

WORKBOOK



CONVERSATION HACKING

5 Actionable Keys for Cultivating
Powerful Conversational Change

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Introduction

Conversation Hacking

Good communication is the key that unlocks and gives depth to our relationships. Communication is the primary method through which we show others what's going on inside of our hearts and minds. Still, poor communication has the potential to destroy any relationships we spent a considerable amount building up within seconds.

While no-one wakes up in the morning with a burning desire to offend, upset or hurt other people, even our sincerest intentions aren't robust enough to prevent this from happening. Speaking out of turn is inevitable because we're all imperfect humans and we're equally flawed communicators. When conversing and interacting with others, it can be easy to say things we don't mean or not say the things that we do.

For this reason, I've put together this guide to help you navigate your way through unfruitful communications towards being able to initiate healthier and more meaningful patterns of communication with the people in your life. Whether you want to make improvements in your relationships, or you want to sharpen up your day-to-day interactions with peers. This resource aims to share some actionable ideas that you can build into your life immediately.

Relationships form a robust network in life. The quality of your relationships determines the quality of your life, but the quality of your communications determines the quality of your relationships.

This ebook is not perfect; it will not cover everything that there is to know about communications. However, it is a menu that will help you become more comfortable communicating with more transparency, honesty and humility.

Before we get started, write down the reasons you have for wanting to improve the calibre of your communication skills:

Q. Think about a recent conversation that you've had which didn't go as smoothly as you hoped it would. How influential do you think your communication was?

Q. How might the quality of your relationships improve by learning how to communicate more effectively?

01

CHAPTER | 01

Good Communication
is a Coward Free Zone

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Good Communication is a Coward Free Zone

Communication isn't defined solely by the verbal messages shared; it's a multichannel process which bears further significance in the tone of delivery and body language of a communicator. Kinesics (the interpretation of communicative body motions) discloses your subconscious beliefs, attitudes and thoughts. In his book *How to Read a Person Like a Book*, anthropologist Ray Birdwhistell argued that nonverbal behaviour has a grammar that can be analyzed. According to his estimations, words constitute no more than 30 to 35% of the social meaning of a conversation. Furthermore, to add to the complexity of kinesics, research has shown that body language not only manifests commonalities and differences between individuals, but also across languages, cultures, and social classes.

As you can imagine, people subtly communicate with others on an unconscious level all of the time. The tone of your voice suggests to others your mood or levels of engagement and your hand signals (or gestures) add emphasis to your communication. You project your fear, anxiety, nervousness, happiness, positivity, hope and sadness through not just what you say, but through your facial expressions, vocabulary and tonality.

If reading this has made you feel self-consciousness about how you have been communicating in the past, there is no need to feel defeated or wrong. The most likely reason why your communication skills have been failing you is that no one taught you any better. Communication skills are usually mainly learned via primary caregivers, as schools and employers don't take on such responsibilities (despite communication being such a fundamental skill). However, primary caregivers often aren't privy to the role they play in teaching communication, so they fail to teach us how to interpret or translate tones, emotions and gestures or use them within our communications.

As most people don't know how to communicate with honesty and integrity, they hide behind pretence and socially constructed masks in the hope that they will be accepted by others by default.

Fear of Truth is the Destroyer of Honest & Meaningful Conversations

If you don't have the courage or the willingness to accept the truth about how you feel, what you think and what you need, you will communicate confusing and inaccurate information to others. Say, for example, your partner gets distracted one month and forgets to pay the rent on time. You receive a late payment penalty, and your landlord now wants to evict you.

The thoughtful response would be to act promptly to the situation, make amends and develop a plan with your partner to avoid this happening again in the future. But many people opt for a less direct approach. They become angry instead and criticise their partner. A fight erupts, and then neither one speaks to the other for days. Meanwhile, the problem remains, and no plan going forward is laid out.

Criticising and blaming are two of the best ways to destroy communication. While communication is critical to every healthy relationship, mature communication doesn't always come easily. When you blame or criticise someone, you remove the responsibility for a particular outcome from yourself and forcefully ascribe it onto someone else. Granted, it might well be the other person's fault in some cases, but as far as open and healthy dialogues are concerned, pointing fingers and playing the blame game will always do a relationship more harm than good.

