

Communications Training In Clinical Practice

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Communication problems are at the heart of many challenges in life. The success or failure of your work and personal relationships depends upon how effectively positive communication skills are utilized as negative feelings and thoughts are shed. The *Talk to Me*® system (O'Grady, 2005) defines and teaches about two different styles of communicators – Empathizers and Instigators. Empathizers (E-types) and Instigators (I-types) think and speak differently when communicating with themselves and others. Because most people do not know about these differences, people assume that everyone else thinks and communicates as they do. Utilizing a format that likens communication to driving a car, *Talk to Me*® provides the understanding and insight needed to move beyond assumptions and begin communicating effectively in every dialogue in any situation.

WHY CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?

It all boils down to communication skills. Everyone says so, everyone knows so. People listen to what they want to hear, and they hear it how they want to hear it. But the question is: How do you know the right strategy for getting talk partners to hear you – and work with you? After much research, we now know that when you're in conflict with a fellow communicator, chances are that person is your opposite communicator type – walking, talking, thinking, feeling, and problem solving entirely opposite from the way you do! Because we are often ignorant of communicator types, we end up blaming our fellow talk companion for the communication snafu and chaos AND lack of positive change results. Then our communicator car spins out of control, and we end up in the ditch, sputtering and needing a tow truck to rescue us.

Look Who's Talking!

The *Talk to Me*® system clearly demonstrates how *Empathizer* (E-types) and *Instigator-type* (I-types) communicators are opposites in their talk preferences. This is a radical departure from previously taught viewpoints that gender, gender role expectations, or personality style are solely in the driver's seat of communication. When you know your talk type and the talk type of your co-communicator, it is likely that you will figure out not only how to correct what's been going wrong, but also how to make small changes in the way you communicate, resulting in enhanced benefits for everyone. To date, my studies have involved over 470 of my clients who have achieved effective personal results by using the *Talk to Me*® system. The business version of the system has been implemented at such companies as Motoman, Inc.

(robotics), Dayton Freight Lines (shipping), and Morris South (machining industry), with impressive results, from top administration through the ranks of all employees.

Many of the communication clients with whom I work put it this way: “The light bulb came on for me after learning about my type and how my opposite type walks in different shoes. Now I have options that open new avenues of communication instead of closing them off.”

CASE EXAMPLE #1: ARE GIVING COMPLIMENTS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS?

Do you most often dispense compliments freely or keep them to yourself? When you give compliments, what is your communication style? Do you feel that giving compliments is a sign of weakness, a form of manipulation, or both? Do you believe that people should just do what’s right without expecting accolades? These are some of the thorny issues we brush against as we hike through the deep woods of interpersonal relationships. I love the e-mail I received from a male college student, who asked why compliments given to a female friend seemed to fall on deaf ears.

I Just Don’t Understand Where the Issue Is

Here’s what this young man wrote and how I helped explain that compliments are experienced very differently by *Empathizer* and by *Instigator* communicators. It’s nothing personal . . . or peculiar!

Hi, Dr. O’Grady,

I sit here in the library, taking a break from studying for my first exam of the semester. The real reason that I thought to write to you is because of my female friend, Jill. It is a new milestone for me to have a really good friend, who happens to be a girl, and who is not my girlfriend. We talk so much that her roommate calls me her husband and refers to her as my wife! What perplexes me is that I have complimented her twice and neither time did I receive the response I had expected. I told her that I thought she was amazing, and that I really respected her. For me to say those things is extremely big, because I don’t just go around giving out compliments. I give them when I really mean them, which is why I was kind of surprised and hurt by her response . . . or lack of response, actually. She didn’t even acknowledge that I had just paid her a significant compliment. She just ignored it. When I kept pushing for a response, she said, “O.K. let’s just forget about the whole thing. I think you’re awesome, too.”

I just don’t understand where the issue is. I don’t know if we just have different ways of accepting and responding to compliments, or what. Could it be that she is not recognizing that I am paying such a significant compliment or caring sentiment to her?

Please let me know what you think about the situation with Jill.

Thanks.

*Jack**

*Names in all examples have been changed to protect privacy.

