

## 1.2 Relationships

# Connection vs. Communication

## TEACHING BASICS

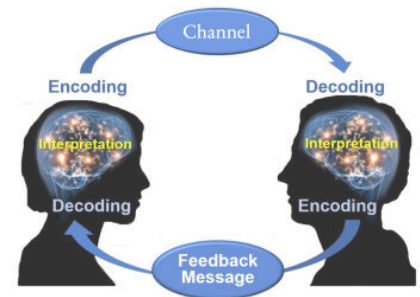
### The Communication Process

The communication process involves a sender, a receiver, and potentially a feedback loop. The process begins when the sender has a message they wish to convey to the receiver. This message can be anything from a simple idea to a complex set of instructions. The sender then needs to choose a channel of communication, such as email, face-to-face conversation, or a phone call.

Once the channel is chosen, the sender encodes the message into a form that can be transmitted. For example, if the sender is writing an email, they will need to encode the message into written language. If the sender is speaking in person, they will need to encode the message into spoken language.

The encoded message is then transmitted through the chosen channel to the receiver. The receiver then decodes the message, interpreting it and understanding its meaning. Once the receiver has decoded the message, they may choose to respond. The response can be verbal, written, or nonverbal.

If the receiver chooses to respond, the communication process continues with the receiver becoming the sender and the sender becoming the receiver. This back-and-forth exchange of messages continues until the communication process is complete. The communication process is essential for building relationships, sharing information, and solving problems. It is also important for creating a sense of community and belonging. Effective communication can help people to build stronger relationships, achieve their goals, and live more fulfilling lives.



This communication process can then be broken into 5 stages:

- Sender Encoding
- Delivery Channel
- Receiver Decoding
- Receiver Encoding
- Feedback Channel

Each of those stages are gates through which communication may fail and ultimately lead to miscommunication, or even altercations. The book of Proverbs clearly emphasizes the importance of each step: "He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him" (Proverbs 18:13). Within the terms of this diagram, the verse can be rephrased as: "He who encodes before properly decoding the message received will be ashamed."

As an example, a servant, John, attempts to plan the yearly graduation celebration for the High School Class. He wants to know who will be available to come but no-one responds. He needs to order the gifts, get the cake, reserve the place, prepare the certificates and he's running out of time. Generally people have not been responding, he is left not knowing what to do!

Based on the Diagram, it appears, there is no feedback. The failure will lie either in the Sender Encoding, Delivery Channel or Receiver Decoding. John will likely need to follow up, approach them personally instead of group messages, be conscious of things that could be keeping people from responding (varying the channel of communication). Alternatively, it may also be due to improper decoding and the receiver was simply busy, or thought they had replied but they didn't, or wasn't sure they needed to respond, or alternatively was not comfortable responding in group messages.

## The Hidden Factors

Beyond the potential stages of failure in communication, each individual may have hidden factors that impact their ability to encode or decode messages effectively. These factors can be broadly categorized into four main groups:

1. **Past Experiences:** Previous situations with a particular person or similar situations with others can influence how an individual communicates. For instance, a person who has had negative experiences with a particular server in the past may be more likely to be critical or demanding in future interactions.
2. **Culture:** Different cultures have their own unique norms and expectations regarding communication. What is considered polite or appropriate in one culture may be seen as rude or disrespectful in another. For example, the "OK" sign, which is often interpreted as "perfect" in the United States, is interpreted as "money" in Japan and "zero" in Argentina.
3. **Feelings/Mood:** A person's emotional state can also impact their communication. Someone who is stressed, tired, or busy may be more likely to be short-tempered or irritable. They may also be less patient or attentive when listening to others. They might even get upset about something that's not even that big of a deal!
4. **Language:** Language can be a source of misunderstanding, especially when people are not familiar with the idioms or colloquialisms used in a particular language. For instance, the phrase "once in a blue moon" may not be understood by someone who is not a native English speaker.
5. **Gender:** Men and women tend to communicate differently, both verbally and nonverbally. It is important to be aware of these differences to avoid misinterpretations. For example, men may be more direct and assertive in their communication style, while women may be more indirect and collaborative.

By understanding these factors, individuals can become more effective communicators and reduce the risk of misunderstandings and conflict. For example, imagine a scenario where two servants are in the same class, Peter and Mariam. Peter has this great idea that they start off the lesson with songs. He tells Mariam about it and she listens to his proposal and nods. He is so glad she likes it and can't wait to get started! Two weeks later, Mariam is surprised to see Peter getting up, plugging in his phone and then starting to teach the kids a song. She didn't agree to this! And....it means she won't have time to

do the activity she had planned for that day which she had been working on for two days. What should she do? Where did the communication fail?

