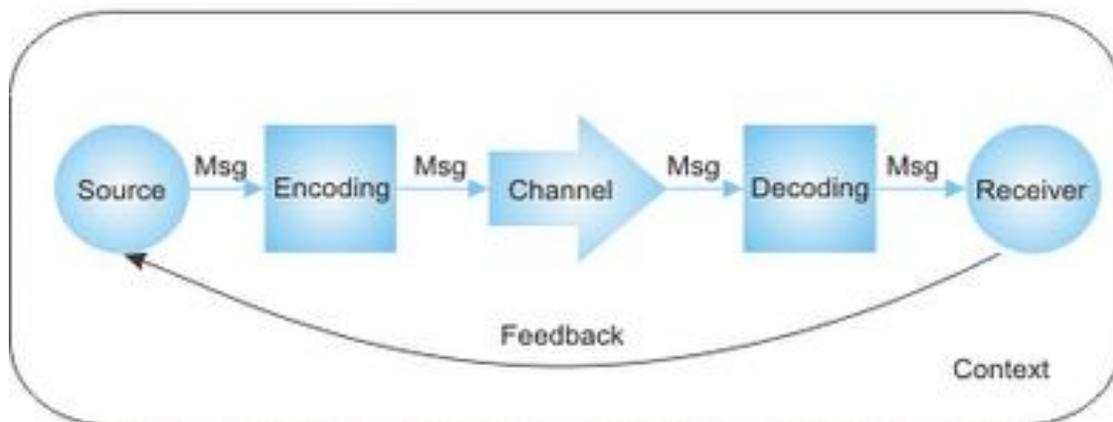


L'Arche USA New Leader Online Training September 2017: Communication and Conflict

Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 1998 (pp.21-31)

Community is a place of conflict, the first conflict is between the values of the world and the values of community, between togetherness and independence. The next source of conflict is in learning to give space to others so that they may grow, rather than competing with them and lording over them. The third source of conflict is similar to the second. It is the conflict between caring for people and caring only for oneself. The fourth source of conflict is between being open and being closed. [Often] the extended family is closed... people may sacrifice their personal growth, freedom and becoming to the god of belonging, a death to personal growth. A community that is called to keep people open is a vulnerable community that takes risks. It does not hang on to its own security and power.

The Communications Process



Systematic=Step by Step=Process

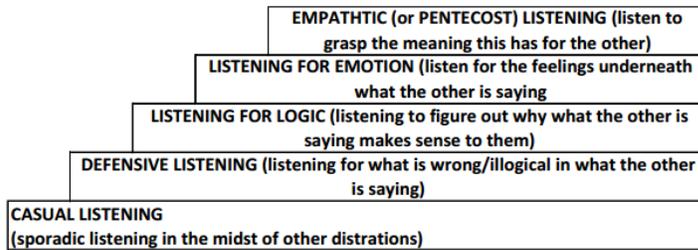
Human communication is interpersonal, purposeful and a process.

What do we mean by process? By process we mean that steps have to be taken and in a set/particular order to achieve a desired result/goal. These are the important elements of the communication process:

1. **SENDER/ENCODER:** The sender also known as the encoder decides on the message to be sent, the best/most effective way that it can be sent. All of this is done bearing the receiver in mind. In a word, it is his/her job to **conceptualize**. The sender may want to ask him/herself questions like: What words will I use? Do I need signs or pictures?
2. **MEDIUM:** The medium is the immediate form that a message takes. For example, a message may be communicated in the form of a letter, in the form of an email or face to face in the form of a speech.
3. **CHANNEL:** The channel is that which is responsible for the delivery of the chosen message form. For example post office, internet, radio.
4. **RECEIVER:** The receiver or the decoder is responsible for extracting/decoding meaning from the message. The receiver is also responsible for providing feedback to the sender. In a word, it is his/her job to **INTERPRET**.
5. **FEEDBACK:** This is important as it determines whether or not the decoder grasped the intended meaning and whether communication was successful.
6. **CONTEXT:** Communication does not take place in a vacuum. The context of any communication act is the environment surrounding it. This includes, among other things, place, time, event, and attitudes of sender and receiver.
7. **NOISE** (also called interference): this is any factor that inhibits the conveyance of a message. That is, anything that gets in the way of the message being accurately received, interpreted and responded to. Noise may be internal or external. A student worrying about an incomplete assignment may not be attentive in class (internal noise) or the sounds of heavy rain on a galvanized roof may inhibit the reading of a storybook to second graders (external noise).

