

Communication Patterns

Written by Carol McGowan for askacoach.com – see full attribution at the end of this document

Introduction

This information has been provided to assist you with identifying types of communication patterns.

Some skills development exercises are provided at the end of the document for your consideration and exploration.

Communication Patterns

Below are the five types of communication patterns and a brief description of each.

Communication Pattern	Description
Passive	This is the approach where someone takes the role of the nice guy. They try to be compliant and appease those around them. This can sometimes involve them having to “give in” in some way. Unfortunately this can lead to repressed anger for the person concerned.
Aggressive	This approach is pretty much the exact opposite of passive communication. This is where a person comes across as vocal, boisterous, accusatory and highly demanding. In reality they may be on the defensive in order to make themselves feel secure.

Communication Pattern	Description
Rationalistic	This approach can also be overwhelming but in a different way to someone who is aggressive. Their approach is to try to overwhelm people but they do so by how they use words and explanations. They may be quite unfeeling in their approach and everything is addressed or analysed from a purely logical standpoint.
Evasive	This approach is where the truth is avoided wherever possible. This is done through jokes, sarcasm, jumping from one topic to another and also engages in frenetic activity in order to avoid engaging in meaningful dialogue / discussion.
Assertive & Honest	This is often the desired communication pattern, or the ideal approach. This is where communication is open, honest and assertive. Here, an individual is most likely prepared to take responsibility and ownership for their feelings, actions, ideas and behaviours. This is the only approach where recognition, acceptance and expression of one's feelings can occur.

Skills Development Exercises For Further Consideration And Exploration

Exercise One

Consider a recent communication with someone, where there may have been conflict, or a lack of resolution on a particular issue.

- Which pattern or patterns were you using? What was the effect of using that pattern in terms of the overall conversation? What was the effect on the other person, or people?
- Which pattern or patterns were the other participants of the conversation using? What was the effect of those choices on the conversation? What was the effect of those choices on you personally?

- If anything other than the Assertive & Honest pattern was used, by you or the other person, can you identify any possible reasons?
- What could have been different if you and/or the other participants chose to use the Assertive & Honest pattern?

Exercise Two

If you are anticipating having a conversation in the near future, which you feel will be potentially challenging or confrontational, consider the following questions now, in preparation for having the conversation:

- Which pattern or patterns do you feel the other person(s) is likely to be using? Do you have any ideas as to why that may be?
- Which pattern or patterns do you feel you would typically use in the conversation, more out of habit, than from planning? Do you have any ideas as to why you might fall into that habit?
- If you approached the conversation from an Assertive & Honest pattern, how might that change how the conversation goes compared to what you were previously concerned about?
- How might you encourage the other person to also use the Assertive & Honest pattern, compared to the pattern you might have been previously concerned they would use?

Exercise Three

If there is someone that you feel you often have a difficult time effectively communicating with because you, the other person, or potentially both of you tend to use patterns other than the Assertive & Honest pattern, and then consider this exercise:

- Share with that person this document, or at least the chart / contents at some appropriate level. Let them know that you're committed to improving your communication patterns that you use with them and you'd like to go through this material and ask them to help you evaluate which patterns you're using and how they might be overcome by using the Assertive & Honest pattern.
- The other person may then also choose to ask you to help evaluate the patterns they typically demonstrate, and likewise ask for ideas on how to change the pattern to the Assertive & Honest pattern.

Attribution

Carol McGowan is a successful coach and counsellor, based in Sydney Australia, who specialises in retirement lifestyle planning. She has been a significant leader in the development of askacoach.com from the beginning. Carol may be contacted by e-mail at francarol@bigpond.com or by phone in Australia on 0407 410 610 or internationally on 61 4 07 410 610.

Further development has been conducted by the askacoach.com team in the creation of some skills development exercises and overall formatting.

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