

Key Communication Pointers

I truly believe that **how** we choose to communicate something is as important (or more important) than **what** we choose to communicate. Therefore, it is very important before speaking to be mindful of what our **intention** is, and what our ultimate goal is, in order to present our thoughts and feelings in such a way that we create a **win/win** scenario for both ourselves, and the person we're talking to. By **win/win**, I mean the person talking wants to make him or herself understood, without imposing his thoughts and feelings onto the listener. His ultimate goal is the following: "**UNDERSTAND ME**"!!

Before speaking, it is important to ask ourselves the following question: "What am I hoping to achieve by sharing my thoughts and feelings in the first place?" "What is my **intention**?" Am I intending to shame, ridicule, intimidate, mock, judge, or malign someone else? Am I hoping to debate that person, and ultimately prove that I am right and that he or she is wrong? Am I looking to incite that person, in the hopes of engaging him or her in a war of words? If these are our intentions before entering into a conversation with someone else, chances are we will only say things that we will regret, and make matters worse for ourselves and for our relationship.

I believe that good, effective communicators know to keep their mouths shut when they are feeling tempted to lash out at others with bad intentions, and say things that they will later regret. These self-disciplined individuals wait until they are feeling more calm and rational before choosing to speak their minds. And when they finally do communicate with someone else, they enter into the conversation intending to **relate** their thoughts and feelings in a way that is **intended** to be constructive.

The root word in "**Relationships**" is "**Relate**", and this is likely because "**relationships**" thrive or die based on how we relate to others. And how we choose to relate to others is entirely up to us. For example, if two people disagree, than they can choose to agree to disagree!! They can choose to remember that another person's subjective reality, or subjective worldview, need not threaten their own. They can also keep in mind that differing world views, perceptions, and/or opinions need not be mutually exclusive. They can coexist in harmony with the other, can't they?!!

This does not mean that the listener must also **agree** with what we are saying. The listener **need not inherit** our point of view. Consequently, the listener need not feel threatened by our opposing point of view either!! Just because I insist the world is black doesn't **negate** or wash away your conviction that the world is white!! Therefore, you can welcome my different point of view with an open mind, and open heart.

We must remember that our perceptions, points of view, and beliefs are our very own. No one has the power to take our perceptions away from us. What's mine is mine, and what's yours is yours!! I can have my reality, you can have yours, and we can still chat away, openly sharing our thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Chances are that I'll learn something from you, and perhaps you'll learn something from me.

Additional Communication pointers:

1) Avoid black and white words like "**always**" and "**never**." More often than not there are **shades of gray**, and when we use words like "**always**" and "**never**", we sound absolutist, and/or rigid in our thinking. And this type of thinking sets us up to feel resentment towards others.

For example, I might be tempted to tell a friend that he is **never** on time, or **always** late. Such an accusatory internal dialogue will likely trigger angry feelings inside of me for this person. Yet Chances are I am forgetting the many times this friend has indeed been on time.

By making such an accusation, I am disqualifying the many times my friend has actually been punctual. In turn, he is liable to feel that his efforts in the past to be on time have been all but forgotten. He may subsequently feel disheartened, and may choose to stop coming by to see me all together.

2) Use "**I**" statements. More often than not people start their communications with others using the word, "**You**." For example, a person will say, "**you're** making me angry." Or they will say, "**You're** not hearing me." In these instances, the word, "**you**", puts people on their heels and may contribute to their feeling defensive. Moreover, the person speaking is not taking ownership of and/or responsibility for their own thoughts and feelings.

I personally believe that when people share their thoughts and feelings with others by starting with the word, "**I**," their chances of having these particular sentiments considered go up considerably. This is because they are taking **ownership** of their thoughts and feelings, and this in turn gives the listener enough personal space to consider and respond to what is being said.

Rather than become defensive, the listener will likely become more open-minded, and receptive to what is being said. Therefore, it would be in the speaker's best interest to say, "**I'm** feeling angry", in lieu of, "**you're** making me angry." And it would be in the speaker's best interest to say, "**I'm** not feeling heard," in lieu of "**you're** not hearing me."

One common mistake that people often make is when they begin each sentence with the phrase, "**I feel that**." For example, a person might say, "**I feel that** you're being selfish." Someone else might say, "**I feel that** sex shouldn't be taught in

schools." It is important to remember that an "**I feel**" statement is meant to precede an expression of feelings.

