

DEVELOPING HEALTHY COMMUNICATION ON TEAMS

THINK, SAY, DO



Nothing builds or breaks a team like its communication patterns. Get it right and people feel encouraged, supported, and challenged. Get it wrong and people feel overlooked, undervalued, and unheard. That's why doing the hard work of developing a healthy communication culture is worth it and absolutely necessary for relational and organizational success.

To guide our team, I have adopted a THINK, SAY, DO mindset. Let's unpack it.

THINK

All communication starts with what we are thinking. The words we formulate. The nonverbal cues we express. The expectations we have of ourselves and others. All start with what we are thinking and here's the tough truth: only we can know and control what we are thinking.

If you are filled with negative, critical thinking, that will always shape your communication with others. Negativity breeds contempt for others. Negativity leads us to get defensive feeling as though others are attacking us. Overall, negativity causes us to communicate in ways that hurt us and others because what we think and what we say and do are linked.

So, what can you do, to change your thinking and improve your communication?

Look to celebrate before you criticize. No one is 100% perfect and no one is 100% failure. That's why we choose our thoughts to celebrate first. We find something that others are good at or strong in. We consider their strengths and communicate with them from that perspective. You don't have to compliment them every time you talk to them, but you always work with them in a complimentary fashion.

Keep a list of rights not wrongs. In your daily dealings, be quick to forget the wrongs others do or say and be quick to remember the things they do right and get right. Forgetting the wrongs isn't a permission slip to be taken advantage of or a refusal to have the tough conversations. Instead, forgetting the wrongs is choosing to love like the Bible teaches in 1 Corinthians 13:5 - keep no record of wrongs. Live with grace and compassion and you will see your thinking about others change.

A key discipline you can live each day is to own your stuff and prepare your mind for the day. Each of us carry good and bad experiences into every relationship. When you own your stuff, you deal with your thoughts in healthy ways rather than making that demand of others. When you own your stuff, you know what you are thinking, capture your thoughts, and choose to celebrate and forgive others.

SAY

Once our thinking is ordered, now we prepare to say what is best. The principle here is simple: say what needs to be said to the person who needs to hear it. Often times in groups and companies, we fall into sick communication patterns where we talk about people instead of talking to people or we give full vent to our thoughts without considering how it impacts others.

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When learning to say the best, we learn how to shape the content of our words and the direction of our conversations. It is of the utmost importance that we get this right because our words either build trust or break trust. Break trust often and you have broken relationships. Build trust often and you see your relationships, friendships, and teams strengthened.

So, what can you do, to say the best to people and about people?

See it and say it. If you think something positive about someone say it. Saying it can come as a text, note, or email, but the best way to say something positive about others is to speak it directly to them. If your culture is negative, these positive comments can transform your community quickly. Positivity feeds positivity. This takes courage from teammates to honor each other and not to look out for their own interests.

Talk to people, not about people. This takes maturity, but rather than talking about people, talk to them. Talking about others with whispers breaks trust like no other betrayal. Talking to people even if it is uncomfortable builds trust because you have the confidence that if something needs to be said, it will be said. Keep this commitment: if you wouldn't say it to them directly, don't say it to anyone.

Vent up, not out. When you are frustrated, mad, tired, or confused, be careful with the direction on your conversation. When you vent out, you talk to people who can't solve the problem and you create more problems. Venting out is natural, but it's not wise. Proverbs 29:11 says that only a fool gives full vent to their anger. None of want to be seen as a fool so we vent up, not out. Venting up means you talk to people who can solve problems, not multiply them. Organizationally, it means that you talk to your lead or to teammates who are responsible for the concern you are carrying. Here's what changes when we vent up instead of venting out: venting out leads team leaders to think things are better than they are and teammates (that we vent to) to think things are worse than they are. When you vent up, solutions are found, opinions are protected, and the culture is healthy.

DO

As we grow in healthy thought and words, our actions must follow. For trust to be fully built, we must do what we say and say what we do. Here's a game changing principle: consider other people's needs before your own when you consider what you think, say, and especially do. Consider these questions as you consider the communication needs of others.

- What do they need to know, do, or consider? Be specific so that your communication is clear.
- What is the best way to communicate with them? Do they prefer face-to-face, phone, text, smoke signals? Communicate with them in the way that is best for them.
- What is the best time to communicate with them? Some are early birds, others are night owls, and most fall somewhere in between. Communicate at the right time and you will see success. Communicate at the wrong time and the results may not be the same. One trick when it comes to email communication is the schedule the send date and time of the message so that it shows your consideration of them.

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In addition to considering others with our actions, let's look at how our actions either build trust or break trust. Let's start with the truth breakers. Nothing breaks trust like:

- *Saying one thing and doing another.* We may be tempted to do this because we want to make people happy, but the best way to keep teammates happy is to be dependable and faithful.
- *Making excuses rather than solving problems or taking responsibility.*
- *Talking about people rather than talking to people.* Two people getting quiet when a third person enters the room. It may not be the case, but 9 times out of 10, the person entering the room will think you are talking about them.

As you look at this list, you may have been guilty of some trust breaking behaviors. We all have, but there are some things you can do to build trust today.

- **Fight defensiveness.** When you find yourself getting triggered and defensive, own your stuff, check your thoughts. Defensiveness divides.
- **Overcommunicate.** Don't assume that people don't want to hear from you. Communication clearly and consistently requires that we feel as though we are overcommunicating. Bottom line: if you aren't overcommunicating, then you are undercommunicating.
- **Say the Hard Things.** This one is counter intuitive. We think that having hard conversations makes us seem harsh or critical, but done right saying the hard things builds trust.

Ready to grow as a communicator? Download our communication culture guide and put these principles into practice at parkwaychurch.tv/leaderu.