

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION ALLIANCE (AMAA)

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**COMMUNICATION WORKSHOP**

Presentation by:

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**OUTLINE**

Introduction

I. Ingredients of An Interaction (Communication)

- A. Group Demonstration (Exercise)
- B. What Affects Communication
  - 1. Body Language
  - 2. Voice Tone
  - 3. Words
  - 4. Rules and Stereotypes
  - 5. Stress

II. Communication Styles

- A. Fox vs. Hedgehog
- B. Stress Styles
- C. Congruent Styles

III. Skill #1: Checking for Meaning

- A. Demonstration
- B. Group Exercise

IV. Importance of "Bonding" Throughout Our Lives

- A. Biological Need
- B. Two Essential Parts of Bonding: Physical Closeness and Emotional Openness

V. Skill #2: Daily Temperature Reading

- A. Demonstration
- B. Group Exercise

VI. Skill #3: Mind Reading

- A. Demonstration
- B. Group Exercise

VII. Conclusion: Questions & Answers

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# THE FOUR STRESS STYLES . . . by Virginia Satir

## #1 - PLACATER or APPEASER

The Placater: Eager to please, apologetic, a “yes” man or woman.

They often say things like ...

“Whatever you want.”

“Without you, I’m nothing.”

“Don’t make waves. Don’t rock the boat.”

“Never mind about me. It’s okay.”

The Placater derives a sense of value and safety only from the love and approval of others. “Peace at any price” is the motto. Because the Placater has difficulty expressing anger and holds so many feelings inside, he tends toward depression and is prone to illness.

## #2 - BLAMER

The Blamer: a fault-finder who controls, nitpicks, criticizes relentlessly, and speaks in generalizations and goes on the attack. They often say things like...

“You never do anything right.”

“You’re just like your mother (father, etc.)”

“If it weren’t for you ... (everything would be all right).”

“You’re so stupid (sick, bad, crazy).”

The Blamer is angry because he anticipates not getting what he wants or needs, so he assumes that, given a problem or a threatening situation, the best defense is a good offense. He is unable to deal with or express his pain or fear.

## #3 - COMPUTER or SUPER-REASONABLE

The Computer: calm, cool, collected. The “Computer” carefully chooses the right word, expects people to perform and to conform, avoids admitting mistakes, denies feelings, tends to cite facts, statistics, authorities and tradition. They often say things like ...

“Upset? I’m not upset? Why do you think I’m upset?”

“Everybody knows ...”

“It says in this book (article, newspaper, etc.) ...”

“The right thing to do is ...”

“I don’t reveal my emotions and I’m not interested in yours.”

Afraid of emotion, the super-Reasonable operates on this principle: Given a problem or any stress, the best thing to do is quote authority, facts and statistics, never emotions. Emotions are unreliable, unpredictable and dangerous.

People who adopt this style are often described as legalistic, militaristic, compulsive, dogmatic, obsessive, opinionated, rigid, principled, insensitive, unfeeling, lacking in empathy, sympathy or compassion.

## #4 - DISTRACTOR

The Distractor: talkative, unfocused, often frantically active. The Distractor avoids direct eye contact and direct answers, and is quick to change the subject or ignore the point being discussed, as if to say:

“Problem? What problem?”

“I’m too busy to deal with this problem.”

“Let’s go to the movies (get drunk, have sex, invite friends over, etc.).”

The underlying principle of this style is this: If I ignore the problem, it doesn’t exist. Maybe it will go away or take care of itself. Confronting the problem would certainly lead to a fight, which would be dangerous and could end up with me or someone being hated, or left out.

A Distractor often is described as erratic, inappropriate or a workaholic who is distracted, hyperactive, purposeless, and sometimes out of touch with reality.

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## SKILL #1: CHECKING FOR MEANING

Repeat what you heard the other person say:

- a. Using as many of their words as possible, and
- b. Reflecting with your tone of voice, and body language, the emotional meaning they put behind their words.

*Example: Speaker says* “I felt let down when my proposal wasn’t accepted.”

*Listener repeats* (with mirrored emotion) “I hear you saying, you felt let down and disappointed when your proposal wasn’t accepted.”

## SKILL #2: DAILY TEMPERATURE READING (DTR) ... with appreciation to Virginia Satir

» **Appreciations**

» **New Information**

» **Puzzles (worries, concerns)**

» **Request For Change**

“I have noticed... I would prefer instead...”

» **Wishes, Hopes and Dreams**

**Directions:** • with your partner, the speaker goes

Through all five areas while the listener just listens...

no interruptions or questions. • with small groups,

the whole group goes through each area, with people

contributing as they wish for each area.

This relationship skill nourishes, enriches, and informs each other. It can be used with our partners, our families, small groups and work environments.

