

Defective Communication Patterns (which rob couples, groups, and families of their power to change or improve)

Do you live on a one-way street or a two-way street?

Conversation Killers

Psychic Assumptions- Rather than discover and explore what someone else really thinks, the Psychic likes to make up what others think. This way they can continue seeing themselves as the victim and others as a make-believe enemy instead of a real and evolving person.

Overgeneral- Overgeneralization is the game. You always. Every time. I never. Ensures that the other person will never try to change for you. Because your truth is so distorted and extreme, and any evidence of or capacity for positive contributions are discounted and ignored.

The Ultimater- If you don't do this, I'll _____. If you won't give me _____ then I think I'll kill myself. I'll divorce you. Take it or leave it. Heavy-handed ultimatums and threats, inflexibility ensures no two-way conversation or solution is acceptable. My way or the highway.

Spitting Hairy- These conversation tactics get so bogged down by scrutiny and disagreement of minor or non-essential details, nothing can ever get decided or changed, no matter how uncomfortable everybody says they are.

Interrupting Cow- A method of preventing others from speaking or changing the topic to prevent the conversation from moving forward. Could be an effort to prevent the alleged cow from having an outburst, be upset, or deal with conflicting ideas. Before you can say anything or finish a reply, they talk right over you. Machine-gun mouthpiece.

The Judge- He wields his machete of guilt as assigned by his will and all judgments are final. (Picture gavel-slamming black-robed angry person in a wig of white curls here.) Demonstrates disinterest in other people's thoughts or feelings. Shoulds, oughts, guilt, and long stories about what they think is the only right way to be are his favorite weapons.

Blame Game- Rather than take responsibility for themselves, the blamer communication style dumps everything on everyone else. It's never their fault. The blamer convinces you that you have no power until the other person does something to make a change. The blame game gets everyone so involved in finger-pointing, denial, and accusations that nothing gets resolved.



Justify Guy- It's all about creating a defense and shifting the blame. Present oneself as the helpless victim or the justified "you made me do it" Opposite of the blamer but just as effective at blocking communication and problem solving.

Sidewinder- Can be extremely devious. By continuing to bring up new issues, they keep you off balance and prevent working on a problem they don't want to address. Distraction is his weapon of choice.

Dump-trucker- Keeps adding more details and issues to prevent moving forward on any single one. Might sound like a venting session, where they ask advice or for a solution, but then they interrupt with more information or some other problem. Confuses and overwhelms the target. Makes the user feel like nobody helps, they are all alone in their battle and illness.

True-blue-screw- There is so much discussion about what is "Really" going on, all time and energy are spent trying to establish the truth and no action is ever taken. The issue never gets settled.

Labeling- Uses a name or category and tries to make you think that's what you are or that's what someone else is. Attack, counter-attack, and bitter feelings. Attacks the person and places them in a concrete mold. Stupid name-calling and very effective way of avoiding solving any problems, this style is in the business of making more problems and making them worse.

Analyzer- Rather than responding to what this person is saying, the analyzer keeps you focused on your perceived flaws in how exactly are you communicating.

Sick Sally- I'm tired. I don't feel good. My head hurts. Can we talk about this later? Avoidance, incapacity, and illnesses are the excuses, and when Sick Sally gets ahold of you, you are likely to be able to actually feel the fatigue, nausea, or pain. I don't think I can handle this. Here's your sign.

Overactivator- Suddenly, the need to become fascinated with some object and manipulate it, or get up and do/find something else, just overcomes you. You can't sit still. You will find, do, or say anything to get distracted from what someone else wants to talk about or do with you. Keeps you very alone and lonely.

Ha-Ha Henrietta- Your so funny, you can't stop yourself. Even when other people are uncomfortable and let you know. Then you might be embarrassed. Uses continual humor and irrelevant giddy comments to dominate attention and prevent any self-scrutiny or genuine engagement with others.

Good-time Gary- Look, I just wanna relax and play. This is too stressful. I've had a hard day. I'm done, I need to check out.



Mirror-mirror- The blamer's twin, with a twist. This is where someone sees their own unwanted qualities and behaviors only in others, or projects aspects of a past relationship onto their current partner.

Why Bother Brother?- I've tried before, and nothing works. I quit, I've given up. There's nothing I can say or do to get through to you, so I'm not going to talk about it.

Yah-butt- Always has a reason why trying something can't be done or won't work. Leave the Yah-butts in the field with the ra-butts, I always say.

deNyles- No I didn't. I never said that. May make you doubt yourself and your sanity. Deals with the uncomfortable by refusing to acknowledge.

Mini-mizer- deNyles' half-sister, she gets her victim to refuse to acknowledge the importance or severity of a situation or someone else's feelings. Makes others feel ridiculed and devalued.

Old Yeller- Hollers and scares everybody from asserting their own needs and wishes. Tyrant tool to dominate through intimidation.

Just Kidding- Don't do this. I was only kidding is a way to avoid responsibility for something you should not have said and the pain you have caused. Just kidding will invite an angry attack or withdrawal and giving up.

These patterns of ineffective communication and faulty thinking can be learned. Once a couple or group is familiar with these terms, they can detect their errors and replace them with healthier, more responsible and accurate conversation that allows problems to be solved and people to improve behaviors.

What are healthy communication patterns that facilitate relationships and problem-solving?

Active Listening- acknowledging and paraphrasing, slows things down so everyone has time to think, hear what is being said, and demonstrate to the speaker that they are heard and understood.

Adopting a position of trying to understand rather than trying to assert or defend your own position. Ask questions, seek to clarify, shows the speaker their thoughts and feelings are valuable.

Compromise- Be willing to give a little to get a little. Seek win-win solutions.



Owning your own stuff- If you did it or said it, take responsibility and offer to correct it in the future.

Recognize that your version of the truth is not the only one or the only right one.

Make the health of the relationship and it's participants more valuable than being right or getting your way all the time.

Read and respond to body language and tone.

Don't interrupt, and don't dominate. Doing all the talking so you can feel right, in control, justified, and powerful will breed resentment and withdrawal or conflict.

Clear your mind. If one person is distracted or too emotional, be prepared to take a break and set a time and place to discuss issues face-to-face without distractions and extreme interfering emotions.

Do not attack and do not defend. Defending is what you do with an enemy, and will make an enemy of the person you are defending against. If the person really is hurting you, say you are hurt and keep yourself safe.

Use I statements instead of you statements. I feel bullied when you threaten and shout is different from "You're a bully."

Make criticism constructive. Sandwich complaints between compliments.

Be positive and encouraging.

Don't tell others what they think and feel. Let them stand up for themselves, and state what you think, feel, and want. I feel _____ when you _____ and I want _____.

Be assertive, not aggressive, submissive, or passive-aggressive.

Be available. Don't shut down the messenger just because you don't like the message. If you are not ready to deal with someone and their issue, set a time and place to talk privately later. "What you have to say is important to me, and I want to give you all the time and attention you deserve. Right now is not a good time for me to do that, can we make an appointment for this later when I can really focus on you?"

Be honest, patient, and committed to the relationship.

Don't yell, scream, or call names. Try to stay calm. Don't let things build up for too long before bringing a problem you are having to someone else's attention.



Make rules for fair fighting:

- 1, No put-downs, yelling, or name-calling.
2. Anyone can take a time-out. That person is responsible for setting a time to return to the conversation later.
3. Deal with one issue at a time.
4. Don't threaten to run away, divorce, or kill yourself.
5. Use words not actions for expression. No use of force.
6. Take turns talking.

