

Week 3: Communication Styles & Personality Styles

I. Highlights

- A. When working in groups, reflect on everyone's communication styles. Does everyone have a chance to contribute? Is everyone being genuinely heard? Is anyone taking over?
- B. "Dialogue" is a deeper, more genuine connection where everyone listens and reflects. It's deeper than "discussion" or "argument" where people are focused on their own point of view being right.
- C. All four communication styles (direct, spirited, considerate, systematic) are effective and valid. It helps the group to have a balance of styles.
- D. Be aware of what "pushes your buttons" in communication. When someone talks too much (or doesn't talk at all), think about what feelings or human needs are driving that behavior. They're probably not doing it to bug you on purpose.
- E. Personality is part genetic, part environmental. It can shift a little over time but won't radically change from one extreme to the other.
- F. Meyers-Briggs personality assessment describes us in four dimensions:
 - E-I (extrovert/introvert = outward or inward focus),
 - S-N (sensing/intuition = how we get information, facts or gut feelings),
 - T-F (thinking/feeling = what we base our decisions on), and
 - J-P (judging/perceiving = how easily we make decisions).We are all on a continuum/spectrum for each one, and how these factors interact is what matters.
- G. It's easier for me to change my behavior than for me to change your behavior. Changing my behavior changes how you interact with me because your personality style is going to stay the same.

II. Homework

- A. For next week, read the first two chapters of the smaller brown/purple textbook, *Inspiring Peak Performance*
- B. This MTBI powerpoint is from BusinessBalls.com and will be on Angel.

III. Introduction Activity

- A. Look at this picture of children walking on a path of hollow wooden blocks, built down the center of the ramp outside the WVC classroom.
 1. In terms of safety and appropriate activities, is there anything here that makes you uncomfortable? or are you on the fence? or is it okay with you?
 2. Love it: We like the physical development opportunities, risky play benefits, the fact that it's child-directed. Problem-solving and self-esteem building to do it themselves without adult intervention.
 3. Middle-of-the-road people: I don't see any adult in the picture to be present with them. Obviously someone took the picture, but want someone closer to catch them if they do fall. Would be good for an adult to be directly involved facilitating the play.
 4. No one voted that they were uncomfortable with this idea.
 5. Anxious adult presence makes kids anxious. Even if you mean well, being right there all the time sends the message to children that they're not competent enough to handle it themselves.
 6. Can build safety expectations into the culture of the program so you don't have to be right next to them with verbal/physical prompts to be safe all the time.
- B. Picture #2: Same environment, but now a child is walking/balancing on the block road while holding another hollow block over his head. He is barefoot.

There are two children standing to the side of the path a few feet ahead of him.

New opinions?

1. Worried?

- a) Worried about no shoes and a heavy block above his head.
- b) Worried that there are two children who will get bonked if he loses control of the block he's carrying, or who could turn around unexpectedly and bump into him.
- c) Worried that there are so many hard edges nearby in case any of them falls. Maybe move the balance activity to more open space?

2. Still comfortable

- a) All of the children look comfortable and confident. They're not worried.
- b) Know your children. I have a few children I would want to be close to in case they lose their balance or intentionally bonk the other children, but still wouldn't stop him.
- c) It's a safe surface to be barefoot on (no splinters, etc.) and barefoot can be easier balancing than shoes. No worries.
- d) This is clearly an ongoing project during the day. It changes over the course of the morning or afternoon, kids are all aware it's there.

C. Discuss in small groups: Pretend we're a staff and a parent has presented this concern/issue to us (seen in the pictures). We're in a WVC-like program where barefoot outdoor play is okay, some risk is okay, open-ended materials that become different projects every day, adults are nearby but trusting. Parent is complaining about the play seen in these photos, wants us to make a rule about shoes outside all the time, no climbing on blocks unless they're on cushioned mats. What do we do? Do we change our policy or not? (And watch our own group dynamics while we discuss this.)

1. Our discussion

- a) Start by acknowledging parent's observations, feelings, etc.
 - b) Maybe different if there were several parents complaining about the same thing, but not just one, and especially if it's "that parent."
 - c) Is it because it's outside the parent's comfort zone, or because they've had repeated ouch reports from this play? Even if not serious injuries, if repeated minor injuries, can be opening ourselves up to a licensing report for lack of supervision.
 - d) Invite her to try the activity herself or come observe through the window to see it in action.
 - e) Know your parents. Some parents will be assuaged by explaining, "Research is showing us the value of risky play..." and showing a copy of the article with Author, Ph.D.
 - f) Ask what they would want to see happen, be open to meeting them halfway. Maybe they have insight/experience from another context that we haven't thought of.
 - g) Unless can prove a serious safety issue that doesn't outweigh the benefits of this risky free play, don't plan to change our policy.
2. Reflect on our group's communication style
- a) One person was direct, helped us re-focus when we got off topic.
 - b) We all listened, all contributed.
 - c) No one was spirited or systematic (some have systematic tendencies).
 - d) As direct, did you jump right in and get the conversation started?
 - e) As considerate, did you listen to get a feel for the group and then speak up?
 - f) More vocal in these classes than we used to be in other settings. Have learned to speak up more.
 - g) Birdwalking... thankful for our direct person.

