

Intrapersonal Communication

You Take You Wherever You Go

—P.S. Perkins

Give me a chance, Mr. Markham. I know I can lead the team. I ran this office for five years! Can't you see through Jim? What's wrong with you? It's my turn. You can't give it to him! It's my promotion. Mine! Mine!"

Beep! Beep! Beep!

Now you're awake and it was just a bad dream. Or was it? You're about to start your day and you had a fretful night. You're about to place your feet solidly back into the world. But wait. Before you do, are you sure you're awake? Yes, I know your eyes are open and you feel your heart beating. You're breathing, and you can probably feel the blood coursing through your veins if you're quiet enough. But are you awake? What about that dream? What a way to start the very day you're

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF COMMUNICATION

looking forward to your promotion. Let me give you a suggestion for getting back on the right track: Eat first, and then get out of bed. Yes, you read me right: eat first. We all understand breakfast is the most important meal of the day. We understand that we are what we eat. Many people are dedicated to starting their workday with the right kind of physical fuel to take them where they want to go. But what about their mental fuel? In the waking hours, just before you begin your workday, what kind of mental fuel do you feed yourself? It matters because this nourishment prepares you to handle the *mental* challenges of your day—personally, socially, and professionally.

“You are what you think” is the awareness and practice of the role *thoughts* fulfill in the moment-to-moment experiences of your life. Those moments begin over and over, begin with each waking breath as you move deliberately into consciousness. Your thoughts are the seeds that germinate the actions you will perform throughout your workday. What actions are you ready to perform today? It all depends on what thoughts you begin with every morning. Remember the expression “getting up on the wrong side of the bed”? We understand that this does not refer to a literal side of your physical bed! It is a metaphor for beginning your day with negative thoughts. And it’s really true. If you wake up with negative thoughts and don’t replace them immediately, you tend to carry those same negative thoughts and feelings around with you all day long. Ponder this—when have you had a bad start and been able to totally set it aside and perform your work duties without any mental or physical distractions? Chances are you took those same thoughts and emotions with you to the office and faked and/or fought your way through the day. You take *you* with you. You walked that attitude right into the office!

SELF-SABOTAGE OR SELF-FULFILLMENT?

The first step in achieving success in professional pursuits is mental preparation! We positively create our lives or we sabo-

Intrapersonal Communication

tage our lives. Most of us have associated sabotage with the act of undermining or backstabbing someone else. Truth sets you free—most individuals do more to undermine themselves than the combined efforts of everyone around them. The true sabotage lies within communication with oneself, in thoughts and words.



No one can think or speak to create your life for you!

Just as no one takes your place at work physically, no one can go to work for you mentally. That would be like asking a friend to eat your dinner and expecting you will be the one satisfied! The key is to arrive to work in a mental state you can positively thrive in. How can you use your thoughts to create the work environment you desire to prosper in?

DISCIPLINE OF THE MIND

The French philosopher Descartes was quoted as saying, “Except our own thoughts, there is nothing absolutely in our power.” It is this power of thought that introduces the first step of the Communication Staircase. Intrapersonal Communication is the *communication you have with yourself about yourself and others*. It shares the inner workings of your mind with yourself. How often would you say you engage in mental chatter during the day? You talk to yourself more than you talk to anyone else. The important point is *how* you talk to yourself—what you say to yourself verbally and nonverbally.

Sizing up your internal communication is the first step, the basis of all other communication experiences within your work environment. It requires a lot of critical thought and awareness. When an individual pays serious attention to the

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF COMMUNICATION

daily conversations he has with himself, and critically examines the quality of experiences springing forth from these self-talks, he will be able to control more positively the materialization of the experiences around him. I use this word “materialization” literally. With our words we materialize the actions and events of our daily lives. You are either your greatest ally or your greatest adversary. We are all given the same empty screen as we start the *movie* of life. Then that screen fills with images and messages from our internal selves materializing into our external surroundings, including work. This ability to create our own movie, our own lives, is the gift and power shared by all humans.



The universe is an equal opportunity employer giving each human the same vocation—to create their lives!

