Communication Climates

- Communication Climate - the environment created by the participants which increase or decrease defensiveness.

Supportive & Defensive Communication Climates

- Defensive climates - group atmosphere that impedes group effectiveness.
- Supportive climate - group atmosphere that enhances group effectiveness.

Gibb, 1961

Comparison of Communication Patterns

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Gibb, 1961
Comparison of Communication Patterns

- **Evaluation versus Description**
  - We react negatively when it looks like someone is judging us
  - "You" language
  - How to become more descriptive
    - Use "I" language
    - Make descriptions specific, not vague
    - Eliminate editorial comments

Gibb, 1961

Comparison of Communication Patterns

- **Control versus Problem Orientation**
  - We react negatively when it looks like someone is trying to control us
  - How to become more problem-oriented
    - Focus on the problem, not the person involved
    - Try suggestions, not orders
    - Collaborate on a problem; try to be cooperative

Gibb, 1961

Comparison of Communication Patterns

- **Strategy versus “Spontaneity”**
  - Most people resent being manipulated
  - How to become more spontaneous
    - Be honest
    - Be direct and straightforward
    - No hidden agendas!

Gibb, 1961
Comparison of Communication Patterns

- **Superiority versus Equality**
  - Most people don't like to be around others with a superior attitude
  - **NOTE:** Equality does not mean we all have the same abilities—but that we should give all an equal opportunity to succeed.
  - How to become more equality-oriented
    - Start off respecting others
    - Don't set people up for failure

Gibb, 1961

Comparison of Communication Patterns

- **Certainty versus Provisionalism**
  - Most people don't like to be around others who are dogmatic
  - How to become more provisional
    - Let others speak
    - Allow for the possibility that you might be wrong
    - Use provisional language

Gibb, 1961

Comparison of Communication Patterns

- **Neutrality versus Empathy**
  - Indifference to group members (neutrality) makes us defensive
  - Empathy - “thinking and feeling what you perceive another to be thinking and feeling”
    - Communicating involvement and concern for the group task & for other group members

Gibb, 1961
Becoming more Empathetic:
Avoid Disconfirming Responses
- Impervious Response
- Interrupting Response
- Irrelevant Response
- Tangential Response
- Impersonal Response
- Incoherent Response
- Incongruous Response

Gibb, 1961

Becoming more Empathetic:
Use Confirming Responses
- Direct Acknowledgement
- Agreement about Content
- Supportive Response
- Clarifying Response
- Expression of Positive Feeling

Gibb, 1961

Reciprocal Patterns (like begets like)
- Supportive communication from one person can influence another person to also be supportive
- Defensive communication from one person can influence another person to also communicate defensively
- What does this mean to you and the groups with which you are involved?