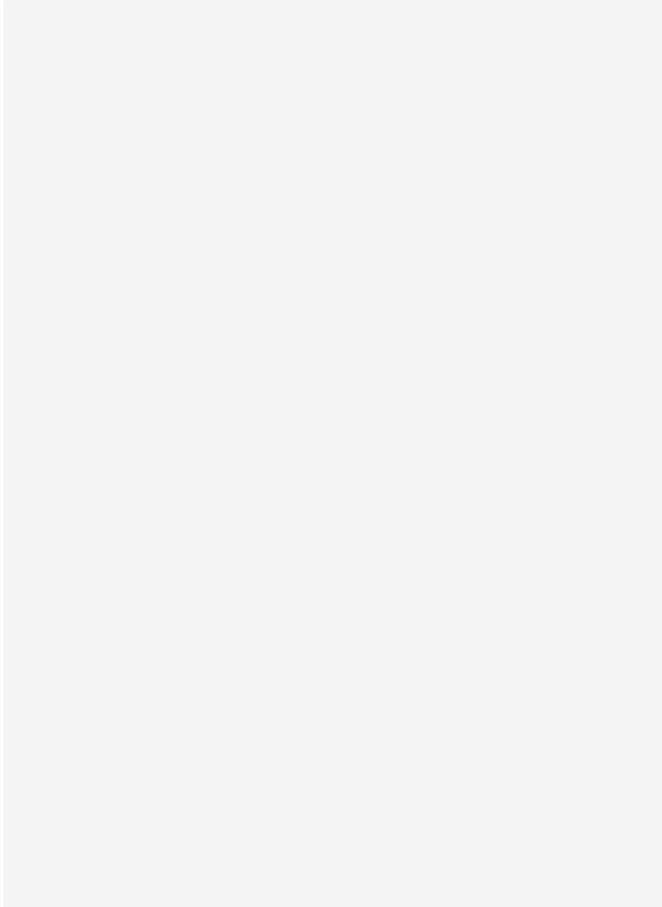
Understandably, we all want to express our dissatisfaction at times, but communicating a general dissatisfaction maturely and responsibly is very different from passing the buck, pointing fingers and verbally assaulting another person's self-esteem.

It can be a worthwhile exercise to ask yourself the following three questions to help you understand the part you play in your relationships and communications. Make sure you give honest answers:

1. How are you to understand and appreciate what's going on inside someone else's head when you fail to understand and appreciate what's going on inside of your own?
2. If you don't understand yourself, how could you ever understand someone else who has a different perspective and set of life experiences than you?

3. Would you choose to be friends with someone who spoke to you in the same way that you talk to yourself?

Take a few minutes to reflect on your answers and make a note of them below. Remember, this is for your benefit, no one else's.



No-one wants to be misunderstood by others, and while you cannot control the assumptions other people make about you, you can influence these assumptions by minimising the risk of others misinterpreting your verbal and nonverbal communications. The key to this is always to remember that honesty is the best policy.

You won't be able to understand other people until you've learned how to understand yourself, and you won't ever be able to communicate honestly with others unless you have learned how to communicate honestly with yourself.

To avoid dealing with constant miscommunication, misunderstanding and misinterpretation, you will need to learn how to take responsibility for how you communicate what's going on inside of you.

Passive-aggressive communication is a visible sign of a disempowered person. While it's

easy to criticise and judge such individuals for their attitudes being uncondusive to a healthy discussion, it's important to remember that such communication styles trace back to an individual's incorrect, deep-set beliefs about themselves.

People who are secure in their core identity will have little difficulty communicating honestly, confidently and boldly. But people who are insecure about who they are will be more likely to interact passively, aggressively, or passive-aggressively in an attempt to hide how they feel about themselves.

Ironically, insecure people are usually experts in the art of cunning manipulation and deception. The vicious and unkind behaviours and statements of the workplace and school bullies, for example, don't originate from a secure sense of self. Instead, they are motivated by a need to prove themselves to others through desperate attempts at making warped, self-edifying statements.

Passive Communicators

Passive communicators have developed a style of communication that consciously suppresses their opinions and feelings, avoids protecting their rights, and prevents them from identifying, acknowledging and meeting their needs. Passive individuals, therefore, are those who avoid conflict and do not respond to hurtful or antagonising situations, allowing their grievances and frustrations to mount subconsciously. Naturally, such pressure cannot be sustained for long, resulting in the individual hitting a tolerance boiling point and exploding, usually disproportionately to the circumstance that triggered the outburst. They are then crippled by feelings of guilt, shame and embarrassment, and return to being the way they were.

Passive communicators are the way they are because their life experiences have left them feeling afraid. Their underlying core belief is that everyone else is more important in life than they are, and believe that the safest and most effective approach in life is to seem and be inferior to everyone else. Therefore when faced with important relationship decisions, the passive communicator insists that their thoughts, feelings, and worldviews are less important than everyone else's. If their thoughts, feelings and needs are disrespected in any way, they'll do their best to avoid any conflict and 'move on' as quickly as physically possible.

Because they go out their way to hide how they're feeling about themselves and others, passive communicators are, fundamentally, dishonest. They tell lies and fabricate the truth to cover up what's going on inside of them for fear of offending someone or being seen as weak or incompetent. Those of us who deal and communicate regularly with passive communicators never experience an authentic relationship, due to the facades and falseness the passive communicator embeds themselves in.

