Workplace Communication: Strategies for Effective Verbal Communication in the Workplace

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Respectful Communication

Respect/Equality

Confirmation
   --recognition
   --acceptance
   --engagement (agree or disagree; involvement)
   --dialogue vs. monologue (talking with vs. talking at)
   --verbal and nonverbal validation

Listening

Choice

Finding Blame vs. Taking Responsibility

Appropriate Boundaries

“Smart” Conflict Strategies

Levels of Meaning

content and relationship levels of meaning (self-esteem/power)

Truths about conflict
(based on Notarius and Markman)

1. Each relationship contains a hidden reservoir of hope

2. One zinger can erase twenty acts of kindness
3. Little changes in you can lead to huge changes in the relationship

4. Conflict is influenced by Spirals and Arousal

**Preparing**

--Pick your battles carefully
--Be sensitive to timing
--Nip it in the Bud
--Check your motivation
--Check your expectations
--Identify trigger points
--Make a plan

**Beginning**

--Change your environment
--Start with gentleness and understanding
--Calm down—breathe slowly with focus; stretch muscles; go for a walk or run

**Handling**

--Describe, don’t blame--I messages
--Be specific, concrete
--Listen to understand
--Ride out the storms—ride emotions like the tide; focus on the relationship
--Stay focused
--Pay attention to body language
--Validate your partner—recognize her, affirm him
--Take responsibility
--Be polite (no interrupting)

**Finishing**

Summarize
Affirm the person
Affirm the relationship
Follow-up
### Gibb’s Defensive and Supportive Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation (defensive)</th>
<th>Description (supportive)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“You simply must be more responsible.”</td>
<td>“When you don’t inform the rest of us of a situation you’ve encountered, it puts all of us at a disadvantage.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Control (defensive)</th>
<th>Problem Orientation (supportive)</th>
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<td>“You need to have this fixed...soon!”</td>
<td>“Can we work together to find a solution?”</td>
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<tr>
<th>Strategy (defensive)</th>
<th>Spontaneity (supportive)</th>
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<tr>
<td>“It’s important that we all work hard, isn’t it?”</td>
<td>“I know you don’t like answering the phones, but at times we’re all busy. What are some ideas on how to manage this?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Certainly.”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“And you know the phones have to be answered, don’t you?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Well, of course.”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“Then, you’d better do your part in answering them.”</td>
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<th>Neutrality (defensive)</th>
<th>Empathy (supportive)</th>
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<td>“Do whatever you want.”</td>
<td>“Why don’t you tell me what you’ve been struggling with and I’ll help you thing through things.”</td>
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<th>Superiority (defensive)</th>
<th>Equality (supportive)</th>
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<td>“That’s not the way we’ve done things here. Wait until you’ve been around this campus for awhile, you’ll see.”</td>
<td>“We’ve tried a variety of procedures before and this is the only one that seems to work. What are your ideas?”</td>
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<th>Provisionalism (supportive)</th>
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<td>“You can waste your energy if you want to, but I know this is the only way to get this done on time.”</td>
<td>“I’m pretty certain this is the only way to get things done, but I’d like to hear your perspective.”</td>
</tr>
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