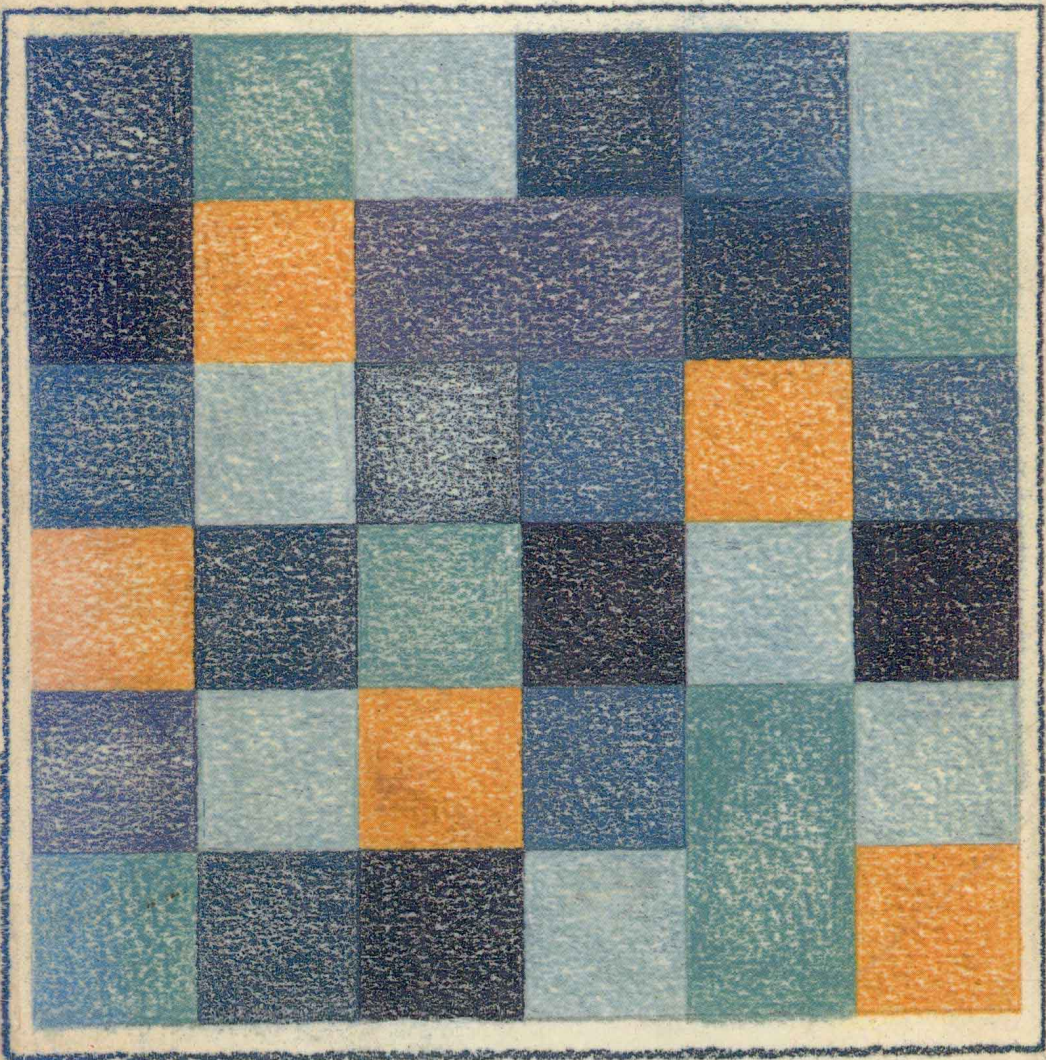


Gary T. Hunt

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION



Effective Communication



Gary T. Hunt

California State University
Los Angeles

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Effective Communication

Preface

Although generally unaware of it, people engage in some form of communication behavior every day of their lives. Because success or failure in many careers and human endeavors is largely determined by how well one communicates, the subject of communication is a vital part of one's education. To help you understand how communication works and how you may become an effective communicator are the objectives of this book.