Our thoughts and words are the tools of creation, our pens and brushes. The process of creation is based on the same pattern of materialization shared by all species of creation. Specific conditions encourage creation. Seed + nutrient = tree. It is the same as Thought + word = action (or results). We create our lives with the brushstrokes of our thoughts and words! The *Human Communication Cocreation Theory* proposes that *Conscious thoughts + words + feelings* → *subconscious = materialization of life*. The purpose of the subconscious is to accept something as true, then create it. That’s why feelings play an important role. They generally do not lie. This knowledge is important to experiencing the type of work environment you are thriving in. The environment starts within you. Many of us can immediately identify our work environments as either positive or negative. But do you realize those labels come from inside you? Too often we look at either of these realms as being simply the result of someone else’s actions or responsibility—our bosses, employees, coworkers, management. Not true. Your life starts and ends with you. Do others play a role in the

Intrapersonal Communication

environmental attitude? Of course they do, but only to the extent that you allow them. And yes, sometimes the organizational environment can be so toxic that the decision before you is whether to stay and tough it out or walk away and create a new situation. But before you throw in the towel, take a look at what you are adding to the communication environment of the organization.

DIVE INTO YOUR LIFE!

Think of your life as a lake, a body of confined water. That which holds the lake in place—its banks, sediment, rocks, plants—represents your physical being, the body. The water in the lake represents your mind, your thoughts, the essence of your intellect or spirit that has no boundaries. Somehow the water, the internal you, continues to add to itself without ever overflowing its boundaries.

If I or someone else decided to fish in your lake on any given day at any given moment, what would we catch? Casting a rod into the depths of your mind would pull up what type of thoughts? When you go *fishing* into your own thoughts, second by second, what do you dredge up? How do you see yourself? What value do you place on yourself in comparison to others? Do you appreciate your coworkers? Do you respect your boss? Are you experiencing professional fulfillment at work?

Inside your *lake* are all the experiences and memories of your life. It is where you hold your values, attitudes, and beliefs. It is what houses that first birthday you remember, or your first kiss. It is that day at the park, or that first job and first promotion. It is also where you store the first harsh words you heard, the job you lost, emotional and physical abuse you suffered, the torment of bullies at school, the realization of unfairness, the desire for acceptance, and the negative feelings of unrealized expectations. All the contents add up to the image you have of yourself. When you go *fishing*, which

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF COMMUNICATION



Figure 1.1 How Clean Is Your Lake?

experiences are most likely to be reeled in? Probably those tied to your deepest desires or fears, the ones that have the greatest impact on how you see yourself. It is these experiences that create the image you call *you*. Your self-esteem (how you feel about yourself) and your self-worth (the value you place on yourself in comparison to others) come from the depth of these waters. Most of us can honestly say we do not have the cleanest, most pristine body of mental thoughts to fish from (see Figure 1.1).

Your workplace personality is the mirror image of your self-image. It determines how you act in front of your co-workers and how you thrive and compete in the organizational culture.



Your thoughts shape your self-image.

WHERE DID THAT THOUGHT COME FROM?

When we communicate with others, we are bringing forth from our minds (our lakes) the reality created by us or for us, one that may be very different than the reality the coworker/listener is operating in. Think of the words in your vocabulary. Where did they come from? Who do they belong to? You? What if I told you that you do not own any words! None of the words you present with authority belong to you, nor were they devised by your incredible imaginations. When you were born, you were given a *platter of words* meant to define your specific circumstances of birth: male, female, black, white, cute, ugly, rich, poor, privileged, untouchable, and so on. As you moved through life, in and out of experiences, relationships, jobs, careers, you amassed more and more words and labels, claiming and accepting them as your own. Did you choose these words, these labels? No, you did not, but you did quickly agree and conform to them. We all did. We did not understand that, from the beginning of the process of enculturation, we had a choice. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (named for Benjamin L. Whorf and Edward Sapir) is a linguistic “mould theory” that seeks to explain the impact of language on the individual, and how this impact, though very personal, is a shared experience for all humankind. In essence it states that *language equals social reality*. The words you use, most of them added to the language before you were born, have been assigned to you to define and determine how you should see and experience life (see Figure 1.2).

For example, think about the many Inuit words for snow versus the absence of the same word/phenomenon in the world of the Maasai tribe of Kenya. Different realities create different degrees of relevance for different words. What type of reality do your words come from? What words have been assigned to you in the workplace: boss, supervisor, worker, CEO, janitor, secretary? What adjectives: smart, clever, persistent or lazy, dull?

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF COMMUNICATION

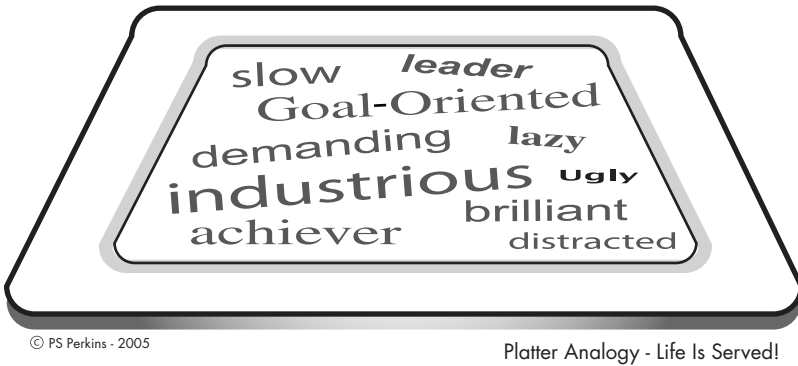


Figure 1.2 Your Words Served Up!