Communication

Empathic Listening (based on Stephen Covey's theory)

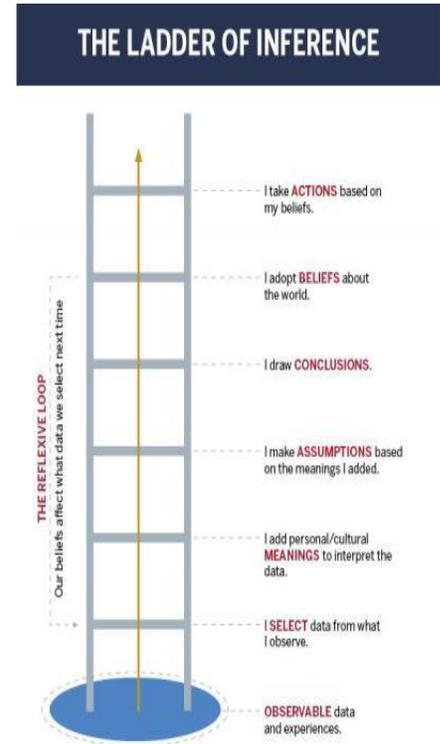


Ladder of Inference

From *Redeeming Conflict*, Anne M Garrido

In the early 1970's, Chris Argyris, a Harvard Business School professor, first proposed what would become widely known in the management field as the "ladder of inference." His model describes the process by which two persons in the same place at the same time can translate the same event in ways that make no sense to one another.

We've been trained to pay attention to whatever pertains to us. We each have our own ladder. In times of conflict, our conversations tend to start at the top of the ladder. We stand on the highest rungs trading our conclusions and beliefs. Argyris notes that the most effective thing we can do is move backward down the ladder and be curious about what is happening at each other's lower rungs.



The Knot of Intention

Intent ≠ Impact

MY INTENT	MY IMPACT ON THEM ?
THEIR INTENT ?	THEIR IMPACT ON ME

Ann M. Garrido talks about the metaphor of conflict being like a knot. A key to untangling the knot is to separate Intent v. Intention

Intent does not equal Impact

We are called to:

- Test assumptions - Ask!
- Practice the Principle of Charitable Interpretation

Curiosity

Adopting a stance of Curiosity

- What is the other person's truth?
- What if this is not about truth?
- What are my purposes?

Right-sized aims for a conversation

- We can always find out more
- We can share our own partial truth with the aim of contributing to an ever more adequate picture of reality
- We can always invite others to problem solve with us

Emotion

Emotional triggers

Harvard law professors Roger Fisher and Daniel Shapiro researched the role emotion plays in arriving at negotiated agreements. They identified five core emotional needs that seem wired into human nature:

- Autonomy - We all want a certain degree of control over our lives and work.
- Affiliation - We all want a sense of belonging, of inclusion.
- Appreciation - We want others to notice and value what we do.
- Status - We want to be seen in right relation to others based on what we believe has value.
- Role - We want to have a part that contributes to the overall whole.

When our needs are met, people are collaborative, forgiving, creative and generous. When needs are not met, people are frustrated and angry.

We should welcome our emotions and those of others, never suppress them. Researchers Sheila Heen and Douglas Stone note that each of us has our own emotional baseline, our own emotional swing and our own emotional recovery time. We can vary as much as 3000 percent in terms of how long it takes us to return to baseline. Ann calls this our unique "Emotional Fingerprint."

We need to recognize our own emotional fingerprint and understand the importance of owning and handling our feelings while recognizing that we don't always understand the feelings of others.

Don Miguel Ruiz's Four Agreements are:

- Be Impeccable With Your Word
- Don't Take Anything Personally
- Don't Make Assumptions
- Always Do Your Best

Understanding the Theory: Conflict Styles

In the 1970's Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann identified five main styles of dealing with conflict that vary in their degrees of cooperativeness and assertiveness. They argued that people typically have a preferred conflict resolution style. However they also noted that different styles were most useful in different situations.

Thomas and Kilmann's styles are:

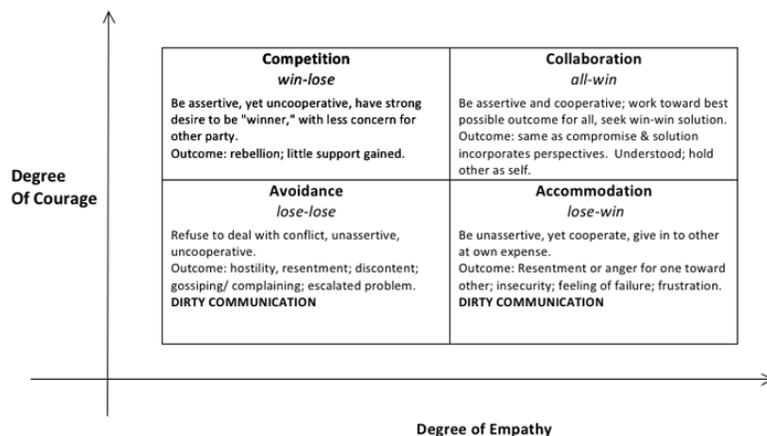
Competitive: People who tend towards a competitive style take a firm stand, and know what they want. They usually operate from a position of power, drawn from things like position, rank, expertise, or persuasive ability. This style can be useful when there is an emergency and a decision needs to be made fast; when the decision is unpopular; or when defending against someone who is trying to exploit the situation selfishly. However it can leave people feeling bruised, unsatisfied and resentful when used in less urgent situations.

