

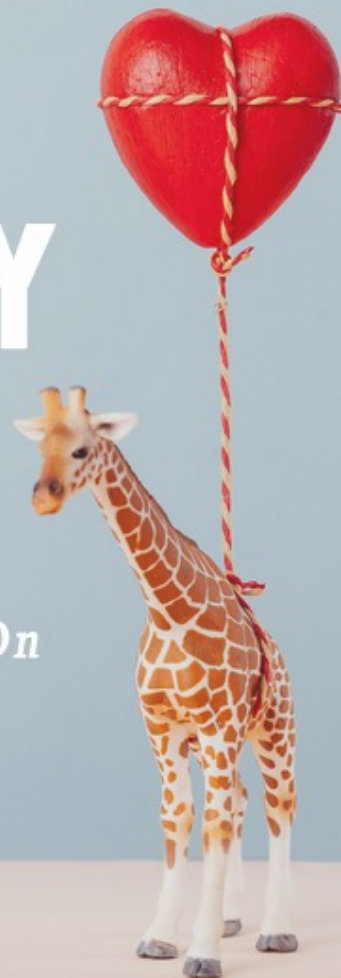
COMMUNICATION HACKS

3 Ways to Cultivate
Healthy Communication
at Home or Work.



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Keep Your Love On



COMMUNICATION HACKS

*3 Ways to Cultivate Healthy Communication at Home
or Work.*

Danny Silk

WELCOME.

Communication exposes what is going on inside the human heart. This is why it can often be the most sensitive space in any relationship. Most of us find it far too easy to resort to saying things we don't mean and meaning things we never say.

That's why I've put together this short guide to help create patterns of healthy communication at home with your spouse or at work with colleagues.

Whether you're looking for a reboot in your relationship or just additional keys to effective communication, I hope this practical look at avoiding the typical communication pitfalls will leave you with the power to communicate in love and ultimately protect your connections!

Hope it helps!



P.S. I'm also created an online class as a bonus communication hack. What we discussing happens to be one of the most important keys to relationships. In fact, while over the last couple decades of helping people attain freedom in their lives, I've never come across something as liberating and empowering.

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1

Good Communication is a Powerful-Person-Only Sport.

Communication exposes what is going on inside the human heart. Jesus said, “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” If your heart, your internal reality, is governed by fear, then you are going to telegraph that through your body language, facial expressions, words, and tone. Conversely, if your heart is governed by faith, hope, and love, you will release this reality through what you say and how you say it.

If your heart is governed by fear, then much of what you communicate is actually designed to hide what is *really* going on inside. You hold back, pretend something doesn’t hurt, or act happy when your heart is breaking in an attempt to avoid the pain that being “real” can inflict.

It’s also possible that you (like many) were never taught how to interpret and translate the language of your thoughts, emotions, and desires into words, let alone communicate them to others. As a result, your internal reality has never been validated. Now ashamed and fearful—the results of not knowing how to communicate your feelings—you hide behind an acceptable social mask.

The Fear of truth is the great hijacker of communication.

When you don’t have either the courage or the ability to face the truth of what you feel, think, and need, you end up communicating confusing and inaccurate information—sometimes even downright falsehoods.

Ask yourself these two questions.

1. If you never really learn to value and understand what's going on inside you, how can you value and understand what is going on with another person?
2. If you don't know yourself, how can you get to know another person—someone with a completely different experience and perspective—and value the truth of who they are?

The answer to both questions is simple. You can't.

Only those who value and understand themselves can value and understand others. Only those who can communicate honestly with themselves can communicate honestly with others.

These are both the traits of a powerful person.

And unless you become a powerful person who values what is going on in your heart, your experience with communication is guaranteed to be an endless sequence of misunderstandings and being misunderstood.

Powerless people communicate out of the fear of truth, and they primarily do it in one of three styles—*passive communication*, *aggressive communication*, or *passive-aggressive communication*. As you'll see, each of these styles traces back to false core beliefs about the value of what is inside a person.

Worse, they cultivate fear and destroy connection because they provide a way for people not to tell the truth.

