

CHAPTER 10

Communication Climate

What is communication climate?

- Communication climate: Social tone of a relationship.
- Every relationship has a unique climate.
- Communication climates are shared by everyone involved.



How Communication Climates Develop

- Confirming communication: Messages that convey valuing.
- Disconfirming communication: lack of regard.
- We send and receive confirming and disconfirming communication statements whenever we communicate.



Levels of Message Confirmation

- Confirming messages
 - Recognition
 - Acknowledgement
 - Endorsement
- Disconfirming messages
 - Impervious response
 - Interrupting response
 - Irrelevant response
 - Tangential response
 - Ambiguous response
 - Incongruous response
- Disagreeing messages
 - Argumentativeness
 - Complaining
 - Aggressiveness

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Defensiveness

- Disconfirming/ disagreeing messages pollute a communication climate.
- Defensiveness is a response to protect one's presenting self and face from an attack.
 - Face-threatening acts: Messages that seem to challenge the image we want to project.
 - We protect our presenting self, our face.
- Topics that trigger defensiveness vary, as well as who offers the defense-arousing remark.

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Climate Patterns

- Research:
 - Married couples' response in conflict situations is similar to the other's statement: conciliation leads to conciliatory responses, confrontation leads to aggressive responses.
 - Negative communication is more likely to be reciprocated than positive; once hostility is expressed, it usually escalates.



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Creating Positive Climates: Gibb's Approach

- Reducing defensiveness
 - Evaluation versus description
 - Control versus problem-orientation
 - Strategy versus spontaneity
 - Neutrality versus empathy
 - Superiority versus equality
 - Certainty versus provisionality



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Offering Constructive Criticism



- Check your motives
- Choose a good time
- Buffer negative with positives
 - Sandwich method:
 - Positive comment, issue of concern, positive comment
- Follow up

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Transforming Negative Climates



- Seek more information
 - Listening open-mindedly
 - You don't necessarily have to accept the speaker's ideas
- Ask for specifics
- Guess about specifics
 - Become detective and suspect with goodwill
 - "Okay, I understand that you think the outfit looks funny. What is it that's so bad? Is it the color? Does it have something to do with the fit? The design?"

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Transforming Negative Climates

- Paraphrase the speaker's ideas
 - You don't have to guess about the specifics of the behavior that might be offensive
- Ask what the critic wants
- Ask about the consequences of your behavior
- Ask what else is wrong
- Agree with the critic
- Agree with the truth
 - If agreeing with criticism, the other person will ask what you intend to do about your behavior.
- Agree with the odds
 - Could be devices for manipulation.
 - Bring hidden agendas into the open for resolution.
- Agree in principle.
- Agree with the critic's perception.

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