Walk the talk – Effective Communication

The Power of Communication

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUd5j0NVdRk

This scene is rightly labelled the most touching scene from the movie Taare Zameen Par. It shows the father of a dyslexic child, justifying his stand to his child’s teacher. The parent had sent his son away to a boarding school without even trying to understand why the child had difficulty coping up with his class. The teacher, without really outright blaming the parent, drives home the point how words and actions can hurt. He explains how some ancient villages believe that harsh words and curses can kill a tree. Leaving us to realise, how powerful our words and our communication can be. How they can maim someone for life.

![Some words can wither a soul...](image)

I wondered at this movie a lot. How could a father be so insensitive? What was he so scared of and how did the mother give in to his wishes?

What makes us do what we do? What makes us behave the way we do?

The Merriam Webster defines Communication as the act or process of using words, sounds, signs, or behaviours to express or exchange information or to express your ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc., to someone else.

Here is another video to show the power of words and how they can change the way the world looks at something.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYcXTIgL UgE
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Communication is like that arrow, which when it leaves the quiver cannot be retraced back. And communication is not just words.

It is the silence and the unspoken words hanging in the air.

It is the gestures, as we fidget around someone who makes us uncomfortable or in the mirroring of the other’s actions as we seek to unconsciously build rapport

It is the averting of the eyes, when we don’t wish to see or for others to see what we feel

It is the increased breathing when we are excited about something or when we seek to hide our discomfort

It is in the tone of our voice, which reveals how thrilled we are, or how choked up or how traumatised.

So even if you say nothing…

"You cannot not communicate."  
PAUL WATZLAWIK

So communication skills really involves reading into the non-verbals, the silence and words to make sure we get our message across and that it is what we intended in the first place.

What is effective Communication

Effective communication is a two way street.

“Good communication is 20 percent what you know and 80 percent how you feel about what you know.” It goes beyond the sharing of information. It is understanding the emotions and intentions behind the information. It is effective, only if what you conveyed is received and understood the exact way you intended it to be. Hence feedback is critical.
Think of a person whom you would rate as a Master Communicator. The one person you would listen to because you are absolutely convinced this guy is authentic. Three things which convince you of what he or she is saying are:

- They speak with absolute conviction
- Their voice, tone, body language totally convince you to listen to them
- They are totally interested and invested in what you are saying and feeling.

If I have to name a public figure I would trust – it would once again be Amitabh Bachchan. See the KBC episodes. He gets to meet people from all walks of life. Some are gushing to the point of making you cringe. Some are downright weird. And yet, never once does he give away how he must feel. No doubt he’s a great actor but what comes through is his genuine warmth and interest and his ability to make everyone sitting in front of him feel good about himself. The responses that he gets are heart warming. I didn’t see Shah Rukh Khan getting the same feel in or even when Amir Khan cried every time and by the time the reality shows of Salman Khan came in, I stopped watching TV but the point is – see the response!

A great communicator knows the objective of his communication. Remember – call for action? When we talked of presentation skills. We want them to do something. Inform. Convince or Persuade. Similar with when we communicate even one on one.

And how effective we are is something we come to know only with the response we get. If we asked someone to make a report a certain way and we got the opposite, the fault lies in our communication and in not making sure that he understood exactly what we wanted. In my line of work, I know I haven’t been understood right, when I am giving instructions for activities and they are all going totally haywire because I wasn’t clear enough and I didn’t cross check to make sure.

The key is : Be flexible

But there is another twist to this – something I Learnt when I was studying NLP, Neuro Linguistic Programming. From a very learned teacher. The key to effective communication is to try, try and try again till you get the response you want but try something different, if one way fails.

As an exercise – try to get someone to shake your hands but tell them not to do so explicitly. Then, try in different ways to ensure that they do what you want. It’s really funny and gets your
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creativity out to the fore front. You can congratulate the person for something and put your own hand out. Involuntarily the other person will put his hand forward. Try it in different ways till you get the response you want. So it is with communication.

You have an objective. You want it fulfilled. Be flexible. Watch the response till you get what you want. That's when you have been effective.

Why does one need effective Communication

It rates on the top most skill that Companies ask for. It creates

- Bonds of trust.
- It is the glue which facilitates decision making and problem solving
- Facilitates an environment of collaboration and innovation
- A healthy understanding which allows even negative messages to be conveyed without increasing conflict and destroying relationships
- Authentic relationships
- Rapport and support
- Open communication aligns personal goals with organisational objectives

And personally … well! It just adds so much more meaning to your relationships, if you mean what you and say what you mean.

The introduction to Isabs

For me the true meaning of communication and its effect on inter-personal relationships dawned on me after the beginning of my journey with Isabs. The Indian Society of Applied Behavioral Science. If you click on this link www.isabs.org, It takes you into a different world altogether. ISABs is a not for profit organisation and works towards helping individuals discover their self and enhance inter-personal relationships through a very unique methodology.

My tryst with Isabs began in 2013. A few years after my life– changing talk at ICSI-CCGRT.

I was running two centres for conducting workshops on Presentation skills and Creative Expression and the husband felt I could do with some mentoring because clearly I was facing mental blocks in taking things forward. I had no sense of self worth, was pretty pathetic at marketing myself and my business and like everywhere in my life, I had jumped in without
researching the market. I was surviving purely because people loved coming in. We spun stories, played word games and practised modulating our voices around – in short doing everything that schools had stopped doing and adults had no recollection of. I had called it Chrysalis. The day I opened my first center, someone thought I was the Mumbai branch of this very famous training company based in Chennai- also named Chrysalis. Inspite of being literate and fairly savvy with the computer, I hadn’t bothered to check what name I was choosing for what I wanted to do.

Chrysalis is the stage in the life cycle of a butterfly, where post the cocoon stage, it gains its brand new, colourful wings. I wanted to be the threshold where people tried their new wings, just as Chrysalis was the threshold where I tried my luck at being an entrepreneur, after having worked as a Company Secretary with HCL Hewlett-Packard and having taken a break, I really wanted to do something with my life. So after moaning and groaning about it for a long time, the husband had probably had enough and while returning from the gym one day – pointed to a place and said “You have till 10:00 am to think about. I am going to pay the deposit for this place. You keep talking about wanting to do something – so do it.” Ouch.

And so Chrysalis was born. Like that. Out of the blue. I didn’t know what to do with the place. I mulled over it. And I was in panic. I had to prove what I had been saying. I just wanted to do something. I knew if I ran a coaching centre I would have to study super hard again or deal with physics, maths etc (not very exciting things for a very right brained me). And I just couldn’t deal with the idea of going back to law. So the best thing that I could think of was to write or read or anything related to books and words. But I didn’t want to teach. I was so clear of all the things I didn’t want with absolutely no clarity of what I actually wanted.

