

Family Notes



A Family Newsletter for the Cottonwood Seventh-day Adventist Church
"for all who have relationships to improve"

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In this issue: Communication Part 1, "Why Misunderstandings?"



Editor's Notes

Dear Friends in our Church,

This time we begin a journey through the subject of communication. We begin by simply understanding why other people don't always really understand what we are saying! It can be frustrating to try your best to be nice to someone, and they continually take it wrong. Our inclination is to blame them for a wrong attitude! But understanding why it may be happening is the first step towards better communication. And whether it is in the church, or our family, that is a good thing.

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Why Misunderstandings?

In the very beginning, God realized that it was important for people to have companionship – to have someone to talk with. *"The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."*

Gen. 2:18 NIV.

But that communication is not always easy! *For example: a husband walks into the kitchen in the morning and says, "You look nice this morning!" She absent-mindedly says "Thanks," then "Wait a minute! Are you implying I look bad other mornings?" He puts his arm around her and says, "You look nice every morning." She replies "That's not what you said." He:*

*Everyone should be quick to
listen, slow to speak and
slow to become angry*

James 1:19 NIV

"It's what I meant." After a moment she comes back with: "No, it isn't — If I look nice every morning, how come you just said it this morning but not those other mornings?" He turns to put the toast in the toaster and says "Have you ever noticed how some people take compliments better than others?" She folds her arms and says, "Wait a minute, are you implying I don't take compliments well?"

Have you ever been misunderstood? Let's take a look at what might cause that to happen:

Communication is a two-way process, a meeting of meanings between two people. It involves three things:

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| 1. Words | 7% |
| 2. Tone of Voice | 38% |
| 3. Body Language | 55% |

When I first heard those percentages I thought "No way! Surely my words are worth more than 7%!" But the more I study human behavior the more I

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Why Misunderstandings? — Continued

believe it. This confirms the old saying “Actions speak louder than words.”

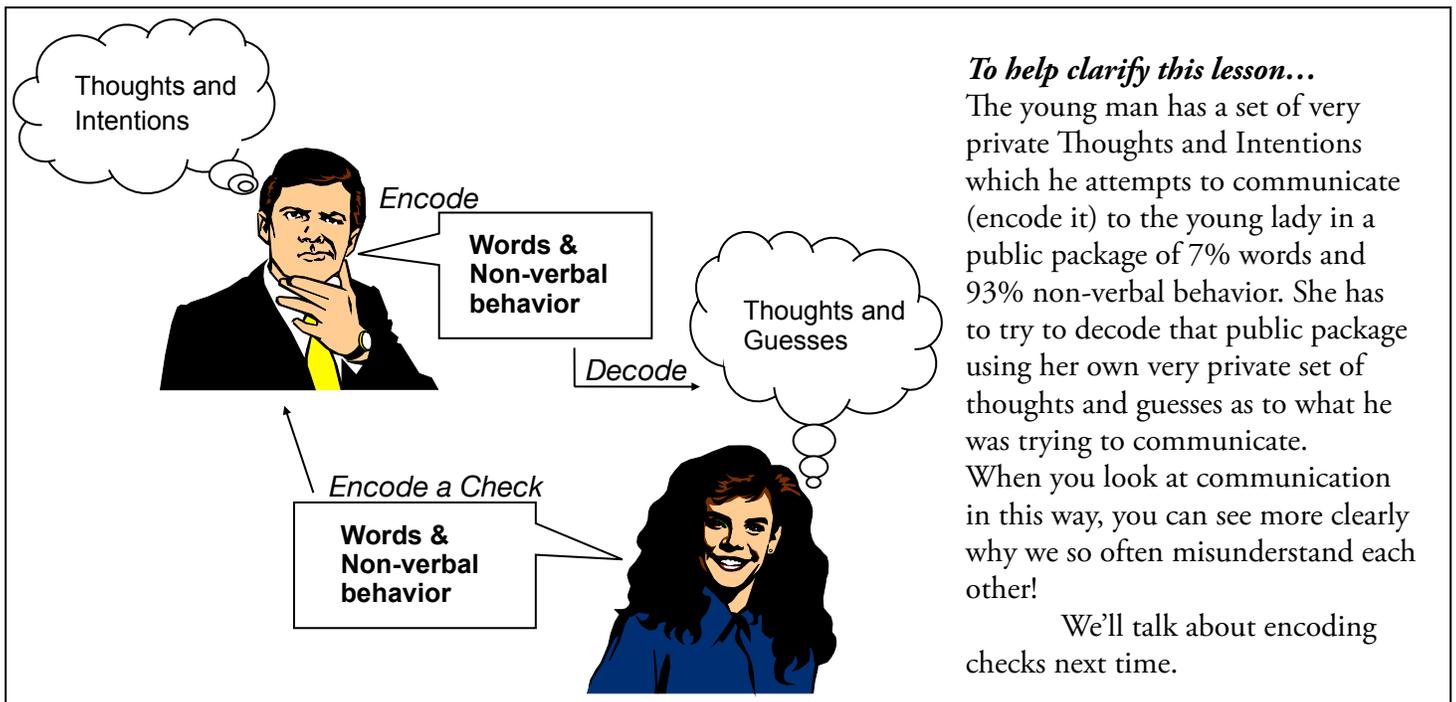
When all three (words, tone of voice, and body language) give the same message, it is “congruent,” like the congruent triangles we studied in geometry. All the aspects and angles match. Communication is the same, when all three parts match congruently, it seems real. When one part of that communication doesn’t agree, something doesn't seem right, we might say the person seems insincere, or sarcastic. *For example, A simple phrase like “Aren’t you a sight for sore eyes!” can be meant and interpreted in very different ways, depending on the tone of voice, emphasis, and body language of the person saying it. It can sound like the ultimate of put-downs, or like a warm complement. It isn’t the words - it is the tone of voice and body language that is communicating to us.* Noticing incongruence is a hint that should tell us to listen more closely, to find *why* we are hearing a difference between words and non-verbal communication.

Another reason the communication gap happens is because we grow up differently. My husband is half

Italian, and grew up in an environment of many people speaking loudly, with emphasis, and with their hands moving. I was brought up in a quiet home, with one sister — we didn’t even raise our voices! The first time I visited his home at holidays, I thought they were all mad at each other! We need to be aware of cultural differences, and even the more subtle differences of how we are raised.

Also, the words themselves can have different meanings. The Inuit in Alaska have more than 50 words for “Snow,” and their knowledge of snow is far superior to the word “snow” to a person born and raised in Phoenix, Ariz.! “Father” can mean something different to each person—based on their own father.

All of these things together point to the fact that communication is often difficult, and we need to all take it on ourselves to be sure that what we wanted to say is what the other person understood. It is our responsibility to say things right! And our second responsibility is to *check out* whether we are hearing the other person correctly. We’ll talk more about how to do that in the next few newsletters!



We need to listen with all our hearts to each part of communication coming our way

In Coming Issues...

- ★ In our series on communication - how to listen to each other in caring ways - and to successfully communicate our own concerns.