Statements that begin with, "**I feel that you**" generally defeat the whole purpose of sharing your **feelings** in the first place. For example, the statement, "**I feel that you're being selfish**" is really just another way of saying, "**You're** being selfish." It's a "**You**" statement masqueraded as an "**I**" statement, and so the addition of the word, "**feel**," in your statement serves no purpose whatsoever. Moreover, the statement, "**I feel that sex shouldn't be taught in schools**" is really just a poorly disguised way of sharing your opinion and/or judgment about whether or not sex should be taught in our schools. In this instance, I believe that you've fallen short of your goal yet again to share your personal thoughts and feelings with someone else.

3) Eliminate the word, "**should**," from your vocabulary. There is a saying in pop psychology, "**Don't should on yourself or on others.**" The word, "**should**," can feel shaming to people. Moreover, it has a self-righteous ring to it as well. For example, a person struggling with shedding pounds doesn't want to hear from someone else, "you **should** lose weight." An A student would rather not hear from his parents, "You **should** run for president of your class." In such instances, the well meaning feedback that is couched in the word, "**should**," will likely put off the person on the receiving end because nobody wishes to be told what to do in such a self-righteous, presumptuous manner.

In the first instance, the person may be may be thinking, "Who the hell are you to tell me to lose weight?" And in the next instance, the A student may be thinking, "Mom and Dad, don't tell me what I **should** and **shouldn't** be doing."

There are other ways to make recommendations to people without encroaching on that person's personal space and violating that person's psychic boundaries. In the first example, the well meaning friend could say to his overweight friend, "**I want to encourage you** to lose weight because being heavy could end up causing serious health problems for you in the long run." In this instance, the friend who is offering this potentially hurtful feedback sounds genuinely interested in his buddy's health, and well being. By offering up a reason for his concern, he sounds like he is speaking up for a valid reason, and coming from a loving place. He is making it clear that he is not intending to sit in judgment of his friend, and take a shot at his already low self-esteem.

As for the honor student's parents, they could say to their child, "I think it would be great if you decided to run for president of your class." This approach would likely sound far more encouraging to their child, and he or she will likely give their idea some careful thought and consideration.

4) When asking other's questions, do your best to avoid beginning your question with the word, "**why**". "**Why**" questions put people in their heads, and not in their

hearts. They also put people on their heels, and on the defensive. Finally, "**why**" questions get people thinking more pragmatically, and solution-focused, and their focus is no longer on their feelings, and being introspective.

Take, for example, the question, "**Why** are you late?" Or take the question, "**Why** are you feeling so sad?" Or take this last question, "**Why** don't you like me?" These questions come across as though the person being questioned is undergoing an interrogation!!

One way to ask the very same question in a way that allows the person responding to have more room to reflect is by beginning with the words, "**How come**" or "**What**." The question, "**How come** you're so late?" has a more inquisitive tone to it than that of an interrogation. The question, "**How come** you're feeling so sad?" has a rounder edge to it and affords the person being asked an opportunity to reflect and explore the roots of their sadness, rather than feel put upon to come up with a heady reason to explain away their sadness.

Additional examples of these kinds of questions that come to mind are, "**How come** you don't like me?" and "**What** about my behavior bothers you?" Again, questions asked in this vain implicitly give the person on the receiving end permission to explore his or her thoughts and feelings without feeling put upon to reflexively deny that such feelings exist in the first place.

In conclusion, do your best to remember when asking questions that the words, "**How**" and "**what**," give people the room they need to process for themselves what they are thinking and feeling. "**How**" and "**what**" questions inspire others to open up and share their thoughts and feelings in greater depth with you, and with more honesty.

5) Do your best to avoid saying that someone "**makes**" you feel or think one way or another. For example, "He **makes** me feel loved." Or "He **made** me angry." When used this way, the words "**makes**" and "**made**" respectively imply that someone other than yourself is responsible for the way you think and feel. In truth, no one can "**make**" you feel loved, or "**make**" you feel angry without your consent. When a person uses these words in this way, he or she sounds like a passive witness in his own life, a chance recipient of the good and bad that is up for grabs all around them, every day.