A very dear friend, suggested ideas for marketing and while I totally advertised for workshops for adults – all the queries came for kids! Now I have three of own. My near triplets. You know when they say – three hands full! Yes that was me. If I wanted to teach children, I would have joined a school!

But well, you got to pay the rent so the first batch started. Notice how things were totally going contrary to whatever I was planning. And well, thank God for that, because when things happen to God's wishes, some sense comes out of it. (unquote Mr. Harivansh Rai Bachchan)
Surprisingly, despite my fears and lack of any formal knowledge in the area of business or training, I managed to get some recognition. People started coming in. We rigidly refused to follow any defined curriculum – more because I had no clue what I was doing next – I hated the idea of being bound and managed to instil a love for creative expression in all my charges. So when the children started pouring over speeches and talks and practising them, parents obviously sat up. When people gained confidence to present with flow, they passed the word around. Their companies started coming in and the colleges began calling us. What was a fun thing, was actually bearing fruit. My love for books and words was taking me on a different journey.

We soon needed a bigger place. I had a vision in my mind. We took a huge place on the first floor and made it something of a second home. With different areas for serious speaking and other places for brainstorming on bean bags and group debates. A library. A movie centre. A speaking podium. A pantry with a microwave where kids tried their hand at baking and making salads and sandwiches. Worksheets and activities. Fun recordings and pizza parties. Words. words and words. Professionals and other entrepreneurs, loads of teachers came in to polish their skills. We began tying up with companies to train their people in Grooming and presentation and life was good. That’s when the itch starts. It was time for boredom to creep in again. I was restless. The husband thought I should meet up with a person who was a coach and maybe he could guide me into how to grow further.

This was my pattern. I was impulsive, easily excited and easily bored. With things and with people.

So this guy, young, upstart and full of himself (brazen confidence) talked of things I had no clue about. He could probably sell a cup of tea to anyone sitting in front of him and while I was in
 awe of that skill, I hated him for making me feel small. Invariably, after he would leave, I would be gathering my humiliated self off the floor, plotting all kinds of revenge. And this very contrary thing – they say. When someone tells you can’t do something – you got to prove them wrong. So he talked of ISABs. And said, “Go on! They are going to wash you and hang you to dry! I bet you won’t last.” He would say nothing more about it.

Well..so I clicked on that link and enrolled for what they called the Basic Lab Human Processes and voila, tickets booked I was on my way. True to form, I didn’t read any literature about it. I wanted to be cut up, quartered and hung to dry! Do we get madder as we grow older??

Isabs or the Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Sciences was something beyond my imagination. I was expecting a class room training. I saw my life play out there. It is something we call T- group and learning is truly experiential. We get formed into small groups of 8-10 and are assigned two facilitators and for 5 days we are together. Communicating. Whether we wanted to or not. Without an agenda. Unstructured.

I remember reading this Zen story about potatoes being washed in Korea. Nobody scrubs each one of them. The entire lot is put under high pressure water and stirred with a stick and the force of the water and the potatoes, rubbing together, jostling for space, manage to make each other squeaky clean.

The lab was that. A cleansing ground. Where we were beginning to see the layers we had wrapped around us to hide the darkness within. There was no judgement. Just an awareness of self.

That is where I started to learn the true meaning of Communicating. Of inter-personal Skills. Of Assertiveness.
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That lab showed me my communication pattern. It showed me how I interacted in groups. And it was just a start. I realised that while I coached people to speak in public, in a group I never wanted to speak till absolutely necessary. I clicked more with people like myself – the quiet, non smiling ones! Or maybe we were the ones who smiled inside but didn’t show it. I didn’t realise that I came across as intimidating and closed. While inside, I was actually terrified. And I definitely didn’t like being around older women, I had some heavy baggage regarding that.

When I expressed my worry about my lack of business skills, this balding gentleman told me I could market it a la Kingfisher …with hot young girls in red dresses. That was probably the first time I would have let lose my temper with strangers.

But within a span a three days, I saw this slime ball transform into the most adorable teddy bear who wore his heart on his sleeve. All because of the lab and some brilliant facilitation. He got a glimpse of who he could be. Most of us realised how we were perceived in a group, whether we were authentic or not, did we inspire others to trust us or did we manage to alienate them. In short, we learnt how we communicated even without realising what signals we were giving out.

Communication skills, if you remember was part of the curriculum at the Intermediate course and I marvelled at the thought that it could be taught. It also seemed like making obvious, things we already know. But it is experiencing it which brings in clarity the entire ramifications of the meaning of communication skills.

This chapter on Communication skills covers the following topics:

- Understanding one’s own pattern of communication
- How to be more effective in communication
- What are the barriers to communication and overcoming them
- Developing an Assertive Presence
Understanding self – Using Transactional Analysis

Good communication skills require a high level of self-awareness. Transactional Analysis is a very rational approach to analysing and understanding our behaviour.

If you don’t read the caption, the tendency is to think that that invariably a man, is being pulled both sides by his parents or kids - Some even wonder where the wife is in all this pulling!!

Transactional Analysis owes its birth to Dr. Eric Berne, who explored the patterns to human behaviour in his book “I AM OK, YOU ARE OK”

And it’s not the man being pulled, but the fact that all of us, at any point of time operate from any one of three ego states;

- Parent
- Adult
- Child

I will share an example which I chanced upon in the book “Born to Win” written by Muriel James and Dorothy Jongeward and based on the work by Eric Berne

It talks about a man walking in to evaluate the merits of a playschool he wants to get his son admitted into. It is one of those very modern schools with a play way approach, with messy paintings and where children learn by doing all kinds of activities. Informal teaching styles and loads of creative activities.

His first thought is how could anyone learn in such a dirty place!

Next it comes to his mind that he should check about its ratings before deciding on the school.
Third – unbidden comes the thought “I wish I had gone to a school like this!”

Within a span of a few seconds, he has acted as his father would have, rationalised as an adult and also reverted to a child like state when he wished he could have gone to a similar school.

Imagine a mother shouting at her child for creating a mess in the living room. The phone rings. She picks it up and without a trace of the anger in her voice, answers in a normal tone. It is almost like different people are living inside her but it is actually the switching of the ego states which changes the style of communication.

According to Berne – since our birth, events get recorded in our brain. Everything we have experienced, perceived or incorporated from our parent figures gets embedded in the nervous tissue, the feelings as well as the ways we might have distorted them. It is like a video recorder. Everything gets imprinted and it can often be replayed, recalled and re-experienced.

He defines “Ego states as a consistent pattern of feeling or experience associated with a consistent pattern of behaviour.”

So when we are acting, thinking and feeling like we had observed our parents do, we are in the Parent Ego State. When we are dealing with current reality, rationally, objectively, gathering facts, we are in the Adult Ego State and when we are feeling and acting as we did when we were children, then we are in the Child Ego State. The ego states are always shown with a Capital letter.

