

Radical honesty versus decency in speech essay

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Accept it or not. Some topics are weightier and trickier to handle than others. Take the example of intimate friends or workmates. How do you begin to tell them that they have bad breath, body orduor, dandruff or that they are extremely shaggy and therefore need a haircut without hurting their feelings?

Similarly, issues such as finances or sex among friends can easily shake up things and end a treasured relationship. Thus the mode of relaying information so that issues of misunderstanding are kept to a minimum is key. This might prompt one to resort to the use of indirect communication where you don't hit the nail directly on the head but instead meander with the information so that their feelings are not hurt. But could this also be seen as ineffective way of communication? (Witcheins, 45)

Failure to put things in black and white might be interpreted as dishonesty that is crafted to hide important facts. This 'lack of honesty' therefore can blow up things particularly in the family set up. For example explaining to your fiancée why your secretary answered to your personal cell phone.

While many would argue that honesty is the best policy, this may not be applicable in a myriad of instances where the likelihood of being misunderstood is a reality. This is because some people are generally oversensitive. These people are very fragile and must be handle with care especially on what they are being told. This is because they may not challenge you to a physical duel but would probably get annoyed and end the friendship. (Medhurst, 65)

To get along with many people particularly the oversensitive, one has to avoid direct language by minimizing critical comments, avoiding harshness

and being romantic. Most human beings by nature dislike criticism. Thus the best way to get along smoothly is to avoid antagonism that would lead to harsh comments or criticism. To a partner being romantic in presenting a dissenting opinion would perhaps help to avoid conflict.

Some people still quoting from the holy book argue that 'speak that speak the truth and the truth shall set you free'. That a friend should be notified of anything funny about himself or herself without dilly dallying. The idea being that something that is offensive to many must really be out of the expected. Moreover, our wish to protect children's innocence may prompt us to hesitate on certain subject matters. Issues such as sexuality would be improper to be discuss with children below some age bracket. However, it is said that this lack of free exchange between the children and the parents has been blamed for the escalating moral decadence among the youth. Being open and frank has the advantage that it help eliminate to a possible simmering row that is dangerous especially in an organizational set up. It enable members of that organization to know what is expected of them and what each of them expects from the other without being kept in the dark for fear of speaking up. This helps to save time and redeem an organizational image on time. Some organizations usually hire anonymous services such as the media to do this delicate job of informing the person on their behalf. However, this is likely to make one paranoid and perhaps affect their personality in the workplace. The idea being that the victim would feel that his problem has been exposed to all and sundry who would undoubtedly look down upon him or her. (Goodwin, 31)

Again, failing to be open and frank make friend technically unaware of each

other. They would not know each others personality, likes and even dislikes. This is dangerous especially for people who are staying together for one person would continue to make a mistake or persist with an irritating habit since they are not openly rebuked or told off.

Despite the many merits of radical honesty in communication, it has many flaws as well that makes indirect communication preferable. In the contemporary society, people have their own unique ways of doing certain things and the concept of a standard one is inapplicable. Therefore being direct in what you expect might be interpreted as being proud or rude.

Secondly, most people are very emotional and telling them our expectations when we know that they fall short would certainly lead to a strained relationship. Indirect communication if handled expertly can yield results without within a shorter time and without tension.

However, this position of giving preference to the indirect style of speech is opposed by Paul Grice, a linguist to whom the meaning of an utterance is very significant. Grice in his popular Grice cooperative principle argues that information should be exact and to the point. He says that a lot of information should never be given as this would be flouting the maxim of quality. Similarly, giving long statements or utterances would lead to flouting of maxim of relation and maxim of manner. Grice says that flouting of maxims leads to conversational implicatures that can lead to a wrong interpretation of a text. (Cameron, 29)

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