

I'm Talking. Why Aren't You Listening?

Sometimes we forget that we each come with different communication styles and needs. Our default is to assume that everyone communicates just like we do. That's "normal," at least from our perspective.

The truth is that we each have different ways of viewing the world, processing information, and getting motivated.

1. Do you process things visually, in an auditory manner, or kinesthetically?

What did you have for breakfast this morning?

How did you process that question?

Did you visualize the food? If you did, you're processing information visually.

Did you talk yourself through it? If you did, you're processing information in an auditory manner.

Did you think about how it made your body feel? If you did, then you're processing the information kinesthetically.

Visual processors are more likely to use words like analyze, appear, clarity, dream, examine, foresee, hindsight, illustrate, image, look, obscure, perception. It's all about how it looks.

Auditory processors are more likely to use words like announce, boisterous, discuss, dissonant, earshot, hear, interview, listen, mention, proclaim, report, ring. It's all about how it sounds.

Kinesthetic processors are more likely to use words like active, bearable, concrete, feel, flow, grasp, hassle, hold, hustle, lukewarm, panicky, rush. It's all about how it feels in the body.

If you're a visual processor talking to a kinesthetic processor, you may be talking about how it looks, while the other person is focused on how it makes him/her feel.

How does it impact how you show love to another? Or how you receive love from another? A visual person will gravitate toward something in writing. An auditory person needs to hear and say, "I love you." A kinesthetic person needs to feel it in the body.

2. Do you like a big picture or a detailed view of things?

When you are faced with a new idea or concept, how deep do you like to go?

If you like to talk in broad, general terms, about the big picture, providing an overview, painting with a broad brush, opening your arms while talking, you are a big picture person.

If you like to get into the specifics, to be detailed, exact, and precise, and keep your arms close to your body when talking, then you like a detailed view.

If you like a detailed view, you will always want much more information than a big picture person instinctively provides. And you may be frustrated at that person's inability to answer your detail-oriented questions. The big picture person sees the forest, not the individual leaves.

If you provide a detailed view to a big picture person, it doesn't take long for that person's eyes to glass over. For the big picture person, it's information overload. All that person wants is the big picture.

3. What motivates you?

Do you like change? Do you set goals for yourself? Do you talk about growth, challenge, goals, and opportunity? You're motivated by moving toward something. Your assumption is that better days are ahead. You're motivated by the carrot.

When you think about times that you were motivated to change, do you say things like don't want, away from, didn't like, avoid? You're motivated to act when it's a means of moving away from something painful. If there isn't something painful to get away from, you're less likely to be motivated to move. You're motivated by the stick.

4. What to do with this information?

The next time you notice someone tuning out when you're talking, think about whether you're speaking their language.

If the person is an auditory processor, use words that allow that person to hear what you are saying. If the person is a visual processor, have them look and see what you are saying. If the person is a kinesthetic processor, have them feel what you are saying.

If the person needs the big picture, skip the specifics. If the person likes details, give that person every detail you can find.

If the person is motivated by moving forward, talk about the opportunities and incentives. If the person is motivated by getting away, then tell them all about the pitfalls of staying where they are.

Once you're speaking their language, you'll have more success in getting your message across.

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