

WISDOM SESSION

Four Words, Three Messages

“Communicate unto the other person that which you would want him to communicate unto you if your positions were reversed.”

– Aaron Goldman

Because men and women are cognitively different in so many respects, communication between spouses frequently transmits on different wavelengths. The inevitable result of communication is misunderstanding. When we *are* talking, we have misunderstanding. How much more so, then, when we are not talking at all!

Albert Mehrabian, former professor of psychology at UCLA, suggested that only 7 percent of communication is the actual words. A remarkable 38 percent of the message is attributed to tone of voice, and 55 percent is credited to body language. If you question this, as I did at first, consider this example.

How many different messages do you think we can communicate with these four words: “What do you want?” Let’s suppose you had a hard day at the office. You’re tired and frustrated, and someone cut you off on the way home. Then you had to stop in the driveway, get out, and move your son’s bike and skateboard. Get the picture? What you want more than anything else in the world is about thirty minutes of peace and quiet.

So you greet everyone and promptly adjourn to your favorite chair with a newspaper. A few minutes later, your wife comes in to ask you a question. What’s your response? Do you naturally set the paper down, gaze affectionately into her eyes, and say, “Hi, darling, what do you want?” Or is it more likely that you try to send her a signal by leaving your nose buried in the paper and ask in monotone disgust, “Yes, dear. what do you want?” Or is it possible that you might respond more abruptly - maybe even crumple the paper in affect anger - and bark, “What do you want?”

Same four words, yet three totally different messages. Why? Just picture in your mind the differences in tone of voice and body language in our example.

The inevitable result of communication is misunderstanding, because we assume the receiver picks up the same transmission we send. But the receiver always has a separate agenda and his or her own unique view of the world. Only through dialogue can we be certain we are being understood.

- Patrick Morley

“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.” – James 1:19

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David Trent believes that wisdom comes from continually seeking to learn and grow through relationships and reading, which leads to personal development. In an effort to inspire learning in others, David Trent sends out weekly Wisdom Sessions. He recommends purchasing and reading any book source used in these Wisdom Sessions.