

Outcome Essay Three Part II

Communication can be improved in organizations and in personal relationships by creating climates where open communication is valued. **Supportive climates** allow people to speak freely, sharing their ideas in a comfortable, safe manner. When communication is open in supportive climates, employees are honest and forthcoming with important information. They feel comfortable sharing feedback, ideas, timelines, and possible scope changes, shortcomings, or barriers (Rothwell, 2010, p.120).

While supportive climates encourage truthful, meaningful, open, and honest communications, **Defensive climates** create closed off channels of communication. People are on edge, afraid of feeling vulnerable or subjected to criticism, scrutiny, and ramifications for stating the facts or thoughts. Defensive climates influence how people feel and how openly they communicate. Some signs of a defensive climate may include people sitting in silence when asked a question, or showing anxiety when asked for information that should be harmless to share (Rothwell, 2010, p.120).

“Defensiveness is a reaction to a perceived attack on our self-concept or self-esteem. Defensive communication patterns invite hyper-competitiveness. Supportive communication patterns invite cooperation.” (Rothwell, 2010, p.120).

Confirming responses let the messenger know that you care about them, that you care about what they have to say, and that you value them and their message (Eisenberg, Goodall, & Trethewey, 2010, p.125). Confirming messages give positive non-verbal reactions by giving good eye contact, reacting appropriately to the tone of the conversation- for example, do not smile if someone is telling you about a hardship they dealt with. Show interest by asking for more information (Eisenberg et al., 2010, p.126). Summarize and paraphrase the information shared to show that you listened and understood their meaning. Showing concern, acknowledgement, and validation when appropriate all send confirming messages to the speaker.

Disconfirming messages hurt communication and often can hurt the speaker’s self-opinion. By not showing signs of listening, hearing, engagement, and interest, the speaker does not feel that their ideas are valued and will likely be discouraged from sharing with the person who sent the disconfirming messages. When disconfirming messages are identified, it is important to give constructive criticism to help the person understand the effect their reactions have on the messengers. If this behavior is not corrected, it will be difficult to improve communications in an organization (Eisenberg et al., 2010, p.125).

Winston Churchill said, “Criticism may not be agreeable, but it is necessary. It fulfills the same function as pain in the body. It calls attention to an unhealthy state of things.” There are two forms of criticism, destructive and constructive.

Destructive criticism is judgmental, negative, and hurts the recipients self-esteem. There are certain behaviors that can impede our ability to move forward positively with others.

Constructive criticism, helps people learn about themselves and receive feedback on what works and what may need to be tailored to others needs in any given situation. Constructive criticism is intended to build someone's knowledge and awareness of self, provide a safe environment that fosters change, and it comes from a positive place of caring and a desire to make the relationship or interactions improve (Cambridge Encyclopedia, 2005). "Criticism leaves the realm of specific, identifiable behaviors by attacking the other's personality in a broad, almost indefinable manner. Criticisms tend to be generalizations that carry implicit blame" (Trenholm & Jensen, 2008, pg. 326).

Emotions are difficult to swallow sometimes. It is easy to blame others or deny issues and negative emotions when we feel them. For example, to say that you are mad is to take **ownership** over your feelings. To state that someone else made you mad is to blame someone else for how you feel and to state that you are not mad when you are is to deny that you have the feeling.

Owning ones feelings is the responsible, most effective way to manage emotions. Blaming others, and denying obvious emotions is a fast way to create a defensive communication climate where the open communication flow stops or becomes charged with negative, heated emotions. Using descriptive language to share feelings while maintaining ownership of the emotions would be to say, "I get angry when you leave your shoes out and I trip over them because I'm not paying attention to the floor in the dark hallway."

Organizational

The organizational climate affects all aspects of the organization. Organizational climates can be supportive or defensive. A supportive climate shows authentic interaction and openness, respect for others, receptive attitudes, encouragement, and genuine concern for employees. Supportive climates incorporate confirming messages that show positive regard for others and constructive criticism. This type of climate shows ownership and descriptive language that improve communication skills. A defensive climate shows a lack of commitment in an environment that is unsupportive, unresponsive, ridged and controlling. A defensive climate can include the use of disconfirming messages that show a low regard for others and destructive criticism. This type of climate will make communication growth a challenge to achieve.

Eisenberg, E.M., Goodall, H.L., & Tretheway, A. (2010). *Organizational communication: Balancing creativity and constraint* (6th ed.). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Rothwell, J. D. (2010). *In mixed company: Communicating in small groups and teams* (7th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

Trenholm, S., & Jensen, A. (2008). *Interpersonal communication* (6th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.