Diverse Communication—Alive & Well

Chances are the members of your family, social circle, and office team are of various ages and from diverse backgrounds. As a result, the definition of communication is not necessarily the same from one person to another. Consequently, miscommunication is alive and well in every aspect of your life. When I asked some associates to define communication, one said that it involves speaking clearly, and having good eye contact. Another indicated that communication is something that should be handled by an e-mail or a text message to save time. Still another was concerned that people no longer actually engage in verbal conversation with their words and body language connected. Wow!! This puts a real burden on people in multiple settings. Some ideas to help work through the communication differences are:

- Determine for yourself what constitutes communication for you, and at the same time, be aware of how others in the group tend to get their messages across. Some understanding and adaptation on your part can bridge the gap between you.

- Develop skills which allow you to better connect with other members of the group. Listen and observe, and embrace personal tactics that can help you to accept other styles and engage in ways others communicate.

- Be aware of others’ interests. If you are not familiar with certain subjects, take time to learn about them. You will educate yourself, and you can then present new topics with which to engage in communication with your family and acquaintances.

- Be patient with others. If your colleague needs step-by-step directions, take time to help him/her learn. If a co-worker is one who immediately jumps from step 1 to step 6, be gentle, and show how eliminating the in-between steps could be detrimental to the final outcome. Conversely, be open to explanations that may enlighten you as to why the additional steps may not be necessary in completing the process.

- When conflicts occur, don’t take them personally. Utilize the 6-step process of problem solving: identify the problem, brainstorm solutions, select one, implement it, review its success, and choose another tactic if the first one didn’t work. Once you become familiar with this practice, you are likely to find that it is really not as time-consuming as you might have expected, and it helps open your mind to new methods. This process can be a valuable asset to improving your communication.

- Be realistic. People do make mistakes, and when you work together to solve problems, those mistakes become learning experiences. Pay attention to one another, and you may find communication barriers are not as extreme as you thought.

Therefore, as you mull over the idea that miscommunication is alive and well, and people communicate in different ways, you may become quite comfortable in your various groups. Try to recognize the different styles of communication, and realize that these are good methods, just different. If you make a conscious effort to adjust, you are on the way to becoming comfortable and productive in a vast number of situations.
Summer Vacation Is Almost Here. Are You Ready ???

Believe it or not, school will soon be out for the summer. Golfing, swimming, hiking, and other activities are making a return to your schedule. Have you even thought about what you and your family will be doing for the next few months? Perhaps now is a good time to take inventory and make some plans. Are there a lot of family/friends’ weddings, graduations, or other events on the horizon? Can you consider making some short vacations around such activities? Are your kids heading to camp, or are they taking extra courses in summer school? Do you have schedules made for these activities? Before everything becomes overwhelming, take time to review and decide on a summer plan.

⇒ On your calendar, block out the short vacations, camps, school-connected activities, and holidays. Consider estimated preparation time for these functions. Also, remember to allow for “wind down” time when returning from events. Now, mark that on your calendar as well, so you will not inadvertently schedule another activity too close to going or coming.

⇒ If some activities require new clothing or gift purchases, get that done—preferably when there may be sales. If you prefer to shop for these items, make a plan to save time as well as money. Share the responsibilities of picking up necessities. If you are inclined to shop on-line—get the orders in so you have time to make sure things are as you expect them to be. Take advantage of companies that offer free delivery. For safety, consider having deliveries made to your place of employment if no one is home to get them inside safely.

⇒ Don’t forget to give yourself some down time. You may want to read a good book, or just relax with your feet up. Balancing rest with your activities is an asset, as it can keep you from “overload.”

⇒ Proper diet and exercise are critical for all times of the year. In the summer, you may like to include some meals that require little or no cooking—or perhaps, good food on the grill. Just be sure to include proteins, fruits/vegetables, and some carbs. These will help you stay fit. Exercise can include a walk in the park, playing golf, playing tennis, or swimming. Do what is best for you and your family. Enjoy the long days of summer.

Now that you have adjusted to the idea that summer is right around the corner, begin to plan. Remember to keep your activities in line with what you have to accomplish (work, family, etc.), so you will not be overwhelmed. Enjoy the summer. Take some mini-vacations. Take time for yourself.

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