

# **INTERACTION DYNAMICS**

## **COURSE GUIDEBOOK**

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## INTRODUCTION - BASIC NEEDS

Some of the most important needs which most of us deal with on a daily basis are not for food, shelter, safety, survival or even companionship. We seek to fulfill our needs for self esteem and self-actualization.

We search for recognition, for a feeling of belonging as well as of independence. We want to have a sense of being guided by purpose and to make a difference by being effective in the realization of our visions.

Probably the most common barrier to fulfillment of the needs for self-actualization and self-esteem is incomplete communication.

The incomplete communication can be between oneself and another individual, or it might simply be in the dialogue that goes on within ourselves.

The internal dialogue may be the most important communication that takes place. It sets the tone for how we interact with another. Being clear about what we feel, think, want or have to offer, enables us to communicate accurately and completely with others.

## THE PROBLEM

At the core of every conflict is an unfulfilled need, usually a miscommunication.

Incomplete communications fall into the following categories.

A communication has been:

- a) **UNEXPRESSED**
- b) **INACCURATELY EXPRESSED**
- c) **UNHEARD**
- d) **MISUNDERSTOOD**
- e) **an UNACCEPTED DISAGREEMENT**

Here are some examples of the levels of incomplete communications;

**a) UNEXPRESSED:**

Alex has a need to express something to Sara (or just to acknowledge it to himself) and Alex is either unaware of the need or unwilling to fulfill the need by speaking out.

**Example:**

Alex is angry. Alex and Sara are going to make a presentation this afternoon at a critical meeting. Sara has once again waited until shortly before the meeting to give Alex important information he needs to write a report for the meeting presentation. Alex has not communicated his feelings to Sara or established an agreed upon schedule for accomplishment of their tasks. His body is tight. In his concern about his deadline, he is impatient with his family at home and then with his associates at the office. No one understands why he is like that, perhaps including himself.

**b) INACCURATELY EXPRESSED:**

Alex expresses himself to Sara inaccurately. The correct message is neither sent nor received.

**Example:**

Finally, Alex says to Sara, "It's really frustrating that you never give me enough time to do my report right!" Sara throws the papers on the desk and stomps out. The environment for teamwork and creativity are clearly less than optimum.

**c) UNHEARD:**

Alex expresses himself to Sara, and Sara does not let the message in.

**Example:**

Alex says to Sara, "Will you talk with me for a few minutes about how we can better work together on these reports?" Sara, afraid that Alex is going to blow up at her again, is not listening and merely responds with, "Here's the data," and walks away.

**d) MISUNDERSTOOD:**

Alex expresses himself accurately to Sara, and Sara interprets a different message than the one that Alex intended to send.

**Example:**

Sara agrees to talk. Alex says, "I feel afraid that I am not going to have enough time to do a good job on this report, and I apologize for not letting you know when I needed the information. I would like to set up a schedule that will work for both of us in the future." Sara responds with, "I've been with the company longer than you have, and a lot of people think I do a great job here."

**e) an UNACCEPTED DISAGREEMENT:**

Alex sends a message to Sara which she accurately receives, and either one or both of them is unwilling or unable to accept that disagreement into their relationship.

**Example:**

Sara agrees to talk. Alex says, "I feel afraid that I am not going to have time to do a good job on this report. I apologize for not letting you know when I would have liked to have had the information. I would like to set up a schedule that we both agree to which will work better for us in the future." This time Sara says, "I hear that you are afraid and thank you for the apology, but if you don't like the way we work together, you can just find someone else to work with."

**SOLUTION: Successful communication**

If the source of conflict is unsuccessful communication, then what is the nature of successful communication?

Authentic, clear, accurate, responsible\* and complete interaction clears barriers to natural rapport and cooperation.

\* includes sensitivity to other's feelings

The principles in this guide were informed greatly by my 15 years of practicing, teaching and applying of the non-violent martial art of Aikido.

**AIKIDO PRINCIPLES**

AI: "The great love, the merging, the being together with"

KI: "Life energy"

DO: "The Path, The Way"

AIKIDO means "The Way of Harmony with Life Energy"

Aikido shows us that there are four ways to interact with a force:

- 1) Ignore
- 2) Avoid
- 3) Fight
- 4) Blend and Lead

## COMMUNICATION RESPONSES

Similar to the physical practice of Aikido, there are four categories of response to energy when "communication energy" is sent your way.