CREATING OUR SELF-IMAGE AT WORK

I remember an interview on *Larry King Live* in 1999 with the successful magicians and illusionists Siegfried and Roy. They were both discussing their childhood and their later ascent to fame. Siegfried talked about how his big break came after he left home. Apparently, his childhood was filled with negative *mirror messages*—the messages we receive about ourselves from others—and very little positive attention from his father. He said it was not until he was a very successful illusionist that his father ever really talked with him or acknowledged any aspect of his worth. Siegfried shared how troubling this was for him as a young man. His story is not unlike the story of millions who possess the residue of negative messages they have floating in their lake. The messages are the material we use to create our self-image and self-worth. However, a fortunate few break through the cycle of negativity and create new agreements in their lives. This is what Siegfried had to do, to break free of the thoughts, words, memories that might have kept him from realizing his full potential and his unique gift, the career of a lifetime.

Think about the attention paid to personal image and how we are programmed (especially by Western culture) to be very

Intrapersonal Communication

image conscious. The perception of beauty is often narrowly defined, and we all dream of looking like a fashion model or fitness expert. Day in and day out, we are inundated with the pictures of the “preferable” images of beauty, the ones that equate with success and acceptability. Watching this, what type of messages must we be dredging from our lakes on a daily basis?

Ever wonder what your colleagues think about your looks, your dress, and other appearance factors? How about when you have to address an audience? How much of stage fright is precipitated by your concerns over what others will think about you and especially how you look? Be honest. So many individuals in the organizational environment sabotage themselves from the inside out. Daily, I consult with business professionals who block, stall, or lose opportunities within their organizations due to poor self-image and the fear or inability to effectively communicate their abilities. This is a major problem for many individuals climbing the corporate ladder. They think about themselves and see themselves in a manner that does not foster professional success. Take for instance the societal phenomenon in which everyone compares herself to everyone else—*social comparison*. How does the cultural norm of social comparisons affect the work environment?

Many of us remember the sociocultural phrase “keeping up with the Joneses.” You know the Joneses, the successful family that lives on the top of the hill in the big white house, with the picket fence and two-car garage—Lexus and BMW inside—and the 2.5 kids. Think about how the cultural value of *individualism*, with the resultant *competition*, drives the vast majority of people to look outward and compare themselves with everyone around them. Examine the impact of these values on the work environment and on how you gauge your position and relationship to others there. For many, comparison leads to constantly questioning their professional self-worth. There is this constant nagging voice to look at what everyone else is doing or whether you are getting your just due. Of course, the habit is not just a Western phenomenon. It’s a condition of

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF COMMUNICATION

being human, exaggerated in some cultures based on the need of a given society to move in one direction or the other. In the West, the value of competition makes the habit very strong indeed, and in doing so accounts for a significant portion of the feelings of inadequacy many individuals experience in and out of the workplace. As a result, millions conform to their work surroundings in a manner that *protects* their position. But the question is how does this conformity affect you personally? Do you experience professional fulfillment based on your unique contributions to the organizational objective? Do you fit the ideal and are thus able to experience the rewards of such conformity within the professional environment? Are you allowed to really impact the organizational mission? Not everyone finds it easy to “get in” or “fit in.” Read Sheila’s story.

GROWING UP “DIFFERENT”

Growing up in what I considered to be a stable, middle-class African-American family, I hold the memory of my early life as far back as three and four years old. My family and my community in these early recollections were a reflection of me. I was born in the Southern United States before the end of Jim Crow—government-sanctioned segregation. As such, I grew up in a self-contained environment, socially, religiously, and politically. Only employment took us from our safe havens. The messages I received in my community were messages of being smart, talented, and accepted. My early world was one of homogeneity. Everyone was a reflection of me. The occasional Euro-American came by in the form of bill collectors or the “vegetable man.”

