

Effective Communication

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | August 5, 2012



Writer Charles Swindoll once found himself with too many commitments in too few days. He got nervous and tense about it. "I was snapping at my wife and our children, choking down my food at mealtimes, and feeling irritated at those unexpected interruptions through the day," he recalled in his book *Stress Fractures*. "Before long, things around our home started reflecting the patter of my hurry-up style. It was becoming unbearable.

"I distinctly remember after supper one evening, the words of our younger daughter, Colleen. She wanted to tell me something important that had happened to her at school that day. She began hurriedly, 'Daddy, I wanna tell you somethin' and I'll tell you really fast.'

"Suddenly realizing her frustration, I answered, 'Honey, you can tell me — and you don't have to tell me really fast. Say it slowly.'" "I'll never forget her answer: 'Then listen slowly.'" (*Bits & Pieces*, June 24, 1993, pp. 13-14.)

Effective communication starts with Listening. Remember to **L-I-S-T-E-N**

L - Love others more than self

One day a homeless woodworker, who couldn't afford a faster means of transportation, walked into the city. He eventually found his way to one of the large churches and stood out front and began telling the people who were passing by his beliefs about God.

Evidently he was a very good speaker because a crowd began to gather. But the priests, who worked at that church, became upset, because he was teaching different things about God than they did.

So the woodworker said:

"Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand...

" 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; by you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has **become calloused**; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. (Mt 13:14,15)

Healthy communication always starts with love. When our hearts are calloused, we DO NOT hear.

- We don't hear God's Word
- We don't hear Jesus pleading to heal us
- We don't hear each other

In order to Communicate well we must Love others more than self - we must have tender hearts!

I - Include God and his methods

- Truth presented in love while leaving others free
- Don't tell people what they "should" do, or "must" do, but share your wisdom gently, kindly, respecting the individuality of the other always leaving others free to make their own decision
- Don't send messages that suggest your love is conditional - "If you don't do what I think, what I want, then I will be mad, I won't talk to you..." etc.
- Pray for wisdom, discernment "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." James 1:5

S - Seek to understand before seeking to be understood:

- Don't be mind readers, don't assume you know what the other is going to say, even if you are right, give the other opportunity to disclose
- If someone you care about thinks negative things about you, is angry, heard a rumor, would you want them to tell you or not tell you? Why? So you can clear the air. Therefore, foster an atmosphere of safety and then...

T - Thank affirm, identify with the other person. Put yourself on their team. Don't become defensive.

- "Thank you so much for coming to me with this. No wonder you are upset, I would be upset too, if I thought that happened to me..."

- Then...

E - Evaluate - yourself and the situation - after you have Understood, after you have Thanked the other person and put yourself on their team, then:

- clarify, correct and explain
- when you make a mistake, own up to it, communicate clearly to your spouse and your children you are sorry and ask for their forgiveness -
- Ron was in his early thirties, married for 5 years to his only wife. For more than half his marriage he had been in Iraq with his NG unit. He had been in combat, seen numerous deaths, a number of his buddies had been either wounded or killed. He was struggling to come to terms with these experiences.
- His marriage was strained. His wife complained that he didn't love her anymore. He would disagree, "that's not true" they would argue. But nothing improved.
- Ron learned to use these tools, rather than defending when his wife alleged he didn't love her. He asked her to help him understand why she thought that.
- She disclosed he was distant, wasn't as affectionate, seemed on edge and never relaxed anymore
- Once he understood, he thanked her for sharing, he affirmed her "I understand why you feel that way," then clarified, corrected, explained and took ownership for how the war had changed him.
- Once she understood rather than complaining she began supporting and patiently encouraging him.

N - No late night conflict resolution

- The Frontal Cortex of the brain is the part that reasons, thinks, self restrains, problem solves, exercises patience, etc.
- It is the part of the brain first impaired by exhaustion and sleep deprivation and thus late at night we are more likely to be irritable, unreasonable and say things we don't mean.
- It is better to get a good nights rest and then deal with thi issue so say, "Sweetheart, you are so important to me that you deserve my whole brain, not just the irritable mood circuits. Let's sleep on it and in the morning talk about it."

Healthy Communication requires we **LISTEN**

L - Love others more than self

I - Include God and His methods

S - Seek to understand before seeking to be understood

T - Thank, affirm, identify with the other

E - Evaluate - yourself and situation - then clarify, correct, repent

N - No late night conflict resolution