Passive communicators attempt to convince the world that everyone else is more important than they are.

Their core belief is, "You matter and I don't." When faced with a joint decision in a relationship, the passive person insists that the other person's thoughts, feelings, and needs matter more. If they believe that their feelings, thoughts, and needs are being disrespected, they will simply try to absorb it and move on. Passive communicators say things like, "Oh whatever you want. No, that's okay. No, that didn't hurt. No, I'm fine. No, I know you were just upset. No, I don't need to talk

about this anymore. I'm good. No, I don't care where we go—wherever you want! I'm fine. No, I'm great.”

Passive people justify devaluing themselves by painting themselves as long-suffering, patient servants who keep the peace and don't ever make problems. They think it's right to have no needs or requirements.

In reality, they are lying cowards.

If I am a passive communicator, then I will lie because I am afraid of what you will do if you find out that I have needs. I'm afraid of being punished for telling the truth. I'm afraid of communicating what's going on with me, because I'm afraid you'll think I'm a bad person, or that I'm selfish. Somehow, I actually believe that it is noble to hide myself from the relationship. But I am only feeding my own anxiety by ensuring that you will never know the truth inside me. You will never be dealing with the real me. You will always be dealing with the facade.

And of course, the passive approach, being a lie, is impossible to maintain in the long term. The bitterness that grows by absorbing other people's selfishness will ultimately make passive people more miserable than scared, and so they will take action. They will stop being passive and will probably end the relationship so that their needs will finally be met.

The problem is that the passive people have been just as selfish as the ones toward whom they're bitter. They devalued their own needs, not out of a desire to benefit the other person, but out of self-protection.

I know two sisters. One lent the other a moderate sum of money. Days turned into weeks, weeks turned into months, months turned into years, and still the one sister did not pay back the sum of money. The sister who loaned the money—the ultimate passive communicator— was inwardly seething, but she never confronted her sister about it. She wanted to maintain peace. She abhorred confrontation, and since she didn't “need” the money, she did not feel that her need to be repaid was valuable enough to be addressed. Nevertheless, by year seven, she couldn't take it anymore and decided that she would just sue her sister. There is little peace in the family now. Hurt has

skyrocketed on both sides, and connection might be irreparably damaged. This is not healthy communication.

The aggressive communicator is like a T-Rex. His or her core belief is, “I matter. You don’t!”

Aggressive communicators know how to get what they want. They are large and in charge because they are the biggest, loudest, scariest one in the room.

If we were to line up a communication food chain, the aggressive communicator would be the T-rex at the top, and the passive communicator would be a goat cowering at the bottom. The craziest thing happens, though—the T-Rex and the goat end up in a relationship together! How in the world does this happen?

Simple. They both agree on something: the T-Rex matters and the goat doesn’t. *What a pair!*

This communication dynamic sends anxiety through the roof, because the unequal value and power balance entirely eliminates intimacy. It can only be a relationship of survival. The T-Rex will get what he needs by taking it and the goat will get what she needs by giving away body parts to the T-Rex. In the end, the goat will no longer exist, and the T-Rex will still be hungry.

Both are motivated by fear and selfishness, and both are powerless.

The passive-aggressive communication style is the most sophisticated, and therefore the most devious of the fear-based communication styles. It is the worst of being passive and the worst of being aggressive.

The passive-aggressive communicator’s core belief is: “You matter... No, not really!” They manipulate and control others through active deceit and subtle-but-deadly forms of punishment. To your face they say, “Oh, whatever you need, absolutely.” Then, after your little disagreement, they head outside and key your car. The passive-aggressive communicator is famous for sarcastic innuendos, veiled threats, the manipulative use of Scriptures, judgments that come in the form of counsel, and withholding love.

Because passive-aggressive communicators maintain a veneer of civility, it is often hard for people on the outside to understand why someone has such a difficult time being in relationship with them. Someone who is trying to gain counsel about dealing with a passive-aggressive person looks crazy, because he or she is the only one who perceives all the person's hostility and manipulation. To everyone else, the passive-aggressive person is kind and bubbly and smiling all the time. They don't know that the second they get behind closed doors, he or she is insinuating, criticizing, accusing, stonewalling, and sending mixed messages that would drive anyone insane.