Passive communication is systematically deceitful and unreliable, and inherently blocks any chances of healthy, long term relationships developing.

Q. Are there ways in which you communicate or behave passively at times? If so, do you understand why?

Aggressive Communicators

Threatening another person physically, mentally or emotionally obviously shuts down all communication, and can potentially destroy relationships; yet ironically, some people consciously choose this communication style.

Aggressive communication doesn't leave room for much discussion at all; it's usually a one-way discussion which doesn't lend itself to allowing for engaging or healthy debate. Did you ever have a classmate in school who tried to assert themselves through competitive and veiled threats such as "my dad's bigger than your dad!", or "my mum's younger than your mum." Unless these children mature and grow out of these immature, ego-boosting ways, they evolve and grow into aggressive communicators whose core underlying belief is "I am important, you are not."

We have all dealt with an aggressive communicator at one point in our lives. They're the people who interrupt you when you're expressing yourself or talk louder than you in an attempt to speak over you. Aggressive communicators know what they want and are ruthless in the relentless pursuit of their ambitions and goals. They don't value anyone else's points of view and enjoy being in the company of passive communicators, whom they can drive into deep states of crippling anxiety through overpowering manipulation and controlling techniques.

Aggressive communicators often create a lot of tension in relationships, but it's essential to understand that they are disempowered people who are primarily driven by fear, pride and selfishness.

Q. Have you ever resorted to employing aggressive communication techniques? If so, do you understand why?

"Don't waste your energy explaining yourself to others. People only hear what they want to hear."

Passive-Aggressive Communicators

Dealing with passive-aggressive communicators can be one of the most challenging aspects of managing our day-to-day relationships. Passive-aggressiveness is often challenging to interpret because it frequently disguises as a personality quirk of those who express themselves in indirect and backhanded ways.

Passive-aggression is a way that many people express anger through typically muted, seemingly apathetic forms. The passive-aggressive communication style is one of the most sophisticated in terms of its complexity and diversity. Passive-aggressiveness can involve anything from a person resisting to complete everyday tasks (e.g. procrastination, deliberate inefficiency, and forgetfulness) to stubbornness, resentment, and thoroughly inconsistent behaviour. Passive-aggressive people may initially appear to be enthusiastic about something on a surface level, but then intentionally act in a way that's either counter-productive, unhelpful or damaging.

While passive-aggression is as old as time itself, it was only first given a name during WWII by Colonel William Menninger of the U.S. military. Menninger noted that soldiers employed passive tactics (such as pouting, stubbornness, procrastination, inefficiency and obstructionism) to spite their superiors. Menninger argued that these "immaturity reactions" were responses to military stressors and the soldiers' desire to reassert their independence.

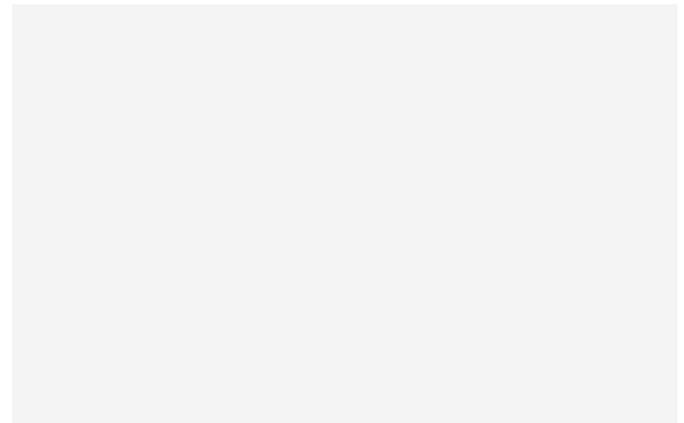
The passive-aggressive communicator is comfortable employing sarcastic innuendos, veiled threats and implied judgments when provoked. In worse case scenarios, passive-aggressive people can resort to manipulative tactics such as withholding love, intimacy or affection as a way of punishing or controlling others.

The passive-aggressive communicator is primarily regarded by others as bubbly, overly joyous and happy, and make it their mission to brighten the mood when others feel down or ill-tempered. However, because passive-aggressive communicators are conflict-averse, they perpetuate this happy-go-lucky performance despite their true feelings towards the circumstance or the people they're entertaining. Unfortunately, because passive-aggressive people learned in their past that speaking the truth was unwise or unsafe, their inner monologues become

infested with all their suppressed thoughts and feelings, making them feel resentful or even hateful towards others.

Examples of passive-aggressive behaviour include answering 'yes' or 'no' to open questions, deliberately forgetting to do a task, or avoiding communication when there's something important to be discussed or resolved.