I believe that we are ultimately responsible for how we **choose** to feel and how we **choose** to receive information and feedback from others. We generally make **choices** to open our hearts and take in the love from those around us. Furthermore, we are responsible for choosing to react angrily when provoked by others. For example, a more empowered way to say how you feel around a loved one would be, "I **feel** loved by him." Said in this way, it is implied that you are the one who is letting in that person's love for you. Instead of saying, "He **made** me angry", take ownership of your feelings and say, "**I felt angry**" when he said or

did that." Said this way, it is implicitly understood once more that you are the person responsible for allowing yourself to feel triggered by someone else.

By the way, the world is filled with people who will make every effort to frustrate and anger you. These individuals may find some sadistic pleasure in seeing your face redden with anger. Perhaps baiting you in this way offers them a fleeting sense of power and control over you. Their ultimate goal is to lure you in, and catch you, hook, line, and sinker. Whether or not you **choose** to feel angry, and bite onto their dangling hook is entirely up to you.

This reminds me of some of the men I worked with when facilitating domestic violence groups some time ago. Many claimed that their girlfriends, wives, and children were the ones responsible for **making** them mad, and **making** them act violently towards them. A man might typically say, "She was complaining about everything, and **made** me feel angry as hell." "She kept on complaining for over an hour, and **made** me go over to her and slap her so she'd shut up."

I believe these guys were consciously and sometimes unconsciously manipulating their choice of words to avoid taking responsibility for their actions, and simultaneously projecting the blame onto their victims. In truth, these men were the ones who **chose** to feel angry when their wives complained, and they also made the **choice** to physically assault them as well.

6) Another one: Avoid the phrase, "**have to**". For example, "I can't make it tonight, because **I have to** be at work." Truth is, you don't "have to" do anything. What a person chooses to do or not do is really up to them. Do your best not to hide behind phrases like this. Take responsibility for the choices you make in your life. A more empowered way to express your sentiments in this instance would be to say, "I won't be over tonight, because I'm going to be at work." This statement implies that you are choosing not to come over tonight, and that you are **choosing** to be at work instead.

7) Avoid the word, "**can't**." For example, "**I can't** make it tonight." Or "**I can't** see the good in going to war in Iraq." Truth is, unless you're impaired in some way, you usually **can** do whatever it is that you want or don't want to do. How about saying instead, "I won't be making it over tonight." This statement implies that you are **choosing** not to come over. Regarding going to war with Iraq: How about saying instead, "I don't see the good in us going to war in Iraq." Or "I think being in Iraq isn't in our best interests or in the Iraqi's best interests for that matter." These latter statements reflect a willingness on your part to take ownership and responsibility for your thoughts and feelings.

8) Avoid the word, "**Need**." For example, take the following statements: "**I need** to be in bed by ten o'clock." Or "**I need** you here by early morning." In truth, we really don't need much, save food and water. We generally want things. How about saying instead, "**I want** to be in bed by 10 o'clock." Or "**I want** you here by

early morning." Instead of saying, "I **need** you to understand me", how about saying instead, "I **want** you to understand me." Better yet, say "I **want** to feel understood by you."

9) This is Very important!!!! Take the time to improve your "**emotional vocabulary**!! Become familiar with different **shades** of emotions. I once heard that Eskimos have over 100 words to describe different kinds of snow. Be like the Eskimos when it comes to incorporating into your daily vocabulary words that describe your whole color spectrum of emotion to a tee. Most people can identify some basic emotions, like mad, sad, glad, fear, and shame. Yet when we expand our emotional vocabulary, it increases our chances of being understood by those around us. Some descriptive emotional words include: "I feel **unacknowledged**"; "I'm feeling **invalidated**"; "I feel **betrayed**"; "I feel **discouraged**"; "I feel **disheartened**"; "I feel **exasperated**"; "I feel **overwhelmed**"; "I feel **disrespected**"; "I feel **humiliated**"; "I feel **forgotten**"; "I feel **invisible**"; and "I feel **unimportant**."

There are countless words that describe a wide range of human emotion and feeling, and each and every word has the potential to capture most accurately the subtle nuances that distinguish one feeling from another. Therefore, I believe it is in your best interest to find words that most accurately reflect to others the essence of what you are feeling in your heart.

10) Avoid the word, "**But**". For example, I want you to come over this afternoon at 4:00 PM, **but** I have a dentist appointment at that time. Incorporate the word, "**and**" into your everyday parlance instead. This word gives all thoughts and feelings equal importance. I think a more effective way to say the aforementioned would be, "I want you to come over this afternoon, **and** I am scheduled to go to the dentist during that time."

