COMMUNICATION, CONTROL, AND THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTING

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RELATIONSHIP HISTORY 101

• 1950s/1960s
  • Emphasis on traditional relationship roles.
    • Parents were the 1st role model for a child.
    • Nuclear families with heterosexual couples.

• 1970s
  • Cultural revolution!

• 1980s/1990s
  • “Family values.”
  • Greater acceptance of some differences.

• 2000s
  • Massive diversity in all types of relationships.
WHY HAVE RELATIONSHIPS CHANGED?

• We value autonomy and personal control.
  • Greater emphasis on work and leisure.
  • Less desire to ‘burden’ or have to rely on others.
• Gender-defined roles are continuously changing.
  • Expectations and actual interaction are different now based on gender identity and perceived gender.
• Economic, legal, religious, and social barriers have been reduced.
  • The pauper and the prince can become friends.
  • We can file for divorce freely.
  • It’s not as taboo putting a child up for adoption.

INTIMACY - WHAT IS THIS?!

• Intimate relationships vs. casual associations:
  • Knowledge
    • Your history, feelings, desires, and personal information that we don't share with just anyone.
  • Caring
    • Greater levels of affection towards each other.
    • More understanding, concern, and appreciation → intimacy.
  • Interdependence
    • How we need and influence each other.
  • Mutuality
    • Seeing each other as a unit rather than two individuals; overlap between lives.
  • Trust
    • We believe that we will be treated fairly and honorably.
  • Commitment
    • The connection will continue indefinitely - time, effort, resources are invested.
OUR NEEDS

• Need for affiliation
  • Defining self when compared with others.
  • Seek out for social comparisons.
  • Provides comfort.
  • Basic, less intimate relationships.

• Need for intimacy
  • Closeness, beyond basic friendship.

• Need to belong
  • We all just want to be part of the group; creates social contact.
  • Bonding with others is essential.

OUR NEEDS

• Each need can influence another.
  • High desire for intimacy → low satisfaction with affiliation.
  • High desire for affiliation → difficulty committing to intimate relationships.

• Each need can be met by a variety of partners.
  • Doesn’t always matter who the partners are as long as needs get met.

• Pleasant interaction → overall life satisfaction.
• Unmet needs and losing relationships affect us:
  • Emotionally
  • Socially
  • Physically
COMMUNICATION

BASICS OF COMMUNICATION

• Communication is the foundation of close relationships.
  • Provides a system of meaning for intimate relationships.
• Two broad approaches to communication:
  • Strategic/functional – communication is goal oriented and intentional.
  • Consequential/cultural – communication creates a context within with a relationship can succeed or fail.
COMMUNICATION TASKS

• Instrumental tasks
  • Focus our interactions.
• Relationship maintenance tasks
  • Defining rules for the relationship and handling conflict.
• Interaction management tasks
  • Defining rules for “how-to” tasks regarding the development of adequate conversation between partners.
• These skills require motivation, skill, and action.

SELF-DISCLOSURE

• Central concept for communication.
• Telling someone about yourself.
  • Attitudes, feelings, experiences, etc.
  • Includes intimate and even risky information that we share with others when feeling close to them.
    • Drop our “social mask.”
    • Cease the careful editing of words.
    • Share our innermost thoughts and feelings.
    • Tell someone who we really are.
• This changes over time as the individual(s) and relationship changes.
SELF-DISCLOSURE

• Nondisclosure isn’t necessarily a bad thing.
  • “Surface talk” is the basis of everyday interaction.
  • “Surface talk” helps maintain relationships with acquaintances.
  • Withholding disclosure may be a form of discretion.
  • Withholding disclosure allows needed privacy in relationships.
• We need a little bit of both (disclosure and nondisclosure).

PATTERNS OF COMMUNICATION

• Communication styles fluctuate frequently.
  • This occurs due to empathic accuracy.
    • We’re better able to accurately interpret what our partner is feeling and thinking.
• As we get more intimate…
  • Communication becomes more personal.
  • Communication becomes more synchronized.
    • Easygoing conversations that are coordinated.
  • But barriers in communication may actually increase.
    • General difficulty in understanding one another.
MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT COMMUNICATION

• The assumption of consistency
  • “But that’s not what you said yesterday.”
  • Helps us approach others because we can predict what others will do.
  • We like consistency but don’t like others telling us we’re inconsistent (we may not think that we are inconsistent).

