

Personal Communication Philosophy

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I view communication like a mechanical clock. Most people see a clock as only a device to tell time and never consider its intricate parts, systems, and inner workings. Likewise, most people think communication is merely speaking, listening, writing, and reading and never consider the intricacies that make communication a vital discipline. Just like there is much more to a clock than just its ability to tell time, there is so much more to communication than just speaking and writing. Communication has inner-workings, theories, and practices that are important to consider and understand. There was a time, not too long ago when I gave scarce thought to communication. I didn't spend any time thinking beyond just the surface of what I saw or experienced. I didn't consider how communication worked; I never asked 'why' when it came to communication. I only thought that my communication was either good or bad. I have missed out. Because of my limited understanding, I have missed out on building stronger relationships, being more deeply connected, serving others, and I have missed a genuine sense of understanding myself, others and the world. Communication is essential for building relationships, being connected, understanding, and serving others. It is vital for me that communication be true, just and beneficial to others.

Communication is a fundamental mode of relating, which means communication is not primarily about transferring information (Shepherd et al., 2006), but relating and connecting which are essential and uniquely human acts. Communicating meaning and understanding are what makes us different from the rest of the animal kingdom. Communication is the thread that ties our relationships together. No two relationships are the same, and no relationship stays the same. How we relate to one another has a significant impact on our relationships, their health, and satisfaction. People in close relationship experience a myriad of ways of mutually

connecting (Griffin, 2012) and communication plays the essential role in the ways we relate. Communication also plays a significant role in helping those in relationships feel more deeply connected. How we relate to one another affects our sense of connectedness. If communication practices are strong in relationships, there will be a stronger sense of being connected. In a society where many people struggle with feelings of isolation, understanding how communication can connect us to each other and the world is critical. Communication makes one of our deepest needs –the need to be connected to others–possible. Meaningful communication helps us feel connected to those with whom we relate and lets us know that we are not alone in the world.

As humans, we all want to be understood, and we get frustrated when we are not. I also believe that understanding the other is just as important and being understood ourselves. In his famous prayer, St. Francis prayed “O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek...to be understood as to understand;” (The Prayer of St. Francis: For the Peace of Christ. (n.d.). Retrieved November 06, 2016, from <http://www.ourcatholicprayers.com/the-prayer-of-st-francis.html>) understanding is paramount in communication, both being understood and in understanding others. McLaren and Pederson (2014) write, "Understanding can be defined as achieving congruent perspectives about a particular domain or topic (Laing, Phillipson, & Lee, 1966)." Communication allows us the opportunity to achieve these congruent perspectives. Achieving understanding is a relational process; it is not done merely by oneself. We gain understanding as we are in communicational relationships. We each have the ability and responsibility to convey meaning to one another in the messages we create. We also have the ability and responsibility to interpret meaning in the messages we receive from others. Communication needs to be about achieving mutual understanding.

I believe that we were created to serve others and when we live self-centered lives, we diminish our humanity. I believe that one of the noblest acts we can achieve is to help others live into the fullness of their humanity, to reach their full potential. Every day affords us the opportunity to interact in people's lives in ways that can help them. To me, communication is a lynchpin in that process. We have the chance to create our social world and subsequently to be shaped by that world. By choosing communication that builds rather than destroys, that is true rather than dishonest we can help one another live into their humanity and reach their full potential. Communication theories and practices afford us the opportunity to uncover injustices, to serve the marginalized, and to benefit society at large. To do this, communication must be true, honest and brave.

To me communication is like a clock, there is so much behind the face, so many things that make it work. As a communication scholar, I want to be like a clockmaker who knows the inner workings of the clock, who knows that there is so much more behind the face that makes the clock work. I know that by understanding communication theories and practices that I will be a person who can relate better, is more deeply connect, understands more clearly and can serve and help others.

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