The word "**but**" creates an either/or situation, and **negates** everything the person has said prior to its usage. I think it's important to understand that two opposing thoughts or feelings do not have to cancel each other out. For example, I can say, "I know that you are self-reliant and resilient, **and** I worry about you never the less."

11) Avoid the word, "**Try**". For example, if someone asks you to come over and feed his pet canary while he is away on vacation, you're not likely to say, "I'll **try**." More often than not, you'll know in your heart beyond a shadow of a doubt whether or not you plan on following through on something. The word, "**try**", is an evasive, non-committal word that gives a person wiggle room to get out of something.

12) **MY SENSE IS**: This phrase is an incredibly effective one, and I encourage you to incorporate it into your everyday conversation with others ASAP. When you **sense** someone is feeling one way or another, it will serve you well to begin

by using this phrase. For example, if someone is angry with you and chooses to stonewall and keep these feelings to himself, you can choose to be more proactive and say, "My **sense** is you're feeling really angry with me."

If you've invited someone over and that person seems hesitant around accepting your invitation, you can share your intuitive sense of where he or she is at, and say, "**My sense is** you would really rather not come over tonight." If a friend is unusually quiet after breaking up with his girlfriend, you can break the silence by saying, "my sense is you're really hurting right now."

When you begin with the phrase, "My sense is," you're not pretending to know what someone else is feeling, thinking, and/or experiencing. In turn, you are not being presumptuous, but rather you're acknowledging that another person lives in his or her own world, and that you can never know for sure what that world looks like at any given time. Instead you are sharing with that person your intuition, which in turn shows care and concern on your part while simultaneously honoring his or her personal space.

You are effectively giving the other person enough emotional space to receive your sense of him or her in a non-threatening way. This affords the person an opportunity to agree with you, or disagree with you. This non-threatening, non-intrusive approach also clears enough space for the recipient of your feedback to reflect for a moment and then clarify for you what he or she is really thinking, and feeling. Again, offering your **sense** of someone else in this gentle way inspires him or her to reflect more, and share their thoughts and feelings openly with you. Finally, this phrase takes people out of their heads, and puts them into their hearts.

13) Sometimes it is helpful to share with someone else what your **perception** and/or **experience** is of his or her behavior. Communicating your subjective **experience** of someone else can be tricky, however, as you may come across as being judgmental, disapproving, and hypercritical. Never the less, by emphasizing and owning that you are merely sharing your own subjective point of view, you are hopefully making it abundantly clear that you are aware that your **perception** isn't based in fact.

For example, let's say I sit down and have dinner with my friend, Paul, and he appears angry, all the while talking on and on about his life without bothering to listen to what I have to say, and without bothering to ask me about my life, and/or how I am doing. In this instance, I might say to Paul: "**My sense is** you're feeling really angry right now, and I understand you have a lot on your mind. My heart goes out to you, and I also want to let you know that I'm feeling more or less invisible and all but forgotten here with you." If Paul chooses to disregard my feelings, and becomes defensive and agitated instead, I might say: "Paul, **it is my experience that** you are being really defensive right now, and agitated."

In this instance, I'm making an effort to share with Paul how I am **experiencing** him, and his general disposition. It is important to remember, though, that sharing your experience of someone else is often tricky, as you may unintentionally sound as though you are sitting in judgment of him or her. So tread carefully, and remember to underscore that you are merely sharing your own subjective **experience** of him or her, and that you are aware that your perception is yours, and yours alone.

14) Do your best to avoid **labeling** people. This includes **name calling**, and/or **categorizing** those around you. **Name calling** and **labeling** others serves little constructive purpose, and more often than not names and labels are merely intended to hit below the belt, and hurt. Moreover, lashing out at others and calling them names has an insidious way of objectifying that person, and/or dehumanizing them. Human beings are very complex, multifaceted, and dynamic. Calling someone names has a way of reducing someone into one thing or another, and doesn't assess or portray that person fairly or accurately at all.

If I lash out at someone at say, "You're a bitch", or "You're a jerk", or "You're a selfish, lying bastard," I've done little to let that person know how I'm feeling, and how I would like them to treat me differently. In other words, my intention from the get-go had little to do with making myself understood. It had everything to do with trying to hurt that person, and making him or her feel small.