• The assumption of simple meaning
  • “Well, you said it so you must have meant it.”
  • Words don’t always mean something.
    • Associated meanings or the context may mean more.
    • The how means more than the what.

• The assumption of communicator independence
  • “It wasn’t my fault.”
  • Our interactions are interdependent.

• The assumption of obvious causation
  • “I know the real reason for why you said that.”
  • We are quick to assume that there is a ‘hidden’ message or ulterior motive.

• The assumption of finality
  • “That settles it.”
  • Thinking it’s finished ≠ actually being finished.
COMMUNICATION EXPECTATIONS

• Communication rule
  • Patterns of behavior that are “preferred” in certain situations.
    • Ex: Parent to child → “If you yell for me, I won’t answer. You have to come here.”
  • Following the rules → interpersonal satisfaction.

• Communication norm
  • When a rule is followed most of the time, it becomes “the norm.”
    • Ex: “We always split the bills 50/50.”

RULE VIOLATIONS

• When rules are violated, relationships experience “hiccups.”
  • The one who is violated must focus on the issue to determine what it means in relation to their needs and concerns.

• Sometimes, rule violations aren’t always a bad thing.

• How we interpret violations depends on…
  • Our beliefs and expectations of relationships.
  • Our trust in others that they will share those beliefs.
RULE VIOLATIONS

• Breaking the rules → betrayal.
  • This is the negative aspect of rule violations.
• Close relationships = painful betrayals.
  • We’ve entrusted someone with our deepest fears and feelings.
• Context matters with betrayal.
  • Different relationships have different rules and expectations.
    • Communal relationships (family/romantic).
    • Exchange relationships (work)

VIOLATING THE RULES AND GETTING AWAY WITH IT

• Unaware of expectations or unable to fulfill them.
• Violation is offset by circumstances.
• Perceived as an isolated incident.
• Violation was chosen carefully and did not affect an individual’s ego.
• Violator holds a higher status.
• To irritate, poke fun, control, or deflect a previous violation.
• Violation is offset by apologies or disclaimers.
  • Like…
APOLOGIES AND DISCLAIMERS

• Hedging
  • I’m not an expert, but…

• Credentialing
  • Don’t get me wrong, I like you but…

• Sin licenses
  • This is against the letter of the law but not the spirit…

• Cognitive
  • I know this sounds crazy but…

• Appeal for suspended judgment
  • Hear me out on this…

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!

• Speak clearly/be clear!
  • Say what you really mean.
  • Don’t exaggerate or understate.
  • Ask partners to repeat for clarity.

• Make sure the content and tone of voice match.
  • Choose appropriate content to share at appropriate times.

• Say the right thing at the right time.

• Use person-centered communication.

• Listen with nonverbal signals as well.
WHAT IS POWER?

• The ability to manipulate, influence, or control other people or events.
  • We struggle for power in every relationship.
  • Social motive
    • We have needs for power just like we have needs for intimacy and belonging.
    • Our needs for power vary greatly.
    • Also influenced by gender, culture, resources...
POWER IS...

- Positive or negative
  - How we handle power is what makes it positive or negative.
  - We must agree on power arrangement.
  - The powerful person should exercise his/her power ethically and responsibly.

- Always present
  - We can share power.
  - Have more power than another.

POWER IS...

- Context-specific
  - Some types of power are only relevant in specific situations.

- Related to conflict
  - Many conflicts are over power and who has the power to decide.
  - Conflict can influence power.
    - Varying levels of power are dependent on goals, personality, and relationship quality.
TYPES OF POWER

• Coercive power
  • Power based on the ability to punish for non-compliance.
  • If you don’t come visit our family for Thanksgiving, we will not visit you for Christmas.

• Reward power
  • Power based on the ability to reward someone for compliance.
  • If you behave now, you’ll get a special treat later.

• Legitimate power
  • Power based on rightfully granted status or position.
  • Parents have control over raising their children.

TYPES OF POWER

• Referent power
  • Power based on liking, admiring, and/or attraction.
  • We comply more when we like the person – we want to make them happy and not disappoint them.

• Expert power
  • Power based on education, training, and experience.

• Informational power
  • Power based on having specific knowledge that is unavailable or unknown to others.
  • You hold the ability to verbally present this knowledge in a persuasive way.
INFLUENCES ON POWER

• Gender
  • Think about social norms...

