

Huh? What Language are you Speaking? The Role of Communication

Differences in Conflict

- Communication style refers not only to what we are saying, but also how we are saying it.
- Many things determine communication style, culture for example. In some cultures it is considered polite to look at the person you are talking to and in other cultures looking directly at someone may be considered impolite. Other factors include class, ethnicity, gender, health, geography, age...
- Different styles manifest in many different ways:
 - mannerisms: such as posture, facial expressions, patterns of speech, pace, volume, and rhythm of speech, silence, the use of slang, introversion /extraversion
 - multi-textured conversation and a more linear/one at a time style
 - effect of rank and feeling of entitlement: speaking clearly and confidently and hesitating, being unsure
 - deferring to the other / competing
 - lecturing or speech-making, debating, co-creating, supporting
 - direct or blunt and a more feeling and circular communication

Why is it important to look at different styles of communication in conflict situations?

- Supporting diversity contributes to deep democracy
- Not noticing or making space for the other's style tends to escalate a conflict; awareness of a different style helps to process conflict. If my communication style is the dominant or major communication style, I am usually unaware of other styles and the impact I have.
- To avoid assuming that a certain communication style denotes certain characteristics. Stereotyping will escalate conflict because you're generalizing about someone rather than seeing them in the moment. Likely a projection of your own marginalized part.
- Communication style can be an indication of rank and it is useful to be aware of this as it can unconsciously influence the interaction.

Double signals:

- The unintentional and uncanny things that happen to you and create your signals even though you are mostly unaware of them. Discovering what these signals mean and congruently bringing them into interaction will de-escalate a situation. For example, if you find yourself looking away and out the window in the middle of a heated argument, perhaps you are more detached than you are aware of, or maybe you are shy.
- The information in the secondary signal is also useful for the group and needed in the

group process.

Accusations:

- The less you know about yourself, the easier accusations freeze you, whether you are dealing with unprocessed trauma or simple lack of awareness about yourself.
- Accusations are the field's unconscious attempts to heighten your awareness of yourself – so learn to differentiate yourself from accusations by being fluid in stepping in and out of them.
- It's useful to pick up the 1% of the accusation that may be true. If it's not true in the moment, where or when could it be true? An accusation is often a statement about an aspect of yourself you don't usually identify with—so it manifests in double signals. You're being accused about a piece of your wholeness and it can be useful to own it and bring it into the moment.
- Picking up an accusation can defuse the conflict.

Dyad Exercise: Accusations And Dreaming

1. Remember an accusation that someone made to or about you. Coach your partner in re-creating the accusation so s/he can present that to you. Partner then makes the accusation.
2. As the accused, first try to defend yourself, deny it, or disregard it as not your problem. If it is hard for you to defend yourself from the accusation, simply notice this difficulty.
3. Now, as the accused take time to do the following innerwork:
 - Think of this accusation as a gift from the Dreaming Universe or as something you need to learn more about.
 - Even if you cannot or do not fully believe in it yet, pretend that this accusation is useful, even necessary for your life and good for your personality; that it's a role in the field calling you to inhabit it.
 - If you need help ask your partner to reframe the accusation in a more positive way, making it more appealing, so that you can appreciate it.
4. Lastly, embrace the accusation and find at least 1% of truth in it, i.e., a kernel of truth. If you are adamant that there is no truth in it now, then imagine that it could be true at a future time. Take time to unfold the 1% of truth with help from your partner who encourages, asks open-ended questions, is compassionate, and keeps awareness. This means find that truth in you and allow it to express itself through you. Actually embody or become the accusation.
5. Now that you have picked up and unfolded the accusation, do you feel any different towards your original accuser? How so? Discuss with partner.

Optional extra step:

6. Focus on the 1% of truth and get to its sentient essence. Notice what was there before it had a name or description. What is it in its seed form? When you have the essence look back from within that essence state at your everyday self and the original scene where the accusation emerged. What do you notice? Does this view bring any new insight or understanding, and if so, what?