My parents were considered highly educated “Negroes.” My father acquired an undergraduate degree from a famed historically black college, in music, and then went on to receive a Master’s in English from a recognized prestigious university. My

Intrapersonal Communication

mother was a registered nurse by trade. Her father was the owner of a neighborhood grocery store and restaurant, and his father had the fortune of being one of the first “coloreds” to work for a prestigious bank in other than a custodial capacity. My father’s father was a Mason and a Shriner, my grandmother a member of the Daughters of Isis and a Morning Star. As children, we were members of Jack and Jill, a philanthropic community-support network of parents. These affiliations meant little to me as a child, but would later become very relevant in the formation of my self-image and self-worth. These were the collective experiences of family and community.

In the fifth grade, I was bused to a predominantly white school. I was anxious, scared, but excited about the prospect of going to a new school with “different” people, and that difference seemed to be something special as far as I had observed. By this time the images of television, magazines, and other representations of mass media had already begun to give me the distinct awareness of being different, and for some reason I began to equate this with *undesirable*.

On the first day at my new school, one of my first contacts was with two little White girls who sent a clear message on the playground during recess. They chanted, “Look at those ugly, black legs. We don’t want to see those skinny, black legs. Why don’t you cover them up?” (Yes, I remember the words. They were quickly added to my *lake* of experiences.) I was in shock! I ran to tell the teacher, who gently chided their “playful antics.” The quality of the water in my lake was changing. The messages I was now receiving were not as affirming; they were meant to distinguish me from others who had their places of privilege already carved out. I did not belong.

Unfortunately, these early experiences became a part of my lake of experiences and I started to create a self-image of *victim*. My lake was becoming a cauldron of contradictions and mixed messages. Now don’t get me wrong: I was experiencing nonaffirming messages from some around me. I did experience

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF COMMUNICATION

racism and sexism firsthand. But it was I and only I who made the decision to keep these messages in my lake and feed on them as I moved among my real and imagined persecutors! I often blamed “them” for the job I did not get. I often second-guessed the ulterior motives of my colleagues when *my* idea was not chosen. I would carry the perceived injuries around with me all day long, looking for the next insult to my ability or intelligence to pounce on me! It was a way of life that kept me frustrated, cynical, mistrusting, and often depressed. Now, I know this paints a pretty bleak picture, but I learned to play the “no problem” game pretty well with everyone but myself, so the baggage was visible and heavy only on my back! The true self does not lie. I was angry and it was somebody else’s fault. Did I advance at work? Sure I did. The *victim game* made me pretty competitive, gave me an “I’ll show them” type of mentality. I wore the mask of accomplishment and contentment pretty well on the job, and was highly productive, but it was my self-talk that clearly defined my true nature. I would go in my office and close the door, or go home in the evening, and engage in a never-ceasing mental dialogue about some verbal injury or about being overlooked, or you name it—it did not take much for me to enter into my victim mind-set. I was not happy, because I made myself unhappy with thoughts that constantly dwelled on past injustices and expected future slights. I realized, and thankfully not too late, that there needed to be a change and that change had to come from me!

What’s your story? Is it different than Sheila’s? Was growing up inside your household a challenging experience and you escaped into the outside world to get away? Were the messages you received from your caretakers the ones that damaged your self-esteem? What messages are you still regurgitating to your own harm? Who are you still blaming? What experiences sit at your desk with you each day, fueling unhealthy thoughts, words, and actions? How clean is the water in your lake?

WRITING A NEW SCRIPT

After those formative years, Sheila engaged in the positive reformation of her self-identification, self-esteem, and self-worth. She waged a difficult but increasingly successful battle to reprogram the words and the messages that had been particularly destructive to her physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. She has made great progress in overcoming the scavengers at the bottom of the lake. She has examined her personal responsibility and adopted an attitude of worthiness and capability regardless of any lingering messages to the contrary from her past or the people around her. In order to live in real peace and fulfillment, personally or professionally, we must all be willing to engage in this level of self-examination.



We must not fear our own truth.

Do not be afraid to look within.

The ego tells you all is black with guilt within you, and bids you not to look.

Instead, it bids you to look upon your brothers, and see the guilt in them.

Yet this you cannot do without remaining blind.

A Course in Miracles

Victory can be yours in conquering whatever messages have been the caustic agents of embitterment, discouragement, and destruction in your own life. How are the scavengers in your lake trying to prevent you from coming into your personal and professional power? Understand the illusion of their hold on your life. Name them but do not claim them!

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF COMMUNICATION

Maybe you just need to skim a couple of thoughts floating on the top of your lake. Maybe you need a water-filtering system. Maybe you need to dig a completely new lake. We must begin to see how our thoughts about ourselves have been our greatest allies or our greatest nemeses in creating the self-image that becomes our *work image*.

