

COMMUNICATIONS WHOLE vs. MIXED MESSAGES

Four kinds of expression involve stating: (1) observations, (2) thoughts, (3) feelings, (4) wants. Each category requires a different style of expression and often a different vocabulary. **WHOLE** messages include all 4 kinds of ex-pression - intimate relationships require whole messages in order to maintain clear, clean communication. Partial messages leave something missing which the other person senses, not always in their awareness, and to which they may respond out of their awareness. Negotiating with your staff, your mechanic, or the salesman may only require data discussion and not necessarily your feelings. Contamination of communication occurs when messages are mixed, disguised, or hidden agendas are present, (conscious or unconscious!)

"I see you're wearing that same old dress again" may sound like an observation but may contain some other elements:

1. "That dress is a little frayed and still has that old ink spot." (observation)
2. "It's not nice enough for a Sunday visit to Grandpa's." (thought about value)
3. "I'm scared that your grandfather will think I'm a poor parent. (feeling)

"Why don't you act a bit human for a change?" (contamination by value judgment)

1. "You say very little and usually in a very soft, flat tone." (observation)
2. "I think that you keep a lot of control over your feelings." (thought, belief)
3. "I miss out on knowing you and would like to know more about you." (want)

"Well, you know, you eat your breakfast without a word, you get your hat, and go to work, come home, mix a drink, read the paper, talk about the day, watch TV, go to bed and start all over again and that's what life is all about."

1. "My day is filled with a large number of routine events." (observation)
2. "I am sad and angry about the dullness and repetition of my days." (feeling)
3. "I want more excitement, variety, and good feelings in my life." (want)

"I know what your problem is, you like to get paid but you're lazy and don't like to work or be responsible." There is more than a little value judgment here!!

1. "You have been 15 minutes late 12 times in the last month." (observation)
2. "I don't want your personal problems to stop you from being on time." (want)
3. "I depend on you to do your job and I want you to be on time." (want)
4. "I will have to fire you if you are unwilling to change." (thought - policy)
5. "I think that you are smart and can solve your problems." (thought - belief)
6. "I think that you are too "proud" to get help." (thought - opinion)
7. "I am angry about your being late so much." (feeling)

Learn about your own agendas. Be clear about the difference of your own beliefs thoughts, feelings, opinions. Most people have trouble being clear between "I think", and "I feel". Fact and opinion is another area of great confusion. Personal feelings often get in the way and "the person" is focused on rather than "the problem". Are you looking for a place to dump your bad feelings or do you want to solve the problem? Beware (or aware) of unconscious or hidden agendas.

adapted from MESSAGES: The Communications Book, M. McKay, PhD, M. Davis, PhD, P. Fanning
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**OPINIONS AND FEELINGS ARE FREQUENTLY A PERSONAL TRIUMPH OVER GOOD THINKING
YOU DEFINE REALITY BY WHAT YOU KNOW, WHAT YOU BELIEVE, AND WHAT YOU DO ABOUT IT.**