When we feel hurt by someone else, we are often tempted to hurt back. That's human nature. Yet being vindictive and striking back generally makes things worse. In the moment, it may feel good to hit back and cut someone else down. The adrenaline flows, the venom flies, and the heart may feel momentarily vindicated.

In the long run, though, we've made matters worse with our loved one, our friend, or even our adversary. That person no longer trusts us, or feels safe around us. And it's often very difficult to win back trust and safety after they've been broken and lost, respectively. Apologies rarely piece back together trust that has been broken. The damage is usually done, and while the cuts may heal over time, the emotional scars never fully go away.

Imagine, if you will, a piece of wood, a hammer, and some nails. Every **label** hammered into someone, or at someone, gets lodged into the wood that makes up their psychic foundation, their psychic architecture if you will. Apologizing is one's way of extracting the nail from that piece of wood. However, we all know that what is left is a splintered hole, with splintered wood. The hole remains, even though the nail has been removed. And I believe that this is the sort of hole that remains in the heart of those whom we name call, label, and verbally abuse.

Rather than say, "You're being a bitch," be constructive instead and tell that person, "When you do such and such, I feel angry, or disregarded, or discounted,

or invalidated, or exploited, or hurt, or sad, or invisible, etc." Then tell that person how you would like them to treat you instead. For example, "I'd appreciate it when I talk to you that you look at me, and appear interested in what I am saying. When you turn away and get distracted with other things, like the television, I feel unimportant, insignificant, and uncared for. Please make an effort to pay attention to me when I am talking, because I want to feel as though you care about what I have to say."

Remember, it's all about **intention**, folks!! Are you intending to hurt someone, and strike back at them, or are you endeavoring to make yourself understood and/or teach someone else how to treat you in a way that is more to your liking.

15) **Anger**: Be as conscientious as you can to communicate your anger with others responsibly. Remember to use "I" statements, thereby taking ownership for your angry feelings. Verbally abusing someone else, or labeling them, or aiming to be destructive and hurtful, will only serve to put that person on his or her heels. The listener will be in defense mode, and he or she will be far more concerned with self-preservation than with listening to what you are saying, or screaming, for that matter.

In lieu of going into defense mode, some people will retaliate, and angrily hit you right back. The tension between the two of you has escalated, compounding the original problem. The two parties will likely emerge from the battle suffering from more losses than gains. They will have been participating in a **lose/lose** type of scenario. Feelings will have been hurt, trust broken, and the fabric of their relationship will have been irreparably torn apart.

I encourage clients to remember that their anger is a **secondary emotion**, masking more **primary emotions** like **fear**, **hurt**, and **frustration**. When you are feeling angry, take a time-out so that you can experience your anger, and find a safe place to vent your anger so that you are leaving no collateral damage behind. I also recommend that you take some time to introspect and discern what primary emotions have triggered the rise of your anger in the first place.

The purpose of engaging in such introspection is so that you can come from a more **vulnerable**, **authentic** place when you eventually make an effort to communicate your thoughts and feelings with whomever it is that upset you. People are far more likely to listen to you, and hear what you are saying, when you appear calm and rational, and when you are trying to be constructive, in hopes of creating a **win/win** scenario.

16) I have recently learned of the following anachronism: **D.E.E.S.C.P.** The **D** stands for **Describe**, the **E** stands for **Emotion**, the next **E** stands for **Empathy**, the **S** stands for **Specify**, the **C** stands for **Consequences**, and the **P** stands for **Positive Consequences**. This anachronism offers you an easy format to follow when communicating your thoughts and feelings with others.

Take the following situation for example: I asked my friend, Maggie, to pick me up at my house at 4:00 in the afternoon to take me to the airport. If Maggie fails to show up on time, I might use the above script to guide me as I communicate my thoughts and feelings to her. I might say:

"When you don't come over when you say that you're going to come over (**Describe**), I feel angry and disappointed (**Emotion**). I understand that you have a lot on your mind, and that you're been feeling overwhelmed of late (**Empathy**). In the future, I would like you to follow through with me, and when you make a commitment to doing something on my behalf, I want you to follow through and do it (**Specify** the behavioral change you're wanting instead). If you don't honor your commitments with me in the future, than I will choose to rely on you less and less (**Consequences**). If you do decide to make a greater effort to follow through on your commitments to me, and do what you say you're going to do, than I will feel closer to you, and more trusting that I can count on you. In turn, I'll want to spend more time with you, as I will value your presence in my life that much more (**Positive Consequence**)."