### 1) IGNORE-

No response - through forgetfulness, procrastination or as a "consequential" punishment

### 2) DISTRACT-

Indirect reaction. Attempt to redirect the discussion as a means to not respond directly to the original communication

### 3) ARGUE-

Direct reaction. Response directly clashes with the original communication

### 4) RECEIVE and RESPOND-

Communication is acknowledged with direct response.

## INTERACTION CYCLES

*"Communicate: To make known; to be connected, to join"*  
Webster's Dictionary

*"The fundamental law of the universe is rhythmic, balanced interchange."*  
Walter Russell

There are 3 fundamental cycles of interchange between people.

- 1) **Statement / Acknowledgement.**  
**and**
- 2) **Question / Statement / Acknowledgement**

## INTERACTION CYCLES - Examples:

### 1) Statement / Acknowledgement:

Dave makes a statement to Sheryl and Sheryl lets Dave know somehow that the message was received.

Examples:

- a) Dave: I think you look terrific.  
Sheryl: Thanks.
- b) John: Mary, please ensure the proper functioning of the "O" rings for this shuttle mission.  
Mary: Sure, no problem.

## **2) Question / Statement / Acknowledgement:**

Dave poses a question to Sheryl, and Sheryl answers the question with a statement. Dave acknowledges receipt of the answering statement.

Examples:

- a) Dave: Can you find me how to send a question to [thrivemovement.com](http://thrivemovement.com)?  
Sheryl: you just write to [info@thrivemovement.com](mailto:info@thrivemovement.com).  
Dave: Thank you.
- b) Dear, will you take out the garbage tonight?  
Certainly I will, honey.  
Thanks, dear.

Few people are trained in the fundamentals of complete communication. Pilots, air traffic controllers, army field units and telephone operators are. Why? Because in their environments, the survival and well-being of the people and/or organizations involved are obviously dependent on successful communication.

Young children instinctively repeat their questions over and over until they are answered in some fashion. A "no" answer is more satisfying than no answer at all. Children and spouses often prefer being abused to being neglected.

## **SELF EXPRESSION**

If one is willing to speak and listen sincerely in relationship, then the next key challenge is representing oneself accurately.

Accurate interaction is more critical between people when there is a relationship, a job or an important outcome at stake.

Accurate communication is especially critical where significant results are needed or desired.

The following examples demonstrate the distinction between accurate and inaccurate communication.

**INACCURATE:**

It's hot in this room now. (Who knows for sure? Some people may feel warm, others cool. What temperature is hot? Who gets to decide? Someone would always be able to justifiably argue.)

**ACCURATE:**

I feel hot in this room now. (I am saying only what is so for me. Who can reasonably argue with that?)

**INACCURATE:**

Tulips are prettier than roses. (In whose perception? How do we know what is pretty?)

**ACCURATE:**

I think tulips are prettier than roses.

Accurate communication statements fundamentally begin with "I" because that is whose experience is being communicated.

Next comes a description of the process actually going on in the communicator: feeling, thinking, asserting (thoughts backed up by compelling evidence), requesting or promising.

Finally there can be a reference to what the feelings or thoughts are about.

**I feel** \_\_\_\_\_ about \_\_\_\_\_.

Ex. - I feel afraid about your often not getting your reports to me on time.

**I think that** \_\_\_\_\_.

Ex. - I think that we need to make a change if we are going to be effective.

**I request that** \_\_\_\_\_.

Ex. - I request that you have the next one to me a day early.

**I promise that** \_\_\_\_\_.

Ex. - I promise that I will get you that report at least a day early next time.

Whether these words are actually used or not, it is useful to distinguish thoughts and feelings from actual requests, assertions and promises as a means to clear relationships. In doing so, you can have each distinction (think, feel, want, promise etc.) serve the purpose for which it is suited.

Here are several of the most common “energy traps” that our cultural habits unfortunately incline us toward.

### **"AND" instead of "BUT"**

In your conversations, try replacing the word "but" with "and". This makes room for multiple points of view, including diverse feelings and even disagreements - all of which are vital to effectiveness, cooperation and well-being. It is like blending in Aikido, instead of resisting the first part of a sentence with the energy of the second.