TAKING OWNERSHIP

We need to understand a fundamental truth concerning language: “He who owns the words, owns everything.” As described before, on a platter before you are all the words you will need to fit into the prescribed place that society has already marked out for you. But you do not have the understanding to examine or question this platter; you just start eating. The feast includes all the words concerning your self-identification—the way you see yourself and the manner in which you will live your life. The words describe your sex, gender, ethnicity, looks, social status, economics, opportunities, and so forth. No one cautions you to examine each word before you eat. Why not? Because they never examined the words put in front of them! Everyone around you is still absorbing the words on their platters, living up to the identities carved out for them. For far too many, these word choices are limiting, debilitating, and visionless.

You must take control over the words you use to create your daily images of self and others. I have examined the words presented to me on the platter of life and now am much more discerning about what I eat. If you do not take the time to define yourself, there are others lined up to do it for you. If you do not know who you are, there will be many others always ready to tell you *who you are not!* A famous quote by Winston Churchill best illustrates the power of being narrator of your own life: “History will be kind to me, for I intend to write it.”

Intrapersonal Communication

Behavioral Communication practitioners describe this process as *metacognition*—the ability to think about what you are thinking about. To cleanse your thoughts, you need to examine them. The work includes *self-monitoring*—the ability to watch your thoughts shape themselves, to understand how given thoughts will show up negatively or positively in your personal situation, and to deliberately choose to change course or move forward in the desired direction. This is a vital tool for understanding change as it happens in the moment. Too many of us go home from work and dredge up from our lake all the toxic waste of the workday, then spew it into the home environment. You know how the rest of the story goes.

I will never forget a young client who was introduced to the concept of self-monitoring. One day he came into a session with a stopwatch hanging around his neck. He was dressed in a business suit, so I knew he could not have come from the gym. I decided to ignore it and move into the session, until I heard this incessant clicking. At several intervals during our coaching session, he would click the stopwatch. Finally, I asked him what was going on. He replied, “I am monitoring my negative thoughts.” It took me a minute to understand. He went on to share, “Yeah, when I understood the importance of self-monitoring, I started to count the number of times my thoughts would turn against me. I could not keep up with it and was getting a bit discouraged. So I got this stopwatch to keep tabs on the number of negative thoughts I was having. Guess what? When I first started clicking, I could not believe that I was experiencing up to three hundred and something negative thoughts a day! Now I am down to a few dozen!” As his coach, I was astounded by his effort, diligence, and honesty. Admittedly, the stopwatch may have been a little drastic for his social and professional environments, but you have to admit, he got the idea!

What thoughts and words have been placed on your platter without your permission? What toxic images have you ingested without understanding the repercussions? Take a moment to try Application 1.1.

Application 1.1 - Monitor Your Thoughts

Make a list of all the words you use to describe yourself.

Go ahead, write them down. Describe your gender, looks, body image, skin color, class, religion. Every word you can think of that constitutes a label you attach to yourself. After you assemble the list, ask yourself, "Did I make up these words? Did I choose these labels for myself?" Which words empower you? Which words limit you? Which images have you struggled to throw off? Which words have you readily accepted, and to your detriment or benefit?

For each of us, our words create a different movie that has become the story of our lives (more about that later). What would it take for you to rid yourself of words on your platter that are not creating the type of life you want to star in? Believe me: it's as simple as choosing different words. Monitor your thoughts BEFORE they become your words and then actions. Create a new platter!

Did you take the time to go through Application 1.1 and really examine the quality of thoughts and words you are using every day, the thoughts and words that create your communication environment? Is it time to make some changes? Does the water in your lake need a serious filtering system installed? Are you making momentary critical choices concerning the manner in which you formulate your thoughts: which words become yours, which actions become yours, which life becomes your life? Remember, unchecked thoughts lead to unchecked words that lead to uncontrollable chaos. Understandably, many will find it difficult at first to monitor their thoughts consistently. One method that will help is to be in constant touch with your feelings. How do you *feel* on a day-to-day basis? Good? Bad? Indifferent? These *feelings* will attest to whether or not you are in control of your thoughts. Bad feelings are a clear signal that there are negative thoughts trying to invade your lake—your well-being. You will

Intrapersonal Communication

probably find that there are negative thoughts and words accompanying these feelings. If you do not feed the negative feelings, they will disappear. Replace the negative feelings, thoughts, and words with more empowering, positive feelings, thoughts, and words. Sing! Laugh! Pray! Dance!

Review the agreements you have made that cast you as a character in someone else's vision of your life. Examine the socialization/enculturation process you have gone through that holds you captive. The *self-fulfilling prophecies* of your life come from the real you, deep inside at the bottom of the lake. You have to go fishing and dredge up all the thoughts, experiences, and people that need to be cast away. Discontinue the consistent drama of comparing yourself to others and creating the endless cycle of dissatisfaction, the need for outside approval.

