

“What language are you speaking?”

Imagine this scene, you have just arrived home from work and your spouse greets you at the door. You ask them how they are doing and in a short, tight voice they say, “Fine, just fine”. Their words are communicating one thing, but the voice has communicated something entirely different. And I’m sure before the next hour is up you will find out what that is!

This is one of the greatest challenges with communication. It is trying to understand the non-verbal language we have created. You have probably seen the statistics, only 7% of what you communicate comes through your words. What about the remaining 93%? Right, it is your voice tone, your gestures, your posture. It is what you haven’t said at all! And of course, this is where the miscommunication may occur.

So what are your non-verbals communicating? Dorothy Leeds, in her book “Powerspeak” identifies some of the non-verbals we are communicating without even realizing it. Arms crossed, crossing legs, fistlike gesture, pointing index finger these communicate defensiveness. Arms crossed, sideways glances, touching or rubbing the nose, rubbing eyes reflect suspicion. I was involved in an interview once and the applicant rubbed his nose during the entire interview. His words and track record were great but, we were all wondering what he was up to. No, he didn’t get the job! So what about non-verbals that communicate confidence? Putting your hands behind your back or on your coat lapel or your hands in a steepled position. And to communicate openness and cooperation try having an unbuttoned coat, tilt your head a bit as if listening intently, hand-to-face gestures or your hands open to the person.

The next time you are talking with someone pay special attention to their non-verbals. See if what they are saying matches the actions of what they aren’t saying. And then ask them about their non-verbals – see if there really is more to the story. This is where you can really feel that you are understood.

I once heard someone say, “don’t worry that your children are not listening to you, worry that they are watching.” Our actions really do speak louder than words.....What are yours???

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