

Communication breakdown

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



CommunicationBreakdown Deborah Tannen in her essay " Sex Lies and Conversation" points out the problems in communication between genders. She focuses on conversational styles and on how a person's expectations of one's reaction may cause misunderstanding. She emphasizes the importance of something she calls cross cultural communication. Tannen believes that in order to communicate properly with the opposite sex we must learn theircultureand adapt to conversation with them. First, Tannen describes the differences in how children socialize.

Most of what we know about communication we learned when we were children. When women are little girls, they have best friends, ones we can share our secrets with. When we get a little older and have a relationship with the opposite sex we expect the same kind of communication. Tannen believes the importance is not necessarily the topic but the feeling that you get from conversation and points out , " What is important is not the individual subjects that are disclosed but the sense of closeness, of a life shared, that emerges when people tell their thoughts, feelings and impressions" (51).

We must learn to socialize with the opposite sex the same way we do with the same sex. If we could learn to connect and have the " sense of closeness" with the opposite sex we might be able to communicate successfully. Tannen's research has shown that men socialize differently as boys and " Since they don't assume talk is the cement that binds the relationship, men don't know what kind of talk women want, and they don't miss it when it isn't there"(51). Tannen points out that boys learn to

communicate in larger groups, often struggling not to be in the subaltern position of the conversation.

Men do not like to listen; they like to feel like they are the superior person in the conversation. (51) Communication starts in childhood and what we have learned to expect from conversations. Next, Tannen observes how men and women listen to each other and how this can cause misunderstanding between genders. She feels that there is confusion about what women expect and declares, "When women talk to each other in a close, comfortable setting, they often overlap, finish each other's sentences and anticipate what the other is about to say" (53).

Tannen also talks about listener noise. Women often will say "mhm" or "uhuh" and men do not do these things when they talk to each other. Women are looking for that "listener noise" and if he is silent, she thinks he is ignoring her but on the same token Tannen notes, "Men who expect silent attention interpret a stream of listener noise as overreaction or impatience" (53). Body language and conversational habits are causing women to feel like they are being ignored and men to feel as if they are being interrupted.

When a woman is having a conversation they expect the listener to "express agreement" and be supportive of the conversation. Men, on the other hand, feel it is their conversational duty to express other positions in the argument. (53) Learning the importance of building a rapport with the person you are talking to may be another way to have successful conversation with the opposite sex. Finally, Tannen believes that learning how the opposite sex communicates is the key. If we can learn what to

expect when communicating with someone then we can learn how to respond.

Tannen suggests “ A sociolinguistic approach by which male-female conversation is seen as cross- cultural communication allows us to understand the problem and forge solutions without blaming either party”(54). Tannen stresses the importance of telling the other person how you feel about their communication with you and advises,” Women who feel abandoned and deprived when their husbands won’t listen to or report daily news may be happy to discover their husbands trying to adapt once they understand the place of small talk in women’s relationships” (55).

It is really not the male or females fault that we communicate the way we do but it is our fault if we do not speak up and tell them it bothers us. When we are in a relationship with another person we just have to adapt to the way they communicate to make the relationship work. If a woman learns to accept that her husband is not going to communicate with her like her best girlfriend did in her childhood then she can look for other people to hold those types of conversation with. (55) Learning to communicate with the opposite sex involves many different things.

Communication is something that is learned in childhood but mostly with the same sex. In order to have a successful relationship with good communication we must understand that men and women have very different body language when communicating and that they do not respond the same. Accepting that there is a difference in the communication of genders and learning to adapt is paramount in relationships. Tannen,

Deborah. " Sex, Lies and Conversation. " The Norton Mix. Judy Sieg. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012. 45-55. Print.