

Interpersonal Skills

Who We Are

The philosophies of reap what you sow and treat people in the way that you want to be treated, reaps benefits in most relationships. However there are some individuals where our communication and relationship is more difficult. The way they behave or treat us does not seem to reflect these philosophies. It is important to understand that they are not going to change. What we need to do is to get to grips with the way they behave. We can then decide how we are going to change our communication with them. If we do this in an effective way, it will improve our confidence and working relationships.

To enable a change in our communication we have to understand ourselves. We are all a combination of **nature and nurture**. We are born with a personality, however we are moulded and affected by our upbringing. Recent research has shown that by the age of 3 we are the person we will be in adult life. By the age of 8 our characteristics have been formed and set. However, if you experience an extreme circumstance this can modify us at any moment in our life.

How we develop and are nurtured creates our '**programming**'. The way other people behave towards or treat us. Others beliefs that we either accept or reject. The games that we play, the feelings and emotions we learn to suppress or express. The natural pattern of our own behaviour and how we perceive ourselves. This combination creates who we are as a person.

Reactions

Every day we hear, see and experience **triggers** that bring out a reaction from our programming. The way someone says something, a person's name, a situation all makes us react. We have to understand these triggers, manage situations and control our reactions. This is easier when things are going well, but harder when we are under pressure. Another person might naturally bring out triggers and reactions or we find them more difficult to deal with. It is these more difficult situations that need more thought. Our own personal **negative** thoughts and beliefs create barriers to effective communication. We need to focus on the **positive** aspects of our personality. We must remember the saying 'I'm not better than anybody else, but I'm just as good'. It is really important to **value yourself**.

Be aware of any **prejudice** or **delusion** you maybe suffering from. We all suffer from some form of prejudice, where our beliefs contaminate our logic. The severity of these prejudices varies from one person to another. With delusion, it really depends on how much your feelings rule your thoughts. Are you fooling yourself about a situation or person? Are you the sort of person

whose heart rules their head? Whether its delusion or prejudice we need to control these thoughts and try to focus on our **rational** nature. Think clearly about your ideas, beliefs or feelings about a person or situation.

The Way Forward - Respond

The best way to work with others is in an **adult equal** way. Most people will **respond** to this and you will gain respect. We will build long term in depth relationships. Not everybody however, behaves like an adult and when we are under pressure it can be difficult to stay rational and reasonable. There are some techniques that can help in these situations

Pre-planning our communication is the first step. Decide on how you are going to approach a situation. Think of your key messages or statements. Use previous experiences with the individual to anticipate what they are going to say and how they might say it. Decide on how you will respond to these statements. Learn to respond, not to react. Before you go into a situation have positive thoughts about the situation and how you will you handle it effectively. Think back to previous successes and how you can use those this time.

Positive thoughts – positive outcome.

Listen actively to what they have to say. As they bring out the triggers in you, learn to control your reactions. If you need more information or time, ask more questions. Look at their body language and manner. **Match the message** they are sending. Once you are happy with their message then **respond**. Let them see you in the way you want to be seen. Think about the best way to respond. This may mean being slightly more **dominant or passive** than you would be normally, or stay completely **logical and rational**, to force them into that type of behaviour.

The important thing is that the other person will not change. They get reassurance from their own behaviour and the way you react. It reinforces their position **subconsciously** and **psychologically**. It makes them feel more comfortable with the situation and themselves.

Interpersonal interaction is complex. With most people we do not need to modify our behaviour, however there are those individuals where we do need to make a change. We are never going to understand why someone is behaving in a particular way. What we can do is decide on how we are going to respond them. Remember if we react they have won and we reinforce their position.

Respond do not react – that way we get the right outcome.