- h) I've been spirited enough today, am just done tonight, too tired to be enthusiastic. More grumpy / flat tonight.
 - i) Hung back to listen (conservative) then contributed.
 - j) Direct person got us started with the question, "So what do we do about this?" Focus on policy more than feelings.
 - k) If a considerate style had gotten us started, the question might have been more like, "Let's keep in mind the parent's point of view too..." Base it on feelings / opinions of others in addition to the program's policy / needs.
 - l) Spirited would be expressive and passionate like, "This is the best way to be, she bought into this when she enrolled in the program, how can she not understand..." get into a philosophical debate about it because so passionate.
3. This exercise is just about our communication style as a group, not the answers we came up with about handling the parent. Looking at how we communicated as a group. Was everyone included? Did everyone's needs get met? Were you really heard? Did you have the opportunity to contribute fully? This is something we need to learn to pick up in ourselves and see in others.

IV. Dialogue vs. Discussion/Argument

A. Want to get to a deeper dialogue (give and take, deeper than just a discussion) where each of us puts thoughts forward, listens, reflects, back, without arguing to convince you that my idea is right, more important to listen and learn from each other. Different from a discussion or debate where we're defending our point of view.

1. Discussion leads to argument. Dialogue leads to learning about ourselves and others. Can take a while to get to the point that we can really dialogue, but it's

important in order to be able to fully collaborate. Then we can help each other process/think about a situation and get to a productive outcome.

2. Have to be a student of our own communication style in order to get here.

What do I look like/sound like in a group? What are others doing that interacts with my style?

B. Different roles/approaches in the group:

1. Who talked then listened?
2. Who listened then talked?
3. Who listened, listened, then agreed?
4. Who listened, listened, listened, but didn't contribute? (can tell by body language they're paying attention and tracking the conversation, but have nothing to offer?)
5. Who talked, talked, talked, but didn't listen?

V. Different communication styles & how they interact

A. All four communication styles are effective, and we need a balance. Some can annoy others, but all have value.

B. Problems come from problematic or anti-social behavior (including the chatterbox who won't listen, or the one who never contributes) that detract from the effectiveness of the group. At that deeper dialogue level, it's not okay for one or two people to dominate completely, or for one or two people to hang back and never contribute.

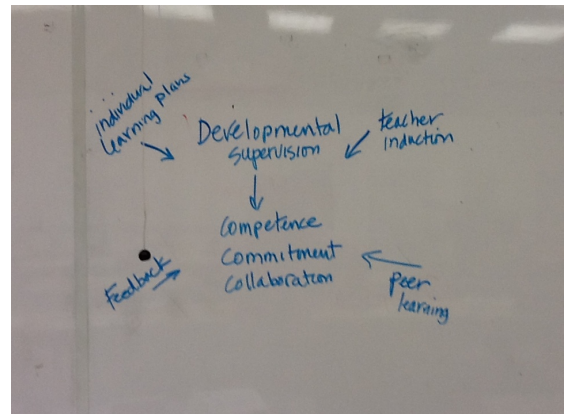
1. Have to practice our own skills and become aware of the behavior within the group. Participate, but also be aware/observe the dynamics at the same time.
 - a) Notice who's getting it started, who's moving it along.
 - b) Notice who gets it started, who keeps it on track.
 - c) Notice who brings in the technical/policy perspective.

2. Based on last week and this week, would you change your communication style label for yourself? Or did you get confirmation?
3. Considerate: feel safer agreeing with the group opinion rather than offering the first opinion, because don't want to make anyone uncomfortable
4. What might be a reason for someone not to contribute even if you have the chance to?
 - a) Difficult to be the only person with an opposite opinion when the rest of the group agrees. Risky to feel like the odd-one-out.
 - b) If the group is split down the middle, even if the person has an opinion, speaking up with that opinion is seen as taking sides. They have to keep working with these people tomorrow, so it's safer not to take sides.
 - c) Scary to confront your supervisor or anyone in a position of power. Silence is safer.
 - d) Sometimes genuinely don't have an opinion, don't have experience or knowledge to know the answer. Don't want to sound like an idiot.
 - e) Fear, lack of confidence, lack of self-esteem.
 - f) Know they're not going to be heard, or will be ridiculed/ attacked for their opinion, no one cares what your opinion is anyway, so why speak up?
 - g) Shy, not used to speaking up.
 - h) New to the group or team, unsure of their role, will contribute later once trust is more established.
5. What's going on for the person who talks too much? too long, too often, can't stop?
 - a) Uncomfortable with silence
 - b) Processing/ thinking out loud, figuring it out as they speak, so it's not as concise as people who can think it out first

- c) Is how they engage with people, take it as approval/feedback when people engage
- d) Extroverted personality, externally stimulated
- e) Some of us who like quiet can get energy / recharged / connection just by being next to each other, enjoying each other's company without talking, can process it intuitively / empathetically. Constant talkers don't get that recharge in silence; they need the verbal exchange to recharge.