Q. Are there ways that you communicate or behave in a passive-aggressive way? If so, do you understand the reasons why?



As you will have gathered from the information above, passive, aggressive and passive-aggressive communication styles are disempowering and ineffective. However, a mature individual who isn't afraid of speaking their truth employs what is called **authentic assertiveness**.

Assertive Communicators

Assertiveness is a willingness to confidently and calmly stand up for the rights of yourself and others without being passive, aggressive or dishonest in any way. An assertive person recognises that they are as important as the person they are communicating with and respects them with the anticipation of being respected in return. They will refuse to engage in conversation with anyone who is unwilling to regard them as an equal and accept and respect them for who they are, be they gay, disabled, black, rich, straight, Asian, female, non-binary, male, white or transgender.

People develop assertiveness through transparency and integrity. Assertiveness requires being honest about your wants and needs while also being considerate of the needs and wants of others. For assertive communicators, honesty is the best (and only) policy; they do not tolerate hypocrisy and expect others to follow through on

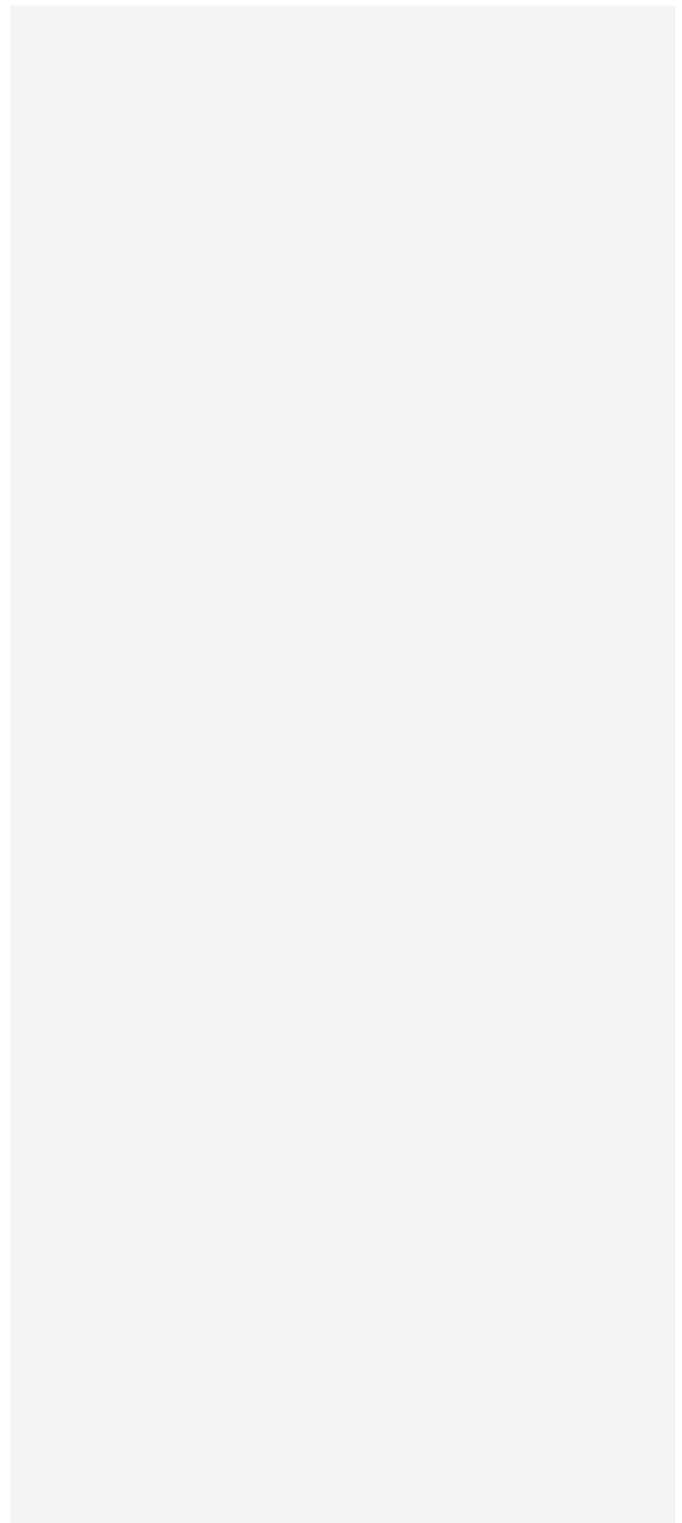
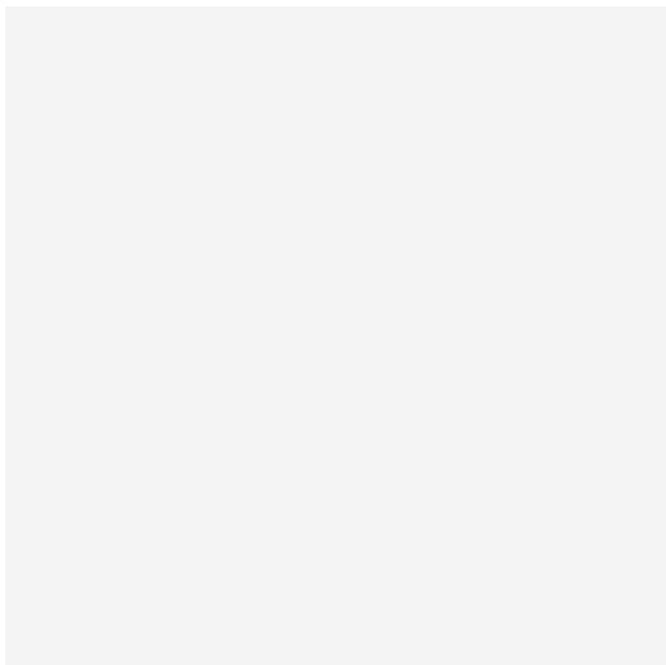
their principles, values and promises in the same way they do. They are unafraid of speaking their emotional and perceptual truth with others, and harbour confidence which some people misread as arrogance.

