



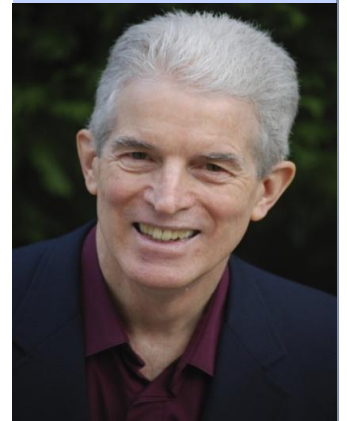
Training Manual

FOR THE Virtual Workshop Series and
Self-Study Program:

Module 2: Communication Skills

www.EagleAlliance.com

www.EmotionallyIntelligentLeadership.com



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Module 2: Communication Skills

Introduction

This collection of articles **reinforces and supplements** Module 2, “Communication,” of my **Tele-Workshop Series**, Emotional Intelligence for Resilient Leaders and Professionals.

These articles can increase your ability for **leadership** and your **professional effectiveness**. If you enjoy and learn best by reading, they can stand alone. If you do nothing more than read these articles, you will miss the skill-building exercises of our Program, but you will gain much knowledge. An intellectual understanding of emotional intelligence can be the first step toward better performance.

It is best to read these articles in order rather than at random.

These articles will also profit you after you have completed Module 2 of the Tele-Workshop for they will remind you of key points you have learned. If you have missed any sessions, they will help fill you in.

Even if you attended all the sessions, these articles will reinforce your learning. You will see the learning points in new contexts.

These articles will also reinforce and supplement your learning if you take the **Self-Study Program** version of my **Tele-Workshop Series**, Emotional Intelligence for Resilient Leaders and Professionals. This program gives you **over 80 audio recordings** of live Tele-Workshop sessions to listen to on an MP3 player at your leisure—anywhere, anytime.

In short, these articles will **enrich your learning experience**. They will help make it stick—and last.

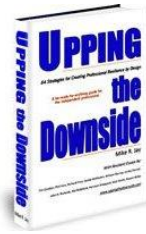


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Bonus:

My published book chapter, “*Emotional Intelligence for Resilience*,” is available for free on our web site, <http://www.EagleAlliance.com>. Look for the book cover of the Amazon best-seller, *Upping the Down Side*:



Crucial Conversations

How to handle crucial conversations? Here are some steps to take.

1. If you know you must have a crucial conversation, prepare for it. When is it worth the time to prepare? If you have these three items of a crucial conversation:
 - When an important issue is involved.
 - The other person or group has a different view from yours.
 - The other person may have a reaction and get emotionally high strung.

If the other person confronts you suddenly so that you do not have time to prepare, you need to be able to recognize these three items quickly. Then you may choose to ask for a delay and make an appointment to talk about this later. This gives you time to prepare.

2. Look inside yourself and get very clear on what you really want. What outcome of this important issue is your goal? Why? What really matters to you here? Do not be satisfied with your first answer. Dig deeper, down to your core values. You may or may not want to express your core values to the other person, but you must be clear about them.
3. Guess what really matters to the other person. This prepares you for what they may say. Even if you disagree strongly, try to have empathy. Ask yourself, “What really matters to them in this situation?”
4. Start the conversation with a factual statement about the issue. Stay away from any evaluations that may be inflammatory.
5. Invite them into a win/win approach. Say you are interested in finding a solution that will give both of you most of what you want. This may require some creative collaboration. Ask, are they willing to do this?
6. Be assertive, not aggressive or avoiding.
7. Use good communication skills.

Taking these steps will give you a good chance of having a good outcome for your crucial conversation.

Want more detailed information on how to handle crucial conversations? Learn about our Web-conferencing Tele-Workshop, Emotional Intelligence for Resilient Leaders and Professionals. Go to www.EmotionallyIntelligentLeadership.com and scroll down.

Speak in Manner Others Can Hear

Would you like to increase your ability to “Speak in Manner Others Can Hear”? The key skill is to start your crucial conversations with a **factual observation**, not a judgment.

