

10 Tips for Better Communication

Brian Tracy, US peak performance and sales expert, says that our ability to communicate with others accounts for 85% of our success. Even people in technical fields, such as IT, engineering or accounting, spend 75% of their time interacting with other people. He goes on to say that all the top executives who've been interviewed have said that their ability to communicate well with others is more responsible for their success than anything else.

The good news is, communication is a learned skill. We can all get better and better at it by learning what great communicators do and practising and practising these skills until they become a part of our repertoire.

If you'd like to become a better communicator, here are 10 things Brian Tracy suggests you need to know and do:

1. The three parts to any conversation:

According to Aristotle, the first part of a conversation is 'ethos'. 'Ethos' has to do with the character of a person. Emerson said, *'What you are shouting at me so loudly, I can't hear a word you're saying.'* Character determines credibility and believability. A person with high character, like Mother Teresa, can say very little, yet be enormously influential. 'Pathos' is the second part of a conversation and means connecting with emotions. We do this when we tune in and focus on the person we're communicating with and their problems and needs. The third part is 'logos' which is the factual part of the conversation and is often the least important part. Until you have established character and connected with the emotions of the other person, the words you say are really not relevant.

2. The three elements of any conversation:

Albert Marabian, a social sciences professor from UCLA, says words only account for 7% of the message in any conversation. The tone of voice accounts for 38%, whilst body language accounts for 55% of our communication. The rule is, people believe the dominant message that comes from our body language and tone of voice. The very best messages are those that are synchronised - the words, tone of voice and body language are all synchronised to the message. This is why it's very important that when someone talks to you, you face them directly, listen closely to what they're saying and nod and pay attention. When you talk to small children, get down to their eye level. It's so immensely different for a child.

For more coaching tips and strategies to help you achieve your goals and create and live the life you've always wanted, as well as information on one-to-one and group coaching to help you get there, visit www.blueskycoaching.com.au or contact Tania below.

3. The four basic personality styles:

Personality styles can be divided into four quadrants based on two spectrums. The first spectrum is indirect communicators versus direct communicators, and the second is people-orientation versus task-orientation types. **The first personality style** includes people who are high on people orientation and are indirect communicators and described as relators or supporters. They're sympathetic and accommodating, quiet, self-contained, not expressive, very sensitive, very concerned about other people's opinions and, in the extreme, can be hypersensitive to the opinions of others. If you're communicating with this person, they require a slow, low key, friendly, warm approach. Be patient with and don't push these people into making decisions - they need a lot of contemplation time. Their primary concern in life is, 'let's get along; let's all be friends.' They're really pained if there is any kind of friction among people. **The second type** of person is also an indirect communicator, but very task oriented rather than people oriented and often described as an analyser or administrator. They are precise and reserved. Their primary concern is 'let's be accurate'. At the extreme, these people can be uncommunicative and very meticulous and picky about every detail. These people often gravitate to fields of work such as IT, engineering or accounting, where facts or numbers are concerned and there are problems to solve that don't talk back! **The third type** is often referred to as the director or the driver. They are outgoing, direct communicators and task oriented. They are impatient, make quick decisions and they don't need a lot of detail - they're the ones that read the summaries of the summaries - and their concern is 'let's get results.' In the extreme, they are dictators, angry, directive, short-tempered and have no patience at all. Don't waste time with this person, get to the point fast. And the **fourth type** is the socialiser, also known as the promoter or executive. These people are outgoing, direct and very people oriented. Their primary motivation is achievement with and through other people. They're very integrated because they have both a strong focus on people as well as on getting things done. We are all in one, or a combination of, these quadrants. The mistake many people make is that they treat everyone they meet as though everyone else is the same way they are. However, no matter what personality style you are, over 50% of the people you meet are something else! By the way, whatever style you are, the person you are most ideal for, whether it be a business or life partner, will be the opposite to you. Nature demands balance in temperament and that the opposite person in your relationship be temperamentally balanced with you. **If you'd like to learn more about your personality style, I'd be happy to help you. I use a tool with my clients called MyProfile to do this.** For the record, my personality style is a combination of the last two and Rick's is a combination of the first two. Interesting!

4. Ask powerful questions:

One of the keys to good communication is that you ask powerful questions and listen carefully to the answers. Ask open-ended questions starting with pronouns, like 'what', 'when', 'who', 'how' and 'why' - that can't be answered with a 'yes' or 'no', to open up dialogue. Ask closed questions, to bring a conversation to a close. These questions will start with a verb, like 'are', 'is' or 'have'. Finally, use preference questions to give a person a choice. People love having choices, so ask them, 'Which would you prefer? This or that?' 'Which of these would be better for you?' Giving people choices makes it much easier for them to make decisions, because people don't like to have only one option.

For more coaching tips and strategies to help you achieve your goals and create and live the life you've always wanted, as well as information on one-to-one and group coaching to help you get there, visit www.blueskycoaching.com.au or contact Tania below.

5. Aim for a balanced dialogue:

This means not monopolising a conversation. The very best conversations are those that have an ebb and a flow like the tide, back and forth.

6. Acknowledge and agree:

In good conversations, people acknowledge and agree twice as often. Good conversationalists are active conversationalists. They're present and engaging, not sitting there passively like a fence post.

7. Engage in active listening:

This is very important for good relationships. Put down the paper or magazine, turn off the TV and really be there the whole time.

8. Seek to understand first, then to be understood:

Some people are shy. One way to overcome this is by tuning in to the other person, asking them questions and then listening. Don't be preoccupied about what the other person is thinking about you. Instead, focus on encouraging them to talk about themselves. The more other people are talking about themselves, the more they'll like you and feel understood.

9. Build trust:

Listening builds trust, the foundation of all good relationships. The more you listen, the more a person will trust you. The more a person trusts you, the more they will like you. Also, pause before replying. When you pause before replying, it raises the self-esteem of the other person because it tells them that you are carefully considering what they've said as well as your reply, rather than just jumping in.

10. Question for clarification:

Always ask, 'That's interesting. How do you mean, exactly?' Then practice listening to their answer and feeding it back, paraphrasing it in your own words. When you can paraphrase what a person has said to you, it proves to them that you were really listening and will make them feel truly understood.

For more coaching tips and strategies to help you achieve your goals and create and live the life you've always wanted, as well as information on one-to-one and group coaching to help you get there, visit www.blueskycoaching.com.au or contact Tania below.