

## HOW WE COMMUNICATE - “ARE YOU TALKING TO ME?” Part I

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Talk is cheap, or is it? We all do it every day, sometimes into the night, but do we really think about what it's all about?

Communication is a very involved behavior that we tend to do automatically. We learn to talk at a relatively young age by imitating those around us, not just their words, but what those words mean to them, their patterns of speech, body language, etc. We then begin to acquire our own styles and quirks as we go through life accumulating experiences. Because of this, we may take it for granted that others understand what we mean and that we understand what they mean. Misunderstandings arise every day as a result of this.

Probably one of the most important things to remember about communicating with anyone is: who determines the meaning of any message? Is it the sender or the receiver? As the sender, what you may intend to be heard, may not be what the receiver hears. Words mean different things to different people and assuming the message is heard as intended can get you in trouble. Ultimately, it is the receiver who interprets the message and may then act on it. The sender needs to be aware of this and take steps to be sure things were heard as intended and to clarify as needed.

Over the next few weeks we'll explore four steps to communication, where problems arise, and strategies to prevent miscommunication and be sure your message is heard.

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