1. Appreciations. We are all vulnerable. We need to be recognized and to know what’s good about us, and nobody is better equipped to tell us this than the person who is closest to us. Whatever you feel good about, let your partner know. We hear so much about what’s *wrong* with us - - the world tells us, and we tell ourselves all the time; we’re usually our own worst critics. When you see something in your partner or other person you appreciate, express it – with words, or with a gesture, but express it.

Hearing appreciation regularly is an important element to our self-esteem. Self-esteem shouldn’t come only from outside ourselves, but we do need to feel appreciated, loved and accepted by others. It’s also important to know what we are appreciated for. And we have to learn to listen to other’s appreciation of us, accept it, and internalize it. Too many people have a conditioned response of “pooh-poohing” compliments away (“oh, this old thing?” or “it was nothing.”)

2. New Information. So much of what goes wrong is because we are not given the information we need to understand what’s going on, so there is too much room left for assumptions. Intimacy and communications thrive when both sides know what is going on in each other’s lives. It may be related to work (“I finally got that new contract”), family (“The dentist says Mandy’s teeth are perfect”), gossip (“Helen’s divorce was finalized yesterday”), fears (I’m worried about the presentation next week”), interest (“There’s a great article on the internet that I think you’d enjoy”), anything and everything, trivial and important, that helps keep your partner and others up on your state of mind, mood, and, generally, what’s going on in your life.

3. Puzzles. If there are things you don’t understand or are worried/concerned about, ask for clarification. “I’m puzzled why you seemed edgy this morning.” “I’m confused about whether your dentist’s visit is a regular visit or if it’s a treatment we should budget for?”

4. Complaints with Requests for Change. This should be used only for minor complaints or irritants and only one complaint with each DTR. “I have noticed that you leave dirty dishes in the family room... and I would prefer instead that you bring them to the kitchen before going to bed.”

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5. Wishes, Hopes and Dreams. If your expectations are different from mine, it doesn't make one of us noble and the other ignoble. It just means that we are all different and in being different we have different expectations. The more we can bring these expectations into our awareness and talk about them, the more possibility there is that we will reach some accord. If we have rules that say we shouldn't let ourselves know what we're thinking or feeling or wanting, much less let you know, then it's almost impossible to work out a comfortable, close relationship. Our hopes and dreams are integral, vital parts of who and what we are. If we don't share them with our partner (as information, not demands or complaints), we are depriving them of an important part of ourselves.

Martin Buber, in his book, I and Thou, says that when two people can be with each other without any masks, without hiding, it is one of the most vitalizing experiences in life. Treating each other not as objects but as someone to trust and confide in, someone from whom you don't have to hide your true self, increases your flow of energy, your pleasure, and your sense of closeness to your partner.

The Daily Temperature Reading can be an "insurance policy" on your relationship, keeping it current and pleasurable.

### **SKILL #3: MIND READING**

1. Ask Permission ... "Do I have permission to Read Your Mind?"

**"ONE THING I SUSPECT IS TRUE FOR YOU THAT YOU HAVEN'T TOLD ME IS..."**

Demonstration:

Speaker: "One thing I suspect is true for you that you haven't told me is..."

*Example*: "I suspect that you really are tired and wish we could take time off but because we don't have the money right now, I believe you don't want to worry me."

Listener:

Repeats with empathy:

*Example*: "What I heard is that you suspect that I really am tired and wish we could take time off, but because we don't have the money right now, I don't want to worry you."

Speaker: Acknowledges accuracy or corrects.

*Example*: "That's right. Thanks for hearing me."

Speaker: Then asks if that is true?

*Example*: "Is that true?"

Listener:

Responds either with: "Yes, what's even more true for me is ...", or "No, what's really true is..."

*Example*: What's true for me is that I am tired. I know we can't afford to take off right now so I don't see any point in talking about it."

Speaker:

Repeats until accurate and shows appreciation for being told what is true.

Listener:

Expresses appreciation for being listened to accurately and heard with empathy.

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RECOMMENDED READING LIST  
FOR SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

- Lori H. Gordon            “If You Really Loved Me...”  
(Identifying and Untangling Love Knots in Intimate Relationships)
- John Gottman, Ph.D.    Why Marriages Succeed or Fail ... and How You Can Make Yours  
Last
- John Gray, Ph.D.        Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus  
(A Practical Guide for Improving Communication and Getting  
What you Want in Your Relationships)
- Otto Kroeger &  
Janet M. Thuesen        16 Ways To Love Your Lover  
(Understanding the 16 Personality Types So You Can Create a  
Love That Lasts Forever)
- Pat Love, Ed.D            The Truth About Love  
(The Highs, the Lows, and How You Can Make It Last Forever)
- Patricia Love, M.D.  
and Jo Robinson        Hot Monogamy  
(Essential Steps to More Passionate, Intimate Lovemaking)
- Virginia Satir            The New Peoplemaking
- Deborah Tannen         You Just Don't Understand  
(Women and Men in Conversation)
- John Van Epp            How to Not Marry a Jerk

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