- Ego State means the state of mind at a particular moment
- Ego state is visible behaviour pattern of self
- Every individual has 3 behaviour patterns within himself – or 3 personalities – Parent, Adult, Child
- Coherent system of Feeling and Thinking and corresponding behaviour
A toy stroller and a chance to be like Mom!

Uh oh! She wants to get in instead!

Ego states start developing soon after birth. The recording starts as infants observe their parents! Here is another example of the ego states at play. Even in children as small as 2 yrs old.

When she gets a toy stroller as a gift, the little girl behaves the way she has seen her mom do. Pushing it along. After sometime, the child Ego state takes over, when she throws the doll out and tries to fit in herself. When the Adult Ego state takes over, it rationalises and makes her realise she can’t fit in, so once again the doll goes back in the stroller.

The ego states change in a fraction of a second. And they are already developed even in a child as small as two years old.
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For you to understand which ego state you primarily operate from, take the test. The first one.

- Save the Ego gram.

Given below you will descriptions of each ego state. See if it holds true for the top two dominant ego states that you operate from

**EGO STATES**

- **Parent Ego State**
  Behaviours, thoughts and feelings copied from parents or parent figures

- **Adult Ego State**
  Behaviours, thoughts and feelings which are direct responses to the here and now

- **Child Ego State**
  Behaviours, thoughts and feelings replayed from childhood

You can understand your personality a bit better based on the ego states.

The Parent Ego state can be distinguished further into the Critical or the Nurturing Parent Ego State and the Child State can be further identified as a Natural/ Free child Ego State and the Adapted Child Ego State.

The Adult Ego state remains whole.

After you take the test, look where you have the dominant scores, over a major period of time.
CRITICAL PARENT EGO STATE

In this state, we are angry and controlling. We seek to exert power and authority. The tone is harsh and critical.

BODY LANGUAGE
- Heavy strides
- Pointed fingers
- Jerking fist
- Hands on hips

BEHAVIOR
- Compelling
- Disciplining
- Admonish
- Forcing
- Reprimand
- Control
- Scold
- Question

WORDS AND PHRASES USED
- Should
- Should not
- Always
- Never
- DON’T
- Filthy
NURTURING PARENT EGO STATE

In this state, we are like Nurturing parents. Guiding, encouraging, benign and helpful.

BODY LANGUAGE
- Nod
- Embrace
- Consoling touch
- Arms around shoulder

BEHAVIOR
- Permit
- Guide
- Care
- Rescue
- Encourage
- Cling
- Support
- Agree

WORDS AND PHRASES USED
- Take care
- Don’t worry
- Don’t be afraid
- You can do it
- Be careful!
ADULT EGO STATE

The calm rational state. Objective. All decisions taken on clear evaluation of facts. Able to handle conflict maturely and cross any unpleasant transactions.

BODY LANGUAGE

- Quiet
- Pleasant
- Alert
- Forward leaning
- Clear gaze
- Unprejudiced
- Relaxed

BEHAVIOR

Acquiring Knowledge
Looking for Options & Probabilities
Comprehend
Weighing Pros & Cons
Perceive
Reorganize
Interpret
Organize
Classify
Checking for Truth
Unifying Data

WORDS AND PHRASES USED

- I understand
- I remember
- Suppose
- The information I have is.
- What? How? Where?
- However
- Another way of looking at it.....
FREE CHILD EGO STATE

True relationships and true intimacy happen when we are in this state. We are at our creative best, open, vibrant and our true selves. Intimacy here is the connection- when we look at someone and we know what they are thinking. In that second.

BEHAVIOR

- Active, Intuitive,
- Exuberant
- Bold
- Self centred
- Boastful
- Curious
- Excited laughter
- Shouting, stamping
- Forgetful
- Gregarious

BODY LANGUAGE

- Mischievous smiles
- Wide open eyes
- Looks innocent
- Open laughs

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTAtg7mvbs4

That's a Free Child, if there ever was one! And what fun when we are in this state!!
ADAPTED CHILD EGO STATE

In this state, we aren’t assertive. The Parent influence is there, either directly or indirectly. We seek to please, suppressing our true self and it causes annoyance, which again we don’t express.

**BEHAVIOR**

- Stubborn
- Rebellious
- Complaining
- Competitive
- Lethargic
- Anxious
- Obedient
- Manipulating

**BODY LANGUAGE**

- False, vindictive smiles
- Down cast eyes
WHAT IS THE NEED OF EACH EGO STATE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ego State</th>
<th>Need</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Parent</td>
<td>Control, power, assert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing Parent</td>
<td>Show love and care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>To think and evaluate information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Child</td>
<td>The Biological need to feel and experience stimulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapted Child</td>
<td>Approval and safety</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each ego state has its own advantages as well.

When we operate from the parent ego states, we end up doing a lot of things unconsciously, just as we had observed our parent figures do, which leaves our mind free to rationalise and use it to make decisions objectively.

In the Adult ego state, we are non emotional, practical and objective, forming decisions based on facts and evidence.

In the free child state, is when true creativity, excitement and intimacy in any relationship comes about whereas in the Adaptive child ego state, one is disciplined, tolerant and accepting.

At any point of time, you can recognize which ego state someone is operating from.
GETTING TO KNOW YOUR PARENT EGO STATE

a) Write three things that your parents did that you didn’t like.

b) Write three things that your parents did that you did like.

c) Now study these lists and ask yourself, “Do I do any of these things myself?” If so, with whom

d) Write down three important Parental messages that you still hear in your mind.

e) Are these positive or negative?

f) Do they still influence your behavior in any way? Where? With whom?

I had some very weird realisations when I had answered these questions for the first time. I remember, my father telling me ever since I was a little girl, that my mother had never used make-up. My mind of course, interpreted that as make-up not being good, I shouldn’t use it. And I didn’t! Not until I got married! How we generalize and distort information. And when my daughters were growing up, I would always say – I never used make-up till I got married!! I had a rather jaundiced view of women who applied too much of make-up. Perhaps as someone too frivolous or superficial. Well - there’s a whole multi-billion dollar industry thriving even without my contributing to it but see where my thinking was coming from?

I catch myself now. It’s a small pattern, but I was carrying it forward. Really… the things we do.

I realised some more things. Our house was always like a guesthouse. Some one or the other was always staying with us. My dad never said ‘no’. So we had relatives from villages who were looking for jobs in Delhi or some who came to study or get married. We loved them all and looked after them to the best of our capability but we never said no! When I got married and moved to Mumbai, another metro – the story, of course, repeated. My friends would jokingly call
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my house as an ‘Inn’. It took a lot of effort to break this pattern and a loss of fair amount of relationships too. But learning to say “NO” and sticking to it was rather exhilarating!!

But this is not a fault finding exercise, because if you look back and think, how old were your parents when they had given birth to you? Definitely a lot younger than this generation. And they had recordings playing in their head… of their parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles! So the pattern continues. Till we see it and decide what we want to do with it.