- Example: a) I would love to be windsurfing now, but I have to work.  
vs.  
(I would love to be windsurfing now, AND I need to work.)
- b) I would love to play the piano, but I don't know how.  
vs.  
(I would love to play the piano, AND I don't know how.)

### **ALWAYS / NEVER**

The words "always" and "never" are usually inaccurate, and they are often a tip-off to a statement that is intended as an attack rather than as a gift.

- Example:
- a) You never get your work done on time.  
vs.  
I would like you to be prompt with your work.
- b) You are always leaving your socks in the sink.  
vs.  
I have been noticing your socks in the sink, and I would like it if you would not leave them there.
- c) I am never sensitive enough to people's feelings.  
vs.  
Sometimes I have not been as sensitive as I would like to have been to other people's feelings.
- d) You always want me to change but you never look at yourself.  
vs.  
Would you be willing to discuss your part in this as well as mine?



So here is a self-test to help you successfully integrate what has been presented thus far.

### **\*\*POP QUIZ\*\***

How would you make each of these statements accurate and unarguable?

- 1) This workshop is too long.  
I think this workshop is too long.
- 2) My spouse never acknowledges me.  
My spouse does not acknowledge me as often as I would like.
- 3) I would like to get remarried, but I don't want to risk being hurt that badly again.  
I would like to get remarried, AND I don't want to risk being hurt that badly again.
- 4) Sometimes I have felt afraid to share my feelings with people.  
(This is accurate and unarguable as is. Trick question!)
- 5) You are always late to our meetings.  
You have often been late for our meetings and I request that you be on time.

Emotion is a key aspect of the life force – that which “motivates us.” Our feelings can seem wild and dangerous and overwhelming. But like whitewater rapids in a river, they can be navigated successfully if it is done with humility, understanding and skill.

When I looked into the energy dynamics of our language for emotion, I discovered that the vast majority of words we conventionally use in English to describe what we are feeling – are not feelings at all. They are descriptions of past events done to us by the power of an outside influence. That is why they mostly end in “ed.” Trying to express our feelings authentically with such words as perturbed, annoyed, frustrated, outraged, dejected, troubled, discouraged, terrified, frightened, tormented, pissed, freaked etc. actually serve to suppress the emotion needing to be experienced and give our power away to someone or something else.

Though there are endless subtleties to the spectrum of feeling, I found it very useful to work with what I call the “primary colors” of the emotional palette: Joy, Fear, Sadness, Anger and Apathy.

### **CYCLE of EMOTIONS**

*"We must be careful not to make intellect our God-  
it has powerful muscles but no personality."*

Albert Einstein

The vibrations of emotion, like the vibrations of color (the rainbow spectrum) and sound (the octave of musical tones) seem to be a continuum of change with nevertheless identifiable discreet aspects like sadness or joy. The primary spectrum of emotion bears a strong resemblance to the well-recognized stages in preparation for dying.

Cycle of Feeling States

Apathy  
 Anger  
 Sadness  
 Fear  
 Joy

Stages in Preparation for Dying

(Elizabeth Kubler-Ross)

Denial  
 Anger  
 Grief  
 Fear  
 Acceptance

**FEELINGS**

In the left column are real feelings. In the center are the basic categories they fit into. On the right are words we tend to use that mask or suppress the authentic and full experience of the emotional state.

**Feeling**

(True feeling)

**State**

(True state)

**Illusion**

(Victim's pt. of view)

**don't care**

numb to feeling

**apathy**

**anger**

**angry**  
 grouchy  
 spiteful  
 resentful  
 bitter  
 rebellious  
 furious  
 defiant  
 mad

**depressed**

bored

**angered**

upset  
 exasperated  
 perturbed  
 aggravated  
 annoyed  
 agitated  
 irritated  
 frustrated  
 outraged  
 peeved  
 enraged  
 incensed

**sad**

blue  
 miserable

**sadness**

**saddened**

hurt  
 dejected

gloomy  
low  
forlorn  
sullen  
grim

troubled  
discouraged  
rejected

**afraid**

**fear**

**scared**

panicky  
desperate  
timid  
fearful  
anxious  
nervous

freaked  
shocked  
terrified  
frightened  
tormented

**happy**

**joy**

**excited**

cheerful  
merry  
good  
enthusiastic  
joyful  
whole  
peaceful  
free  
serene

elated  
thrilled  
moved  
exalted  
relieved  
fulfilled  
satisfied  
amused  
soothed  
pleased

Here are some of the key skills that I recommend for your personal toolkit to empower well-functioning relationships.