In addition to *reading* about theoretical concepts, students will find in these pages ample opportunities for *practicing* communication. Through exercises and activities designed to fortify the content and to develop specific skills, the reader is encouraged to work with others in improving his or her abilities and techniques. Underlying the overall structure are two dimensions: the context approach and the importance of individual self-appraisal.

The organization of the book takes the reader first through general principles and then into specific kinds of communication contexts. Part One lays the introductory groundwork with such topics as communication models and theory, communication contexts, and the uses of communication in everyday life. In Part Two those skills that are important in all types of communication (e.g., listening, nonverbal communication, and the use of language) are covered in detail. Part Three is concerned with interpersonal communication while Part Four deals with public speaking. Special types of communication challenges found in the small group and in the professional organization are covered in Part Five. I hope that this logical order of presentation as well as the many examples used to illustrate the text will be helpful both for students and instructors.

In acknowledging those who helped with this project, I would like first to thank Steve Dalphin, the capable Speech Editor who has contributed over the years to make my association with Prentice-Hall very rewarding. Hilda Tauber did a marvelous copy editing job—removing much academic jargon from the manuscript and improving the text immeasurably. Her task as production editor was complicated by my being in Africa on a Fulbright fellowship during most of the production period. For the attractive look of the book thanks are due to the designer, Jayne Conte.

Several colleagues were gracious enough to read earlier drafts of the manuscript; their comments were appreciated, and many of their ideas are reflected in the final version. Finally I would like to acknowledge the help of my colleagues and students at California State University, Los Angeles. My daily interactions with these individuals certainly influenced my own thinking about human communication. CSULA remains a dynamic, alive environment in which to teach.

Indispensable to this project was the presence of my sons, Jonathan and Michael, who fill my life with joy. What I owe to my wife Marilyn for her aid and counsel in this project, as in many others, is impossible to acknowledge.

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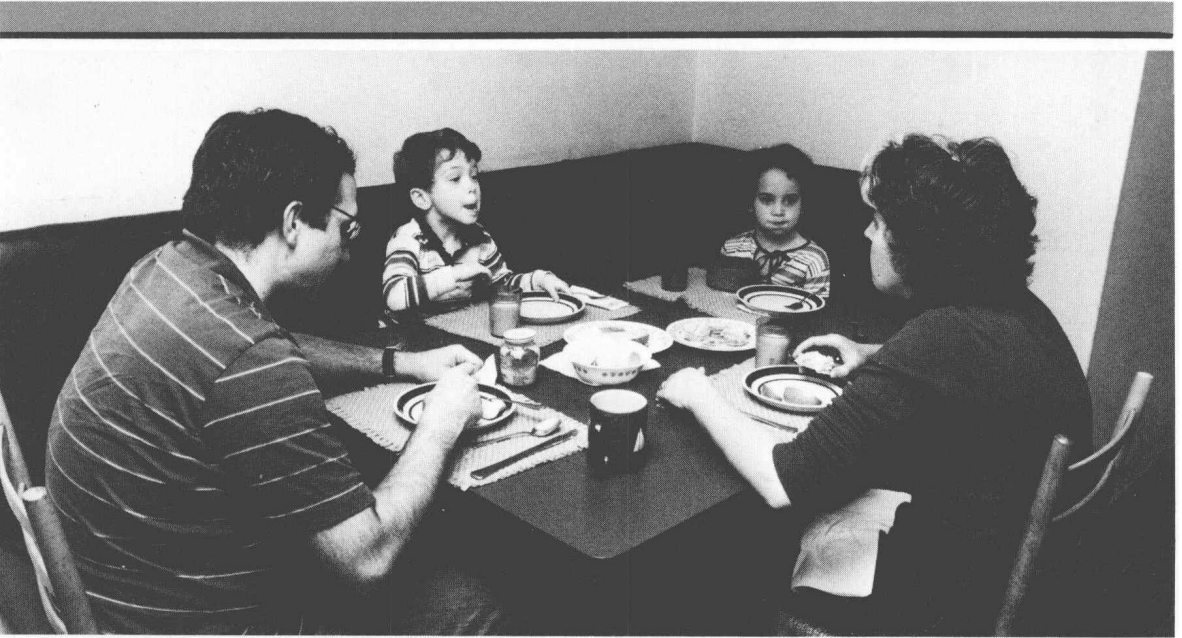
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1

INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN INTERACTION

Chapter Highlights

- The process of human communication*
- Components of the communication process*
- The role of communication in our everyday lives*

During an average day you are likely to take part in many interchanges with those around you. Perhaps the day starts with your baby brother awakening you by crying at the top of his lungs. Your father responds by picking up the baby, changing him, and giving him his bottle. Brother reacts with a happy gurgle. At breakfast you might have a conversation with your mother that goes something like this:

You: Mom, I need a few extra dollars this week to buy some reference books for my history class.

Mom: But you've already bought your texts for the semester. We don't have much money left in our checking account this month. Do you have any money left?

You: No. If I did, I wouldn't be asking you for some. I just need \$20. How about it?

Mom: I don't know, I'll check.

Upon leaving the house you might exchange pleasantries with your neighbor. Then while waiting at the bus stop you might engage in the following interchange with a friend.

You: Bill, are you going to the football game this Saturday? It should be a good one. Both teams are 5-0.

Bill: I'm going to try. I have to work late Friday night and I won't get to bed before 3 A.M. Why don't you give me a call around 11 Saturday morning. Maybe we can go together.

You have yet to reach campus and already you have interacted or participated in several interchanges with others. We can label these interchanges *communication*.

Communication is a basic human activity. It enables us to interact with our world. We engage in some form of interaction¹ with one another from the moment we come into the world, and we communicate almost constantly every day of our life. Yet, though we spend nearly all of our waking time in some form of communication activity, few people understand how the process works.

Why is it important to understand how we communicate? Isn't it enough just to be able to do it? The reason is obvious. Sooner or later, no matter how hard we try, communication breaks down and we find ourselves facing *miscommunication*, or *communication failure*. For example, you discover that your roommate has taken for granted—without discussing the matter with you—that you would be responsible for the weekly food shopping. Such communication failure may lead to serious difficulties between you. The only way to resolve a communication problem is by breaking down the process into component parts to get a profile of what is not functioning properly. When your car won't start and you look under the hood to try and locate the trouble, it helps if you know your battery from your radiator. Similarly, when there is a breakdown in communication, a knowledge of the component parts of communication enables the individual to get the process working again.

This book provides the tools and techniques for analyzing communication problems. At the same time, it shows how to refine your own particular skills as a communicator so that you can improve your ability to interact with those around you. These two purposes, analysis and skill development, will be part of every chapter to follow.

BEGINNING ASSUMPTIONS

Before we define communication and examine a representative model of the process, three underlying assumptions should be stated.

First, *people are bound together through communication creating mutual dependency*. Communication keeps us linked to our fellow human beings. We involve ourselves in each other's lives through communication. Without communication, relationships among people—with one's parents, friends, lover, professional colleagues, to mention a few—could not be developed. Through communication we are able to establish bonds with others, creating a network of mutual dependencies. Thus, communication must be thought of as a *social science* that enables people to share with and relate to each other in many ways, from casual to intimate.

Second, *people communicate because they have certain informational*

¹The terms *interaction* and *communication* are used synonymously in this book.



Communication enables people to relate to each other in many ways, from casual to intimate. (Ken Karp)

needs. In addition to their social needs, people need information. You need to know what is going on around you. You need information to do your job. You must have data to make personal decisions in your life. This information is gathered through communication with others. Without adequate information our decision making is based on a poor data base and we are not in touch with our environment.

Third, *the communication process is not infallible*. We rely on communication in meeting our social and informational needs, but there are times when the process breaks down. If people fail in their communication efforts, the process fails. Some communication failure is caused intentionally by the communicator, but most failures result because the individual has not developed effective communication habits. When we engage in communication we need to recognize that problems will develop even under the best of circumstances. The fragile quality of communication will be emphasized often throughout this book.

DEFINITIONS OF COMMUNICATION

One of the older, "classic" definitions of communication focuses on its interactional aspects. To Jurgen Ruesch and Gregory Bateson, communication includes:

... all of those processes by which people influence one another. This definition is based on the premise that all actions and events have communi-