I describe a passive-aggressive communicator as a "chocolate-covered dragon." Sometimes women are attracted to men who appear charming and romantic, flatter them incessantly, and who are just plain too good to be true. It's not until women get into deeper relationships with these passive-aggressive men that they learn that they are actually chocolate-covered dragons. Once the "nice" facade is gone, they become vicious manipulators who discount these women's thoughts and feelings. They are often jealous of anything the women do that doesn't revolve around them.

I once knew a chocolate-covered dragon who happened to be a pastor. He had an argument with a member of the congregation who was also a friend of his wife. In the midst of their argument, this friend mentioned that she wanted to help the pastor's wife work through an issue. The pastor responded, "If my wife wanted help with this problem she would go talk to somebody she trusts and respects." He was not saying what his wife felt about this woman. He was saying how *he* felt about her in a devious way. Both his dislike and his insinuations inflicted pain. That is passive aggression, and it can be devastating.

The core belief of an assertive communicators is, "You matter and so do I."

So if these are the communication styles that grow out of being powerless and afraid of the truth, what communication style grows out of being powerful and loving the truth? The answer is *assertive communication*.

The core belief of an assertive communicators is, "You matter and so do I. My thoughts, feelings, and needs matter, and so do yours." Assertive communicators refuse to have relationships or conversations where both people do not have a high, equal value. They are not afraid to show the

other person what is happening inside them. Because they value what is inside them, they take the time and effort to understand their thoughts, feelings, and needs, and to find words to express them clearly and honestly. This process enhances their ability to value and understand what another person communicates to them about his or her own heart. This is the core value of honor and mutual respect. This is the value assertive communicators project as they interact.

Assertive communicators are unafraid of being powerful and letting other people be powerful within a relationship or a conversation. In fact, they insist on having two powerful people in every conversation. They refuse to give in to the temptation to turn into a T-Rex, a chocolate-covered dragon, or a goat, and they confront other people if they see them slipping into those roles.

A powerful assertive communicator responds to a passive person with,

“What are you going to do about that?”

They respond to an aggressive person with, “I can only talk with you when you decide to be respectful.”

And they respond to a passive-aggressive person with, “We can talk later when you choose to be responsible and tell me what is really going on.”

In other words, they are able to set consistent boundaries around a conversation so that it stays respectful, and they require both participants to equally participate in pursuing the goal of the conversation.



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2

Agreement isn't the point.

Some people think that talking is communicating. But talking is not communicating unless it has a goal, a purpose. Most often in communication, the goal is agreement. But if our goal is agreement, then what happens when we disagree? I must persuade you to agree with me, or vice versa. But unfortunately, persuasion has a way of slipping into pressure, manipulation, and control. The priority of agreement demands that there really can't be two different people in the conversation—there can only be one. The longer you refuse to respond to my efforts to convince you to agree with me, the more anxiety grows in the conversation. Before long, the battle lines are drawn and we are allowing our need to be right to overtake our need to protect our connection.

The conversation becomes a fight over which one of us has the *right* perception, the *right* answer, or the *right* decision.

If we are not careful, it will be only a matter of time before one of us introduces some kind of “relationship killer” to the conversation. A relationship killer is a message that invalidates or disqualifies one person's thoughts, feelings, or needs in some way. It most often happens when someone mentions his or her feelings and the other person responds:

“Well, that's not logical. You can't be right because you just have a feeling. We can't measure your feelings. We have to present things logically. Your 'feeling' doesn't even make sense. My perspective, on the other hand, has all the qualifiers to be valuable.” The underlying message, although unintended, is, “I am valuable and you are not.” When people start devaluing one another's thoughts, feelings, or needs in some way, they are attacking their connection like a pack of wolves.

If we want to keep two powerful people involved and connected in a conversation, the first goal must be to understand.

