

KEYS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION - REFLECTION



I ask for what I desire as we begin this topic



I pray that my entire being become open to God's grace



I imagine these texts being addressed to me, and note my response

Grace: that we have the courage to examine our communication and make it to become more fruitful and life giving

"If there is one word that we should never tire of repeating, it is this: dialogue. We are called to promote a culture of dialogue by every possible means and thus to rebuild the fabric of society. The culture of dialogue entails a true apprenticeship and a discipline that enables us to view others as valid dialogue partners, to respect the foreigner, the immigrant and people from different cultures as worthy of being listened to. Today we urgently need to engage all the members of society in building 'a culture which privileges dialogue as a form of encounter' and in creating 'a means for building consensus and agreement while seeking the goal of a just, responsive and inclusive society'. Peace will be lasting in the measure that we arm our children with the weapons of dialogue, that we teach them to fight the good fight of encounter and negotiation. In this way, we will bequeath to them a culture capable of devising strategies of life, not death, and of inclusion, not exclusion."

Pope Francis - Address upon receiving the Charlemagne Prize, May 6, 2016

"Teach me your way of looking at people: as you glanced at Peter after his denial, as you penetrated the heart of the rich young man and the hearts of your disciples. I would like to meet you as you really are, since your image changes those with whom you come into contact.

Remember John the Baptist's first meeting with you? And the centurion's feeling of unworthiness? And the amazement of all those who saw miracles and other wonders?

How you impressed your disciples, the rabble in the Garden of Olives, Pilate and his wife and the centurion at the foot of the cross... I would like to hear and be impressed by your manner of speaking, listening, for example, to your discourse in the synagogue in Capernaum or the Sermon on the Mount where your audience felt you "taught as one who has authority."

Pedro Arrupe, Pedro Arrupe: Essential Writings

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Who are my communication role models? How am I invited to follow their example?

How can my way of looking at people further my dialogue with them or block our conversation?

KEYS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION - EXERCISE

ASSESSING YOUR COMMUNICATION

The practices summarized in the following pages help in communicating with others. Take some silent time to read the suggested inventories and check the statements that catch your attention.

FROM REFLECTION TO ACTION

Collecting Insights

- From the list of statements that you highlighted in the first part of the exercise, how frequently do you actually practice each point? You can use the following scale:
 - 5: for behaviors you practice very frequently
 - 4: frequently
 - 3: occasionally
 - 2: rarely
 - 1: very rarely
 - 0: never
- What three insights have you learned about yourself following this assessment?

Called to Action

- What are three communication behaviors that you wish to commit yourself to following this assessment?
- Why is it important for you to incorporate these behaviors in your interactions? How would your communication be different? What could stand in the way, and how do I plan to overcome these difficulties?

Actions I commit to	Why is this important?	Potential barriers and ways to overcome them
1. 2. 3.		

Share your learning and commitment with your group.

ADDITIONAL EXERCISES

PART 1: SUGGESTED KEYS TO BETTER COMMUNICATION

- In my communication, I emphasize in addition to the desire of being understood, the commitment to understanding others.
- I connect to (or seek to develop) my desire to be with others, knowing that it affects my motivation to communicate with them.
- I believe in the “treasure hidden in the field” of the person I am communicating with.
- I try to learn from the conversation and regard it as a benefit.
- I consider my audience and adapt my communication accordingly.
- I remind myself that communication is a *mutual* process and give others a chance to respond.
- I don't dominate the conversation.
- I am fully present in the conversations. I don't multitask.
- I let others finish speaking before I begin talking. I do not interrupt.
- I consider the speaker's nonverbal behaviors and tone of voice.
- I monitor my body language and adapt it to reinforce my message.
- I outline what I plan to share and clarify the purpose of my communication.
- I vary the pace and tone of my speech according to the situation.
- I know when to pause to make a point.
- I listen for the central theme and patterns.
- I use stories to get my points across.
- I use clear and simple language.
- I communicate in a straight way. I give the necessary information while keeping my interventions short and to the point.
- I try to be specific and avoid generalizations (e.g. “everybody”, “always”, “never”).
- I help others feel comfortable and at ease when I communicate to them.
- I am honest, kind and realistic in what I say.
- I am aware of my defaults when dealing with sensitive or emotionally charged issues. I know what presses my buttons.
- Throughout the conversation, I am aware of my arousal levels (excitement, boredom, tiredness, anger...) and am able to regulate them.
- I share my views in a non-threatening way.
- When I am communicating, I realize and recognize that I can see things only from my own perspective.
- I don't equate my experience with others. I know that all experiences are individual and that the conversation is not only about me.
- When sharing my opinion, I use statements in the first person “I” form.
- I am comfortable praising and apologizing when needed.
- I take the time to identify (and maybe also share) the assumptions that I make about what others are saying (instead of just making them and not clarifying what I assumed).
- I ask others about assumptions they might be making themselves or ask for clarification when I am not sure what they meant.
- I paraphrase (by stating in my own words) the main points to make sure that I understand them correctly.
- I inquire as to what the other person has heard me say.
- I seek to develop my communication and keep practicing.