You should observe facts about a situation that you want to discuss. Hopefully, you can state the facts in a way that the other person agrees with or can at least tolerate. Then you can proceed with the conversation. Sounds obvious? Then start noticing how often you and others start crucial conversations with a **judgment**:

- That idea is not sound.
- The project is proceeding too slowly.
- Joe always takes too long.
- Sally can’t delegate.
- Sam is a micro-manager.

What if the other person strongly disagrees with you? He/she is likely to get defensive and reactive. **Defensive** means they stop listening to you and start to focus on how to defend themselves or their colleague.

Reactive means they go further and become aggressive back at you. They point out how your view is wrong. Maybe they get annoyed or mad. Or they can become too passive and try to avoid you and the issue. If they are a direct report, it becomes all the harder to get their true opinion out in the open and to get their buy-in for your approach.

In other articles I have described how the brain has a part called the amygdala that responds when it sees a threatening situation developing. It instantly chooses to fight or flee. Neither choice works well in the office environment. One becomes too aggressive or passive.

Now, of course you want to avoid all this happening. Therefore, carefully craft your **opening statement**. In my Web-conferencing Tele-Workshop, Emotional Intelligence for Resilient Leaders and Professionals, participants practice this skill at length. Participants describe an upcoming crucial conversation, and we all help them craft their opening statement.

Here is one of the **techniques** we use. Talk as if you were a **camera on the wall**. All you can report is what you see or hear. For example, if someone says, “Rob, you were too aggressive!” We help them revise their statement to something like, “Rob you walked up close to Sam and shook your finger at him. You spoke very loudly.” See how we **transformed the judgment** “aggressive” into factual statements?

Later on you can bring in your judgments if the other person is still dialoguing with you. Just don’t start with judgments, evaluations, or interpretations. In the beginning, stick to factual observations. That way you can get off to a good start.



Come join us for **complimentary sessions of my Web-conferencing Tele-Workshop**, Emotional Intelligence for Resilient Leaders and Professionals, and see firsthand how you can improve your ability to Speak in Manner Others Can Hear. Call Bill Murray at 919-240-7924.

Communication Skills - Avoid these things

To be a better communicator, **avoid these things**:

1. **Rushing to judgments, evaluations, conclusions.** Instead, start with the facts. What did you observe? Describe what you saw or heard in this situation.
2. **Being critical, blaming, accusatory, inflammatory.** We know how we react to these things, so how come we dish them out so readily? If you must point out some flaw in the other person or their ideas, etc., first try to **establish some rapport**. Also ask if they want some critical feedback now?
3. **Being judgmental.** You must make good judgments about the situations you face. But you need to share these judgments in a non-judgmental fashion. What does that mean? It means you do not put the other person down and make them feel bad or wrong as a person. Their viewpoint may be incorrect, but make sure you communicate that they are still worthwhile as a person.
4. **Jumping right in** with your judgments. Make sure they **give you permission** to discuss this now. Even if you are their boss, you want them to be ready and emotionally prepared to discuss your criticism. Maybe a later time will work better for them.
5. **Expressing too much anger.** If you are very angry, take some time to cool off. Literally, take a walk, or even, wait a day. Exploding with anger is one of the most common mistakes of leaders. Today's pressures are making this happen more often. But the bad consequences are many: People react with their own aggression, or they become passive and will look for ways to get back at you later on. If those above you get wind of this, they downgrade their opinion of you. One of the most common assignments given to executive coaches is to help an executive manage their anger better.
6. **Making** the other person feel **guilty**. This may seem to work. They do what you want them to because you made them feel guilty. But they will make you pay for this later on. For example, they will hide their mistakes better in the future. They will build up resentment and possibly bad mouth you to others.

Avoid these things and instead do what I have suggested and you will communicate much better so that your work and relationships will prosper.

Why not get some help with these communication skills? Go from good to great. Explore joining our **Web-conferencing Tele-Workshop**, Emotional Intelligence for Resilient Leaders and Professionals, described at: <http://www.EmotionallyIntelligentLeadership.com> – scroll down.