## Communication Failures

When communication fails, it is critical to remember that the servant of God is to have the spirit of the bondservant of the Lord as expressed by St. Paul: “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1-3). It is therefore critical that when communication fails we attempt to resort to the sacrifices and self-denial aspects that are needed to keep the spirit of unity and then re-evaluate the point of failure. In this case, Peter and Maria needed to be conscious of gender differences that could cause misunderstandings. Women will nod their head to show they’re listening. Men will interpret head nodding as a sign of agreement, and then are surprised when they realize that they didn’t agree at all. The opposite is quite true as well, when a woman speaks to a man and he’s in neutral body language and does not say anything nor nod, the woman will think he’s bored, uninterested or doesn’t understand. This sometimes makes a woman uncomfortable and she will either repeat or ask a man what she’s saying.

Provided the number of hidden factors and the stages of the communication process, it is given that the odds of miscommunication are excessively high. Avoid holding grudges against servants or any of your surroundings where communication failed. Forgive, evaluate the communication process and repeat. Effective communication is dynamic, it requires significant work, and will be faced with many failures.

## Differentiating Connection from Communication

Words are everywhere. Whether through email, texts, billboards, ads, newspapers, magazines, movies, or other types of social media, words are everywhere. Through a varying number of channels of communications, our environment is cluttered with words. In fact, a 2008 research estimates that an individual is usually bombarded with approximately thirty five thousand messages daily (Elway Research). However, how many of these words are actually received, or filtered out. Communicating messages is easy. However, to communicate a message that relates, that makes a difference, this sets the communication apart from all other messages your receivers encountered. The key: Connection. Connecting allows the communicator to identify a method of communication that allows them to relate and influence the receiver. Connecting, then becomes a key in every individual's pursuit of success, and even more so in their day to day life and service. The ultimate goal of communication is connection.

Looking at both Josiah and Nehemiah, both inherited a kingdom or a nation that were alien to God, his laws and his commandments. Yet, through effective communication and zeal, they connected with individuals such that many followed their visions and restoration plan. Or even with Queen Esther who manages to have the King of Persia connect and relate to her inability to follow the decree set by Haman. All of their successful services began with the ability to connect with those around them. People gravitate towards those with the best capabilities of connecting. In many schools and colleges, students have the choice of their professor. Though the material may be identical and the message delivered should relatively be similar, students always attempt to pick the professor with the

communication skills, essentially those that connect with their students. Connection is powerful and is key to delivering any message.

## Obstacles to Connection

Connection has many obstacles. Immaturity, ego, and insecurity are formidable barriers to establishing meaningful connections with others. Each of these obstacles distorts our perspective and hinders our ability to engage in genuine and empathetic communication.

**Immaturity:** Immaturity is characterized by a limited capacity for empathy and an inability to see beyond one's own needs and desires. Immature individuals often struggle to understand the feelings and perspectives of others, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts. They may be impulsive and act without considering the consequences of their actions, further straining their relationships. Immaturity can be a major obstacle to forming lasting and fulfilling connections.

**Ego:** Ego refers to an inflated sense of self-importance and a preoccupation with one's own image. Individuals with a strong ego tend to be self-absorbed and may have difficulty listening to others or considering their feelings. They may be overly sensitive to criticism and quick to defend their own opinions, creating a barrier to open and honest communication. The focus on self rather than others makes it challenging to establish genuine connections. From the perspective of the communication process, the encoding process is skewed for specific feedback that benefits the self.

**Insecurity:** Insecurity is a deep-seated feeling of inadequacy or self-doubt. It often leads to a preoccupation with one's own flaws and a fear of being judged or rejected. Insecure individuals may be hesitant to share their thoughts and feelings with others, as they worry about being criticized or ridiculed. This fear of exposure can create a barrier to intimacy and make it difficult to form close relationships.

These obstacles to connection can be likened to the difficulty of having cellular reception in certain areas. Just as a weak signal can hinder communication, these psychological barriers can interfere with our ability to establish and maintain meaningful connections with others. Overcoming these obstacles requires self-awareness, empathy, and a willingness to challenge our own limitations. By cultivating maturity, humility, and a secure sense of self, we can create the conditions necessary for genuine and conducive connections.

## Conductive Connection

Creating meaningful connections with others is a fundamental aspect of human interaction. When we connect with someone, we establish a bond that allows for mutual understanding, support, and growth. Connecting effectively involves focusing on the other person and demonstrating certain conducive behaviors. Here are six key connectors that foster connection and their corresponding disconnection counterparts:

|               | Connector                                                                                                                                          | Disconnector                                                         |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>CARING</b> | Truly caring about others means putting their needs and interests before your own. It involves showing empathy, understanding, and compassion, and | Indifference, selfishness, and lack of empathy create disconnection. |

