

We change the world one communication at a time.

I heard a friend say to a group of us this morning that “**We change the World one communication at a time.**” Could this statement be true? How could it be true? Does communication have that much power? What would I need to understand and practice in order to have the power to effect some positive change in the world?

While I’ve heard similar ideas before, hearing it this way struck a particular cord in me today. So I’ve been thinking about it and here’s what I’ve come up with.

Could this statement be true? Yes, it certainly is true. What we communicate to others and how we do that makes a big difference in people’s lives. **Harsh** messages hurt, **kind** messages heal, **sincere** messages create connections, **playful** messages trigger laughter, **grateful** messages boost mood and have someone know they have made a positive impact. Even non-verbal looks and gestures can carry a powerful and course changing message. A client recently described the powerful impact her look of determination had that influenced a major positive change in her relationship with a family member.

How could it be true? The communications we make may be in the form of words, thoughts, or other actions and they effect both the deliverer’s and receivers’ mood, heart rate, breathing rate, autonomic nervous system, sense of authentic power, and mental, emotional, and physical health. In this context, the truism that “what we put our attention on expands” means that our communications are a holistic expression and have holistic influence on our mindbody and the mindbody of others – whether we’re aware of it or not.

Does communication have that much power? The affirmative evidence of this are the millions of articles that have been written about how to communicate effectively in an intimate relationship, other personal relationships, parenting, workplace relationships, and in community and leadership roles. Influence, respect, regard, and right power in all our relationships expand with conscious and effective listening and speaking. Sometimes, we just don’t believe that we could affect any good change. When I’m working with couples to improve their connection, I often hear from one or both that they don’t believe they could make any positive impact on the course of their relationship. Yet, often, all it takes to turn a relationship onto the path of reconnection is basic listening and speaking skills that most of us have the capacity to learn.

What do you need to understand and practice in order to have the power to effect a positive change in your communications? (I’m going to give 3 top ideas here.)

1. Intention sets the foundation for any powerful communication. Identify what you intend to communicate and build on that. Spending time in getting clear about

what your intention is will be a good investment. When we keep them in mind, intentions guide words and actions. When we get off track we only need to remind ourselves what our intention is. For example, for a number of years now I make it a daily practice to name my intention for being clear, open, authentic, and kind in all my communications. These factors guide my interactions. When I get off track I remind myself of them. Since I began using these intentions I've noticed a big change in the ease and flow of my communications and the positive impact they have.

2. Communication is a skill to develop that involves both listening and speaking. I name listening first because this is the primary skill people most ask for from their partners, close friends, and associates. There isn't a day that goes by in my practice in which someone doesn't say in some way, "I just want to be listened to." Mark Twain said that "If God intended us to speak more than listen; he would have given us two mouths and one ear." A good practice principle is: "more is less". Someone said to me recently that she is transforming her closest relationships – having less conflict and distance - by listening more and talking less. A wise woman indeed. The other idea to keep in mind here is that skills are learned. We are not born with them. We are not flawed if we struggle with communicating. We just have something to learn. Learning is power and learning/practicing communicating clearly has the power to transform your world.
3. Keep in mind that your whole brain, your whole mindbody are involved in communicating authentically. If what we say is not aligned with what is going on inside of us, we're sending risky mix messages. For example, if we smile to cover up hurt or anger, we'll feel it on the inside and we're not giving a trustworthy message on the outside. When we do that consistently over time, our mindbody disconnects and we risk a variety of imbalances, i.e. health, relationships, well-being. And recent relationship research by John Gottman, the foremost marital researcher in the country, strongly indicates that lack of trustworthiness is the major cause for any relationship break down and a significant cause of early death for men. Those are very powerful responses to communication or the lack there of.

We change the world one communication at a time. All we have to focus on is **one at a time. We can do that. You can do that.** What can you do today to strengthen the positive impact you want to make on the world around you?

