

Figure 14.1

Five Communication Styles

The Assertive Connector

- Is not engaged in other tasks.
- Faces speaker and uses consistent eye contact.
- Mirrors the speaker's emotions; for example, if the speaker is sad, the listener's face reflects sadness.
- Spends equal time speaking and listening.
- Expresses emotions appropriately.
- Uses body language that matches the emotion being communicated.
- Asks for clarification or elaboration; asks questions respectfully.
- Deliberately attempts to fully understand the content and the emotions being expressed by the other person.
- Repeats what was said to ensure understanding (for instance, "What I heard you say is . . .").
- Can express agreement, disagreement, or neutrality.
- Engages in conversation in a win-win manner with the intention to connect with the other person and resolve any issues.
- Sends this meta-message: "I value our relationship and what you have to say."

The Apathetic Avoider

- Ignores the other person's presence or attempt to speak.
- Pauses too long before replying, barely replies, or does not reply.
- Interrupts or interjects own thoughts while the other person is speaking.
- Is distracted while working with or talking to the other person; displays distraction through body movements, such as tapping.
- Conveys being apathetic, detached, or distracted.
- Talks while the other person is talking or talks for long periods without listening.
- Does not mirror the other person; uses body language that is inconsistent with what is being said by either person.
- Turns away, looks away, or walks away.
- Avoids relationship with the other person.
- May experience considerable anxiety when attempting to connect with another person.
- Sends this meta-message: "I don't want much of a relationship with you and will put minimal effort into it."

The Junior Therapist

- Takes a one-up position—assumes that he or she is better able to speak for someone than that person is.
- Talks for the other person, telling the other how he or she feels, thinks, and acts.

(continued)

Figure 14.1

Five Communication Styles (continued)

- Tells the other person how he or she should feel, think, and act.
- Tends to talk about the other person rather than about himself or herself.
- Criticizes the other person for his or her feelings, thoughts, and actions.
- Decides how the other person is or should be, then responds only when the person acts in accordance with that perception.
- Tells the other person that the advice being given is for the other person's own good.
- Uses prior knowledge of the person's history in an amateur way; "analyzing" why the person feels, thinks, or acts in a particular way that benefits the speaker's point of view.
- Uses knowledge about the other person to distort that person's point of view, often to enhance his or her own argument in hopes of "winning" the conversation.
- Sends this meta-message: "I know you better than you know yourself. I know you better than I know myself."

The Bulldozer

- Focuses on own topic and ignores topics brought up by the other person.
- Switches from the other person's topic to a topic of his or her own liking; dominates the conversation.
- Repeats the same thing many times over.
- May speak in a louder-than-necessary voice, shout, or scream.
- Engages in aggressive behavior—attacks, blames, criticizes, belittles, intimidates, invalidates, or mocks the other person's self-esteem or point of view and, ultimately, to "win" the conversation, making the other "lose."
- Attempts to make the other person appear incompetent, inferior, unintelligent, or childish, and implies that the other person generally lacks the positive qualities that the bulldozer believes he or she has.
- May use violence or intimidating gestures to suggest violence.
- Sends this meta-message: "I will do whatever it takes to get my way."

The Hider

- Speaks too softly for the listener to hear.
- Uses incomplete, incongruent, unclear, paradoxical, or ambiguous sentences; may talk a lot but say little.
- Uses contradictory adverbs, over-qualification, or words that indicate unclear status, such as "maybe, sort of."
- Pulls away from listener; body language conveys fearfulness or confusion.
- Doesn't respond to personal questions or says very little; "hides out" in a group.
- Body language, voice tone, and message are not congruent because the person frequently is trying to pretend that he or she is not hiding.
- Appears afraid of being heard, criticized, or confronted; assumes that he or she will "lose" the conversation and would rather leave and not continue talking.
- Sends this meta-message: "I am afraid of you and don't want you to know about me."