There is a difference, however, between being honest as an assertive communicator and being assertive as an aggressive communicator. Aggressive communicators, on the other hand, will have a profoundly ingrained longing to 'come out on top' and win. They do what is in their best interest with complete disregard for the needs, feelings or preferences of others.

Assertive communicators may sometimes come across as being brutally honest, but their honesty is primarily for the sake of the other person, not themselves and their ego. Assertive people are honest to protect the integrity of their relationships, and their honesty earns them respect and a sense of freedom and liberation that comes with unadulterated transparency.

It doesn't benefit people to live in the illusion that their behaviour is okay when it isn't—becoming assertive demands that you set consistent boundaries around your conversations so that they remain mutually respectful. Mutual respect only occurs when both parties participate equally in pursuing the goal of a healthy discussion.

Q. What benefits can you see from becoming more assertive in your communications and behaviour?



“Only once in life, do people find someone who can turn their world around. So be that person.”

02

CHAPTER | 02

The Main Goal in
Communication

CHAPTER 02

The Main Goal in Communication

Healthy relationships should be determined by what you invest into them, not by what you can get out of them.

In the context of any healthy relationship, if either party is unwilling to bring anything less than 100% to the table, it's only a matter of time before the relationship reaches turbulent times. The 100/100 connection principle is when two people in a relationship give each other 100% all of the time, thereby continuously deepening connection, intimacy, mutual understanding and trust.

Unfortunately, there's no current mandate that teaches people how to manage relationships well; so, we learn from our friends and family members who aren't always the greatest of role models for us. Building relationships is similar to building houses: they need strong foundations, but instead of iron and concrete, we build relationship foundations from unconditional acceptance and trust.

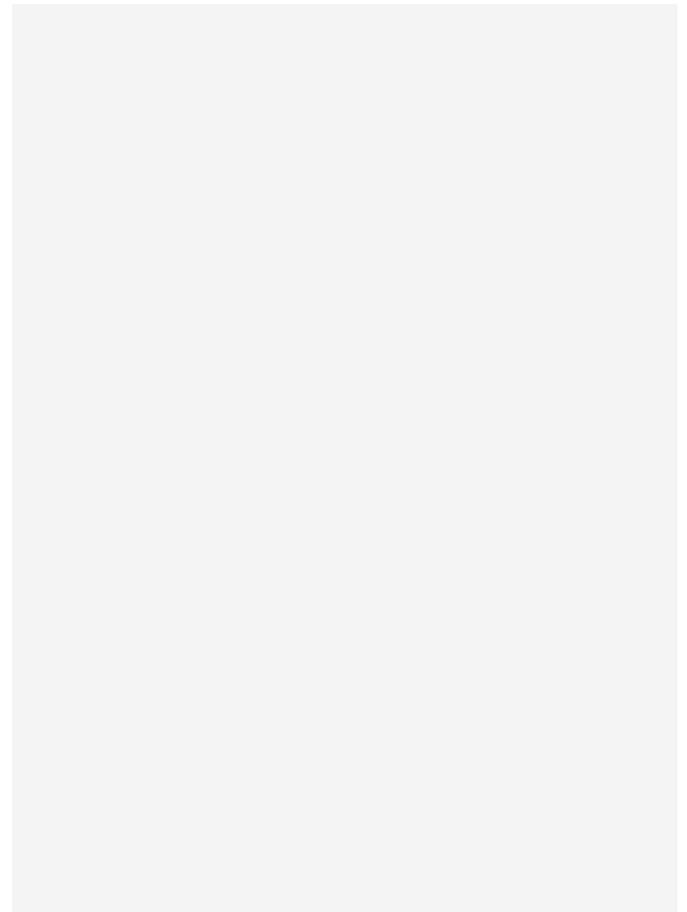
Unconditional acceptance is when someone accepts another for who they are and has no intention of changing them. However, I should stress here that unconditional acceptance doesn't involve accepting another person's destructive or selfish behaviours.

