

# *Vehicles for Peace*

**"If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten  
that we belong to each other." ~ Mother Teresa**

**"Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding."  
~ Albert Einstein**

From a spiritual standpoint, communication is probably the most important thing we do everyday. We all think we do our best to convey our thoughts about ideas to each other and for the most part we do. We send out a message to someone and sometimes we are lucky enough to find out that we have been heard. We may even feel that the other person has interpreted our message exactly in the way we meant to convey it. Only when things are not working do we stop to assess.

What typically happens is that the receiver gives a nod or eye contact and we believe the receiver understood us. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. So there we go down a rabbit hole in an endless cycle of messages that go haywire leading relationships, business and families down a sinking hole of mistrust. This is why communicating well is so important to us. But how does it affect our spiritual selves? What makes it so essential to our daily lives, personal, business and spiritual? More importantly, why is it so difficult to make ourselves understood by the opposite sex, or in business and even within the same family? Because we all come from different perspectives, using different lenses to address the issues at hand. We wear diverse hats with varied backgrounds, come from sub cultures and different perceptual experiences.

Each of us in our individual professions such as law, accounting, medical, business, human resources, construction, marketing, social services, (the list is endless) has a culture and language of our own. We have shortcuts to talking to each other and each of us comes to the table looking through the lens of their profession. Crossing over to the perspective of another profession, a culture within itself, is complicated. Then factor in all of the other subcultures: race and ethnicity, corporate culture, regional culture (where you live), personal style, gender, and the waters get muddier. It is a wonder that we communicate at all!

Today's corporate teams need to work together to produce great results. Productivity depends on leading our teams and our families in ways that make everyone successful. The way to ensure that happens is to get people communicating effectively across these sub cultures. Let's just look at the sub culture of gender.

The first time I shared some cross gender communication techniques in a management workshop, I was talking to a group of upper level managers. Two men sitting beside each other were good friends, at the same level in the organization and equally educated. We were talking about communication and they were nodding. I am always

looking for “teachable moments” and wanted to make a point about assumptions in communication. I looked around and noticed the women were also nodding, so I asked the men what their nodding meant to them. Well, of course they said they agreed with me.

Next I asked the women what *their* nodding meant to *them*. They said with a knowing smile that they were not agreeing at all, that they were “following what I was saying” or perhaps “bonding with me,” but definitely not agreeing. These two managers looked shocked, and then looked at each other puzzled as the light dawned on their personal life. When men see women nod and think they are agreeing they are assuming a great deal. This is why men tend to see women as waffling on subjects, because they appear to change their minds. They are not waffling, since they never agreed in the first place (See *Leading the Sexes to Successful Communication*).

The process gets more complicated. Looking from the perspective of personal styles we all come to the table with our own personal style of operating. Those who assess temperament say that there are 16 separate types of personality with a unique way of communicating within each style. We see the world, even if we grew up in the same family from our own unique vantage point. Some of us are introverts and some of us are extroverts using different ways to take in energy. Some of us are data conscious while others find it more appealing stay open to the possibilities, and all of us use one of 2 main methods to judge the world. In addition about three quarters of the population uses “feeling” words (with emotional content), while about a quarter of the population uses objective words to describe what we see. This is not right or wrong, bad or good; it just is the way each of us developed through time.

Within corporate cultures we communicate using these different styles to interpret, communicate and problem solve. We each bring our unique puzzle piece to the table and this is a good thing. If we all brought in the same puzzle piece, we would not create the rich, creative models for problem solving. We would be barely adequate in conducting business, creating movement and making decisions. The more diverse the population of the team, the more creative we are in our problem solving efforts, but alas, this also makes us more quarrelsome since we see things differently.

Even within families we see this diversity. In a spiritually perfect world we would all be raised by ideal parents in adoring families, and influenced by flawless institutions (schools, churches and communities). Our experiences would be uncomplicated as we would communicate directly for everything we need and in return we would receive everything we want back, easily and effortlessly. Unfortunately, we are limited (at this time) by the physical world. We also come from a diverse set of circumstances unlike many cultures (of pure lineage) around the world.

Finally, each individual is blessed with their own unique interpretation of reality called perception. This is the capacity to take in and understand a physical, emotional, or

intellectual observation and interpret it using our experiences. Those experiences along with what we are seeing or hearing shape our thoughts and how we approach each situation.

We communicate imperfectly and shrug it off, blaming the other guy for the flaw in communication. I want to reinforce though that it takes two to communicate anything. There is always a sender and a receiver in any communication transaction. Each transaction is a process where by we are accountable to the other to interpret what is said the way the sender intended the listener to hear it. Because this communication is flawed, countless dollars are lost annually in business, relationships end in divorce, families break down, and friendships are ruined, all because of communication that has gone astray.

For some, the easiest fix is to live cloistered within a culture, profession, club, family, or friendship circle that feels familiar. In this way we have predictable methods in which to operate, what to think, what to expect and how to interpret our reality. Falling into assumption traps, failing to follow a concept through without asking pertinent questions keeps listeners blind to growth. This works in the short run, although it can be limiting, since it's harder to grow when we are less able to experience new ideas, and stretch our consciousness beyond our boundaries. Keeping boundaries flexible includes listening with our whole selves: mind, body and soul.

Moving to a higher level of consciousness is a spiritual aim that relies on good communication. By and large, if we are not communicating with others, we are also not communicating with ourselves. Communication consists of three main elements: words, tone, and body language and all must be in alignment. Communicating with spiritual intent is possible only when we are fully present in the moment, are authentic and true to self, ultimately focusing on the other person and what is being said. This straight talk is enhanced by listening actively while giving and accepting honest feedback.

This is the give and take of any relationship and it is the mainstay of spiritual intimacy. It is a value that you can manage in life, in business, in family, in community and in relationship. In the pool of life, we create concentric circles with every verbal pebble we send out into this vast Universe, reverberating with life and pure energy. We can have this kind of relationship in business. We can and we must, if we are to ever have lasting peace. Corporations and small business are a big part of our communities today and where we spend a great deal of time communicating across subcultures. Consequently, peace is supported in *mindful* communication that works to understand, while denying the small daily wars in living. Communication is the vehicle to peace and we are all its drivers. World peace is possible, but the responsibility is ours to create peace where we live. In doing so, we build a brave new world made up of small wins and leading the way to world peace!

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