So, quick check here to see if you realise which Ego states you mostly operate from. Also look around. See your colleagues, friends, peers. Notice their behaviours. Which ego state do they operate from primarily? Are they always critical or nurturing? Rational or free child like?

The beauty of knowing our ego states is also that it is in our hands to change the pattern, without any external hep.

The Second important key to effective communication is building in awareness of self and the others around us. Only then can we resonate with them or handle them in an appropriate manner

Transactions

Every word, nod, smile, a flicker of eyes with which a person recognizes the other is called a ‘Stroke’ in the language of Transactional Analysis. And a stroke is like a stimulus. We respond to it. Two or more strokes make a transaction.

A Transaction = stimulus + response

A transaction is the basic unit of social interaction.

At the simplest level Transactions can be parallel, crossed or ulterior.

A parallel or complementary transaction can take place between two similar ego states or between parent and child ego states and they can continue indefinitely i.e go on and on in the same vein.

Imagine this:

A colleague of yours has come in late to work. Your boss is furious. While he continues to shout at him, your colleague really doesn’t care. He is coolly answering him back in the same vein and
it really is like watching a critical Parent and a free Child engage in a slanging match. This will go on and on till they tire of it or when one of them changes tracks.

Imagine two Parents, complaining about the state of education, blaming schools and the government. They can also keep on continuing to talk. This is yet another complementary transaction.

Or an angry Child with a nurturing Parent.

The ego state being addressed to is the one which is responding. Hence the transaction will continue, because it is open. The response is the expected one.
They will keep agreeing and continue in the same vein,

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Transactions - Crossed
The response to the stimulus is unexpected. Communication breaks down or changes.

“What’s for dinner?”
“Stop bothering me!”

“Let’s have some fun!”
“Can’t you ever be serious?”

“Good morning. How are you?”
“I’m not feeling very well.”

Ref: Eric Berne (1975)

And the poor guy is going to think – What was that?!!!

Expecting an Adult interaction, instead gets a Child who is looking for comfort.
A crossed transaction

This occurs when the ego state addressed is not the one which is responding. The transaction is crossed and communication breaks down.

In the first situation, the stimulus is from an Adult state. ‘What’s for dinner?’ He gets an angry response from a critical Parent state. ‘Stop bothering me!’ Obviously, poor guy won’t know what has hit him. He’s baffled. Communication stops or is changed.

Similarly, in the 2nd. The stimulus is from a Child state. ‘Let us have some fun!’ but the response he gets is from a Parent state –‘Can’t you ever be serious?!!!'

Impact of a crossed transaction

It can be puzzling and a source of pain between people. Husband–wife, teacher–student, employer – employee etc. the person who initiated the response, doesn’t get it. He feels discounted and misunderstood. He would not know how to proceed further.

Ulterior Transactions

While the first two are open and direct, ulterior transactions are very complex. They involve more than two ego states. Superficially the transaction is a social one but at a psychological level it is saying something else.

Imagine, that as a student, you go to buy a pen. The skilled salesman, purposely doesn’t show you the one you want to see. He keeps saying it is outside your budget. And all your three ego states are listening. If the Adult responds, it would be something like “You are right. I can’t afford it, show me something else,”

But if your Child state jumps in to respond, it would be a lot like “I will show you! I am going to buy this only!”and at the superficial level, the transaction will continue. The salesman has got the response he was looking for.

Ulterior transactions are really the “Games People play” – another book by Eric Berne which helps people understand the dynamics of relationships and the games they play, in the workplace, in the bedroom or even when they are not aware of it.
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Transactions – Ulterior

An ulterior message is sent disguised as a socially acceptable stimulus.

“How did you like my report?”
(It wasn’t very good, was it?)

“Would you like to come in for coffee?”
(I want to be alone with you.)

“This is our top item, but probably out of your budget.”
(I’ll shame you into buying this.)

“it was okay.”
(I didn’t like it much.)

“Yes, I’d love some coffee.”
(I want to be alone with you, too.)

“I’ll take it!”

Ref: Eric Berne (1975)
STROKES

The biological and psychological need and necessity for recognition, between birth and death. From the time of his birth, till his death, a man is driven by the need for recognition – a physical touch or assurance that recognises his presence or even a verbal or non-verbal one. Sometimes even a nod can be enough. This recognition is given by what is called as “Strokes”...strokes can be actual physical touch or some symbolic form of recognition which says –“I know you are there.”

Imagine this little baby. What is the first response when one sees him cry? And imagine further, that nobody picks him. What then? He cries himself to sleep. The next time too there is nobody to pick him up. He is already forming decisions in his mind that the world is not OK (nobody loves him) and he also is not OK. The next time he will cry a little less. Till eventually he will learn not to cry. But research says that children who are not picked up or touched or cuddled – their spines shrivel up. Growth is stunted.

People’s hunger for strokes determines what they do with their time. They might spend minutes, hours or a lifetime playing psychological games in order to get strokes or the reverse – minutes, hours or a lifetime spent avoiding strokes.

Strokes can be

- Physical – a hug, a pat, an embrace, a touch
- Verbal – words of appreciation, shouts, scream, compliment, insult
- Non-verbal – a nod, smile, gestures, frown
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Positive or Negative

- A positive stroke is one which the receiver experiences as pleasant.
- A negative stroke is one experienced as painful.
- Any kind of stroke is better than no stroke at all.

Strokes can be conditional or unconditional.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive conditional</th>
<th>Positive unconditional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approval for doing something. We need to earn these strokes.</td>
<td>Acceptance for who we are. We receive these strokes without having to earn them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ve strokes for DOING</td>
<td>+ve strokes for BEING</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative conditional</th>
<th>Negative unconditional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disapproval of what we have done. Constructive criticism – we can learn from this</td>
<td>Rejection of me as a person. This stroke implies I-U-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ve strokes for DOING</td>
<td>-ve stroke for BEING</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Positive conditional:
I will promote you if you work hard

Positive unconditional:
I love you

Negative conditional:
I don’t like you when you answer me back

Negative unconditional:
I hate you
**Walk the talk – Effective Communication**

**POSITIVE STROKES:**

- Make us feel loved, appreciated and wanted
- They make us feel good, alive, alert and significant
- They are an expression of affection
- It gives us information about our competencies
- Makes us more aware of our skills and resources

A kiss

A Smile
Walk the talk - Effective Communication

Appreciation

Listening

A Pat
NEGATIVE STROKES AND DISCOUNTING

- A discount is a lack of attention or negative attention
- Ignoring, teasing, humiliating, degrading
- They create painful relationships which lead nowhere
- When children and infants are discounted – it affects their healthy development

No strokes: indifference

Do you remember the naughtiest kids in class? They misbehaved so they could get some form of attention. Even negative attention would do. But if you ignored them even then, it was the
worse thing ever. To not have your presence acknowledged is even worse than getting negative strokes.