17) When giving someone instruction and/or counsel on what they can do to change a certain behavior, focus on the **positive** change they can make rather than harp on their negative behavior. For example, take a tennis coach who notices that his young protege is using too much wrist on his volleys:

The coach could dwell on this if he so desires, and may be tell his pupil, "**Don't** use your wrist." "**Stop** collapsing your hand when you make contact with the ball." "**Don't** squeeze your grip so tight." In this example, the tennis coach has emphasized for his pupil what **not** to do. Unfortunately for the youngster, his coach has yet to teach him what he can do to turn his volley into a weapon. A more effective coach might tell this youngster, "**Keep** your wrist firm." "**Extend** your forearm through the ball." "**Move** your body forward and **keep** your knees bent as you make contact with the ball."

In my work with couples, I often hear one person tell the other what they're doing that they find bothersome and/or annoying. A woman might tell her husband, "when I'm crying, **don't** just sit there and say nothing." "And **don't** just walk away from me either." I think it would be in the woman's best interest to tell her husband what she would like him **to do** when she is crying. For example, she could say, "When I'm crying, please hold me, and reassure me that everything is going to be OK."

18) Do your best to eliminate disempowering words from your everyday vocabulary. Such words include, "**kind of**", "**sort of**", and "**maybe**". People often hide behind these words for one reason or another. For example, a man might tell his wife, "**I sort of** feel angry with you." A guy might tell his date, "I kind of liked that movie." A woman might suggest to her friend, "I'm thinking **maybe** we

should go out have some Chinese food for dinner?" These individuals clearly sound non-committal in their thoughts and feelings. They sound like they're afraid to say unwaveringly and/or unequivocally what they're thinking and feeling. I think they would sound more empowered and forthright if they said respectively, "**I'm angry with you**", "**I liked that movie**", and "**I think it'd be nice if we went out and had some Chinese food for dinner**".

In conclusion (regarding communication skills and techniques) I want to remind you (and me, for that matter), that words carry vibrations which reflect out thoughts and emotions. We hear the words we speak, as do others. And we shape our reality (positive and negative) by not only our thoughts and actions, but by our words too.

Therefore, it is of great importance that we **choose** our words wisely with others, and pay attention to our tone of voice, and body language.

If we choose our **words** well, and couch them gently enough, then whomever we're talking to will hear the message that we're trying to convey. Moreover, they will likely give our thoughts and feelings far more consideration than they would have had they been feeling attacked, condescended to, etc.

If our **tone** of voice is **soft**, and **slow** (not pressured, abrasive and/or aggressive) than the person listening to us will likely receive what we are saying with an open heart. They will not check out, or dissociate, or become intimidated and/or defensive.

If our **body language** appears **open**, **gentle**, and **non-threatening**, then the listener will lean in and listen to what we are saying. He or she will not feel a need to pull away, or fold their arms across their chest as if to protect themselves from our aggressive stance and/or posture.

I strongly believe that if we, as communicators, have made every effort to choose our words carefully, and use our tone of voice and body language to our advantage, than we will have raised the likelihood that we're going to be heard ten fold. In turn we're very likely going to feel heard, validated, and understood by whomever it is that is listening to us. Regardless of the outcome, I believe we would have every right to feel very **proud** of our efforts to communicate our thoughts and feelings **responsibly**. We would have every reason to feel as though we've conducted ourselves with a lot of **integrity**, for we will have gone to great lengths to live our lives **consciously**, and speak our minds thoughtfully and conscientiously.

Whether or not our listener actually hears what we're saying is another matter entirely. Whether or not he or she chooses to respond back to us with equal care and consideration is his or her prerogative, and is completely out of our control. All we can do is have the best of **intentions** when we share our thoughts and

feelings with others. And if we manage to come from this clean space, then we can rest assured that we've been in **integrity** with ourselves.

We would then have every reason to go to bed at night feeling at peace with ourselves. We can feel proud of the efforts we've made to communicate with others **fairly**, and **constructively**. We also feel proud of our choice to share our thoughts and feelings with others in an **assertive** manner, without being **passive**, or **aggressive**. We will have every reason to hold our heads high, and like who we see in the mirror, for we will have done our part to create a **win/win** situation in our communications with others.