

How Your Communication Can Help Reduce Relationship Tension

by Joe Tabers, CSP



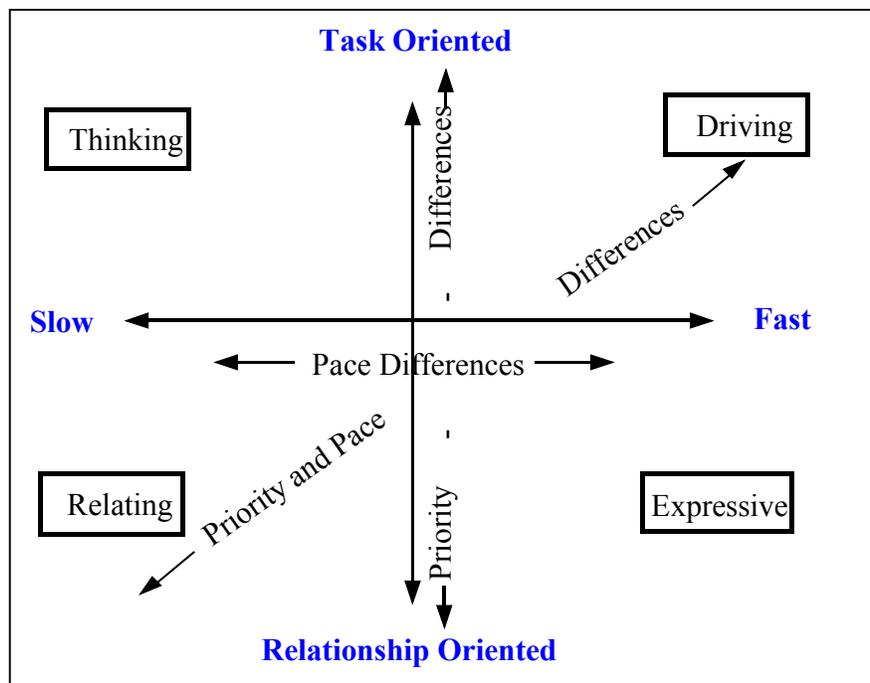
When ineffective communication or communication style between two or more people becomes a reoccurring issue, it can create unnecessary tension in relationships. This tension between individuals not only can take some of the enjoyment out of a task or project; if it continues; it can negatively affect team performance and results.

In your past interactions with people at work as well as home, it is likely you have observed or even encountered some bad communication and relationship experiences. If you're like me, you must have noticed how consistently this added tension can “eat away” at interpersonal trust, and reduce or even kill team spirit.

There Is Hope

The good news is that this relationship tension can often be reduced or even eliminated by making a sincere effort at adjusting/adapting our own style of communicating to better “match” the other person’s style of communicating. The purpose of this article is to share you two types of communication adjustments for you to consider practicing for more easily connecting with your coworkers, clients, customers or family members.

The two types of communication adjustments I am referring to are your pace and priority when communicating with others. For clarification; **Pace** relates to how quickly you or they prefer to communicate (speak, listen and respond). **Priority** relates to your or their need for socializing (relationship oriented) versus getting down to business (task oriented). See illustration.



There is an old saying that seems to fit well here “*He who knows others is wise; he who knows himself is enlightened*”. Lao-tzu 531 B.C.. If so, then I believe that... “*he who knows and controls himself is even better off than enlightened*”. Joe Tabers,CSP 2003.

So How Can We Help Improve Communication?

Our first communication challenge then is to recognize our own natural style or tendencies when communicating with others.

You don't have to be a psychologist to do this for yourself (or even to observe it in others). Simply ask yourself these two questions:

- ★ Eighty percent of the time when I'm communicating with others do I tend to have a naturally slower or naturally faster pace? or. (is their pace naturally slower or faster?)
- ★ Am I naturally more task driven more relationship driven? or...(are they more task driven or relationship driven?)

For example: if my natural style is usually more fast-paced and relationship oriented I have what is often referred to as an influencing or expressive style. Another example would be if my natural style is usually more slower paced and task driven I have what might be referred to as more of an analyzing or thinking style. (See illustration again).

Our second challenge is to recognize that our own natural strengths under stress or carried to the extreme can often come across or be perceived by others as sources of irritation or communication weaknesses.

***Tip # 1:** slowing down your rate of delivery and responding if you are naturally fast-paced or speeding up if you are naturally slow-paced can really help here. Likewise being patient with others with a naturally slower delivery or appreciating the energy of others with a naturally fast-paced delivery also helps here.*

***Tip # 2:** controlling your need to socialize or relate to others i.e. excessive small talk or controlling your tenancy to get down to business and cut communication short can really help here. Likewise increasing your tolerance for other's needs to either “relate” more emotion or details to you or to respect other's needs to “get down to business” with little or no small talk ... can help you increase rapport in this relationship area.*

A willingness on your part to adjust your style of communicating according to the style of those who you are dealing with can go a long way to help building healthier relationships while improving teamwork. ***Hint: Don't wait for others to adjust their style to yours... Take the initiative make the effort to adapt your style to theirs.***

Think about it...When we visit a foreign country or even when we're a guest someone else's home we usually make an effort to adapt to their culture, language, dining style or norms. If we don't, we risk coming across as unpleasant or a source of irritation for them.

Conversely if you had guests in your home you would probably find it irritating if they were critical of the way you did things and you wouldn't want them telling you how or what to cook!

So during your next meeting or interactions with other people within your organization, department or family...consider this reminder. **Watch for opportunities to control your natural strengths/tendencies when communicating and look for opportunities to be more flexible with their natural strengths/communication tendencies.** In doing this you too will help in the easing of relationship tensions. What is the benefit for your efforts? How about greater respect, results and cooperation from others. Not bad for a little extra effort!

*Joe Tabers, CSP is a certified speaking professional, senior consultant and one of our most requested communication skill-building specialists. Since 1984 he has been helping organizations interested in improving trust, teamwork and communications in the workplace. **If you believe your company or one of your departments within it would benefit from more effective communication; please contact our manager of customized training Kathy Kull @ 1 800-805-8780 for a free, no obligation consultation.***