Communication Skills – Avoid Making Up Stories

In other articles I have talked about the importance of **starting crucial conversations with the facts**. What can you observe? Tell the other person what you saw or heard in a specific situation.

Now I would add that we also need to **avoid making up stories** about these facts. In our stories, we tend to add on evaluations and judgments as to why someone did something.

For example, your colleague is reluctant to explain why they did something. You make up a story that he/she is reluctant because they don't want you to know about something because that would add to your prestige. They are competitive. But if you could initiate a conversation and learn what is really going on within them, you might learn that it is not what you thought. Perhaps, they are just embarrassed that they did not do their best in this case. They believe it would be painful to expose this defective skill or action.

I suggest you pause now and remember a time when you added a story to the facts. Then ask yourself, "What did I see or hear?" Get clear on the facts vs what judgments you added by making up a story. Clarifying this will do wonders for your communication skills. Then if appropriate, go to the person and ask them what their motives were. Often you will see your story disproved.

Emotional intelligence includes our **ability to invite others to disprove** our stories and punch holes in our beliefs and perceptions. We tend to discount information that disturbs our beliefs and assumptions. We like to hang on to them and to our stories about why someone did something.

This tendency to hang on to our stories and beliefs can have tragic consequences. One huge **example** was during the Vietnam War. For 15 years different administrations hung on to the belief that North Vietnam wanted to include South Vietnam so that it could then move on to force communism on all the rest of Southeast Asia. This was called the domino effect. If South Vietnam fell to communism so would the rest of Southeast Asia. Therefore, we had to keep fighting to stop North Vietnam from annexing South Vietnam.

The fact was that North Vietnam wanted to include South Vietnam. Several administrations added the story that North Vietnam also wanted to annex all of Southeast Asia. McNamara, the Secretary of Defense for many of these years, has said that never once in any cabinet meeting was the assumption of the domino effect challenged. This story was just assumed to be true for 15 years without discussion. Many people outside government administrations challenged this assumption, but their ideas were never discussed during cabinet meetings.

The actual outcome disproved their belief in the domino effect. South Vietnam was annexed but no other countries were.

Several administrations refused to consider viewpoints that would force them to abandon their story. Unfortunately, we all **tend to discount non-confirming information**.



What can we do about this? Keep perfecting your ability to stick to the facts and **avoid adding on stories with judgments** about why someone is doing something. Then you can better initiate those crucial conversations to learn what is going on inside others and to resolve issues. Finally, we need the skill of **staying open** to different views.

Distorted Communication

As I wrote in a prior article, we all have **biases that filter** much of what we hear, see and think. This means our perceptions and conclusions are distorted. Biases distort reality. This hurts communication too because what the speaker means to convey is not what the hearer gets after the hearer filters the message.

Consider the **case of overweight people**. Researchers at the University of North Carolina created a test study of perceptions of overweight people. They selected a volunteer audience at random. They hired actors to offer a speech with identical words, gestures, voice inflection, etc. As the actors gave their speeches, the audience rated them on their speaking ability 1-10 with a private, individual electronic device. The audience did not know that the speakers were hired actors.

The audience consistently rated certain speakers much lower than others. Guess who? The overweight speakers. In spite of the fact that the presentations were identical, the audience rated the overweight speakers as less competent.

One of the researchers explained to us what had happened. He said there is a common bias against overweight people.” The audience unconsciously applied this bias and used it as a filter for their experience of the speakers. The audience concluded that the overweight people were less competent.

A bias against overweight people is just one example of many biases. In the last blog post, I described a racial bias. Many people have biases against bosses, the elderly, country or city dwellers, foreigners, Democrats or Republicans, Christians or Muslims, etc. The same experiment with overweight people would work with other biases.

Of course these biases and filtering raise havoc in our personal and organization lives. **Communication gets distorted constantly**. To limit this distortion, you have to start with increasing your awareness of when it is operating in you or your organization.

Increased self-awareness is one of the key outcomes of my **Web-conferencing Tele-Workshop, Emotional Intelligence** for Resilient Leaders and Professionals. We also train participants to discover when the filtering has occurred so distortions can be corrected.