I recall an experiment conducted with mice. There were two tunnels leading up to a piece of cheese. When the mice travelled through one, they would get electric shocks while as they travelled through the other, they could just go, have the cheese and come back. Over time, it was found that the mice eventually preferred the one with shocks as compared to the other. Some stimulus was required.

Imagine walking in to work. Everybody ignores you. No responses to your greetings. You are not part of any group or the coffee gatherings. The feeling of isolation and desolation is unparalleled.

The most hardened of criminals are shut away in solitude, in total darkness. Such isolation leads to emotional, intellectual and physical deterioration.

**Plastic Strokes**

A comment like ‘Yeah! I like your sweater,’ but said with a disapproving look is an ulterior transaction. It conveys a negative stroke through an ulterior transaction.

**Internal Strokes**

These are some happy memories or some appreciation we may have received which we like to bring to our minds and feel the same pleasure again. Of course, over time, it loses its power and has to be re-inforced again.

**Look at your own pattern of strokes. Answer the following questions**

- What kind of strokes do you usually give?
- Positive or negative? Conditional or unconditional? Are you comfortable complimenting someone, spontaneously? Do you give an appreciative pat easily? Or is it easier for you find fault and disapprove?
- How often do you accept strokes? Do you brush away compliments by saying – oh! It was nothing. Do you put yourself down/ do you acknowledge with a thanks?
- How often do you reject strokes? Someone said something to us when we were eleven years old. It took away your feeling of self-worth. You always carried it with you feeling
no good as compared to another. Do you reject strokes or do you carry them with you for years and years?

- How often do you refuse to give strokes expected from you? You know someone is unhappy. You refuse to acknowledge that because you are uncomfortable dealing with emotions. So you are unable to give a hug or a comforting word. You ignore and carry on as if nothing has happened.

- What stops you?
- What is it that you can change here? Do you realise how you are impacting someone else?

The Stroke Economy.

Claude Steiner, first talked of the ‘The Stroke Economy”. The “kanjoosi” of strokes.

In simple words it means that in today’s world because of our own internal critical Parent as well as social restrictions, there is a scarcity of positive strokes.

In conditions of stroke economy people:

Don’t give strokes you would like to give: Many a times at the very first instance we want to share something positive about someone, but we don’t for fear of how we may get interpreted.

Don’t ask for strokes you would like to get: ever called up someone to come and have a cup of tea with you? or just for a hug?

Don’t accept strokes you would like to accept: Ah! A big problem! We are so uncomfortable here. We just don’t know how to take it and sometimes we are sceptical too. We can’t believe it is for real.

Don’t reject strokes you don’t want: the baggage we carry. Someone said something to us or behaved in a certain way. We didn’t like it. But we didn’t stop it, yet, we don’t forget it and keep it close to our hearts and feel bad over it for a long time, instead of just unhooking ourselves from it.
Don’t give yourself strokes: Can we just look at ourselves in the mirror and find something good in us? Or do we just list the flaws and beat ourselves for the things we didn’t do? or for not being perfect?

We are too worried about looking foolish, needy, sensitive or sentimental. I could think of so many reasons why I have a problem accepting positive strokes. And there would be very few people I would ask for strokes too. But having understood this whole hunger for strokes, I am more mindful of others’ needs for strokes though somehow still haven’t worked out my own.

I remember this gentleman sharing a story about his father. This guy was super-successful and would travel a lot. Whenever, he reached home, he would always find his elderly father waiting for him. Even though he would be really tired, he made it a point to go and spend a few minutes with the old man. The father would talk of random things, like soaps he had watched on TV or even the household help. But he needed those few seconds of interaction. Those were his maintenance strokes.

One day, the man was going on a trip abroad and as he was leaving, he rushed to say goodbye to his dad. In a moment of affection, he embraced the old man. And what he shared after that, shook me to the core. The old man didn’t know how to respond. His arms just hung there, in that embrace. This was a man, who lived through partition and built a home for his family in a new place. A man who grew up without a mother’s love. No one to kiss his hurts when he fell. No one to appreciate him when he did well. He didn’t know how to respond.

There is always a story behind our stroke pattern.

http://www.claudesteiner.com/fuzzy.htm

A beautiful story to illustrate what happens when we stop giving strokes.

In a lot of our training programs, we get people in concentric circles and ask them to provide positive recognition to each other. We keep the outer circle moving, so everyone can say
something to everyone and in all the sessions that I have conducted, this easily vouches for one of the most touching exercises ever.

People who have sat side by side for years, have never communicated beyond the bare minimum. While initially there is hesitancy and shyness and a fair amount of endearing awkwardness, I am often told that they learnt something about themselves they never knew. Further, the energy in the room is palpable. It changes the entire complexion. Just one positive stroke, between people who haven’t really communicated and it is a miracle!

So just skimming the surface with Transactional Analysis brought us face to face with

- With which Ego states we tend to operate from and
- The pattern of our strokes

“Effective Communication Skills’ can never be a cosmetic exercise. The words are superficial. The entire behaviour has a story to it. Each one of us has a story, a script to which we perform. Because that’s what got recorded and that is what plays in our head.

Till we decide to change it.

4 barriers to communication

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”
George Bernard Shaw

Ever been misunderstood? Ever had your instructions mis-interpreted? Or your intentions turned around on their head? What is the feeling like? How do you deal with the frustration?
Instead of going into damage control, it makes sense to ensure that the message you are sending across is crystal clear, unambiguous and concise.

Some barriers to communication to be mindful of:

1. Perceptions

We don’t see things as they are, we see them as we are.

We are walking talking recorders with a lot of perceptions playing in our minds.

Perception is the process of selecting, organising and interpreting data.

As we go through our daily lives we perceive all sorts of people and objects, and we often make sense of these perceptions by using **previous experiences** to help filter and organize the information we take in. Sometimes we encounter new or contradictory information that changes the way we think about a person, group, or object. The perceptions that we make of others and that others make of us affect how we communicate and act.

**Do you see an old woman or a young woman?**
This is an Image straight from Steven Covey’s ‘7 Habits of Highly Effective People’ and a representative how the same picture can show different things to different people. Some people can see a young girl while others can see an old lady.

**The map is not the territory**

**We take in information from all our senses**

- Visual
- Auditory
- Kinaesthetic (touch)
- Gustatory (Taste)
- Olfactory (smell)

But even when all our senses are in full working order, we tend to generalize, delete or distort some information because our senses can be selective. We are in contact with only our map of the territory.

We tend to select that stimuli which is visually or aurally stimulating or for that matter even something which interests us at that point of time to the extent of tuning out the rest of the information. for instance, if you are looking to buy a Hyundai car, chances are that suddenly you will see a number of Hyundais on the road. You will pay more attention to the Car Show room which has always been there, but now you begin to notice the Hyundai on display.