Unconditional acceptance lays the foundation for trust, friendship and eventually, intimacy. Without unconditional acceptance in our relationships, there can be no mutual respect.

Unconditional acceptance shows another person that regardless of what they do or what they say, the end goal of connection is more important than the short-term goal of 'being right'. Without a foundation of unconditional acceptance in your relationships, you are not free to authentically be who you are around others. So, moving forward, build better relationships by becoming the kind of person for others who you always wanted for yourself and offer other people the opportunity to experience unconditional acceptance.

Unfortunately, unconditional acceptance isn't a cultural norm, but cultural change starts with personal transformation. If you can see that there's room for improvement in your relationships, become the change that you want to see. While you can't control how other people are towards you, you can control how you are for them. By removing the option of disconnection from our relationships, you can begin creating an environment where you can be your authentic self.

Q. Can you identify times in the past when your acceptance of others has been conditional in some way? If so, what were the relationship outcomes?



“If you genuinely believe that there's other people out there who are better than you... stop judging them!”

03

CHAPTER | 03

Communicating
With Maturity

CHAPTER 03

Communicating With Maturity

We all have both good and bad character traits. Our character traits can be anything from the way we behave to the attitudes we display.

Far too many people, however, look past character traits because they're sucked in by more immediate status symbols such as attractiveness, wealth or social standing. Mature people, on the other hand, understand what truly makes a person. So they look past external traits and examine who a person is below all the socially constructed layers. Unfortunately, there are fewer mature people in the world than we'd like to think.

Immaturity and maturity are usually designated to particular age brackets, but levels of maturity are not age-dependent. It's easy to excuse the childishness of a five-year-old having a tantrum in a toy shop. It's not so easy to justify a 41-year-old man picking a fight because his football team lost.

Adults are just as capable of acting childish as children do. We all have bad days, and we're all capable of having the occasional temper tantrum or sulk. Yet for some people, their emotional immaturity can stand in the way of them developing committed and respectful relationships. A seventy-year-old man who is unprepared to take responsibility for his attitude is less mature than a seventeen-year-old who is. Some people choose to grow; some people don't. Maturity isn't about age; it's about how willing a person is to take responsibility for their actions, behaviours, motives, manipulative mannerisms and emotional inconsistencies.

Framing emotional immaturity makes it easier to recognise patterns of childish behaviour within adults who refuse to take responsibility for their emotional inconsistencies. Regardless of behavioural preferences, we're all on the same journey of maturation in life: it's just that some of us travel at a faster speed than others. It's important to understand that maturity is a choice, not a destination.

People who take responsibility for themselves choose to grow up quicker. Responsible people are wise; they expect more from themselves than what anyone else ever could expect from them.

Responsible people get stuff done and positively influence other people by living an exemplary life, ensuring that their actions directly reflect their words. So, to practice living maturely, begin proactively analysing your thoughts and stop blaming the people in your past for your negative outcomes, behaviours and attitudes. Stop blaming society, the government, religion, your friends or your family for the way things are and for the way you turned out. Your past will have affected who you are today, but you control how you come out of it. You control whether or not the negativity makes you bitter, lazy, hopeless or resentful. You choose whether or not you listen to the cruel words or harbour the evil other people inflicted on you and use it to victimise yourself, or to power yourself forward. No one takes anything away from you unless you allow them to.

“The better you know yourself, the less judgemental you are likely to become.”

Q. Are there times that you point the finger towards other people when it would be more helpful if you pointed it more at yourself?

Regardless of their 'good intentions', there are many people who make promises and commitments that they never honour. People who do this have usually developed a long line of plausible explanations as to why they won't fulfil their obligations. In a world that's forever getting faster, people live such busy lives and become experts at explaining away or excusing their failures. Responsible people, though, are those who accept full responsibility for their lives; they know talk is cheap and that actions are all that matter. The world is patiently waiting for people whose actions speak louder than their words. It's one thing to say that you care about someone, but it's another to care about someone. Sometimes, caring about people means that we are honest with them in ways that no-one else will be.

We often become so wholly preoccupied with our interests that it's easy to forget about the commitments we make to others. Become a person who offers people results, not more excuses and promises you won't keep. 50% of communicating is what you say and how you say it – but the other 50% is what you do.

“The saddest aspect of life is that science grows in knowledge faster than what our society grows in wisdom.”