## LISTENING

*"Communication can take place between two people when each of them has expanded their reality to include the other person's reality without conflict."*

Stewart Emery

**Active:**

Listening is an alive, alert, participatory process. The more uncomfortable it is for you to hear the message, the more skill and will it requires for you to complete the interaction successfully.

**Re-creation:**

The sender creates a message and intends that you receive it. As listener, you need to intend to create that message again for yourself - the meaning, not just the words. As you let them know you have done that, the weight of their need to communicate that message disappears.

**Beyond Personal Agenda:**

Real listening involves having the other person's conversation be considerably louder than your own, inside your own mind.

**Accurate:**

The more accurately you filter the incoming message in order to recreate what is actually going on, the more efficient, effective and safe the interaction.

**Evidence of Success:**

How do you know if your listening is working? Neither of you is holding your breath. The other person is not repeating the same message. The message is moving along the spectrum of content which ranges from the cycle of emotions, through thoughts and assertions, into requests and promises, and finally into action and results. Rapport exists between you.

## CLEARING

*"The true measure of greatness of any man is his ability  
to express love in his human relations."*

Walter Russell

These are minimum sufficient ground rules for a successful clearing of a communication breakdown, when combined with rigorous adherence to the principles of communication accuracy already described.

**1) Agreements:**

All parties are expressly willing to interact within agreed upon ground rules with the intention of restoring rapport and resolving, to whatever degree possible, the issues at hand.

**2) Ground rules:**

- a) 10 minute turns in an agreed upon order
- b) No interruptions unless a communication is not understood or responsibly communicated (accurate, sincere - a gift rather than an attack).

3) Continue until all are complete with feelings, thoughts and acknowledgements.

4) After item 3 above is complete, relate requests and promises, and only if appropriate.

- 5) When complete, touch appropriately (handshake, hug...)  
See the **“Emergency Page”** for further detail.

## ACTION INTERACTIONS

When our conversations move into action – into needing to produce real-world results, there are key elements that optimize the process.

### **Requests and Promises** - grounded in time and place and followed up

Example:

James: "Tom, I would love for you to do the monthly balance sheet."  
Tom: "Okay."

vs:

James: "Tom, I need the monthly balance sheet on my desk by Friday at noon. Will you do that?"  
Tom: "Yes I will do that." or, "No, I will be in Detroit then, how about Monday, or you might ask Grace or Larry to do it."

A request is answered by a promise, a decline or a counter proposal. Anything else does not complete the communication.

Confirm completion or incompleteness of a promise, and remake or cancel one which is incomplete by the designated time.

Tom: "James, I want you to know that the balance sheet will not be ready by noon as we intended, and I will have it finished by 4:00 pm today."

Your commitment shapes your word. Your word shapes your action, and your action shapes your results and reputation.

Here are other vital distinctions and skills to fill out your toolbox.

## TOOLS for SUCCESS

### 1) Acceptance-

...means letting go of the fight against the fact that things are the way they are...and putting the energy instead into getting them to be how you want them to be. It's blending – not giving up!

“The experience of love begins with the willingness to allow another person to be the way they are.”

- Werner Erhard

## 2) Acknowledgement

*"Acknowledge - 1) To recognize as fact 2) To give thanks for  
3) To give validity to, to own as genuine."*

Webster's Dictionary

Acknowledgement allows for completion and motivates toward the next level of relationship or activity.

Set up a time for it. Ask for it. Ask how to give it.

Acknowledgement is the lifeblood of relationship - with oneself and throughout any organization - be it a couple, family or larger group.

## 3) Apology

*"Apology - 1) To express regret for something done or said"*

Webster's Dictionary

We can learn to apologize for the impact of our action even if the harm was unintended. This is distinct from feeling shame or guilt.