C. When these behaviors bug you, think about what might be the feelings / human needs underneath that drive them. Some behavior patterns are more annoying to people than others (push our buttons), others are easier to ignore. Know for yourself, what range of communication styles / behaviors can you handle and what will people do that pushes your buttons?

1. Oblivious to the fact that there are other people in the world who matter, other opinions that may be valid, other philosophies in life
2. Entitlement!
3. Abusing the system (such as paying the late fee every night, using it as babysitting, no consideration for teachers needing to go home)
4. People who talk too much, we just zone out, they don't even notice that we've checked out
5. Being asked our opinion, then being told we're wrong or stupid once we share it
6. Someone coming on strong, yelling, hands on their hips, in your face



7. Important to know what these triggers are for us. Is it a lot of a certain behavior, or just a tiny bit of something specific? Probably just a few things, but there's something that will do it. Know this so we can feel it happening and be aware that we're not grounded/logical when we're in that space.

D. Formula: on a continuum from - to neutral to +, we're centered at neutral (present in the moment, functioning well).

1. Can get pushed into negative by something that pushes our buttons.
2. Can also get pushed into the positive when something really great happens, get totally swept up in the excitement of it. Feels great, but may not be really grounded/practical there.
3. Important to know what really pushes you one way or the other.

VI. Communication factors

A. Reflective or "developmental supervision" = knowing your people, their skills, their knowledge base, meeting them where they are individually and helping them move down the continuum toward competence.

B. Feedback really does help

1. Supervisor to employee
2. Peer feedback about your style and how it impacts somebody else

C. Helps build commitment to the program and to the ECE field, able to collaborate with one another effectively.

D. "Induction" = orientation, helping new teachers get off to a good start and grow. (Not necessarily the youngest teachers, just the newest ones to the field and/or to our program.) Helping them grow professionally.

E. Looking first at "individual learning plans" tonight by studying ourselves, our styles, being able to observe and identify these styles in others.

VII. Meyers-Briggs Personality Assessment (what we did for homework was a version of this)

- A. Personality is part genetic, part environmental based on our culture, family of origin in childhood and adult life. Can change a little over time, but won't radically change unless there's major brain damage.
- B. Managers cannot change anyone's personality through training or discipline. We can influence / change behavior, but we can't change personality. This test shows a person's personality, describes behavior in common vocabulary, so we know what not to try to change.
- C. Overview (encouraged to research this more on our own)
 - 1. Created in the 1960s, grounded in research, has stood the test of time, used cross-culturally, validated by longitudinal studies, can count on this being fairly reliable as long as people are honest in their answers
 - 2. Valuable to know these characteristics for ourselves and the people we work with.
 - 3. We're all somewhere on the continuum from 0-100% in each dimension. No one is 0 or 100. Can be high, low, or medium on each one.
- D. Personality types are labeled by letters in four dimensions:
 - 1. 1st letter = E or I, extrovert or introvert (inwardly or outwardly focused / oriented)
 - a) not about being shy, but about where we get our energy: from being with other people, or from within ourselves
 - b) Friday night after a long busy week, the extrovert enjoys the dinner party, feels recharged, is ready to keep going. The introvert at the party likes the people but is exhausted by the end, is ready to go home and recharge.
 - c) Being out in the world (especially with other people) drains an introvert, recharges an extrovert.

- d) An extrovert can go all day in a classroom, but finds it very hard to do a job alone in a room. Introvert loves to work alone, enjoys the kids and coworkers but is tired by the end of the day.
 - e) When a teacher goes to her car to eat lunch instead of being in the staff room, it doesn't mean she doesn't like you. She may be an introvert "recharging her batteries" so she can enjoy the afternoon without yelling at the kids from being too tired.
 - f) Highly introverted may be seen as very shy or stand-off-ish, harder to draw them out to connect with others, because being internally connected is more natural/comfortable for them.
2. 2nd letter = S or N, sensing or intuition (how we get information)
- a) Teachers (mostly K-12) statistically are more likely to be S
 - b) S = get information from facts, what worked before, etc. more matter-of-fact, go with what's in front of them, concrete
 - c) N = collect "gut feeling" information all the time from experiences, feelings, sensations on different levels, etc., package it on an unconscious level, access it holistically
3. 3rd letter = T or F, thinking or feeling (how we make decisions)
- a) Once we get our information (through S or N), how do we make a decision?
 - b) T approaches more analytically, logically, factually, less concern for how the decision will make others feel (statistically more men are T)
 - c) F considers more social/emotional factors, may not come to a decision in a linear/methodical way (stereotype expects more women to be F)
 - d) If it's time for lay-offs, the T person will look at who's most expensive, least qualified, most recently hired, etc. The F person will look at other

factors: who has other marketable skills, who just bought a house, who just had a baby, who's near retirement, etc.