04

CHAPTER | 04

Communicating
Isn't Just Talking

CHAPTER 04

Communicating Isn't Just Talking

Many people believe that talking to someone is communicating, but talking isn't communicating unless it has a specific goal and purpose. The primary objective most people have when engaging in conversation is agreeing with someone as quickly as possible (or making that person agree with them). However, when you prioritise agreeing with someone rather than communicating with someone, you fail to be authentic and honest with another person.

It's tough to create a space in which everyone agrees with every part of a communication. The longer that one party refuses to acknowledge or agree with the other, the more pressure and anxiety will enter the communication. Before long, the conversation becomes a battle over which person is 'getting it right', which person is 'getting it wrong', who has the right answer, or who has come to the correct conclusion. The priority of communication should never be about proving who is right and who is wrong, but it should be about learning how to understand other people's perspectives.

Those who find themselves 'needing to be right' haven't yet matured to a level of life where they appreciate how different people have different perspectives. People who refuse to grow also fail to develop conversationally, and thus are often guilty of introducing 'conversation killers'. Conversation killers are little behaviours which irritate people to the extent that they want to end the conversation abruptly. We are all guilty of having at least one conversation killer in our communication toolkit.

Healthy communication is the glue that binds people together. Don't let situations arise when other people have the opportunity to discredit or dismiss you, only because you told them too much (or too little). Unless your conversation partner is a close friend or family member, most people don't want to know about your latest surgeries, your ex-partner, or current financial dilemmas. Baring your soul to new people you meet, be they workplace

peers or social acquaintances, might give you some short-term relief, but long-term, you might fall victim to vicious gossip, social rejection or even lawsuits! Likewise, other people do not want to give you the details of their medical diagnosis, their latest work appraisal, or anything to do with their finances.

In healthy relationships, people don't always see eye to eye because we all view situations and circumstances from different perspectives. If two mature people want to engage in thoughtful and engaging conversation, the first goal for both parties must be to respect, honour and understand the other. The person whose goal is to respect and understand the other is going to have an entirely different set of results from the person whose goal was to get into an agreement. Making understanding the priority of your conversations will help you build more profound levels of intimacy and trust in all your most valued relationships.

"It's better to be rejected for being who you are, than accepted for being who you're not."

If your goal of communication is to keep two mature and empowered people connected in conversation, the first objective should be to understand the other person. You can only ever achieve this goal by asking questions about other people, and these questions should be about things you're genuinely interested in learning about.

We very often try to understand others by relating their story to similar ones of our own. Relating your life experiences to another person's is not an appropriate way to comprehend someone else; it only serves to undermine the other person's experience and centre yourself in the discussion.

Mature communicators aren't afraid of being told the truth, showing the other person what is happening inside them or hearing what is going on inside of someone else.

If you want to sharpen your ability to understand others, you must learn to listen more attentively. To do so, you must first recognise the five types of listening:

1. Ignoring: When we're not listening at all.
 2. Pretending: When we're trying to show someone that we're interested when we aren't.
 3. Selective listening: When we only hear what we expect to hear.
 4. Attentive listening: When we pay close attention to what someone is saying to us.
 5. Empathic listening: When we focus on listening to what someone else is trying to tell us. Empathic listening isn't about agreeing with another person or showing sympathy. Empathy is more about understanding the core message that someone is trying to convey.
- Q.** When communicating with others, are you more inclined to make quick assumptions about what people mean, or do you take the time to ask them what they mean?

(If you're unsure, think about how often people come to you for advice or guidance - if people don't respect your communication style, they'll unlikely go to you for advice).

05

CHAPTER | 05

The Blocks To
Communication Depth

CHAPTER 05

The Blocks To Communication Depth

Having a desire for depth in our communications is not enough. If desire alone were sufficient, we would all be fully satisfied, content, fulfilled and at peace with everyone we know for the rest of our lives.

There are some critical hindrances to communication depth that you must acknowledge and overcome if you want to take your communication (and relationships) up a level: selfishness, laziness, and superficiality.

Selfishness is an obstacle that stands in the way of anything positive entering your life – especially in the context of your communications. The main result of selfishness is arrogance and pride. A self-aware person wants to understand others, but a selfish person wants nothing else other than to be understood by others.

When you allow selfishness to get in the way of your relationships, you will find yourself dissatisfied with them and often even lonely.

Q. Are your communications selfish or selfless?

This question is one that you will benefit from having in the forefront of your mind every time you enter a conversation. Another obstacle to communication depth is laziness. In short, most of us are lazy: we take the path of least resistance at every given opportunity. We want to do as little as possible for the maximum result. People have no desire to feel discomfort, so they often build their relationships on the pillars of convenience and comfort.

The problem with this is that if we want to enhance the depth of our relationships, we must be willing to increase the depth of our communications, which demands hard work, effort and living outside of the comfort zone.

