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Gender Differences in Communication

Communication is the process of exchanging ideas and information through words or actions.

- Communication is the basis / fundamental building block of all human relationships.
- The ability to communicate skillfully and with confidence will help each person develop supportive and cooperative work and personal relationships.
- Improving interpersonal communication skills will improve all relationships; which ultimately improves chances of success.

Common Barriers to Communication

- Language / Pronunciation / Diction
- Cultural Rules and Expectations
- **Socialization of males and females**
- Social Status / Educational Background
- **Gender differences**
- Method of communication (i.e. speaking versus writing)
- Noise / Distractions
- Incomplete communication
- Context of the communication (situation)
- Assumptions / Pre-conceived notions / Perceptual Screens
- Personality / Personal Experiences

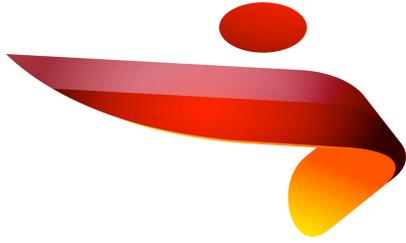
Constructive Communication

- Overcomes barriers to communication when possible
- Includes active / reflective listening
- Allows both the listener and communicator / speaker to build trust and understanding
- Allows the listener to be empathetic to the communicator / speaker
- Saves time in the long-run
- Requires a lot of time & effort in the short-term

Non-defensive Communication is communication that is assertive, direct, & powerful without being defensive.

Steps to Non-defensive Communication:

- Define the situation
- Clarify the communicator's position using active / reflective listening
- Acknowledge the communicator's feelings (be empathetic)
- Bring the focus back to the facts



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Historically, the workplace has had males in positions of authority and power. Therefore, male-style communication and interaction is the norm in most workplaces, even today. Female-style communication and interaction are valid and relevant and have an important function in the workplace. However, when used as a singular communication style, it can be a disadvantage to women.

Women must **recognize and understand** that in order to be viewed as a competent, confident leader in the workplace; they must incorporate male-style communication skills into their everyday interpersonal communications. Gender differences cause males and females to have very different perspectives, which impacts why and how we communicate. How and why we communicate affects how others perceive us.

Utilizing a blend of both masculine and feminine characteristics will improve communication and overall success in both your personal and professional life.

How much do we communicate?

Women =

- Speak approximately 3 times as many words per day as men = approximately 5000 words per day or more than males

Men =

- Speak approximately one-third as many words per day as women = approximately 1700 words per day or less than females

Why do we communicate?

Women =

- To express feelings
- To 'think out loud'
- To determine feelings
- Goal = want someone to listen and to understand their feelings

Men =

- To communicate only the absolutely necessary information
- To solve problems and to "fix things"
- To give advice
- Goal = want to communicate information and to solve problems

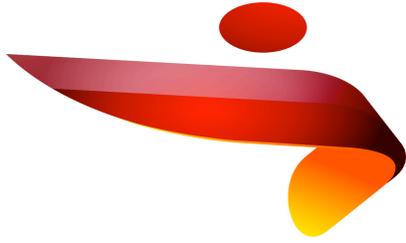
If women adopted male-style communication skills and men adopted female-style communication skills; the workplace would likely be a much more productive and enjoyable environment. Blend both masculine and feminine traits AND hold on to the uniquely feminine-- stay true to what makes you a WOMAN!

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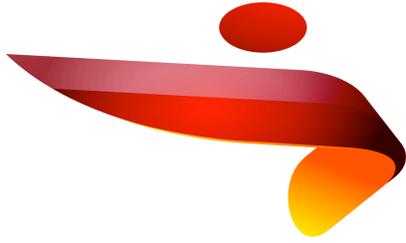
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Stereotypical Differences in Masculine and Feminine Characteristics

<u>Stereotypical Masculine Characteristics</u>	<u>Stereotypical Feminine Characteristics</u>
Self-serving attitude	More concern for other's feelings
Direct use of power	Indirect use of power
Task-oriented	Relationship-oriented
Need to be respected & admired	Need for acceptance & to be well-liked
Direct Communication Style	Indirect Communication Style
Communicate to solve problems or to fix problems	Communicate to express feelings or to determine feelings
Consciously tries to gain power & social status/ One-upmanship social hierarchy	Consciously tries to keep relationships equal in power / Egalitarian social structure
Express self-confidence willingly / Boastful / Proud	Does not express self-confidence willingly / Reluctant to 'brag'
Demands credit for accomplishments	Likely to give credit to others for own accomplishments
Less likely to ask questions or to ask for help or assistance	More likely to ask questions, for help, or assistance
Aggressive / Dominant	Nurturing
Systematic rules	Free-flow rules
Blunt / Straightforward	Diplomatic / Beats around the bush
Likely to attempt to win at negotiations at any cost	Likely to play fair in negotiations
Phrase directives as orders	Phrase directives as suggestions
Negotiates specifically	Negotiates vaguely



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Effective Communication Using Blended Characteristics

Characteristic / Trait	Issue / Problem / or Concern	Impact on Perception	Resolution / Suggested Behaviors for Females
Communication Styles / Conversation Rituals	Misunderstandings are caused by differences in style	Women may be viewed as less confident and competent than they really are, and men may be viewed as hostile or arrogant when they really are not.	Be diplomatic, be direct, be blunt, and be straightforward. Say what you mean. Use your influence and legitimate authority to gain cooperation.
Asking Questions in Public / Asking for HELP / Saying "I Don't Know!"	Asking for help can be viewed as a sign of weakness and incompetence. <i>(In many circumstances, not asking for help can be disastrous!)</i>	Many women are not aware that asking questions can be viewed as negative and a sign of incompetence; and can cause them to be judged as less capable.	Be aware of the negative perception. Do your research and educate yourself, and then ask questions sparingly. Clarify as needed.
Self-confidence--Are you SURE?	Being certain / sure = being aggressive = being 'un-lady-like'	Self-confidence is viewed as a negative trait in females; therefore women are reluctant to reveal the confidence that they do have or to insist that they are correct / certain.	Do not be humble in your professional career. Be able to 'toot your own horn' and share your accomplishments with others. Take credit for your own work. If you are certain that you are correct, state that you believe that you are correct and back it up with facts!
Negotiation Styles / Competition	Women tend to try to be fair rather than try to win. Winning the negotiation and beating the competition is not the main objective.	Women and men have different expectations about how a negotiation is supposed to play out.	Understand that many situations in life will involve negotiations. Be prepared to negotiate. Negotiate specifically; not vaguely, but allow for flexibility. Be fair. Negotiations should be 'a tit for a tat'-- "like a tennis match'.
Leadership	Society in the USA expects men and women to play by different rules.	Men are expected to give directives and 'boss' the other lower-status members around, but women who tell others what to do are called 'bossy'.	Behave like a leader--be self-confident, caring, and charismatic. Do not phrase directives as suggestions. State your opinions and back them up with facts. Be concerned with being respected—not popular.