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                           |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                  | being genuinely interested in their well-being. Do you truly care for them; it's all about them.                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                           |
| <b>REAL</b>      | Going beyond words and expressing genuine emotions and experiences creates a sense of authenticity and trust. It involves being real and transparent, allowing others to see the true you.                                                                                                                 | Superficiality, fakeness, and pretense create disconnection.                              |
| <b>PROACTIVE</b> | Being proactive and willing to put in the work is essential for maintaining connections. What are you willing to do? It involves taking initiative, following through on commitments, and showing a genuine desire to invest in the relationship.                                                          | Passivity, lack of effort, and a "wait-and-see" attitude create disconnection.            |
| <b>RELATABLE</b> | Finding common ground and having shared experiences creates a sense of relatability and connection. It involves understanding and acknowledging similarities, fostering a sense of belonging.                                                                                                              | Dissimilarity, lack of shared experiences, and a sense of otherness create disconnection. |
| <b>SIMPLE</b>    | Especially in larger groups, simplicity is key. Clear and concise communication, avoiding jargon and complexity, helps create a shared understanding and prevents disconnection. Smaller groups can be more interactive and clarification can be interjected, while larger audiences this is not the case. | Complexity, jargon, and overcomplication create disconnection.                            |
| <b>INTEGRITY</b> | Living by your values and practicing what you preach fosters trust and respect. It involves being consistent in your actions and words, demonstrating alignment between your beliefs and behaviors. Do you practice what you preach?                                                                       | Hypocrisy, inconsistency, and a lack of integrity create disconnection.                   |

Focusing on these six connectors and minimizing their disconnection counterparts not only strengthens existing relationships but also opens doors for new and meaningful connections. Remember, connection is a two-way street, and it requires effort, empathy, and a genuine desire to build bridges with others.

## Settings of Connection

Within the six criterias set out, there are 3 settings of connection: one on one, in an outing or during the delivery of a class. Connecting one on one is, without a doubt, the likeliest setting of connection. Conversations are more personal, more relatable and would be the only setting that can build a true relationship. A person will never build a relationship with a motivational speaker by simply listening to their talk. One on one conversations are necessary for building relationships. Within the one on one framework, you may try to engage the receiver by following the 6 conducive connectors layed out in the table. These can be used in one on one relationship among servants, with students, or even with coworkers, friends or spouses. Connecting, during an outing or with a group, allows a more casual setting to help find common grounds. Finally, connecting with a class or an audience is a workable skillset that requires work and effort and is optimized when the other settings are utilized. It may be the most difficult, and the difference between being a lecturer and a mentor or model. Yet, within this setting, you may still try to achieve the 6 conducive selector differently.

|           | One-on-One                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Group                                                                                                                                                                                               | Audience                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CARING    | Ask about them, talk more about them, than you. Be a good listener and see what they value.                                                                                                                                          | Compliment for things they are doing, find ways to increase individual value within the group by finding their strengths.                                                                           | Communicate your desire to be there for them. Do something special for them.                                                                                                                     |
| REAL      | Keeping eye-contact, and good body language. If feet are pointing outward, or body points away from the person you are speaking to, these are indirect signals of wanting to leave the conversation. Be sensitive to these concepts. | Live the experience and the moment, be authentic. Do not hide, or simply bring a friend to seclude yourself with, or go for a stroll outside the gathering, being absent while simply showing face. | Keep smiles, allow the listeners time to hear, absorb and relate.                                                                                                                                |
| PROACTIVE | Bring true energy to the conversation, and be proactive in conversation, See what may be unspoken subtleties in the conversation and ask.                                                                                            | Make sure everyone knows your name and everyone knows your name, and go beyond by trying to discover something unique                                                                               | Practice tone, visual aids and various delivery methods. When selecting a teacher in college and students are given an option, everyone attempts to select the teacher who has better connection |

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                |                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                | about each other.                                    | skills <i>(Better tone, better delivery, etc...)</i> Even though the material is exactly the same!                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>RELATABLE</b> | Express gratitude when possible, find common ground and share experiences and lessons learned.                                                                 | Find common traits and expressions within the event. | Have relatable stories and interactions, one that provides the sense that what they encountered has been seen and has solutions that they can experience.                                                                                           |
| <b>SIMPLE</b>    | Use clear communication, and ensure the communication process consistently has feedback and the decoding has properly been transmitted.                        | Ask for feedback.                                    | Use simple words, have a simple message, and deliver the message in a simple way. The more complicated the words, the more brain power needs to be used, the less is truly captured. Use simple words, have one or two simple objectives, not five. |
| <b>INTEGRITY</b> | show genuineness in a desire to help, to serve, to relate to them, with values you keep, genuinely caring while believing in the potential of those you serve. |                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |



### *Review Questions*

1. What are the communication process stages? (A: Sender Encoding; Delivery Channel; Receiver Decoding; Receiver Encoding; Feedback Channel)
2. Give two hidden factors that impact the communication. (A: Culture and past experiences)
3. True or false? Immaturity, Ego, Insecurity are all various obstacles to properly connecting with others. (A: True)
4. What are the 6 conducive connectors? (A: Caring; Real; Proactive; Relatable; Simple; Integrity)
6. True or false? Connecting, during an outing or with a group, allows a more casual setting to help find common grounds. (A: True)



### *Books & References*

1. [Communicating with the Opposite Gender by HE Metropolitan Youssef](#), accessed 12 June 2024
2. [Maxwell, John C. Everyone Communicates, Few Connect. Thomas Nelson, 2010](#)