Please check out our Tele-workshop by listening to recordings of live sessions at <http://www.EagleAlliance.com/ho/sa> or reading about it at <http://www.EmotionallyIntelligentLeadership.com/index.htm#bottom/> – scroll down.

Case of the Non-communicative Coworker

In my Web-conferencing Tele-Workshop, Emotional Intelligence for Resilient Leaders and Professionals, we sometimes use **cases as a way to practice applying the skills** we have already learned. In the following case we practiced using two sets of skills: strategic thinking – knowing what you really want, and communicating in a way others can hear by starting with factual observations. In this case you can see an example of how this practicing of skills works. Hopefully, you will learn something, and you can see if this is something you would like to do.

A participant described this situation to me on the telephone. He/she did not want to fault their boss or coworker publicly. I wrote the case up with false names and emailed it to our Tele-workshop group. This way the participant stayed anonymous and got some coaching about what to do with their situation.

Case of the Non-communicative Coworker

Jane has issues with a co-worker, Sally. She sits 5 feet away in open space. Jane wants some personal interaction. Sally does not say anything - no "Hello," or anything. She did not tell Jane when she went on vacation until she left her desk to go.

Jane needs Sally's information about some projects. It is hard to get it.

Jane's boss wants Jane to talk more with Sally and iron things out. The boss says Jane must be more assertive.

When the boss is away, Jane is in charge of the office of 5 people including Sally. Then Sally continues to be non-communicative. She does not tell Jane about anything such as being away at a doctor's appointment, which could cause a delay. She does not acknowledge Jane's authority.

Discussion:

Bill: What should Jane do first?

Participant: Jane needs to ask herself, "**What do I really want here?**"

1. Get projects done on time.
2. Better communication with Sally.
3. Get help from boss. Boss should make clear who is in charge. Let Sally know what boss expects. Jane must tell boss, "You have to help."

Bill: When Jane talks with the boss, she must **begin with the facts** and their consequences. What might that look like?¹²

Participant: For example, Sally rarely tells me when she leaves the office. Consequently, when someone asks for her, I do not know what to tell them. She may be back from the rest room in a minute or she may be gone for the day.

Bill: What would happen if Jane leads with a conclusion such as, “Sally does not recognize my authority to be in charge when you are away?”

Participant: The boss may take exception to her conclusion and argue against it. Then she would have to persuade the boss to change his/her position.

Bill: OK, let’s presume that the talk with the boss goes well. What does Jane need to point out to her boss?

Participant: That it is hard for Jane to be assertive with Sally unless Sally is clear that the boss supports Jane.

Bill: Good. If the boss agrees with that point, what should Jane request from her boss?

Participant: Jane should ask for the boss to have a meeting with Sally with Jane present. The boss should reiterate what he/she expects of Sally when the boss is away.

Bill: OK, let’s presume the meeting with the three of them goes well. The boss supports Jane. What should Jane do in this meeting?

Participant: If necessary, ask Sally what she will do differently in the future? Jane needs to make sure that Sally understands what she wants.

Bill: Right, and that goal might be best served with a question or request of Sally. Can you think of one?

Participant: Jane could ask Sally, “Is there a reason you do not tell me when you leave the office?”

Bill: Yes, this question may help Jane understand what is going on with Sally. Perhaps some problem needs to be solved.

Another Participant: I would make a request from Sally: “Please let me know when you will be out of the office.”

Bill: Yes, a direct request often works well if it is **specific** like yours is.

Bill: Well, time is running out. Would you care to say one thing you learned today or were reminded of?

Participants learned:

Know what you want. Dig deeper to notice it clearly.

Staying factual, actual, like a camera, especially at the start of a conversation.



Assertiveness skills.

Asking questions in the right way.

Case approach is good chance to practice. It is closer to real life than abstract discussions.

Why not **join us** yourself in case discussions like this one and other forms of interactive learning in my **Web-conferencing Tele-Workshop**, Emotional Intelligence for Resilient Leaders and Professionals?