runner-up with 5 votes]
8. Conflict Solver's Toolbox (a game dreamed up by Thorsten) – Dojo
9. Team conflicts [runner-up with 5 votes]

Introduction

Pick a quotation from a famous person that is meaningful to you. In my case:

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent – Eleanor Roosevelt.

Discuss these within each group.

Second round: *The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said – Peter Drucker*

Active Listening

Classic definition:

- Ask open questions
- Mention feelings if appropriate
- Provide body-language feedback
- Rephrase speaker's statement in your own words to clarify understanding

Active listening involves reflecting and the heart – Marina distributes mirrored cards with hearts on them. Write on them anything you've learned here.

Non-Violent Communication

NVC (symbolised by the giraffe with its big heart, vision and usually gentle nature) is based on the idea that humans only resort to violence or harmful behaviour when they cannot recognise more effective strategies for meeting their needs. It assumes that basic human needs are never in conflict, only the strategies for meeting them can clash. See Wikipedia.

Our group discusses this proposition and finds that it is 90% in agreement. Naming it "Compassionate Communication" or "non-confrontational communication" might be a better term.

Authority is Marshall Rosenberg. Guidelines:

- Observe – do not judge or interpret
- Describe feelings, not thoughts ("inadequate" is not a feeling, "upset" is)
- Express needs, not strategies
- Ask, don't require / demand

E.g. ask yourself why you suddenly feel defensive in a meeting. Going behind the expressed wishes can reveal underlying needs. E.g. the demand for the whole team to be in place at 9am every day can be provoked by a number of different motivations – ask and you might find other ways to meet the same need.

Game used to move some emotion words out of the passive into the active vocabulary.

Empathy

- Putting yourself in the place of the other person
- Grasp of their situation / context
- Understanding how the other is feeling
- Feeling what they are feeling
- Supportive
- Showing concern
- Being there with the other person
- Can't fake it

Marina's final point: thanks and appreciation doesn't cost a lot. How to say thank you in a way that means something to them?

- Thank them for something specific
- Acknowledge the effort they made
- Tell them the difference it made to you