Engage in Application 1.2 to help re-create the life you want to live.

Application 1.2 - Dreambook to Success

Use a scrapbook or spiral notebook to gather together a living journal filled with your hopes, dreams, and desires for today, tomorrow, the future.

Fill it with positive sayings, new agreements you want to make with yourself, pictures of places where you would like to travel, possessions you would like to own, and relationships you would like to experience. Do not just concentrate on the material desires but imagine the type of people and experiences you want to have.

I call this a "Dreambook" and it's used to create a new dream for your life. I have experienced the manifestation of many desires within my Dreambook over the last few years. I am adding to my Dreambook frequently, finally taking control of my own destiny, actively participating in its materialization. It has been a life-altering, astounding experience to see my self-fulfilling prophecy at work.

JILL'S DAY

Let's return to the woman we met in the beginning pages of the book. We all witnessed Jill's workday get under way as she solidly placed her feet on the floor and moved into deliberate consciousness. Do you remember Situation #1, her first conscious thoughts about being late and not going to the cleaners? What was her mental breakfast, the mental fuel that started her day? Here we have a clear example of waking up on the wrong side of the bed, and of how the lack of a deliberate choice to make a change in attitude can greatly affect the rest of the day. It is the same experience you are having on too many days. But brighter days are just ahead.

What Jill did not understand was that it was her first thoughts that determined the rest of her day! What may seem like a simple irritant is enough to create massive frustration. The energy behind realizing she forgot her clothes at the cleaners became the same energy that set the rest of her day in motion. The energy began to take a shape and momentum of its own. It followed her to the bathroom, where she broke her nail on the cabinet as she slammed the door. It caught up with her as she cursed herself for forgetting to pick up the milk for cereal for the kids. While driving to work, she was thinking about her relationship with Don and how their marriage had become so mundane. In the process, she almost ran the red light! I hope you are getting the point. Once the energy begins to build, like attracts like. Jill's self-talk, her Intrapersonal Communication, consistently determined her outlook throughout the workday, in every communication experience. From the moment she drove into the parking lot and began negative self-talk about Richard, to her first encounter, to scheduled meetings, to the decisions she made and the conflict she resolved, it all came back to how she began her day and the interaction she had with herself *about* herself and others.

This is why the first step of the communication model is so vital. Everything hinges on your ability to begin each day in a

Intrapersonal Communication

way that will produce the results you desire. The essential key is to understand that the present thought determines the present moment. This is why we often hear various teachers and philosophies mandate the need to “stay in the moment,” “focus on the present,” or “remain in the now.” This exhortation is based on the simple truth that each moment stands alone. Often times, the *now* is marred and tainted by one’s preoccupation with past moments or the unforeseen future, neither of which can create a contented and rich present! Understanding the fundamental position of Intrapersonal Communication as the origin of all other communication experiences is the essential key to workplace success.

In reading Jill’s story we see how throughout the day she kept going back to the residue of dissatisfaction and discontent. Additionally, she consistently propelled herself forward to “what ifs.”

WAKING UP TO YOUR DAY!

How do you typically get up each morning? Do you purposefully direct your thoughts? Try it. How much of your moment-to-moment thoughts are filled with past worry, unfocused expectations at work, anger, thoughts of defeat, self-doubt? These are the seeds that are germinating and producing the fruit of your present moment and, if you’re not careful, all future moments! Plant healthy seeds of thought, fertilize with affirmative words, and grow positive experiences. When gardening, we understand the science of a healthy plant. Well, the *garden* of the mind is no different. It is where you create the experiences of your life. Think of your mind as fertile soil where your thoughts are the seeds that grow your life.

Seed + fertilizer + water = fruit

It is the same as saying . . .



Thoughts + Communication + Actions = Your Life

CONQUERING THE FIRST STEP

You are more than a conqueror! Lack of awareness and understanding is the first major obstacle to overcome. Once you are aware of the science of Intrapersonal Communication and understand its relationship to your life, you are ready to start the process of changing the world around you from inside out! And that start is where you stand right now. Individuals attempting to transform their lives by the renewing of their minds often feel overwhelmed by the task. Resist the urge to fall backward or leap ahead. Resist the temptation to dwell on the difficulties of reprogramming your thoughts. Replace the doubts of “can’t do” with “can do” and “will do!” The power is within you to think what YOU want to think, not what others tell you to think or how others think. Do not fall into the trap of “this is too hard” or “I do not have the time.” It is a matter of enjoying an abundant life or suffering an agonizing, unfulfilled life!