Perception involves a three fold process:

Selection – based on your preferences or needs

Organisation –of the sensory data in many ways.

For instance, **Law of proximity**. We tend to group objects which are close together as belonging together. Many a times, we assume someone to be of the same group, just because we perceive them as standing close together. How many times do you get asked at counter lines at stores, if you are with the person standing behind?

Our brain categorizes information for later retrieval and that is not such a bad thing at all. The problem in communication comes in when we colour our perceptions with our prejudices and stereotypes.
Walk the talk – Effective Communication

I had shared how my view of women, with more than regular make up is jaundiced. Simply because I grew up thinking it was bad. And well- I lost a contract with an agency to develop content for them because they were all about building the right image and using make-up and dressing up is a part of it. Something I recognise as vital, since we are going to devote a session on it!! But this is a perception I worked hard to break. My objection was to the focus being on the exterior only but like I said – there is a huge industry thriving out there and there must be something to it. My perception cost me a big contract

Interpretation: Interpretation and organisation sometimes happen simultaneously.
Interpretation happens according to our schema of things. The lense we wear because of our childhood, our memories and culture. So information gets filtered through that.

Count the F’s in the sentence below:
FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY COMBINED WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF YEARS.

Grammarly.com

There are six but our brains are trained to overlook ‘of’ so we end up seeing only three or four.

Are the horizontal lines parallel or do they slope?
Generalisation

A girl who is bitten by a dog, will generalise her experience. She will be scared of dogs and always assume that dogs are wicked. Or someone who has been let down by a boyfriend, will generalise here too and assume that all men are mean.

**Deletion:** Many a times when we are working at home, inspite of the noise of children playing, TV in the background, sounds of cooking in the kitchen, we continue, having deleted these sounds to focus on the task in hand.

**Distortion:** a shift in the process of how we view sensory data. A novel or a movie is an example of how we distort and misrepresent reality. Imagine, when you give a talk and you think it went quite well, not realising that you spoke and repeated your point so many times, nobody had any questions to ask you. They just wanted it over. But you might believe that it went off very well. That’s again a distortion.

Our mind learns what it wants to see from infancy itself. Babies from a very young age, prefer to see and hear their mother from any other stranger. They are drawn towards female care givers if they have been primarily looked after by their mothers. They will recognise people of their own race first.

**There is a book called ‘Blindspot’ which talks of hidden biases of people.**

They quote a study of how a mock trial can get affected by the memory biases of the Jury. They give the example of a Mr Sanders who has been accused of drunken driving and colliding with a garbage truck. Testimony is presented and just before that two groups of the jury are presented with the following different descriptions of Mr Sanders’ behaviour at a party just before the accident.

1. On his way out, Sanders staggered against a serving table, knocking a bowl to the ground
2. On his way out, Sanders staggered against a serving table, knocking a bowl of guacamole dip on the floor and splattering it against the white carpet. (the dip is green in colour)

Funnily, this additional information should have had no effect on the jury’s decision but surprisingly those who heard the additional detail about the dip splattering on the white carpet, were more likely to pronounce Sanders guilty even without being aware of it. The vividness of the description made it more available to the memory of the jury. This is an unconscious bias.
Think of how many we have when we deal with people. We are full of them and most of the time we don’t even realise it. These biases and perceptions make us communicate in a different manner.

2. Prejudices and Stereotypes

Stereotyping is the process of creating a picture of a whole culture, over generalizing all people belonging to the same culture as having similar characteristics and categorizing people accordingly. It is a belief about a certain group and is mostly negative.

Stereotyping can be done on the basis of many things like nationality, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, age, etc.

In our own country, we have so many jokes and stereotypes of Sikhs, Biharis, South Indians. We come fixated in our minds, based on our exposure.

Just this morning at the gym, a gentleman wanted to know which part of the country I was from. When I said Bihar, he was surprised, going on to say I didn’t sound like one. I asked him, what did they usually sound like? Just because we all can’t sound like Laloo Yadav, that doesn’t makes us any less Bihari. Well! I was just needling him a bit. Having gone through this gamut so many times in Delhi University. But it is a very real prejudice. And one which irritates me no end.

Sometimes it can be positive too. For instance, it is believed that students from India are good at maths.

3. Physiological Barriers

These can be because of the physical state of the human body and if there is any disability or disease or ailments, of either the receiver or the sender, it affects communication.

If someone uses a hearing aid, or if they stutter or stammer while speaking or if someone has been unwell for some time, he or she may not be open to communication. When the body and mind is fatigued, or in some kind of emotional shock or trauma, chances are perception is very selective and interpretation is low. One is in no state to communicate.
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4. Cultural Barriers

A visit to the local markets and watch the salesman, hiking up prices as they deal with foreign customers, specially whites. See the tone and body language used towards Black Africans. It is there is thread of our society. And we are discriminated against too. Indians are famous for not being able to say no. which actually creates a problem with cultures like Germany which are used to very direct forms of communication.

Then look at our propensity for using extreme formal language. The Yes Sirs and Ma’ams. I had a strange conversation with a German lady who is currently working with a Public corporation in Mumbai. She described how a birthday cake came in for one of the leaders and was addressed as “Nikhil Sir” - on the cake! She wanted to know why the first name coupled with a Sir!

In an ever shrinking world cultural barriers are bound to crop up. Different places have different ways of doing things but the end all is that work has to be done. So collaboration is a must and so is understanding of our own culture vis a vis the others we deal with in order to overcome any barriers.

5 steps to communicating effectively

The importance of communication skills comes through from the fact that it is the very basic skills on which other skills are based. It is the fertile ground or the foundation place. Look at it this way. Great leadership, Negotiation, Emotional Intelligence. Presentation. Conflict
Management. All of these build up on communication skills. It is what takes you from the realm of ordinary to the extra-ordinary.

1. **Situational and Contextual awareness**

The 6 friends of Communication:

Who  
When  
Where  
Why  
What  
How  

**Who** – you are speaking to. A Boss or a colleague, Senior or a Peer. An individual or in a group. At a meeting or one on one.

**When** – the timing is crucial. Because once the words have left the quiver, there is no retracing them. Our mythology supports us on this one. Draupadi’s ill-timed laughter and poking of fun when Duryodhana fell into water in the “Palace of Illusions” is marked as the key incident which eventually led to the war of Kurukshetra.

Wrong Timing!
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A lack of spontaneity can also become an issue. What you want to say may actually have very little relevance if not conveyed in time.

**Where:** Make a note of the little things around you when you are in someone’s office. They reveal tiny details about the person inhabiting it. His love for books, plants, quotes, family, tidiness, organised or a messy procrastinator

**Why:** the reason you are engaging with is person. Have the end objective in mind. What is it that you want him to do? Do you want him to agree to your proposal, support you or are you there just to inform. Be clear on this. Then learn to flex your communication style so as to get what you want.