- e) Helpful to have both in balance when deciding as a group
4. 4th letter = J or P, judging or perceiving (how we handle the outside world, how soon we decide stuff, whether we judge or continue to perceive)
- a) J wants to decide quickly and be done with it
 - b) P has a very hard time making a quick decision because they see all the possibilities, want to gather more information, feels like, "If I decide now, what if I get more information in the near future that would change my decision?"
 - c) You and a friend agree Monday night to go to a movie Friday night. J opens the newspaper, looks at the listings, chooses the show and time and place right away. The P person can't decide that on Monday, wants to take in all the information, wait and see if another possibility comes along, maybe we'll want to go to a concert instead, wait and see. P is more comfortable deciding Friday afternoon what to see.
 - d) Is about how we prefer to be, given the choice, not necessarily how we operate in real life because our job can dictate that we be more J when we are naturally more P.
- E. Is the combination of these, not just the answer to each one, that forms your personality.
- 1. Think about going to the grocery store. S/J enters the same side every time, goes up and down the aisles in order, buys what's on the list, turns it into the planned recipes. Orderly approach. N/P goes without a list because there are so many possibilities! What if something great is on sale? What if the cool new food is in a different location? Decide what to buy and what to cook

- based on what they find in the store. Still gets the job done, more go-with-the-flow about it.
2. Can be middle-ground N and S: Goes in with a list and a menu, but comfortable adapting as needed if something catches your eye in the store.
 3. N decides what to eat by opening the cupboard and looking at what's available, rather than what you had planned (S).
 4. Put a high S and a high P to get things done, they'll drive each other nuts but can also balance each other well. The S may be more square, the P may be more squiggly line.
 - a) Terry the P used to put jobs in her S assistant's inbox as the S was leaving, and the S would come back in to finish it. Couldn't handle going home knowing that was there in the inbox waiting for her.
 - b) S will ask, "What did we do last year? Did it work? Let's do that again."
 - c) P will have a grandiose new plan, may be creative, but may have no idea how much time or money or manpower it will need to make it happen. The S can help with that.
 - d) When we know this about ourselves and others, it helps us interact more smoothly. Understand the motivation behind their behavior, not try to change their personality to match mine.
 5. Combinations matter: Extroverted T = analytical, strategic, plans, implements, organizes others. Introverted T = contemplative, discovering, theoretical, seeks self-knowledge. (Both are T, but combined with the E or I, it changes.)
 6. Extroverted F = sociable, sentimental, seeks personal and social success. Introverted F = inaccessible, enigmatic, self-contained.
 7. Extroverted S = practical, hands-on, pleasure-seeking, hard-headed. Introverted S = intense, obsessive, detached, connoisseur, expert.

8. Interesting that I struggled to believe the labels on each category individually because most were just a point or two apart, but put together, the final description of my combination of the four letters was very accurate.
Interesting.
 9. Can adapt to situations, especially if you're naturally in the middle of the continuum.
 10. Knowing ourselves, can train ourselves to adapt. Example: a high P is very indecisive, so has trained herself to look at restaurant menu ahead of time and decide before she goes because she knows she'll take forever to decide there.
 11. Helps to know this about ourselves. Instead of beating yourself up for not sticking to the grocery list, helps to realize that following a list may not be your natural style and that's okay.
- F. Case studies often look at the fact that we can change our own behavior sooner and more deeply than we can change someone else's behavior. Changing our own behavior can cause change in others because they respond differently to us. Can't change their personality or ours, but can change how we interact by changing my own behavior. (Example: Terry the P learned not to put jobs in her assistant's inbox until after the assistant left because she knew the assistant (an S) couldn't handle the pile at the end of the day.)
1. Remember it's your *preference* for operating one way or the other on each dimension. It doesn't mean you always actually do that, just that you're more comfortable one way than the other.
 2. Helps to ease the pressure we put on ourselves. Sometimes the world tells us we should be a certain way (such as being more social) but we struggle to do it and may think it's something wrong with us. Helps to realize that it's

because we're introverts, so we enjoy social stuff but need "me time" to recharge to balance that.

- G. Personality is genetic + shaped by experiences. Experiences come from culture, family of origin in childhood, adult life experiences, and the choices we make too. We make choices for ourselves in our own lifestyle.