• Culture
  • Influences resources and the distribution of power.
  • Patriarchal societies → men have the power.
    • Dominant norms outweigh the resources.
    • Regardless of what each brings to the relationship, men will always have the power.
    • Women have no access to resources therefore, no chance.

INFLUENCES ON POWER

• Power distance
  • Distance between the individuals’ power.
  • High-power-distance culture
    • Characterized by uneven distribution of power.
  • Low-power-distance culture
    • More equal distribution of power among social groups.
    • May still have differences but there is much more equality and greater individual control.
INFLUENCES ON POWER

- Resources
  - Traits or behaviors that are valued by others can be exchanged for power.
  - Resource theory
    - The greater the resources, the greater the power.
    - **Tangible** resources - money, education, occupation/title.
    - **Intangible** resources - love, intelligence, problem-solving.

POWER GAMES

- Hard to get
- Prove your love to me
- Jealous
- Corner
- Sweetheart
- Camouflage
- Wooden leg
- It's your decision
- Martyr
- Gaslighting
- Scapegoating

**Power Plays**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power Plays</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nobody Upstairs</td>
<td>An individual refuses to acknowledge your request.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You Owe Me</td>
<td>Someone does something for you and then demands something in return.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yougottabekidding</td>
<td>The listener puts down your ideas to discredit you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought Stopper</td>
<td>Designed to stop your thinking and especially to stop you from expressing your thoughts.</td>
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ADDRESSING POWER DIFFERENTIALS

Least Effective
- **Exchange offer**: give something of value in exchange for something you want
- **Ingratiation**: get others to like (by flattery, agreement, helping) so they comply with your requests
- **Personal appeal**: use relationships, common ground, and rapport to get something that you want
- **Coercion/Pressure**: use force (persistence or threats) to get someone to act
- **Coalition**: build an alliance of supporter to get others to act
- **Power/Authority**: use positional power or formal authority to get things done

Most Effective
- **Persuasion (rational/logical)**: present facts or lay out an argument emphasizing positive benefits related to a course of action
- **Inspiration**: link desired outcome to shared team values or ideals and model behavior to set an example for others
- **Consultation**: seek advice/input from others to encourage them to become more involved, committed, and motivated to take action
- **Collaboration**: offer support/assistance or provide resources to gain commitment for completion of a desired task

BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS
HOW DO WE EVALUATE SUCCESS?

- In communication?
  - Quantity of response.
  - Quality of response.
  - Intent.
  - Goals.

- In relationships?

ACCURACY - GOOD OR BAD?

- Accurately diagnosing an issue may not always be a good thing.
  - Irreconcilable differences
    - Opposing views that will not get resolved.
    - When making my view clearer will not help.
  - Benevolent misconceptions
    - Realizing that someone is being deceptive to keep you happy.
  - Blunt, unpleasant truths
    - Who likes hearing how bad you are?
PATHWAYS TO MISCOMMUNICATION

• Intent and message do not match from the speaker.
• The wrong intent is inferred from the listener.
• Everyone involved makes mistakes.
• Everything is fine but there is still an error.

BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

• So how do we build better relationships and get better at communication?

• Satisfy your needs.
  • Our needs can be met alone or with others.
RETHINK CAN’T AND COULDN’T

• Excuses often include can’t or couldn’t.
  • “I just could not be bothered to make dinner today.”
    • Really? Or did you just not want to make dinner?
  • Challenge these types of statements.
    • “Yes, I can but rather I choose not to.”
  • When can we actually use can’t?
    • “I cannot live forever.”
  • Cannot may cover up fear or just be wishful thinking.

RETHINK SHOULD AND SHOULDN’T

• Should is associated with unhappy emotions.
  • Guilt, frustration, anger.
• Shoulditis - should-ought-must-have-to messages.
  • “I should work harder..., I should exercise more..., I should not get angry...”
  • These types of statements can lower self-esteem.
• Should doesn’t always sound inviting.
  • “Should we get together?”
  • Why not say, “I would like to get together with you!”
• Better to replace this with want or do not want.
PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!

• Avoid metamessages.
  • The true meaning is not openly expressed.
  • Often sarcastic or suggestive.
  • Ex: "Do not worry about being out of town when we have the graduation party. We will find a way to manage without you."
    • Meaning: I am unhappy that you will not be here.
• Take time to focus and be present during communication.
  • Provide feedback (verbal and nonverbal).
• Argue constructively.
• Be willing to share yourself.
  • Discuss your beliefs, feelings, values, etc. openly.

THANK YOU

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