**PRINCIPLES AND SKILLS IN**

**HOLDING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS**

**SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

**NORTH LONDON TEACHING PARTNERSHIP WEBINAR**

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**The 3Ps**

**The Professional, Personal and Private Practitioner**

The 3Ps is a Danish concept that helps us to understand how our professional and personal selves in practice should be working together, and identifies why we aim to keep the private self out of the professional relationship. In the table below, Jan Jappe (2010)[[1]](#endnote-1) examines the differences between each of the 3Ps. It is essential to understand that all three are always in play, and that despite our best efforts to keep the private P out of the professional relationship, sometimes it influences us more than we are aware. How we react to people and situations in our minds and/or actions will be influenced by both what we are conscious of and what is unconscious – self-awareness development is therefore a continual pursuit. As professionals and role models we need to be aware of all 3Ps in ourselves so this is a useful model for checking what we are feeling and where those feelings stem from during practice situations, for supervision, for critically reflecting on practice, and, when appropriate, for sharing our own experiences. It helps the professional relationship to share something of who we are, but anything we share about ourselves should fit with the following

1. What you share must be in the best interests of the other party
2. You must be prepared for the information you shared to be in the public domain (we cant ask someone to keep our own stuff private)
3. You must be prepared for the story to be thrown back at you at a later stage (this is why sharing processed experiences can be okay, but sharing those we have not fully processed can be risky and will likely be more about meeting our own needs rather than those of the other party.

Keeping the private self private is a continual struggle, to varying degrees, for most of us. We cannot put our private self aside and only work with the professional and personal, the private self comes too whether we like it or not. The aim for the practitioner and leader is to be acutely aware of the private self, to be able to interrupt it from dominating the way in which we approach or react to people or a situation and to be able to use the professional and personal selves to guide ourselves so that we remain strongly ethical and primarily concerned about the needs of others in professional situations. By balancing the professional and the personal while keeping the private, private with those we support we develop our professionalism, without this we risk private emotions shaping the way we practice.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **The 3Ps** | **Professional** | **Personal** | ***Private*** |
| **Basis / foundation** | Professionalism Professional integrity | Purpose-relatedImpartiality, Objectivity | *Subjectivity**Partiality* |
| **Knowledge** | TheoryLaw, Policy, Research  | Processed experienceSelf-awareness  | *Own experiences (more or less processed)* |
| **Actions are characterised by** | AnalysisMethods chosen as a consequent of social pedagogical thoughtEvaluation  | EmpathyRespectImmediate understanding of the situation | *Emotionality – how we feel in the moment**Chance*  |
| **Approach to collaboration** | Multi-disciplinaryParticipation rights | Willingness and eagerness to co-operate | *Pursuing one’s own agenda* |
| **Needs**  | Others | Others / own  | *Own* |

Jappe J (2010) *Hand Boe For Paedagog-studerende, 9th edition,* Arhus: Frydenlund with thanks to Lotte Harbo, VIA University, Arhus, Denmark for the translation

**THE COMMUNICATION SQUARE – 4 sides of a message**

**(F Shultz Von Thun, 1981)**



The communication square is the most familiar, and by now the most widespread, model by the German communication expert Friedemann Schulz von Thun. This model also became known as the ‘four-ear-model’. The four levels of communication are not just significant for private relationships, they are especially significant for the social care professional domain—where the professional and personal are constantly interlocking. When I, as a human, make a statement it has four different effects. Each of my statements contains, whether I want it or not, four messages simultaneously. Schulz von Thun represented the four sides of a statement as a square and attributed four mouths to the sender and four ears to the receiver. From a psychological perspective, when we communicate, 4 mouths and 4 ears are participating on both sides; the quality of the conversation depends on the manner in which these interact.

* **Factual information (what I am informing about)**

The factual information stands in the foreground; here the focus is on dates, facts, and factual content. For the factual level there are three applicable criteria: the truth criteria of true or false (correct/not correct), the criteria of relevance (are the listed facts relevant/not relevant for the present issue, and the criteria of sufficiency (are the listed factual indicators sufficient for the issue or do many other things also need to be considered?) For the sender it is therefore important to clearly and coherently communicate the factual content. The receiver, who has opened his factual ear, listens to the dates, facts, and circumstances and has many opportunities to follow up according to the three criteria mentioned above.