If connection is the priority, then the goal of communication cannot be agreement, because then one person has to disappear when there is disagreement. And guess what? People do not always agree. If we want to keep two powerful people involved and connected in a conversation, the first goal in the conversation must be to *understand*. The person whose goal is to understand says, “I want to understand your unique perspective and experience. I want to understand the truth of what is happening inside you. And I want you to understand the same things about me. If I understand your heart, then I can move toward you in ways that build our connection. I can respond to your thoughts, respect your feelings, and help to meet your needs.”

The results of this conversation are going to be radically different from the one whose goal was agreement alone. Pursuing the goal of understanding will help you progress through increasingly deeper levels of honesty in order to build true intimacy and trust in a relationship.

3

Facts Don't Get You to Connection.

When we are just getting to know someone, our conversations are usually centered on the world around us. We exchange facts and clichés, such as the following:

“How are you?”

“Fine. How are you?”

“Great. What's new?”

“Not much. Beautiful day.”

“Sure is.”

“Supposed to be 80 degrees today. It says so right here in the paper.” “Oh, look at that.”

This conversation requires a very minimal level of connection or vulnerability—you could probably have it with an absolute stranger. Sadly, there are many people who camp out at the level of facts and clichés in their relationships. It's comfortable and safe. They usually choose to do this because when they tried to graduate to the next level of intimacy in communication in the past, they got scared and hurt. They ended up in those big, long, disrespectful, “relationship killer” conversations and got so burned that they decided it was safer to retreat to communication that required no vulnerability or risk whatsoever. They use communication to pursue the goal of distance and disconnection rather than connection.

The only way you can build a heart-to-heart connection with someone is to communicate on a heart level about your feelings and needs.

This is the level where we express vulnerability and build trust. This is the level where we get in touch with the truth about who we are and how we affect people around us.

Perhaps you have heard the joke about the man who goes to the doctor and complains about suffering from terrible constant gas. “But it’s the weirdest thing, doctor,” he says. “I don’t make a sound and it doesn’t smell.”

The doctor looks at him and says bluntly, “Okay. Well, the first thing we are going to do is get you hearing aids. And then we are going to figure out what’s wrong with your nose.”

This is what many of us experience every day when we try to communicate. There is a lot going on around us that we don’t always pick up. Sometimes we are completely unaware of how other people are “experiencing” us.

I love to tell people about how my wife experiences the way I drive up Buckhorn Mountain on my way to Weaverville, CA. This stretch of road features superb twists and turns that are perfect for weaving in and out of traffic. The risk of plummeting hundreds of feet to your death lies only a few feet away. When I’m driving, I fly around those corners, passing every car I can overtake. It is marvelous!

My wife always has a completely different experience on these drives than I do—an experience I don’t understand. I’m a good driver, as evidenced by the fact that I have never been in an accident. Personally, I think I should have been a NASCAR driver or at least signed up for a car rally.

When she lets me know that she feels scared as I’m driving, I always think, *Why are you scared? You have absolutely no evidence that I’m a bad driver. You should just calm down and be like me.*

But as mystifying as it is, I know my wife is not like me, and I cannot make her be like me. I can’t force her to feel what I feel and know what I know. I trust her to believe the best about me, so I know that when she tells me she is scared, she is not insinuating that I am trying to scare her. She is simply telling me what she feels.

If I were to argue with Sheri’s feelings, I would devalue her. “You shouldn’t feel that way. There’s no valid reason for you to feel like that. I don’t feel like that. Change and be like me.” This thought process is as ridiculous as someone saying, “I’m hungry,” and responding, “No you’re not! I’m not

hungry so you can't be hungry." How silly is that? But that is exactly what we do when we respond to others without taking the time to understand, appreciate, and validate their feelings.

When I value your feelings, I will not only make it safe for you to communicate them to me, but I will also listen and respond. I will invite you to go deeper and show me what it is you need, so we can move from understanding to decision-making and action.

Understanding one another's needs is the Holy Grail of communication.

If I can find out what you need in a conversation and find out how to satisfy that need, then it changes everything!