The Instigator Viewpoint On the Art of Compliments

Hi Jack,

I wanted to make sure I had time to digest your e-mail, so I waited until this morning to respond to you. I hope that is O.K. I am always glad to hear from you. I'll sound a little like your communications coach, which I am. Let me address your question, "Could it be that she is not recognizing that I am paying such a significant compliment or caring sentiment to her?"

Compliments are experienced very differently by Empathizer (E-type) and Instigator (I-type) communicators. For comparison, remember that you and your mom are E-types, while your dad is an I-type. I should look like both E- and I-types since I've been working hard to adopt the strengths of my opposing communicator style. Jill sounds like an Instigator communicator, given her behavior. Her style isn't better or worse than yours; just different. Here are researched differences explained:

I-types

- 1. consider giving compliments unnecessary.*
- 2. think needing compliments is a weakness.*
- 3. try to put misunderstandings in the past by "forgetting about them."*
- 4. don't like to feel vulnerable or to rely on others for help.*
- 5. believe they can put a strong mind over difficult relationship matters.*
- 6. are afraid that emotions will spin their communicator car out of control.*
- 7. want to send all E-types to "Empathizer Island" when frustration mounts.*
- 8. value Empathizers' ability to be true to their emotions.*
- 9. love to solve problems.*
- 10. are natural-born leaders.*

It's not a boy-girl thing, Jack. You are comfortable with nonmanipulative compliments. Your style is right on! I hope this helps clear up any confusing communication matters for you on this beautiful fall weekend, Jack! Thanks for talking with me. . . .

Communication Cliff Notes: Compliments Are Experienced Very Differently By Empathizer And By Instigator Communicators

Empathizers freely give authentic praise, and they function best when their good works are recognized in words of genuine praise. *Instigators* believe that actions speak louder than words, and they function best when their genuine words are recognized in good works accomplished. So, it's not that women praise more than men, or that men praise to get their way; it's all about the communicator shoes in which you feel more comfortable. Can you tell the difference between the two communicators' types in the example above? Each type perceives the giving and receiving of positive feedback very differently.

WHAT TYPE ARE YOU?

Are You a Tuned-In Empathizer Communicator . . .

For now, let's typecast you on the fly.

1. Are your feelings easily hurt?
2. When you're in the driver's seat, is your mood affecting your output?
3. Do you back off or skim over important issues, so as not to create hard feelings?
4. Have you been told you are too "thin-skinned"?
5. Are you too good for your own good?
6. Do you feel you have trouble getting past the past?
7. Are you surprised when coworkers or family members can't "see the obvious"?

If you answered most of these questions "Yes," then chances are you are an E-type communicator. **Your viewpoint:** You have a bone to pick with I-types, who, from your vantage point, are too insensitive and coldly logical. This is a very important finding, because you can now begin to "adjust your driving style" to get better results with everyone in your communication circle – particularly those strong-willed I-types. You'll be able to tell the type of your cocommunicator – that person with whom you're talking at the time – with a few minutes of practice each day.

. . . Or a Get-Down-to-Business Instigator Communicator?

I'm frequently approached by trainees who say, "Well, I think I might be a mixture of both types, since I have traits of both types of communicators, Empathizer *and* Instigator. I don't like to be put into a box or labeled if there's a question about where I should be. Can't I be a combination of both types?" No, you can't. You can't walk on both sides of Talk Street at the same time. In fact, if you've been running this line of reasoning in your head, then chances are you're an Instigator communicator. But let's check to be sure . . .

1. Are your feelings difficult to hurt, because you believe, "It's nothing personal!"?
2. Are you able to put your mind over your mood?
3. Can you be impatient or get mad a little too easily?
4. Can you be pushy, or "over talk" and intimidating with your debating skills?
5. Have you been known to set the tone or mood in a family or work team?
6. When you're on a mission, can you be like a bull in a china shop?
7. Are you surprised when coworkers or family members don't read or use the map in front of their noses, to get from here to there?

If you answered most of these questions "Yes," then chances are you're an Instigator-type communicator who loves to fix problems and get things done. **Your viewpoint:** You have a bone to pick with E-types, who you think are too sensitive and emotional. Now, I'm not saying your heart is as cold as stone. I'm just saying you trust your head over your heart, and you put your faith in logic. This is a very important finding because you can begin now to "adjust your driving style" to get better results with each of your talk partners – particularly those brainstorming E-types.