* **A self revelation (what I show of myself)**

When somebody provides a statement, they also provide a part of themselves. Every statement also contains, whether one wants it or not, a self statement, an indication of what is going on inside of me, what I am feeling, what I stand for and how I conceive my role. This can happen explicitly (‘me-messages’) or implicitly. This circumstance turns every message into a small tasting of one’s personality, which can be of some concern to the sender. While the sender is using the self-statement beak, implicitly or explicitly, to disclose information about themselves, the recipient is taking it all in with the self-statement ear: What does this tell me about the other? What kind of person are they? What is their disposition?

* **A relationship indicator (what I think of you and how I relate to you)**

Whether I want to or not, when I address somebody I also let them know (through formulation, intonation, expression) what my relationship is towards them and what I think of them—in any case in regard to the actual content of the conversation. In every statement there is also a relationship indicator, for which the recipient often has an especially (overly) sensitive relationship ear. On the basis of this ear one decides: ‘How do I feel treated by the way in which the other is treating me? What does the other think of me and how do they relate to me?’

* **An appeal (what I want you to do)**

When somebody addresses another person, they usually wish to have an effect, have an influence; not just reach the other but to achieve something with them. Open or closed, this level is about desires, appeals, advice, instructions, effects, etc. Hence the appeal ear is especially open to the question: ‘What should I do, think, or feel now?

It is important to be conscious of the communication square because every message, every statement, every form of communication contains these four aspects. No matter whether I am conscious of this or not, my statement says something on all those levels—and the hearer may listen with any or all of their 4 ears. But we might weigh the levels differently; I might, for instance, emphasise the factual level more, but the hearer might listen with their relationship ear. Often, this is how misunderstandings and conflict arise, if the different levels are not made explicit and if we aren’t aware of possible interpretations. Therefore, as Heinz Von Foerster said “the hearer, not the speaker, determines the meaning of a message”.

Adapted from Schultz von Thun, F. (1981). Miteinander reden 1. Störungen und Klärungen. Hamburg: Reinbeck. <http://laofutze.files.wordpress.com/2010/04/schulzvonthun.pdf>

**Which side of a message do you lean on?**

Below you will find 12 different communication situations. Please read the situations and the possible answers that follow with care, and mark the answer you think is most applicable to you. You will have 8 minutes to complete the entire questionnaire (not counting the scoring), that is, about 40 seconds for each situation. Take advantage of this time. Finishing earlier will not add points to your score.

**Situation 1**

A colleague comes to you, eyes you briefly, and then says: "It’s terribly hot again today, huh?" What does she mean by that?

a) That you look as if the heat were bothering you.

b) That she would like something to drink.

c) That she doesn’t know what to do in all this heat.

d) That she’s glad about the weather.

**Situation 2**

You have two questions for the information clerk near the platform. First: Which track does the train for Limerick leave from, second, when does the connecting train in Limerick Junction leave for Cork. After you have asked the first question, the clerk grumbles almost unintelligibly: "Platform 21." What’s going on in your mind?

a) You feel sorry for him because he must have had a very hard day, and you politely ask your second question.

b) You ask your second question, paying close attention because the information clerk mutters a little.

c) Indignant, you think, "What kind of a way is that to talk to me" and ask your second question a little more sharply.

d) You sense that he doesn’t want you to keep talking to him and decide to clear up the second question in Limerick.

**Situation 3**

You’ve just cooked a meal and tried out a new recipe. When you’re seated at the table, the person opposite you asks: "Oh, you made something new?" You reply:

a) "Yes, this is a meal you’ve never had before."

b) "Just try it first and see how it tastes!”

c) "Yes, I thought we ought to have more variety."

d) "I know you don’t like to try new things, but I’m sure you’ll like the taste of this."

