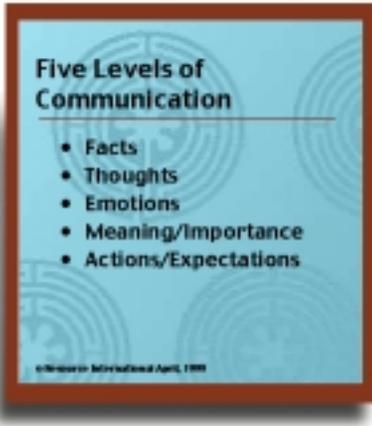


The Five Levels of a Clear Communication

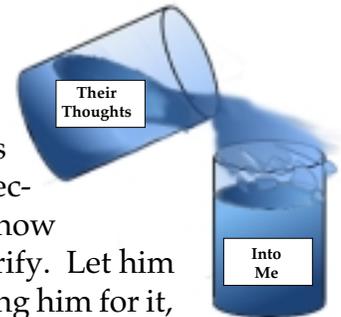


1. Clearly **state the facts**, as they have occurred. Describe what literally happened, without judgement or interpretation. You may check to see if the other person is aware of these facts, and if he has other important pieces of information that need to be considered. People often put across their own beliefs as objective facts. Don't. This is more likely to cause other people not only to disagree with you, but to try to make you wrong.

2. **Communicate your thoughts and opinions** about the situation. Facts are neutral. They become positive or negative, good or bad, right or wrong when you make a judgement about them. Thoughts are your subjective response to the objective facts. Through thoughts and opinions you commu-

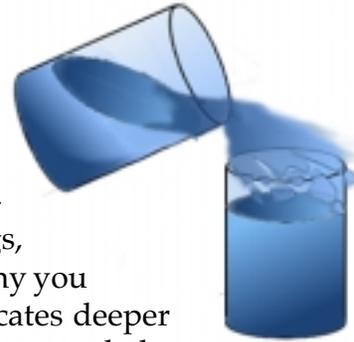
nicate your evaluation of the facts. This second level includes your attitudes, preferences, and opinions about the facts. Do not communicate your thoughts as if they are facts by stating an opinion like, "The fact is you are wrong." Often, people will have less resistance to your opinions if you first clarify the objective facts, and then offer your subjective opinions as possibilities.

3. Clearly **state your feelings or emotions**. You can either control your emotions or your emotions will control you. Chapter Three showed that emotions will be expressed unconsciously if you do not express them consciously. When you suppress or repress the emotion it becomes unconscious and controls your behavior. To control the emotions effectively, you must acknowledge them consciously. Let the other person know that he may have sensed some emotion from you, and you want to clarify. Let him know you will take responsibility for your own emotion without blaming him for it, and you still want to communicate to him what you believe is important ("I know I may be feeling angry, and I don't want that to get in the way of working this out," or "I feel hurt by what you did, so I want to make sure you understand why this is important to me.").



Sometimes people mistake their thoughts and opinions for emotions. They may say, "I feel that you do not understand me," or "I feel you should not be treating me this way." These feelings are not emotions, they are opinions. Any sentence that begins with "I feel that" is most likely not a statement of emotion, but is a statement of opinion. You may think that someone does not understand you, and you may feel hurt or angry in response. Because of what you think (thoughts) about what happened (facts), you may be upset (emotions). But your communication does not end here. Two more levels must be involved by clarifying why this issue is important to you, and what your expectations are. to you, and what your expectations are.

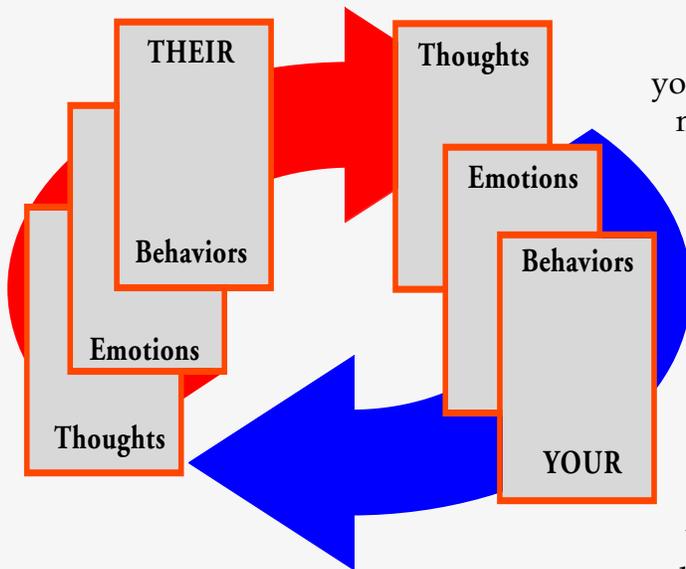




Five Levels of a Communication (cont.)

4. **Describe what is important to you** about the situation. Take a moment to consider your thoughts and feelings, state what these mean to you, what is important to you and why you think and feel as you do. Any emotion you experience indicates deeper beliefs or priorities which are important to you. You may disagree with the other person about the facts or in your opinions, and yet still hold the same goals and priorities. This can provide a basis for cooperation even when you have different points of view. And if you do not clearly state your priorities, others are likely to make assumptions and fill in the blanks. Eliminating any of the five levels of communication adds fuel to the misunderstanding.

5. Clearly **express your expectations**, the **action you want** to take as a result of this discussion. Don't stay stuck in the emotion of the moment. Don't expect the other person to guess. Be clear. Be clear enough to identify what you would like the other person to do, and what you will do. It is important to state this expectation in a positive way. You may expect the other person to not understand you. You may expect him to be uncooperative. But this is not really what you want. You want him to understand, you want him to cooperate. You may tend to think that if he really respects you he will know what you want, and will respond accordingly. Whether he knows what you want has nothing to do with whether or not he respects you or cares about you. It has to do with whether you have told him clearly, directly, and concisely what you want of him and of you.



However, since seventy percent of what you communicate is done nonverbally, you may not consciously think about what you say on each of these five levels of communication during a normal conversation, so it may be difficult to suddenly begin measuring all your words in five easy steps. You need to develop a familiarity with each level in order to comfortably use them in a stressful moment. One very effective way to develop this familiarity is to hold the model of the five levels in your mind as a blueprint while you listen to other people. You could actively ask questions about each level, interviewing them until you completely

understand what facts they know, their opinions and feelings, what they believe is important, and what they want to do.

