How to Stay COOL When Things Heat UP!

Common deviations from our intent:

- Defending ourselves
- Saving face
- Seeking revenge
- Avoiding embarrassment
- Wanting to win...

From Crucial Conversations

Essential communication skills

1 Intent
   Purpose—what you want to have happen

2 Criteria, Expectations or Needs
   Relevant factors to be taken into consideration

3 Content
   Subject—what you end up talking about

4 Process
   How we look  _____ %
   How we sound  _____ %
   Words we choose  _____ %

IF our message is incongruent!
Focus on a specific situation

Describe the SITUATION—focus on the facts

How did you EXPLAIN this situation to yourself? What meaning did you give this event? How did you interpret it?

Situation

What EMOTIONS came up? How did you feel?

Explanation

What did you DO? Focus on specific, observable behavior.

Emotion

Practice: Think of a recent exchange you had with someone when things heated up. Focus on a situation where you weren’t pleased with the outcome or how you dealt with the situation. This is for your eyes only!

“Communication works for those who work at it.”

—John Powell

Jan M. McLaughlin, CSP  www.YourCommunicationConnection.com
“What you are thunders so, I cannot hear what you say.”
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Pieces of the process

The sound of your voice

Tape yourself... yes, that's how you sound! Check your:

☐ Tone

Listen to your voice:

1. Listen to your vm message
2. Rerecord your vm message
   a. When you're NOT smiling
   b. When you ARE smiling!
3. The next few times you leave a message—and have the option—play it back!

☐ Volume

☐ Pace

☐ Pitch

Body language and facial expressions

☐ A __________ is the most important expression for communicating.
× Be sure not to smile when you're delivering bad news!

☐ If we avoid __________ with people, they may perceive us as dishonest, uninterested or cold.
× Be sure to keep cultural differences in mind!

Avoid gestures that are

▸ Aggressive
▸ Extraneous
▸ Or communicate resistance

Think about the situation you just described. How might the way you looked and the way you sounded have helped escalate the situation?

Looked. .......................................................... ..........................................................

Sounded. .......................................................... ..........................................................
Reduce the differences...improve communication

Clarifying
Asking open-ended questions—who, when, where, what, how—to gain a better understanding of the other person’s position and move them toward a solution. Be careful with “why” questions—they can be perceived as accusatory, putting the other person on the defensive!

Pacing
To subtly mirror the communication style of the other person—their posture, facial expressions, gestures and the pace, volume and energy of their voice. Special note: You do not ape or mimic them!

Backtracking
Similar to paraphrasing only you concentrate on using some of their actual words. These are called essence words—when you use their essence words, they feel heard. Single out by repeating a word they use and following that with an open-ended question—especially if you’ve received a single-word answer to a previous question.

Practice: In groups of three, Person A, ask Person B, “What do you consider your greatest challenge when things heat up?” Person B tell them whatever you think is important for them to know. Person A, your job is to listen actively—employing attentive body language and facial expressions while practicing pacing, backtracking and clarifying. Your job is NOT to help them solve their problem / challenge—rather, empathize and listen! Person C, you are the observer. Please note specifically how Person A uses pacing, backtracking and clarifying and how their body language and facial expressions let Person B know they were listening. You don’t talk—just listen—and make notes!

You will have four minutes. At the end of that time, Person C will share specific examples of what they observed.
Keep Your COOL!

Exercise Verbal Aikido

A form of martial arts, the goal of Aikido is to unify mind, body and spirit to effectively neutralize an attack while maintaining the safety of the attacker and defender. When attacked—accept, redirect and affirm. In other words, when pushed, pull; when pulled, push.

► Selective Agreement
  • Look for something you can agree with in what the person is saying
  • “You may be right, ______”

► Limited Response
  • Respond only to the subject of the remark, not the emotion behind it
  • This is an excellent technique for responding to sarcasm!

► Intentional Innocence
  This technique can be very difficult if we want to WIN or BE RIGHT! It’s about acting innocent and letting what the other person said blow right over our head.

Stress the benefits to them

► Condition/benefit
  “We / I will / can ........................................
  if / when you will / do .................................”

Think about the situation you described. Could you have applied any of these techniques?
Your action plan

Look back at your situation on page 2 and ask yourself:

What was my intent? What did I want to have happen?

What might I have done to help create that difficult situation?

What could I have said or done to turn around the exchange?

Suggested reading

Fleming, Dr. Carol. The Sound of Your Voice. (CD series available at many libraries or www.speechtraining.com)

Goldsmith, Marshall. What Got You Here Won’t Get You There


Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, Switzler. Crucial Conversations.

Pease, Barbara and Allan, The Definitive Book of Body Language.

Seligman, Martin E.P., Ph.D. Learned Optimism.

Tannen, Deborah. You Just Don’t Understand Talking from 9 to 5.

Check out Jan’s blog posts, tweets & articles for ongoing support.