



HELPS

Health Enhancement for Lifelong Professional Students

Where did *that* come from? Tips for better communication with the opposite sex

Why is it so difficult for men and women to communicate effectively? Is it just the way we're wired? By learning about the differences in communication styles, we can move on to more effective exchanges with fellow students, work colleagues, friends and family members.

"The primary difference between the genders is that men, in general, are *resolvers* and women are *relaters*," says Certified Corporate Trainer Rosalind Sedacca. "As resolvers, men focus on doing, taking action, finding

solutions, getting things done and solving problems. As a result, they are very externally focused."

"As relaters, women focus on pleasing, communicating, making connections, understanding feelings, exploring emotions and being understood," Sedacca continues. "As a result, they are more introspective and internally focused."

The work of acclaimed author Deborah Tannen, Ph.D. sums up these differences succinctly, says Sedacca. "Tannen points out that women talk to establish

rapport, while men talk to *report*."

Competition vs. Empathy

Cognitive behavior therapist Jayme Albin, Ph.D. helps people build awareness of differing communication styles so they can improve their own communication and assertiveness skills.

"Men seek to preserve a sense of hierarchy," she notes. "That's why they are more comfortable being outwardly competitive with peers. Women, on the other hand, often will look to align themselves with their peers and express empathy by establishing themselves as equals. This is why women often share related stories with one another during times of despair. It conveys to the other person, 'I have been in your position before and can relate.'"

In her book *Talking from 9 to 5*, Tannen expands on her insights into men's and women's conversational styles. While she maintains that no one style of speaking is superior, she emphasizes the importance of understanding our own styles, and knowing their limits and their alternatives, especially in work situations.

"The key is to acknowl-

edge and understand the differences and expand our own styles to respond in ways appropriate to the situation," says Dr. Madeline Ann Lewis, President/CEO of Deline Institute for Professional Development.

Giving him the nod

One distinct difference in styles that can lead to miscommunication is the way women often nod their heads as men talk.

"Women should be certain that they are communicating the correct message when they keep nodding to a male speaker," says Lewis. "He may feel that you are in agreement when you are actually just indicating that you are listening."

"Women nod their heads as feedback," adds Certified Speaking Professional and

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Tips for Women in Business

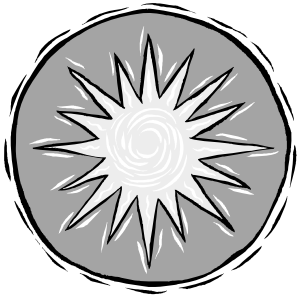
Certified Corporate Trainer Rosalind Sedacca offers these suggestions for women who want to bridge the business gender gap.

- Speak with authority. Avoid raising your voice in a questioning tone at the end of sentences. When your voice goes up, your credibility goes down.
- Don't wait your turn in meetings. Men assertively speak out with strong voices. If you have a comment, state it without waiting to be called upon.
- Be aware of listening style differences. Women listen attentively with direct eye contact, nodding and vocalizing, which men often misconstrue to mean agreement. Be clear when expressing the difference between "I hear you" versus "I agree with you."
- Monitor your smiling. Women smile more readily in business contexts to be friendly. Men smile with women to flirt. Be careful your behaviors are not misinterpreted.

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Communication Styles: His and Hers

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body language expert Patti Wood, M.A. “For women, a head nod conveys ‘I get what you’re saying, go on.’ Yet a woman may nod whether she agrees with the speaker’s message or not. Men only nod to a speaker when they agree. So a man may become confused or even angry when the woman he’s talking with contradicts or argues with him. His interpretation is ‘She is nodding her head. She thinks I’m brilliant.’ Yet while she is nodding, she may be thinking, ‘I get it. Now finish, so I can disagree!’ So woman have to be careful how about giving ‘I’m listening’ nods if they disagree with what a man is saying.”

Another conflict occurs when men don’t nod when a woman is talking, says Wood.

“The woman may think, ‘That jerk isn’t listening to me. I listen and give him feedback all the time.’ Men typically do not give as much nonverbal feedback or even nonverbal utterances like ‘uh huh’ to show they are listening. A woman may accuse a man of not really listening, when he is.

And he may become frustrated, wondering ‘why she is so demanding?’”

With a little understanding, men and women can learn to anticipate and accommodate one another’s communication styles, and move toward better relationships in all areas of their lives.

Resources

You Just Don’t Understand: Women and Men in Conversation, by Deborah Tannen (William Morrow, Ballantine)

That’s Not What I Meant!: How Conversational Style Makes or Breaks Your Relations With Others, by Deborah Tannen (William Morrow, Ballantine)

Talking from 9 to 5: How Women’s and Men’s Conversational Styles Affect Who Gets Heard, Who Gets Credit, and What Gets Done, by Deborah Tannen (William Morrow, New York)

Leadership and the Sexes, by Michael Gurian with Barbara Annis; (Jossey-Bass/John Wiley, 2008)

Success Signals: Understanding Body Language (Another Day Publishing, 2005) by Patti Wood, M.A.: www.PattiWood.net

Jayme Albin, M.A., Ph.D.: www.AsktheCBT.com

Madeline Ann Lewis: www.delineinstitute.net

Rosalind Sedacca: www.womenhelpingwomenmastermind.com

Tips for Communicating About Money

Are you in a committed relationship? Being open and honest about your financial situation now can help you avoid problems later.

“People bring financial baggage into a relationship, and often don’t deal with it until problems arise,” says Gail Cunningham, spokesperson for the nonprofit National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC). “That baggage may come in the form of a poor credit rating, significant debt, or no experience managing money. Regardless of the issue, the time to address money differences is up front, before the financial bottom falls out.”

Here are a few tips to get the conversation started:

Do be honest about your current financial situation. If things have gone south, continuing the same lifestyle that was possible before the loss of income is simply unrealistic.

Don’t approach the subject in the heat of battle. Instead, set aside a time that is convenient and non-threatening for both parties.

Do make it a casual conversation about a serious subject, respecting the fact that each person has valid opinions and concerns

Do acknowledge that one may be a saver and one a spender, understanding that there are benefits to both and agreeing to learn from each other’s tendencies.

For free financial education resources and information about NFCC confidential credit counseling services, visit www.nfcc.org or call 1-800-388-2227. Your HELPS program is also an excellent local and confidential resource, ready to help you address concerns about relationships, finances and other issues that distract you from your educational goals.