



Eksento Inc.

knowing • doing • being

The Art of Collaborative Communication and Connected Thinking

Communication experts, therapists, social archaeologists, philosophers, and leaders of humanity have emphasized the indisputable value of human communication. Author and therapist Virginia Satir states that communication is, in fact, the *largest single factor* determining the kinds of relationships we create and sustain with others in our life sphere. According to Satir, communication determines *what happens to us* in the world. That is no small accomplishment!

Communication may be the common thread in human interaction and quality of life, yet this basic skill continues to be a challenge for many of us. We don't always say what we mean or mean what we say. We don't always validate the other person's thoughts or experiences. We often limit ourselves to mirroring back statements and facts while disregarding feelings and emotional content. Many of us fear being judged or criticized and, as a result, we tend to protect ourselves by communicating in a defensive manner. To complicate matters even more, we often expect others to read our minds. And, let's face it - we are not great listeners; in fact, research confirms that we listen effectively only 25% of the time.

What is the purpose of communication? In the simplest of terms, the purpose of communication is *to understand and to be understood*. Notice that "to understand" comes first. To understand, we need to suspend judgment and stop the noise in our own head long enough to hear what the other person is really saying (not what *we* want to hear).

HIGHER AWARENESS

I argue very well. Ask any of my remaining friends. I can win an argument on any topic, against any opponent. People know this, and steer clear of me at parties. Often, as a sign of their great respect, they don't even invite me.

-- Dave Barry

Through this witty observation, columnist and humorist Dave Barry raises a valid point. We all know people who want to be right at all costs and perhaps we find ourselves choosing this *way of being* to achieve some of our goals. Most of us have been trained in the art of debate (my idea vs. your idea) more than we have in the art of dialogue (my idea improves your idea and vice versa).

When we choose to dialogue, our communication approach is based in our willingness to share Vision and build Meaning. We are constructing instead of deconstructing. Authentic dialogue can't survive without active and unconditional listening. When we are in dialogue mode, we strive to remain open to others' thinking as a way to improve our own thinking. We build ideas... together. The purpose of dialogue is to intentionally search for strengths and value in every position, thought and suggestion that is brought forward by anyone at anytime. It's collective genius at work.

Dave Barry reminds us that being focused on argumentation does not help us build relationships or ideas. When we don't listen to people in our life at home or at work, we lose touch with the larger picture, and the richness of the moment being lived.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What do you need to do to generate more authentic and ongoing dialogue in your life?



When we hear someone speak, our brain registers a chain of words that may not fully convey the *lifetime of experience* and knowledge of the speaker; the words chosen mostly reflect the here and now of the exchange. There is always more to what we perceive, and as listeners, we need to actively try to connect the dots. Where is this person coming from? What is his life/work experience? What is her message? What beliefs colour my own assumptions when I listen and interpret? To support productive communication and enhance common understanding, we need to become more skilled at hearing the message beneath, besides and in-between the words.

We tend to reward speech as a social skill but rarely do we reward good listening. Yet, listening is instrumental in connecting the dots.

To actively listen:

- Be mentally, physically and spiritually prepared. Eyes, Ears, Body. Mind. Soul. All here.
- Be quiet. Stop the noise in your head. Don't speak when the other speaks, not even in your mind.
- Be fully present in the moment. In fact, being fully present in each moment of our life should be our life's ambition!
- Be empathetic. Everyone needs and deserves validation, understanding and respect while they share thoughts and feelings.
- Be inquiring. Ask "wonder-full" questions that show your interest and can further the conversation along.



This newsletter has been prepared by Jeannine Ouellette,
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BEING@WORK

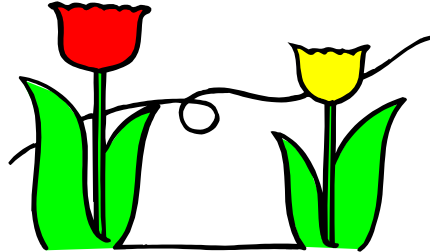
Workshop Series

Collaborative Communication

1-Day Workshop

Learning Objectives:

- To describe the components of the communication process
- To identify barriers and remedies to effective communication
- To practice skills to enhance direct and face-to-face communication
- To describe and practice non-defensive communication strategies
- To identify the role of emotional intelligence in communication
- To learn how to dialogue



Happy Spring To All

...AND COMING SOON

- New workshop on enhancing *Team Creative Potential*
- *Vision Awards*: Eksento Inc. has been nominated for the 2003 Ray & Berndtson Vision Award, for excellence by a supplier in providing a product or service to the human resources function. Go to www.thevisionawards.org for details!

Visit our website to learn more about Eksento services which include **training, strategic planning, facilitation, and proofreading.** www.eksento.com

Talk to us about your training needs!
We are always in the process of designing new workshops for human beings at work.