## 4) Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself in which others can share.

I had the opportunity to work with many people in healing centers, and the primary issue was very often resentment held in the body that someone had been unwilling to forgive. It is critical to know that one does not have to forgive trespasses against us until we are ready. It is equally important to realize that holding energy in our bodies, even with justification, is very unhealthy and dangerous.

What I found was usually necessary for true forgiveness was a complete physical and energetic release of the trapped emotions, a fulfilling self-expression toward the perpetrator (even if they are unavailable or dead), and a full understanding that forgiving - "giving forth" the held energy - does not mean condoning past acts; it does not mean having faith that they won't happen again; and it does not entail any obligation to associate with the violator.

## 5) Golden Rule

- What goes around, comes around
- As above, so below
- Do unto others as you would have them do unto you
- Receive and respond

-Blend and Lead

All of the world's grand religious traditions have has some version of the "Golden Rule," and I want to suggest a "Platinum Rule," where, especially between the genders or between cultures, we do unto others as they would have us do unto them, rather than us assuming they want to be treated the same way we would. Some people want to be held when they are upset. Others want to be left alone. Some want to be hugged while others prefer a wave or a handshake. What does seem universal is that no one wants to be violated against his or her will.

Why bother to learn and practice all these challenging skills? Why not just wing it...be spontaneous and trust it will all work out? Look at most relationships. Look at the desperation in the world and the abuse and suffering. I believe it is our birthright to sense when things are working and when they are not. It is my experimental observation, however, that the skills to have it work need to be discovered and practiced daily with passion and un-conflicted behavior. When they are they lead to fulfillment, peace, prosperity, love and conscious evolution.

## RESULTS

Win/Win = Learning, growth, enjoyment and effectiveness

Becoming increasingly skilled at the art of communication keeps open and vibrant the ever-changing harmonies of relationship. It keeps alive the enjoyment of learning and the creativity, effectiveness and productivity of aligned cooperation.

I studied communication and counseling with Dr. Robert Shaw of the Berkeley Family Institute, and one of the notions I learned which has served me well over the years is this.

$$S = a + g + c$$

In language it goes like this:

*"Satisfaction is a function of accepting what is, in a context of workability, while at the same time going all out to get things the way you want them, while maintaining full communication, affinity and compassion."*

- Robert Shaw, Berkeley Family Institute

When things feel off in my life, I like to check in with this formula and see which one or more factors is missing from my equation for satisfaction in life...

Am I fighting against the fact that things, in this moment, are exactly the way they are?

Starting by **accepting** (not condoning or settling, just *realizing*) creates the Aikido-style “blend,” which is necessary before a “lead” is possible.

Am I doing everything that is in my power to **change the situation** for the better?

Am I shaming, blaming, whining, manipulating... or am I actually **staying connected** at a feeling level with the person with whom I am challenged at the moment?

Here is another review to make sure your understandings are getting clear on what we have covered.

## POP QUIZ!!

How would you optimize the accuracy and effectiveness of the following statements?

1) That movie made me feel sad.

I felt sad during that movie. (The movie was just the movie. I had the feeling.)

2) I am outraged by the neighbor's new fence.

I feel angry about the neighbor's new fence. (Replace “ed” word with a real feeling.)

3) I feel unhappy about my gerbil dying.

I feel sad about my gerbil dying. (Unhappy is not a feeling. It is the absence of something.)

4) I feel that you are trying to manipulate me by saying you feel sad.

I think you are trying to manipulate me by saying you feel sad. (This is a thought, not a feeling.)

5) This traffic is really aggravating me.

I feel angry about this traffic. (The traffic is just the traffic. I have the feeling.)

6) I feel absolutely shocked by your behavior.

I feel afraid about how your behavior is going to reflect badly on me. (Replace “ed” word with a real feeling.)

7) When the San Francisco 49ers won the Superbowl, my cousin in Denver was annoyed, but I was elated.



When the San Francisco 49ers won the Superbowl, my cousin in Denver was angry, and I was happy.

8) I think that men should wear neckties to restaurants.  
Unarguable as is - trick question!

9) I promise I will call you back.  
I promise I will call you back by tomorrow at 5pm. (Grounded in time.)

10) I am sending you the check.  
I will send you the check by the tomorrow at noon. (Grounded in time.)