**Situation 4**

In an important meeting, the numbers you’re referring to are called into question. Your boss even says: "Those are last year’s figures; they’re no longer up to date.” What goes on in your mind, and/or how do you react?

a) You think: This always happens to me.

b) You think your boss wants you to come to the next meeting better prepared.

c) You think your boss himself is probably not well prepared.

d) You ask for the current figures and use them to continue the discussion.

**Situation 5**

As you walk past the desk of a colleague who’s on the phone, you hear him tell someone that you (he mentions your name) made a mistake in planning the upcoming conference. What goes on in your mind, and/or how do you react?

a) You decide to do things better next time.

b) You’re annoyed at your colleague, because he’s a perpetual troublemaker.

c) You’re aghast, because recently you’ve made mistakes fairly often.

d) You sit down at your desk and think about what the mistake might have been.

**Situation 6**

During breakfast at home, you’re absorbed in the business section of the newspaper. After some time, the person opposite you asks: "Tell me, what’s so interesting about what you’re reading?" What do you reply?

a) "Dear, here’s an interesting commentary on our current business development."

b) "Okay, I’m almost done."

c) "Dear, I’m allowed to read my newspaper in peace, right?"

d) "Please tell me right now if it bothers you."

**Situation 7**

You’ve gone shopping with someone. When, after several unsuccessful attempts, you try on another piece of clothing, your companion says: "But that doesn’t suit you." What goes on in your mind, and/or how do you react?

a) You ask the saleswoman whether she has anything else.

b) You suspect that your companion is ready to wind up the shopping trip now.

c) You’re disappointed, because it’s always hard to find something for yourself.

d) You think your companion could be a little more restrained in her comments.

**Situation 8**

A couple you know have asked you to water the flowers during their vacation. At first you took care of that regularly, only in the past week did you forget about it. When you return the apartment key to your friends, you’re greeted with these words: "Jeez, just

look at the flowers, they’re half parched." What goes on in your mind, and/or how do you react?

a) You understand your friends’ agitation, since they’re very attached to the flowers.

b) You suspect that your friends think you’re not even capable of watering flowers properly.

c) Your reaction is slightly sulky, because your friends could have greeted you properly first

d) You notice that they want to be comforted, and you offer to look at the flowers together and save what can be saved.

**Situation 9**

You’re sitting at the dinner table at home, eating a meal you’ve cooked. Just as you’re eating the soup, the person opposite you says: "Dear, there’s something green in the soup.” What do you reply?

a) "That’s true."

b) "Don’t be such a gourmet."

c) "If you don’t like it, you can go to a restaurant."

d) "That’s chives, and chives are good for you."

**Situation 10**

 You run into a former colleague and friend whom you haven’t seen for a long time. After a few sentences of greeting, he asks you whether you’ve gained weight. How do you behave?

a) You think he’s telling you in a roundabout way that you ought to take off a few pounds.

b) You’re a little ashamed and decide to check the scales at the next opportunity.

c) You think he’s a pretty uncouth klutz.

d) You ask him how he can determine that.

**Situation 11**

In a book store, you looked at a book and then put it back in the shelf. A salesperson walks past and says: "That’s not where it belongs." How do you react?

a) You ask him where you should put it.

b) You point out that that was the place you took it from.

c) You apologize and are annoyed that something like that happened to you.

d) You think the salesperson is very rude.

**Situation 12**

Your officemate and you are sitting at the desk and processing the incoming mail. He says: "How is anybody really supposed to cope with this flood of changed destinations?" What do you answer?

a) "You’re quite right, there’s been a lot going on lately."

b) "Actually I can manage it pretty well."

c) "The two of us can try to think about some solutions."

d) "Well, I can see you’re really steaming."

**Scoring Sheet 1**

Now, transfer the answers you selected to the following chart (mark each with a cross): In so doing, keep in mind that the letters do not always appear in the same sequence under the situations.

Then add up the number of crosses in each row and write this number in the column on the far right. Finally, enter these values on the appropriate axes of the cross-shaped scale, marked I - IV.

The labels of the axes (I – IV) correspond to the "different ears” with which we receive messages. You will find details on the next page.