A drastic turning point in my marriage with Sheri came when she discovered (through inner healing) that she had a deep need to feel protected by me, a need she had never previously identified.

Unsurprisingly, it was a need that had never been met in our relationship. It had never occurred to me that she had this need because she had been working to meet that need herself—usually by protecting herself from me.

When Sheri told me what she had discovered, I was offended. I had always felt like I was the victim and she the aggressive offender in our relationship. I blamed her for the fact that I was not courageous. In fifteen years of marriage, I had never—not once—thought it was my job to protect Sheri. She had always appeared so self-sufficient. But the Lord confronted me and told me she was right. She needed me to protect her. I listened to God and permanently changed the way I responded to her. At first, she didn't trust me, but after a while she realized that I was going to stick it out. This took us to totally new places of vulnerability and radically changed our relationship. Her former levels of anxiety dropped dramatically and our connection strengthened exponentially—all because I can now meet this need in her.

The faster you can get to the question, "What do you need?" the faster you can start doing something about it.

Unfortunately, because many people are not used to being listened to, they don't know what they need, or how to communicate it. They think they have to present a solid case for someone to help them, agree with them, or change for them.

For many years, Sheri was a pastor at the Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry and frequently had students come into her office to deal with some issue, their emotions flying everywhere. Quietly, she would ask them, "Hey, what do you need?"

This question always shocked them. "What?" they'd reply.

"What is it that you need?" Sheri repeated.

Then it would dawn on them. "I don't even know what I need. Oh my gosh!"

I have also found that people are usually thrown off guard when I simply show up with the question, "What do you need? Tell me so I can help you with that." It has never crossed their mind that I would help simply because they need something. As soon as they experience it, they immediately recognize it as a practice of intimacy. They feel cared for and loved, which casts out anxiety and helps the search for the truth of what their heart needs.

You can start practicing the skills of assertive communication by paying attention to your thoughts, feelings, needs and respecting their value.

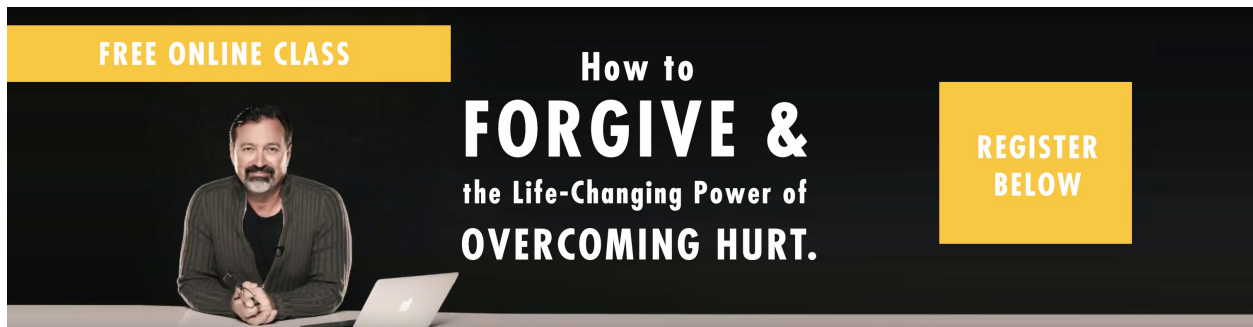
Start doing the same for other people. Check yourself when you are tempted to invalidate someone's experience or heart. Listen to understand in a conversation—especially to understand what a person is feeling and what he or she needs. Seek healing from past experiences that have led you to fear the truth of your heart and become a passive, aggressive, or passive-aggressive communicator. Be real with yourself. If you start slipping into your old styles of communication, then do what needs to be done to make things right.

When you commit to becoming the best communicator you could possibly be, you commit to connection, and to being a truly powerful person. Not only will your relationship with your heart change for the better, but your relationships with others will be transformed.

BONUS!

Again, I created an online class as a **bonus communication hack**. What we discuss happens to be one of the most important keys to relationships. In fact, while over the last couple decades of helping people attain freedom in their lives, I've never come across something as liberating and empowering.

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