FIRST THINGS FIRST!

Start your day off the way you intend for it to go. As you begin to awaken while still lying quietly, purposefully greet the day with mental and verbal objectives, realistic expectations, and heartfelt thanksgivings. See yourself moving forward through your workday in the manner you wish to be received. Contemplate the attitude and actions you will exhibit as you think positively and constructively through your day *before* you hit the floor running. And there’s another important point: stop run-

Intrapersonal Communication

ning! It is the hurry-up attitude that has us all consistently scrambling away from where we are supposed to be—in the moment.

Personal responsibility for our own success and happiness is not a framework that is easy to work from in a world where what happens is too often everybody else's fault. Think about it. Are you both successful and happy? If you are living in the same frame of mind as most people, I dare say not. Most people will sacrifice one quality for the other because they feel, or have been told, that they must do so. Often, due to the pressures of financial needs and wants, we sacrifice happiness for an empty shell of financial success. But guess what, we can have it all! We all have the power to create that abundant life once we fully connect with our individual genius and the action required to manifest our genius. The wonderful writer and theologian Frederick Buechner shared with his students the formula for having a life of both success and happiness:



"To find your mission in life is to discover the intersection between your heart's deep gladness and the world's deep hunger."

Dare to move your professional goals into direct alignment both with your unique passion and with a need the world has. This may be where you are presently planted, or it may be your next garden of cultivation. Either way, you were born to manifest the genius within. Doing so starts with your ability to merge the thoughts of your creative mind with the words you speak, that create what you actualize. Speak words that help you to experience your work environment as fulfilling. "In the beginning was the WORD!" The first step is to understand the communication patterns that will positively affect every step you take thereafter. Below you will find a synopsis of how the first step of Intrapersonal Communication will help ensure your professional success and happiness.

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF COMMUNICATION

Adopt these Intrapersonal Communication strategies throughout your communication workday:

Understand how the *science* of communication goes far beyond an ability to talk.

- With each thought, with each word, you create actions that turn into the life you are living.

Understand that communication begins on the inside and determines the outside.

- Take the first step to begin a new attitude of personal responsibility for the thoughts you are thinking. They cannot dwell there unless you invite them to stay.

Clean out your lake—engage in a thorough examination of your thoughts and words and fill your lake with new agreements about yourself and others.

- You must replace old doubts, fears, resentments, frustration, and anger with a renewed sense of self-worth, with self-love. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was quoted as saying, “No one can ride your back unless it is bent!” Straighten up!
- Forgive yourself, forgive others, and move on up! Forgiveness allows you to remember the lesson without the anger or other negative emotions.



Don't forget the lesson, just let go of the attachment.

Use affirmations, meditation, prayer.

- Seek out pearls of wisdom and write them in a journal, on note cards, or in your Dreambook. Place the affirmations in locations where you will see and read them

Intrapersonal Communication

daily—the nightstand, your mirror, fridge, or desk. The wonderful thing about affirmations is they are there to confirm our dreams and goals. Don't just read them, but speak them aloud!



We are all materializing the world around us through our thoughts, words, and deeds. Some are doing it intentionally and some are not!

Application 1.3 will help you understand the way affirmations can work for you throughout your day.

- Meditate on the vision you have for your life. Remember Descartes: “Except our own thoughts, there is nothing absolutely in our power.” Think of your passion as if it already is!
- Prayer is a consistent conversation with that which is universal creativity. I have found that a very appropriate

Application 1.3 - Affirmations Work!

Exchange nonaffirming thoughts with affirming thoughts and statements.

⊖ I hate my job!

⊕ I look forward to a more rewarding experience at work and my career!

⊖ I can't stand my boss!

⊕ I would prefer a more understanding boss, but I appreciate his vision.

⊖ I wish I was thin.

⊕ I appreciate my personality and know that my outer-person does not define me. I am working toward a healthier me!

No, the affirmations do not solve the issues. But they create a mind that can!

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF COMMUNICATION

use of prayer is to seek those characteristics and gifts that help us to make the right choices, whether personally, socially, or professionally.

Practice self-monitoring.

- As discussed earlier in the chapter, this Intrapersonal Communication tool allows you to be right there in the moment, involved in making choices as to your thoughts and resultant words. I cannot think of a more helpful tool to use at work. “Think before you speak!”

Practice self-management.

- As you enter your work environment, you immediately start to reaffirm the image you carry around of yourself at work. By understanding the connection between your external work environment and your internal processes of communication, you are assured of greater personal fulfillment and professional communication success.