**Situations:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** | **11** | **12** | **axis** | **number** |
| d | b | a | d | a | a | a | a | a | d | b | a | I |  |
| c | a | d | c | b | d | d | c | b | c | c | d | II |  |
| b | d | b | b | d | b | b | d | d | a | a | c | III |  |
| a | c | c | a | c | c | c | b | c | b | d | b | IV |  |

**Scoring Sheet 2**



**I = Factual level of a message**

If most of the answers you marked fall into this category, then you tend to concentrate on the factual contents of conversations. At the same time you may run the risk of failing to hear the resonating, more personal messages. But they can be just as important to conversation as the factual content. Possibly you also rate the factual level higher than the interpersonal aspects of communication.

**II = Self-disclosure level of a message**

The more frequently you marked this option, the more clearly you detect in the statements of your conversational partners the way they portray themselves. And you yourself also hold this self-disclosure aspect in high regard. No matter how you evaluate it in particular instances, be it positive or negative, you always notice how others present themselves. Possibly you place great stress on the interpersonal aspect of communication and even subordinate the factual content to it. If you have marked a lot of answers in the IV category, this would also suggest such a conclusion.

**III = Appeal aspect of a message**

Frequent answers in this category indicate that you readily detect in the statements of other people a call to action that is addressed to you. Either you gladly comply with these appeals because you enjoy doing something for others, or you often have to resist allegedly unjustified demands.

**IV = Relationship level of a message**

In every statement, there also resonates another aspect: the way your conversational partner sees you. And you have developed a keen “ear” precisely for that. You always try to detect what the other person thinks of you. Thus you acquire a fine sense for deeperlying relational threads of the conversation; however, it also entails a danger of continual self-doubts.

Adapted from: Andreas Patrzek Management (Academy of Administration and Business)] ·Kreutweg 4 · 83673 Bich

**NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION** 

Nonviolent communication is based on the work of the American psychologist Marshall Rosenberg. It emphasises how we can engage with other people in a way that avoids judgments and conflict by expressing feelings and needs. Through this, Rosenberg argues, we can empathise with each other and connect with other people as equal human beings, recognising our commonalities rather than our differences. Essentially, nonviolent communication is underpinned by the idea that we all have the capacity to be compassionate with others but often don’t have the language that allows us to understand each other’s’ emotions and needs. When we try to meet our needs but can’t find a way of doing this in a manner that recognises or understands other people’s feelings and needs violence and conflict happen as a result. For example, we might complain about a child’s teacher’s ‘inability’ to encourage our child to engage more in class and think that the teacher is simply incapable or lazy. Our response is perhaps motivated by our anxiety that our child won’t learn as much or will find the class boring and misbehave. Most likely, though, the teacher will have the same anxieties, not just for our child but for all children in the classroom. And the teacher’s reality might be that they feel unsupported in working with a big classroom full of children, all of whom have different needs and learn in different ways. Therefore, if we realise that we actually feel similarly to the teacher and have the same needs, we can avoid accusing the teacher of being incapable (or worse) and instead think about constructive ways forward.

When using nonviolent communication we aim to share our observations, how a situation might make us feel or how we guess it makes somebody else feel, what needs of ours are related to that as well as other people’s needs, and we make a request:

1. **Observations:** Very often we evaluate, judge, interpret what other people do and are tempted to say things like ‘don’t be so naughty’ or ‘he is a bully’ or ‘she is so inconsiderate’. When looking at these statements carefully, it is easy to see that they don’t tell us much about how the other person has behaved and what really happened – and they certainly don’t offer a concrete suggestion of how somebody else should behave, what we would like them to do differently. It is therefore important to distinguish observations from interpretations, to say things like: ‘I asked you to leave the chocolate bars on the table but when I turned around you took one’ or ‘when he called his little sister a coward she started crying’ or ‘she went to get herself a cup of coffee without asking her colleagues whether they would like one, too’.
2. **Feelings:** Sometimes our judgments make it obvious how we feel, or at least we think they do. But very often we don’t talk about how something affects us. It’s important to distinguish between what we think and how we feel, to dig deeper and find out perhaps why we have angry thoughts when someone tailgates us in their car and that these angry thoughts were brought on by our feeling scared and vulnerable. That then allows us to express our feelings in a way does not imply judgment or blame (‘you reckless idiot, should learn how to drive!’) but shows how we are emotionally affected by a situation (‘when you changed lanes right in front of me I got really scared and felt in danger’). This is more likely to get a compassionate response from someone else instead of leading to escalation.
3. **Needs:** Behind every human behaviour is a positive unmet need – the need to be loved and the need to belong might prompt us to be generous and kind, but the same needs might also cause a young person to join a gang. So might the need for safety or the need for structure. Nonviolent communication argues that we all have the same human needs, that needs are universal, but we have developed different strategies of how we meet our needs. And if we are not aware of others’ needs it is easy to put our own needs first, without regard of others. This is why it is important to express our needs, to guess what somebody else’s needs are and to ask, for example, ‘could it be that you’re smoking in your room because you’re feeling upset that your mother didn’t have time for you and have a need to relax?’
4. **Request:** In order to show appreciation and help somebody else understand what we would like them to do, it is important to make a request, for example to say ‘it is okay to walk here in the corridor’ rather than ‘don’t run in the corridor’. Note that this is not a demand, not an attempt to force somebody, however subtly, to do something we want out of fear, guilt or shame. Rather we want others to really understand and show compassion or consideration for our feelings and needs. So instead of saying: ‘I’m disappointed that you haven’t done your homework yet’, which would make a child feel guilty or ashamed, we would perhaps say ‘it’s really important to me that you do your homework, because I really want you to do well in school. I guess you might be feeling exhausted and want to relax now, so would you be happy to do your homework in half an hour?’

**THE FOUR STAGE REVIEWING CYCLE**

Greenaway, R. (1992) Reviewing by Doing. Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Leadership. http://www.reviewing.co.uk/articles/2rbd.htm#4stage

Greenaway defines the term 'reviewing' as: "an activity that is used to encourage individuals to reflect, describe, analyse and communicate what they recently experienced."

**1. FACTS** The first stage is to establish or 'relive' what happened. This stage can serve as a useful reminder of significant incidents that may have been forgotten or overlooked. If the event under review was a success, this stage might take the form of a celebration. If there were problems, this stage would be more like the collecting of evidence. Young people may be surprised to learn of the different perspectives that other group members may have of the 'same' event. The main focus of this first stage is on what happened.

**2. FEELINGS** The second stage is a vital one, but tends to be the stage most at risk if review time is limited. This stage recognises that experiences (especially adventurous ones) stimulate the senses and arouse emotions. This stage focuses on the quality of the experience: "What was it like?", "How did it feel?" Young people may have difficulty expressing themselves. If the experience was new and different, they may need to find new and different ways of communicating their experiences - perhaps through using drama and other expressive arts.

**3. FINDINGS** The third stage is more analytical and rational. 'All-talk' reviews tend to arrive too soon at this stage, especially if reviewers are too impatient to draw out the learning from the activity. If the experience has been a 'whole person' experience, it is important to use review methods which match the fullness of the experience - using review methods, for example, which encourage the creative and analytical parts of our brains to communicate with each other. Analytical thinking is an important feature of any reviewing process, but it can be easier to capture the broader 'developmental' benefits of adventure at the earlier 'expressive' stage of this learning sequence.

**4. FUTURES** The fourth stage is the most practical stage. It involves trying out something that has been prompted by earlier stages of the cycle. It might involve preparing carefully for the next adventure, but it could equally involve making a commitment to 'dive in' and find the confidence and courage to take bigger risks. This 'planning' stage would usually involve setting targets and raising safety awareness, but it is equally important to keep the sense of curiosity and exploration alive - if the experience is to be both educational and adventurous.

**Experience**

FACTS

Doing

**Express**

FEELINGS

Sensing

**Examine**

FINDINGS

Thinking

**Explore**

FUTURES

Planning

1. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)