Collaborative: People tending towards a collaborative style try to meet the needs of all people involved. These people can be highly assertive but unlike the competitor, they cooperate effectively and acknowledge that everyone is important. This style is useful when you need to bring together a variety of viewpoints to get the best solution; when there have been previous conflicts in the group; or when the situation is too important for a simple trade-off.

Compromising: People who prefer a compromising style try to find a solution that will at least partially satisfy everyone. Everyone is expected to give up something, and the compromiser him- or she also expects to relinquish something. Compromise is useful when the cost of conflict is higher than the cost of losing ground, when equal strength opponents are at a standstill and when there is a deadline looming.

Accommodating: This style indicates a willingness to meet the needs of others at the expense of the person's own needs. The accommodator often knows when to give in to others, but can be persuaded to surrender a position even when it is not warranted. This person is not assertive but is highly cooperative. Accommodation is appropriate when the issues matter more to the other party, when peace is more valuable than winning, or when you want to be in a position to collect on this "favor" you gave. However people may not return favors, and overall tills approach is unlikely to give the best outcomes.

Avoiding: People tending towards this style seek to evade the conflict entirely. This style is typified by delegating controversial decisions, accepting default decisions, and not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings. It can be appropriate when victory is impossible, when the controversy is trivial, or when someone else is in a better position to solve the problem. However in many situations this is a weak and ineffective approach to take.



From Functional Consensus <http://www.functionalconsensus.org/step-two/courage-empathy>

Consider for yourself:

- What is my preferred style?
- In my leadership role, what styles do I find myself needing to employ or learn to be more effective?
- What types of conflict have I been part of or needed to manage that required different styles?

Resolving Conflicts as Servant Leaders

In theory it is called The Interest-Based Relational Approach (IBR) but for us in L'Arche it really seems to fit our call as Servant Leaders. This type of conflict resolution respects individual differences while helping people avoid becoming too entrenched in a fixed position. In resolving conflict using this approach, follow these rules:

1. Make sure that good relationships are the first priority. You treat the other calmly and try to build mutual respect. Do your best to be courteous to one-another and remain constructive under pressure.
2. Keep people and problems separate: Recognize that in many cases the other person is not just "being difficult" - real and valid differences can lie behind conflictive positions. By separating the problem from the person, real issues can be debated without damaging relationships. Remember, you always love the person, but may not love the person's action.
3. Pay attention to the interests that are being presented: By listening carefully you'll most likely understand why the person is adopting his or her position.
4. Listen first; talk second. To solve a problem effectively you have to understand where the other person is coming from before defending your own position. Be quiet!!! Listen!!! Don't plan what you'll say next.
5. Agree and establish the objective, observable elements that will have an impact on the decision.
6. Explore options together: Be open to the idea that a third position may exist, and that you can get to this idea jointly.

Conflict Escalation

Learning how to manage conflict involves being able to identify the steps in any escalating confrontation, and being able to stop the escalation and do emotional repair by reinforcing the positive aspects of the relationship.

The following list, from the book "Everyone Can Win" (Cornelius & Faire), shows the escalating steps, from a first discomforting feeling to a big crisis leading to the dissolution of the relationship. In each level, when parties reach the point of no return, they escalate to the next level, beyond which the whole conflict changes because it sets up a different set of feelings and behavior.

- **Uncomfortableness:** you have an inner, intuitive feeling that something is going wrong with somebody or with the group.
- **Incidents:** you feel a little bit irritated by small things that involve somebody else, but you tend to forget them.
- **Misunderstandings:** you don't understand somebody else's words or behavior. Communication is deficient and there is no clarity in people expectations.
- **Tension:** you feel tense each time you meet that person or that part of the group. There is an abundance of negative attitudes. Consciously or unconsciously people hurt each other.
- **Crisis:** repressed emotions release. Violence can appear.

A Conflict Resolution Process

Look at the circumstances of the conflict and think about the style that may be appropriate.

Step 1: Set the Scene: Agree on the rules of IBR - make sure that people understand that the conflict may be a mutual problem, which can best be resolved through discussion and negotiation. USE ACTIVE LISTENING skills to hear and understand the other's position. Restate, Paraphrase, Summarize. Make sure that when you speak, you are using an adult assertive approach rather than a submissive or aggressive style.

Step 2: Gather information. Try to get to the **underlying interests, needs and concerns**. Ask for the other person's viewpoint. Identify issues clearly and concisely. Use "I" statements. Remain flexible. Clarify feelings.

Step 3: Agree on the Problem. If you can't reach a common perception of the problem, then at the very least, you need to understand what the other person sees as the problem.

Step 4: Brainstorm Possible Solutions. It is important for everyone involved to have had fair input in generating solutions. Be open to all ideas, including ones you've never considered before.

Step 5: Negotiate a Solution. Be calm, be patient, have respect. Try for a Win-Win – compromise may be needed on both sides.