If you are in a breakdown in one of your relationships, and you don't have a skilled facilitator to help you clean it up, try this "emergency guide," on your own, first, and then, ideally, with the other person's consent to help see the process of resolution safely through to re-connection and deeper trust building. Remember, everyone is doing the best they can in the moment. Everyone wants to feel loved and to feel safe. Almost every conflict is based in a misunderstanding that can be cleared up with successful and complete communication.

## EMERGENCY PAGE TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

Steps to follow in the event of a conflict or breakdown in communication:

1) Ask yourself, "What am I feeling?"

Apathetic\_\_\_\_

Angry\_\_\_\_

Sad\_\_\_\_

Afraid\_\_\_\_

Happy\_\_\_\_

2) What are these feelings associated with?

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3) To communicate responsibly, do I need to discharge some energy first? No\_\_\_\_ Yes\_\_\_\_ Done\_\_\_\_

4) Ask yourself, "Am I willing to communicate with \_\_\_\_\_ with the intention of clearing the relationship and resolving the issue?" No\_\_\_\_ Yes\_\_\_\_

5) If you are not, and check "no", let them know that you need

to clear an issue and are not ready yet. Be clear that you will let them know when you are. Then follow through.

- 6) If you are ready to communicate with the intent of clearing, then ask if the other party is. No\_\_\_\_\_ Yes\_\_\_\_\_
- 7) If their response is "no", thank them for their honesty and ask them to let you know when they are ready.
- 8) Once both parties have agreed to clear the issue, you may begin the clearing process. Choose a location that provides privacy. Seat yourselves in an upright position facing each other. Be seated an appropriate distance from each other. Agree on a beginner, and start alternating 10-minute uninterrupted sessions until each has completed expressing their feelings and thoughts.

Watch out for the following pitfalls:

- 1) Use of "ed" words
- 2) Sentences that begin with "you"
- 3) Questions that are actually statements
- 4) The use of "but" instead of "and"
- 5) The "always/never" trap
- 6) Present tense descriptions of past tense events
- 7) "Feelings" which are actually thoughts or accusations

Once clear, you are ready to negotiate the resolution of the issue(s). Ask the questions "What do you want or need in this situation?" Make requests, "Would you be willing to...?" State promises, "What I will do is...."

The issue(s):

1) \_\_\_\_\_

Resolution: \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

Resolution: \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

Resolution:\_\_\_\_\_

9) Touch appropriately (handshake, hug...) Enjoy!

10) Ask yourself, "how do I feel now?"

Apathetic\_\_\_\_\_

Angry\_\_\_\_\_

Sad\_\_\_\_\_

Afraid\_\_\_\_\_

Happy\_\_\_\_\_

Here is a handy outline to review what you have covered.

## INTERACTION DYNAMICS COURSE

# REVIEW

### **Purpose**

To create awareness of the natural principles which function in successful interpersonal communication

and

To provide access to the tools - the techniques and abilities - by which these principles can be successfully integrated into your daily life.

### **AWARENESS:**

- 1) PROBLEM/SOLUTION - 5 levels of incompleteness
- 2) Two possible INTERACTION CYCLES - 4 ways of interacting with a force
- 3) CYCLE of EMOTIONS - 4 major feeling categories

## REVIEW

(continued)

### TECHNIQUE:

- 1) ACCURACY      I feel\_\_\_\_\_about\_\_\_\_\_.
- I think that\_\_\_\_\_.
- I assert that\_\_\_\_\_.
- I request that\_\_\_\_\_.
- I promise that\_\_\_\_\_.

### 2) PITFALLS:

- a) Use of "ed" words
- b) Sentences that begin with "you"
- c) Questions that are actually statements
- d) The use of "but" instead of "and".
- e) The "always/never" trap
- f) Present tense descriptions of past tense events
- g) Feelings which are actually thoughts.

3) ACTION INTERACTION      Requests and promises, grounded in time and place and followed up

4) TROUBLESHOOTING      10 step, 10 minute clearing technique

### ABILITIES:

- 1) Listening and speaking accurately
- 2) Getting yourself heard
- 3) Clearing a relationship
- 4) Creating results-producing conversations grounded in time and place and followed up