PART 2: SUGGESTED KEYS TO BETTER LISTENING

- I am interested in other people and understanding things from another perspective.
- I try to keep an open mind and enter every conversation assuming that I have something to learn.
- I face the speaker (or sit at a slight angle to him) and keep good eye contact even if he/she are not looking at me.
- I read and interpret what the speaker's body language is communicating (gestures, eye contact, tone,...).
- I show proper respect and kindness to those I am listening to.
- I am able to show that I understand the point that the speaker is trying to make even though I may not agree with it.
- When I listen, I am aware of prejudices I may have toward the speaker and am able to put them aside.
- I put all the efforts needed to give my full mental and emotional presence to the speaker. I try not to think about other things when listening to others.
- If I find myself losing track of what is being said, I intentionally concentrate harder.
- I allow the speaker to finish his complete thought without interrupting.
- I pay attention to what people are **really** saying, not just what I think they are saying.
- I carefully listen to both content and emotional meaning.
- I use my intuition to hear what is beneath the words.
- I monitor my own non-verbal communication and am aware of the message I may be unintentionally sending.
- I place myself in the speaker's shoes and try to grasp what is shaping his intent and feelings. I try to imagine how things look like through his lenses.
- I listen with empathy. I bring a tolerant stance and am able to suspend judgment.
- I am able to apply objective values to what is being shared and am ready to reconsider some of my biases and beliefs.
- I am discerning and intentional in my listening, and am determined to use what I hear to improve my understanding of the speaker and our interaction.
- I use the speaker's words and style of communication to create resonance and I repeat words that seemed significant to the speaker.
- I mentally note key phrases or word associations to keep in mind the speakers' words.
- I remind myself that we all have a frame of reference when we receive a message.
- I remind myself that we often use the same language and often mean different things: e.g. Catholic, Jesuit, young...
- I test my understanding by offering back what I hear and ask if I am correct in my understanding.
- I trust the speaker to find his own insights and solutions.
- I don't feel pressured to intervene a lot and am able to keep my interruptions to the minimum.
- I am not afraid of silence and am able to use it as a valid intervention.
- I make a good use of questions to encourage dialogue with people.
- I listen for central themes and patterns and ask the speaker about the common thread.
- While listening, I make sure not to formulate rebuttals and bring in a neutral stance without expressing any disagreement.
- I practice listening.

EXPECTED LEARNINGS AND OUTCOMES

1. Presenting strategies and keys for communicating effectively
2. Assessing one's communication style and providing an opportunity to develop skills based on perceived assessment
3. Providing tools to better listen
4. Examining our listening experience and highlighting development areas

KEYS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION - RESOURCES

GENERAL LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

Title	Author	Publisher	Year	Link
10 ways to have a better conversation	Celeste Headlee	TED Talk	2015	Link
How to speak so that people want to listen	Julian Treasure	TED Talk	2013	Link
Brief: Make a Bigger Impact by Saying Less	Joseph McCormack	Wiley	2014	Summary
An Introduction to Interpersonal Communication: A Primer on Communication Studies		Creative Commons licensed, freely downloadable	2012	Link
Communicate Effectively		Creative Commons licensed	2012	Link
Listening (Chapter 5 from the book A Primer on Communication Studies)		Creative Commons licensed	2012	Link
Listening in Groups		Creative Commons licensed	2012	Link
Tips on Effective Listening	Larry Nadig	Conflict911.com		Link
Five Ways to Sharpen Your Communication Skills	John Baldoni	Harvard Business Review	2009	Link
5 Essential Communications Skills to Catapult Your Career		Harvard Business Review	2014	Link
The process of dialogue creating effective communication	Edgar H. Schein	The Systems Thinker	1993	Link
Eye of the needle a communication tool	Nancy Oelklaus	The Systems Thinker		Link
The potential of talking and the challenge of listening	Adam Kahane	The Systems Thinker		Link

IGNATIAN RESOURCES

Title	Author	Publisher	Year	Link
Directions for Communication	Willi Lambert SJ	The Crossroad Publishing Company	2000	Link
Obstacles to Good Listening	Robin Daniels	The Way	2016	Link

QUOTES

- “We often refuse to accept an idea merely because the tone of voice in which it has been expressed is unsympathetic to us.” Friedrich Nietzsche
- We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak. Epictetus
- “A conversation requires a balance between talking and listening, and somewhere along the way, we lost that balance”. Celeste Headlee
- “Two monologues do not make a dialogue” – Jeff Daly
- “The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when someone asked me what I thought, and attended to my answer.” Henry David Thoreau
- "To listen well is as powerful a means of communication and influence as to talk well." John Marshall
- “Silence is only frightening to people who are compulsively verbalizing”. William S. Burroughs
- You cannot truly listen to anyone and do anything else at the same time. Scott Peck
- Since true listening involves a setting aside of the self, it also temporarily involves a total acceptance of the others. Sensing this acceptance, the speaker will feel less and less vulnerable, and more and more inclined to open up the inner recesses of his or her mind to the listener. As this happens, speaker and listener begin to appreciate each other more and more, and the dance of love is begun again. Scott Peck
- An essential part of true listening is the discipline of bracketing, the temporary giving up or setting aside of one's own prejudices, frames of reference and desires so as to experience as far as possible the speaker's world from the inside, step in inside his or her shoes. Scott Peck
- Listening well is an exercise of attention and by necessity hard work. It is because they do not realize this or because they are not willing to do the work that most people do not listen well. Scott Peck
- Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply. Stephen R. Covey
- I believe that every human being needs to listen consciously in order to live fully -- connected in space and in time to the physical world around us, connected in understanding to each other, not to mention spiritually connected, because every spiritual path I know of has listening and contemplation at its heart. Julian Treasure
- “One of the best ways to persuade others is with your ears—by listening to them.” Dean Rusk
- “Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.” Winston Churchill
- “Listen a hundred times; ponder a thousand times; speak once.” Turkish Proverb