

Close relationships sometimes mask poor communication

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Introduction

It is quite surprising to learn that what we normally assume to be true or quite evident is not what it seems. This is the case with how we communicate with other people. It is even more surprising how our communications with the people very close to us, those we love such as our parents, siblings or spouses, often do not get the intent and meaning of our messages. This seems to be the findings of a new provocative research study which indicated people often mistakenly believe they communicated better with close friends than with strangers (U. S. News, 2011, p. 1). This is probably because when with friends, we merely assume they understand us much better as compared to strangers and hence there is no need to expound or explain our messages further. In other words, we take it for granted that close friends understand us much better. We have the false illusion of insight or understanding when we are with close friends.

Discussion

The research study's authors attributed this mistaken belief to the phenomenon called as " closeness-communication bias" which gave the study participants a false sense of perception in estimating the quality of communications. The study used as subjects 24 pairs of couples to let them figure out the meanings of certain phrases which could have other unintended meanings. The results showed these couples overestimated their ability to communicate than they actually did in the study. I do not find this surprising at all and I actually agree with the study's findings. Many couples quarrel, lose touch and get divorced because of this apparent

miscommunication.

I had encountered a similar experience with my mom. One weekend, I said to her that I will be going to the school library for research work to look for some book sources for my term paper. I did not mention how long I will be staying at the library since I had presumed she knows what time the library will close on Saturday afternoons. I had done this many times before and so did not bother to tell her anymore that I will be going to my classmate's house afterwards to go over another school paper which is due for submission that coming week. It so happened that we also do our grocery shopping mostly on Saturday afternoons and so she had waited for me at our local supermarket at around 5 p. m. before starting her shopping rounds without me. She got mad at me for not showing up at that time although I assumed she knew all along I cannot make it.

One way to make sure this miscommunication will not recur is to make myself very clear with regards to my intentions, meaning and maybe even need to repeat a message for the sake of clarity. Moreover, I should not presume my listener knows without waiting or asking for some form of feedback. I may need to ask my listener if he or she understood what I had said. I have to ask my listener if he or she got the full meaning of what I had just said.

Conclusion

Miscommunication can be avoided if we take the perspective of the other person as the study authors had suggested. It is best to have empathy by looking things at their viewpoints. It must be understood that personal communications is a shared process (Sole, 2011, p. 10) with a commonality

of meanings and symbolisms. Communications also has to be taken within its own context in order to lessen the chances of a miscommunication and misunderstanding. People who communicate well get higher grades, better careers and get ahead in life as they can connect with people much better than others can which is their key to success (Green, 2006, p. 150).

References

Green, A. (2006). *Effective Personal Communication Skills for Public Relations*. London, UK: Kogan Page Limited.

Sole, K. (2011). *Making Connections: Understanding Interpersonal Communication*. San Diego, CA, USA: Bridgepoint Education, Incorporated.

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