The Communicator Prejudices on page 168 is a handy reference to see what your opposite talk type thinks and feels about your talk talk.

Test Your Typecasting Skills: Alpha Moms' Communication Style

Excellence in motherhood has again hit the newsstands! Have you heard of “Alpha Moms,” the new breed of multitasking trendsetters who are kid-centric and who feel most relaxed while juggling lots of balls? Did you know that leading companies, such as Procter and Gamble, and big marketers alike are wagging their tails and drooling over them? Stay down now! “Alpha Moms” is the newest moniker created by Constance Van Flandern (Horovitz, 2007).

Alpha Moms – Instigators of Change?

Alpha Moms are instigators of change. But did you know that most Alpha Moms are also Instigator-type (I-type) communicators? Consider these comparisons:

1. **Multitasking experts.** An Alpha Mom is happiest multitasking. Instigator communicators like to save precious time to accomplish more, like talking on the phone while working on the computer.
Downside: Alpha Mom I-types are less comfortable asking for help when they run into a problem that can't easily be solved.
2. **Progress-centric.** An Alpha Mom is kid-centric and hands-on, whether or not she works outside the home. Instigator communicators are progress-centered, love to solve problems, and embrace change as a way of life.
Downside: Alpha Mom I-types can become very impatient and frustrated when their plans don't materialize fast enough.
3. **Tech-savvy happy.** An Alpha Mom enjoys finding out how new techno-gadgets work, because she is power-centered and loves to command the center of attention. Instigator communicators are perceived as strong personality types by family and associates.
Downside: Alpha Mom I-types don't do well with boredom and can be neglectful of their romantic partners' needs.
4. **Enjoys debating and winning.** An Alpha Mom talks confidently and easily wins debates, taking pride in being the first to achieve a goal. Instigator communicators are world-class debaters and exceptionally strong-willed souls. They live by the rule: “If you aren't going to lead, then get out of my way!”
Downside: Alpha Mom I-types are criticized for being too stubborn and covering up their insecurities while going after points to prove their self-worth, at the expense of a relationship.
5. **Influencers.** An Alpha Mom is an initiator and creator of social opinion, of what's popular or what is ditzy. Instigator communicators believe in making listeners quickly come around to their viewpoint.
Downside: Alpha Mom I-types are criticized for listening with only half an ear and for not including the opinions of the quiet, meek, and shy contributors around the Communicator Table.
6. **Confident deciders.** An Alpha Mom makes up her mind and thrives on sharing her viewpoint of what way is the right way to reach a goal or solve a problem. Instigator communicators believe there is a right way and a wrong way to drive down the two-way Communicator Highway.
Downside: Alpha Mom I-types can be negatively perceived as one-way communicators who are control freaks, too pushy, self-centered, strategic, blunt women who loudly talk over others.

Do You Prefer to be an Instigator of Change?

Horovitz's (2007) article, "Alpha Moms leap to top of trendsetters," provides a concise thumbnail sketch of Alpha Moms. An apt quote by Alpha Mom moniker-creator Van Flandern: "I'm at my Alpha Mommy-est when I have the most balls in the air: It's multitasking to the nth degree. It's like training for the Olympics. Most of all, it's fun."

My communication leadership research has determined that most natural-born leaders of both genders are Instigator-type communicators who love to lead and dominate in their chosen fields. Last, but certainly not least, my communication studies also found that an Alpha Mom Instigator communicator is more likely to be married to a "Beta Dad," who is an Empathizer-type communicator. Opposites do seem to attract, for better and worse.

Can You Change Your Communicator Type?

Although you cannot change your communicator type, you *can* adopt the strengths of your opposite type, avoid the negative traits of your own type, and choose more effective avenues of communication, based on your situation. (See The Communication Matrix on p. 166.) Before coming into this world, you and I are wired as either an Empathizer or Instigator communicator. Of course, if we follow the nature versus nurture theory, your family of origin will support or undercut your talk type. Thus, some E-types will sound like I-types because they hail from I-type families, and vice-versa. Although the only people who are truly a blend of both types are those who consciously use the *Talk to Me*© system, even those people will return to their preferred talking style when they are distressed.