**What:** the ‘what’ is critical as much as the ‘How’

Even though nowadays people say it isn’t the ‘what’ which is important but ‘How’ you say it, believe me – if the what is not crystal clear, ‘how’ doesn’t make a difference. Get total clarity on the technicality of what you are saying. Google and research. Be knowledgeable about your topic. Be aware of the context in which you are speaking. “In this world of information, ignorance is a choice”.

2. It is not about you

As usual. People listen to you because of WIIFM

Focus on leaving them with your ideas and vision but aligned to their expectations. So practice at being adept, gather information with all your senses as you speak and stay flexible.

3. Listen Actively

Listening actively is the best positive stroke you can give someone. Listening to another’s point of view, without mentally plotting your response to whatever is being said to you, leaning forward and giving the person all your attention is a wonderful way of ensuring that the other person feels connected and will want to share his or her concerns with you.
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Very often we forget to listen actively. We flip through our phones while someone is speaking, we look through the papers or just cut him through to get out point across. All enough to put the other person off and feel discounted. Sometimes, we manage the eye contact well, but the mind is far away.

Listening is an easy skill to fake. Because a polite smile, engaged body language and encouraging tone can be worked on but the value in the communication is lost, if the mind has wandered away because we lose track of the real intent of the conversation.

https://www.themuse.com/advice/7-habits-that'll-make-you-a-better-listener-and-not-the-person-who-always-needs-everything-repeated

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSohjiYQI2A – a fantastic Ted Talk on Listening by Julian Treasure where he talks of connecting with people through listening.

RASA – Julian talks of an acronym RASA (the Sanskrit word which means Juice or essence) which stands

For

R - receiving
A - appreciate
S - summarizing
A - Ask

The essence of Listening. There are several key skills all active listeners share:

• They pay attention to others.

• They hold judgment.

• They reflect by paraphrasing information. They may say something like “What I hear you saying is . . .”

• They clarify if they don’t understand what was said, like “What are your thoughts on . . .” or “I don’t quite understand what you are saying, could you repeat that . . .”

• They summarize, giving a brief restatement on what they just heard.

• They share. They are active participants in the dialogue by saying, for example, “That sounds like something I went through.”
Listening can only happen when you are silent. Silent and present in the Here and Now.

Try these three simple exercises to hone your listening skills:

1. Sit with both your feet touching the floor flat. Place your palm upwards. Close your eyes and just breathe. Pay attention to all the sounds around you. The hum of the fans. The sounds of birds outside. The distant sounds of traffic. The quiet drone of conversation from another cabin. Listen.

2. Sit with a partner. Listen to him talk. Keep still and stay focussed on him or her. Notice the pattern of his breathing. The movement of his eyes and gestures. Listen to the tones and ups and downs in his voice. Actually listen.

3. Sit the way you were sitting in the first exercise. Listen to this audio from Sounds of Isha. While you do that, just focus on the music, drowning out any other thoughts or sounds around you.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZtihFRxK28&list=PLd1t7W2ShsB9JLEZ5ERuWjVPbodxq8YI7

The experience is a rejuvenating one.

*Listening wires you for connection whether it is with music or with people.*

**4. Empathy**

“To effectively communicate, we must realise that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.”

- Tony Robbins

The best way I can explain Empathy is for you to first take your shoes off.

Empathy is walking in another’s shoes, understanding what he or she feels, without judgement, without prejudice. It is a rational cognitive awareness of what the other is feeling. Empathy can be emotional too, when you can actually begin to feel what the other is feeling.

Empathetic communicators make for great leaders
Walk the talk – Effective Communication

- They can understand the perspective of the other, without casting any judgement
- They are tuned in to others feelings, dreams
- They are sensitive to signs of over work or stress
- They are eager to help others cope with any personal loss

Steps to become more empathetic:

1. Tune into the frequency of others
   - Reduce your own volume. Make it less about you and more of the other

Mirror image

- They can understand the perspective of the other, without casting any judgement
- They are tuned in to others feelings, dreams
- They are sensitive to signs of over work or stress
- They are eager to help others cope with any personal loss
**Walk the talk – Effective Communication**

**Mirroring** is the behaviour in which one person subconsciously imitates the gesture, speech pattern, or attitude of another. Mirroring often occurs in social situations, particularly in the company of close friends or family.

If you are with someone comfortable, your body subconsciously mirrors them. Mirroring can establish rapport with the individual who is being mirrored, as the similarities in nonverbal gestures allow the individual to feel more connected with the person exhibiting the mirrored behavior.\[3\]

Empathy is walking into another’s shoes. Feeling what he is feeling

http://www.wsj.com/articles/why-you-should-have-more-empathy-1462210724

http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/empathy/definition - a very detailed read on how empathy builds relations.

But where pictures speak a thousand words …here is a clip from the movie “ Lage raho Munnabhai”. To best explain the power of Empathy in building relations

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9b04PIVrxIQ

**5. Be Specific: Who does what and by when**

Before you end a dialogue, just as you ask or paraphrase to ensure that you understood them, at the end of a conversation it also pays to be specific.

Merely to re-iterate as worded very nicely in the book “Crucial Conversations” after all the effort that has gone into conveying your messages, it should be clear as to:
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- **Who does what**: what was the objective. Name the people and what action they are required to do in clear terms. The deliverables need to very well defined
- **By when**: fix timelines and deadlines
- **And how will you follow up**: the authors for “Crucial Conversations” says you should build this in the conversation. By what date can you expect something? Will you get a respond by mail or by a call? Specify upfront, so there are no surprises and unpleasantness

**Developing an Assertive presence**

"March Hare: ...Then you should say what you mean. Alice: I do; at least - at least I mean what I say -- that's the same thing, you know."

Alice in Wonderland

**ASSERTIVENESS QUESTIONNAIRE**

YES OR NO

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<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Do you buy things you don't really want because it is hard for you to say no to the sales person?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>When a sales person shows you things, do you feel you must by something?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Do you have difficulty in starting a conversation with a stranger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Do you find it difficult to criticize a friend?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Do you find it difficult to compliment a friend?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Do you feel self-conscious when somebody compliments you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Do you think you are being exploited or pushed around?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Do you find it difficult to ask a Q-breaker to join the Q?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Do you feel dissatisfied with your social life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Do you have trouble asking favors of a friend?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Do you get &quot;I should have said that&quot; kind of thoughts after social meeting?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do you have difficulty in saying no to a friend even when he is making an unreasonable request?

Do you think people find you boring?

Do you have trouble expressing your tender and angry feelings to men?

Do you trouble expressing your tender and angry feeling to women?

Do you have trouble asking for an overdue increment?

Do you find it difficult to speak in public?

Do you have fear of failure?

Do you feel uncomfortable when you are being watched while at work?

Do you think that you are always wrong?

Are you afraid of making mistakes?