Remember the lesson of “Be, Do, Have.”

- Here’s one approach to life: If I *have* a nice ride, I will *do* my thing by driving around town so everyone can see me, and then I will *be* somebody and everyone will know it.
- This formula bases self-worth in possessions. Self-esteem is replaced by social esteem.
- A better formula: If I (be) am successful in managing my mind, in choosing my thoughts and words, I will do things—make choices, take actions—that resonate with success. They will cause me to attract success and thereby have it. If I (be) am kind, I will do kind things and have kindness in return. The formula can be applied to millions of scenarios, but the outcome is ALWAYS the same:

Intrapersonal Communication



You cannot have and keep what you are not!

You have successfully begun your journey up the staircase by accepting the key part that self-understanding plays in your communication IQ. Our next step is to understand the role our nonverbal messages play in determining the outcome of our communication with others.

Do you realize that as much as 93 percent of your trust and believability is communicated through nonverbal communication? Within personal or professional settings, NVC accounts for the majority of your communication. Are you ready to climb the second step to greater communication confidence and power?



"I am what I think I am. My thoughts are not separate from me."



Q & A Intrapersonal Communication

Dear PS,

Q: I'm always wondering what others think about me at work.

A: It's funny; they are probably having the same thoughts. The important thing is to understand how you think about yourself. Remember, everyone sees

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF COMMUNICATION

you as *you* see yourself. Create a positive self-image and you will not be concerned about how others see you, only that you are true to yourself.

Q: I have a colleague who consistently talks negatively about her job and the company. How can I help her change her outlook?

A: Are you her supervisor or an acquaintance? Your relationship with her will determine your course of action. If you are a person responsible for addressing and evaluating job performance, seek support from company staff-development programs that focus on professional enrichment. Talk with her about her unrealized aspirations and how she can engage in an assertive push to position herself where she wants to be. Offer support.

Q: I have a colleague who is so negative. She always wants to have lunch together but all she does is gripe and complain about the job and gossip about coworkers.

A: As a colleague, this may be more sensitive and you need to determine the importance of the friendship and your level of involvement with her as it affects the job. Be clear that you value your work environment and seek to be content and productive while at work. Ask if there is anything you can do to help her achieve the same. Offer her self-help books and guides to encourage her to a more positive self-image. If she does not respond positively to your help and concern, have lunch with someone else.

Q: I can't seem to leave my personal problems behind while I'm at work. It's really affecting my job performance.

Intrapersonal Communication

A: Worry can be a major distraction for all of us. It can become a debilitating habit that impacts all areas of one's life. But understand a very important truth: worry stems from a past experience you have not let go of, and/or from a future imagined experience that has not happened. Only the present offers true success and contentment. Train your mind to stay focused on the moment. You will become much more productive and able to solve any challenge at the time it presents itself. Bend your circumstances to your mind, not your mind to your circumstances.

Q: I have been overlooked for several promotions at work. As a result my self-esteem is very low!

A: Are you sure it isn't the other way around? Your low self-esteem may be creating an image that does not come across as promotable. Search your private lake of experiences. Does your self-image present an individual who is "in-charge"? The public image we present of ourselves may not actually be the way we see ourselves. But the *real* you always shines through. Speak to a respected colleague for an honest assessment of why opportunities are passing you by. Seek a professional coach or take a class in communication that will help you more closely analyze the personal blockages to your professional goals. If you honestly feel that you are promotable but that office politics is getting in the way, have a frank discussion with your supervisor at an appropriate time and setting, and ask for an honest assessment of your future within the department, suggestions for how to improve your chances, and a realistic time line for your expectations. Honest communication with yourself and others is ALWAYS the answer! You just have to be ready to really listen.

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF COMMUNICATION

Q: I am what some call a “minority” at work. My ethnic background is not of the dominant culture. I constantly feel singled out about my work, my accent, my clothes. I feel like I experience greater scrutiny than most of my coworkers but work twice as hard.

A: You are a prime candidate for the work we are doing in this book. Read Chapter 1 and reread it, again and again. Seek out other professionals who can relate to the personal and professional concerns of being a member of a coculture within the dominant culture workforce. Read Chapter 7 on Intercultural Communication and apply the tools needed for Cross-cultural Communication effectiveness. Make an honest assessment of yourself and seek out and destroy the *victim*. Then move forward in the confidence of the unique gifts you can contribute to the work environment. Employ the aid of mentors and professional development to help you navigate the organizational culture. Offer input as to how the organization can move from lip service to true inclusion. Demographics and the global workforce are mandating more inclusive work environments. You can be a catalyst for change. But first: “Be the change you want to see.”