

The Communication Gap

It is fascinating that we can take an idea from one person's brain and implant it into another person's! The journey seems simple, but actually involves complex cognitive processes: sensing and encoding. Additionally, language can have many flaws of meaning and encoding. Often one person's intended message is not well understood. This is the gap between *intent* and *impact*.

Intent



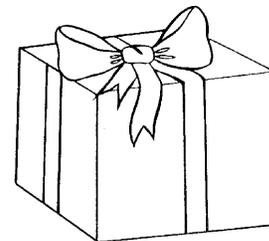
Impact



The goal is always to close the gap. Inter-culturally we learn to speak one another's language. Intra-culturally (within our own culture) we work to better understand each other's meaning by employing different strategies.

Communication becomes more complicated when the communication is feedback, or positive and negative ideas about a person's behavior.

For the inter-personal process of feedback to go well, feedback should really be thought of as a present—a gift prepared especially for this situation. Feedback can sometimes be ugly, given in a way that is not appropriate, but it is still a gift that can help you better communicate in the future and make you a more well-rounded person.



That said both the giver and receiver have important skills to employ in order to effectively understand one another and deescalate a sensitive situation...

GIVER

- Ask permission to give feedback
- Ask if there is any particular way that the Receiver likes to get feedback
- Make sure the feedback is:
 - Meaningful
 - Timely
 - Specific
 - Not over generalized (you always do...)
 - Your own feedback
- Use phrases like:
 - It seems like...
 - I feel like...
 - When you do this it makes me feel...
- Be open to the possibility that your perspective may be off and willingly admit it
 - I may be wrong here, but it seemed like...
- Consider alternative reasons for the Receiver's behaviors
 - Am I wrong? Did you mean for it to come off this way?
- Thank the Receiver for listening and let them know how nice it is to feel heard
- Ask if the Receiver would please respond to the feedback

RECEIVER

- Be willing to accept feedback
- Provide examples of ways in which they like to receive feedback
- Be OPEN. Position oneself in a way to better receive the feedback:
 - Eye contact
 - Facing the person
 - Nodding to show that one understands the meaning of the Giver's language
 - Avoid shaking one's head when the Giver says something disagreeable – the goal is to just hear them out
 - Sitting upright with shoulders back
 - Legs and limbs should face the Giver
- Use language skills to communicate understanding:
 - Parrot: repeat
 - Clarify: when you said this, it makes me think...
- Respond to the Giver's feedback in a timely manner (then or later) and make sure to schedule a time for when that will be
- Thank the giver for the feedback