Are you always defensive when you are being criticized?

Do you have trouble in maintaining relationships with relatives or friends?

Do you feel dissatisfied with your vocation?

If you have 4 or less yeses in all honesty, then you can consider yourself an Assertive Personality.

There are essentially 4 personality types according to the way they communicate.

- **Passive** – (lose-win). The one who doesn’t value himself enough. I am always reminded of those lowly paid long suffering people who work in offices in the old hindi movies, who are almost bent forward, humble, yes –man. The one who is stuck with all the files to work through, even though it is his child’s birthday and he can’t muster up the courage to tell his boss that. (The Adapted child)

- **Assertive** – (win-win) – This one brings Ajay Devgan to mind and the kind of roles he tends to play. Quiet, firm, aware of his self-worth, will not give in to injustice and yet at the same time, not put down the other too. He was never scared of saying ‘No’. (Adult)
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- **Aggressive** – (win-lose) – this one is the Salman Khan of Dabang fame. The aggression, the body language, the shirt-less avatar. The my way or the high way kind of person. The one who wins by putting the other down and if he is losing, he will make sure you lose too! (Critical Parent)

- **Passive Aggressive** – who superficially goes along with you but internally feels the opposite. This one would be me for a major part of my life! I gave in to the most weird demands even though inside I would be seething, just because I didn’t want to look bad or I wanted to look good. Same story. And if you actually think about it – that is the underlying reason behind all our behaviours. We want to look good in the eyes of our friends, colleagues, peers and so we don’t say ‘NO’ when we want to. There is no directness in our communication and we manage to frustrate everyone, including ourselves. (largely Adapted Child)

Wikipedia describes it as “**Passive-aggressive behavior** is the indirect expression of hostility, such as through procrastination, stubbornness, sullen behavior, or deliberate or repeated failure to accomplish requested tasks for which one is (often explicitly) responsible.

Passive Aggressives are not easy to identify. They come from the High Adapted child state. The one which is manipulative, sullen, will not speak outright and carry a lot of baggage within.
Walk the talk – Effective Communication

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fr dqH4kMS1I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PASSIVE</th>
<th>ASSERTIVE</th>
<th>AGGRESSIVE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FLIGHT</td>
<td></td>
<td>FIGHT</td>
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Our behaviours shift across the continuum

http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/communication.htm - A description of different styles of communication/behaviour

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YwhzdW0hjLk

From 7:01 the video goes silent. You will get to see a good example of aggressive/assertive communication plus also the accompanying body language

You cannot teach a man anything, you can only help him find it within himself.

~ Galileo Galilei

The book “Born to Win” begins with a chapter on Losers and winners.

It describes Winners, not as achievers but the authentic ones. Those who were genuine, trustworthy, lived in the moment and strived to be true to themselves and their values. They did not delight in other’s losses but helped other grow as well...secure and comfortable in their own space. Winners did not manipulate or deceive.
Walk the talk – Effective Communication

This session was dedicated to making a start to finding ourselves right from seeing the patterns to our behaviour, the way we offered recognition to others to our own relationship with ourselves in a bid to become Effective, Assertive communicators.

Being Assertive, is just that. It is learning to value ourselves first, without putting anyone else down. And being assertive, is not easy. We constantly battle with our inner devil to look good in all relationships, failing in the most important one, the one we have with ourselves.

But if one actually thinks, at the end of the day, when we are buried or burnt, six feet above or below the ground, and when the 15 minute of mandatory mourning by the people in white is done – it bears to reflect – who did we live for? Were we true to ourselves?

5 tips to becoming assertive

1. Break your pattern: Analyse what makes you say a “yes” when you actually want to say ‘NO’. why are you not giving enough value to yourself? Where does that come from? What will happen if you actually say a firm ‘no’?

2. Think win-win: It is not about putting someone else down. It is about taking a stand and sticking to it.

A close friend works as a primary School Head. Very well educated and financially very sound, she doesn’t need the job at all. She works because she loves being around the little ones. She has no reason to take any kind of nonsense from anyone at work. The most gentle and kind of human beings, I see her always putting in extra hours. Taking on other teachers’ duties and filling in for others even at the cost of personal health. Why doesn’t she refuse? I wonder at that.

3. Say NO like a stuck record: there are people who manipulate you into doing something for them just because it is convenient for them. For instance, this colleague who wants you to pick up her son, even though you know you aren’t going back home that day after taking your kids from the day –care. Start by saying NO. Give a reason if it makes you feel better because you have never said NO so far. Continue to say No as many times as she asks. “I am sorry it is just not convenient today.’ And if she has no shame in asking a number of times, neither should you in refusing a number of times..

4. Say how you feel – stop them in their tracks. Calmly and assertively, say you feel frustrated when someone hands work at the last minute, just as you were about to leave.
5. **Suggest Alternatives if you like** – if you are looking to still maintain relationships with people who manipulate then you could suggest alternatives to resolve the issue but then remember to stick to your ground

Being straightforward

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kUshnpxYnE

It is actually great being straightforward!!  

Not easy, but once you get there, you can’t come back.

**How to communicate assertively**


The journey to being assertive is not easy. But then it is a choice that we make, of valuing ourselves more and then standing by our commitment to ourselves first, before we commit to others. **It is a choice to walk the talk. To say what we mean and mean what we say.**

I would like to end with the story of Victor Frankl.

Victor Frank was an Austrian Neurologist, Psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor. While his entire family was taken to the concentration camps, (1942- 45) only he and his sister survived the horrors of those years, while the rest of his family perished.

In the midst of those extreme sufferings, Frankl would allow his mind to roam, in his class rooms, in the laughter of his students and he came to realise that even when everything can be taken away, the ultimate freedom which belongs to a man – his Attitude, remains with him. Nobody can take away that. He alone decides and chooses what and how he wants to be.
Walk the talk – Effective Communication

In Transactional Analysis, it is said that every Transaction is a combination of a stimulus and our response to it.

With Victor’s words, we learn something more. There is a gap between the stimulus (which is not in our control) and our response to it (which is in our control). It is in that gap, in that fraction of time that we choose how to behave. It is that gap which defines our Attitude and our moment of freedom.

“Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose. In our choice lies our growth and freedom.”

~ Viktor E. Frankl

WE can choose to be Assertive, we can choose to be winners!
Additional readings and bibliography

http://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/a-primer-on-communication-studies/s02-communication-and-perception.html

Mind with a Heart - Richard P Mc Hugh

Born to Win – Muriel James and Dorothy Jongeward

Blind Spot – Mahzain R Banaji, Anthony G Greenwald

Crucial Conversations – Patterson, Grenny, Mc Millan, Switzler

The 7 habits of Highly Effective People – Steven Covey


https://hbr.org/2015/07/figure-out-your-managers-communication-style

https://hbr.org/webinar/2014/09/5-essential-communications-skills-to-catapult-your-career