In his book, *Celebration of Discipline*, Dr R. Foster wrote,

“Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a critical problem. The desperate need today is not for more intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people.”

We live in a culture of fast food and instant gratification. We want what we want, and we want these things now. The biggest problem with superficial relationships is that they are shallow, and when misunderstandings or other issues arise (which are inevitable), a lack of deep relationships will become painfully transparent. Committing to deepening your communication is hard work and requires discipline. Discipline is something people who achieve great things exhibit behind closed doors: it is hard work done in isolation for the sake of personal excellence.

Unfortunately, when we are getting to know someone new, our conversations are often centred around the facts, figures and current affairs of anything relevant that’s currently going on in the world (i.e. superficial conversation). We exchange boring facts and clichés with people such as:

ME: “Hi. How are you?”

YOU: “Fine thanks. How are you?”

ME: “Great thanks. What’s new with you?”

YOU: “Not much really. Same old, same old...”

ME: “Nice weather we’re having!”

YOU: “Yup. It sure is.”

ME: “Are you going anywhere nice this weekend?”

YOU: “No, I’m broke.”

ME: “Oh. Right. Have a good day then...”

Superficial conversations demand the least amount of effort, connection, trust and vulnerability. We’re likely to have conversations like this with strangers, people we barely know, and people whom we hardly trust, but sadly, there are husbands, wives and even full families all around the world whose conversations never go much deeper than this. People choose the comfort zone and laziness over meaningful communication. Conversing like this is sad and unnecessary – especially with those that you know or trust.

People who commit on a surface level usually do so because they've had bad experiences of trying to have meaningful conversations. They may have been shot down, interrupted, rejected or belittled for their honesty. As a result, they got hurt and became wary of communicating openly again. The familiar adage, 'Once bitten, twice shy' comes into play here. When many people get hurt, they often decide that it's safer to retreat into a superficial communication zone that requires little vulnerability and no risk whatsoever.

The good news is that there is a cure for shallow and superficial conversations, and while this cure is attainable by all, it's unfortunately only ever pursued by a few. While everyone can strive to construct meaningful communications, they must understand and accept that they cannot manufacture it, manipulate it, control it or make it happen.

It's also important to remember that it still takes two to tango. So, you can open up to other people as much as you'd like, but if others aren't mature enough to handle your depth, you are wasting your energy on the wrong people.

The only way you can build a deep connection with someone is to communicate on a heart level about your thoughts, feelings and needs. Yes, it's on this level that you leave yourself open to mockery and rejection, but it's only on this level that you can connect authentically with other people and earn their trust. Expressing your vulnerabilities and telling the truth about who you are and what you're willing to accept (or not accept) from other people is the only way others can learn what standards you live by and what standards you expect others to meet.

Ironically, open and honest communication can be the most offensive kind because, believe it or not, most people hate the truth. People would rather accept lies, conspiracy theories, superficiality and falseness over the truth because they aren't mature enough to accept it. Truth often offends, but healthy communication and deep connections require an appropriate level of honesty.

It's important to note here that opinions don't constitute the truth. Opinions are just opinions. Feelings and thoughts are also not facets of truth. Feelings come, and feelings go. Truth is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Speaking the truth with both compassion and unconditional acceptance has the potential to earn you friends for life. The absolute truth is as profound as any communication can go, but telling it isn't easy!

All of your relationships have been built on varying levels of trust developed over time. You cannot demand others to trust you; you can only ever earn it by giving another person your undivided attention and acceptance. In any communication, the sooner you ask someone what they need, the faster you can start making the connection more profound and more meaningful.

The very minimum most people want in life is for someone to listen to them and hear what they have to say. Unfortunately, because most people aren't used to being listened to, they don't know how to communicate what their needs are.

Be for other people the kind of person that you would have them be for you. Check yourself if you are tempted to invalidate someone's experience as irrelevant or incorrect. Listen for the sole purpose of understanding to the best of your ability; and strive to understand how a person is feeling and what it is they need and offer valuable insight, truth and unconditional acceptance.

Seek to understand the experiences in your past which have led you to a passive, aggressive, or passive-aggressive communication style. Be honest with yourself and be honest with other people, because this is the key to creating meaningful relationships that last. If you ever find yourself slipping back into your old methods of communicating, then take responsibility for yourself, take responsibility for what needs to be changed, and become the change that you want. Don't try to change other people with your communications: go on the journey of letting your communication change you. Become a person who practices what they preach: communicate with honesty, transparency, compassion, sincerity and assertiveness.

Thanks for reading, and remember: practice won't make you a perfect communicator, but it will make you permanently better than what you have ever been before!

Kain Ramsay

COMMUNICATION HACKING WORKBOOK