In my clinical practice and teaching experiences, I've found that a majority of psychotherapists are E-types, and that a majority of supervisors are I-types. I-types are natural-born leaders, although E-types have the solutions to vexing organizational problems. Where do you fit on the spectrum of interpersonal sensitivity? In summary, Empathizer communicators are thinner-skinned, sensitive types who are critiqued for being too sensitive . . . taking things too personally . . . dwelling on the past . . . keeping things inside for too long . . . afraid of conflict . . . lovers of genuine compliments.

Conversely, Instigator communicators are thicker-skinned, insensitive types who are critiqued for being too insensitive . . . taking the position of "It's only business. It's nothing personal" . . . moving on quickly into the future . . . putting frustrations on others . . . rising to occasions of conflict . . . lovers of genuine accomplishments.

See how quickly you can identify your type?

What are the Percentages of Each Talk Type?

How many of each talk type are there running around? Statistically, about 40% of all people are Empathizer communicators, while 60% of all people are Instigator communicators. However, I usually advise that you think: by the flip of a coin, whoever you meet could be one type or the other. Being surprised is half the fun!

You won't reach any new destinations by way of the two-way Communicator Highway if you don't first know your communicator type. You have about an even chance of being either an Empathizer-type (E-type) or an Instigator-type (I-type) communicator. Historically, we all thought that gender or personality had everything to do with talk style. Now, with the advent of the *Talk to Me*© system, we know that this is not the case! For example, you can have two clients, each with passive-aggressive personality disorder, one of whom is a female Instigator client while the other is a male Empathizer client. Communication type is separate and distinct from every other variable with which you've been trained to interact. Life's going to get very interesting from here on out!

How Can I Easily and Reliably Determine the Types of my Clients, Colleagues, Supervisors, Friends, and Kids?

An easy way that you, your friends, and your clients can determine individual communicator types is to go to the link at www.drogrady.com which asks: *What's Your Type?* You will be taken to <http://www.drogrady.com/type.php>, where you will complete and submit a questionnaire. A free, private e-mail report will follow. (You are the only person who gets the results of this assessment.) There is, at most, a 7% error rate with this survey. In fact, you can complete the questionnaire as someone you know, guessing at the answers which you think would be given, and receive a report that will fairly accurately predict the communicator type of that person. However, if you'd rather know your type right now, instead of waiting to complete the survey, you can reasonably determine your type simply by looking at the lists of Empathizer and Instigator traits which follow later in this contribution.

If you are interested, you can download a free sample of the *Talk to Me*© system, from the *Talk to Me: Communication Moves to Get Along With Anyone* textbook, by going to http://www.drogrady.com/ttm_optin.php. In the first chapter, you can copy the New Insights Communication Inventory (NICI) and use the results as part of your initial client assessment session.

WITH WHOM ARE YOU TALKING, AN EMPATHIZER (E-TYPE) COMMUNICATOR OR AN INSTIGATOR (I-TYPE) COMMUNICATOR?

By the end of this contribution on results-driven communication training, you will know what your communicator type is and why adopting the strengths of your opposing communicator type is so crucial to effective communication, professional leadership development, and relationship communication in personal and parenting relationships. Glance at the following overview of opposing communicator traits to get a quick mindset for the two types of drivers on the Talk Highway.

Empathizer (E-Type) Communicators:

1. Experience the self as interpersonally sensitive.
2. Drive from their strength of empathy.
3. Have difficulty getting beyond the past, because failure and rejection pierce them to their core.
4. Feel negative when they are stressed then unexpectedly act out in negative behaviors.
5. Ding their opposite communicator type (I-types) for being too stubborn and hard-headed.
6. Listen inclusively with three ears, including what's said nonverbally.
7. Can become lost in the fog of feeling down, sad, and blue – their Achilles' heel.
8. Are empathy experts who are natural-born relationship rehabilitators.
9. Struggle with low self-esteem or the-glass-is-half-empty negativism.
10. Feel deeply about the impacts of a relationship in order to make life changes.
11. Are too thin-skinned; they take things too personally and their feelings get hurt too easily.
12. Regret thinking too much before speaking; bite their tongues too often.

13. Are prone to trying to please too much or telling you what you want to hear, and then holding grudges.
14. Negatively believe, "It's always your way or the highway!" when under severe relationship distress.
15. Secretly wish to be more assertive and speak more bluntly.
16. Are natural-born team players with strong intuitive skills to use in the game of life.

What about their opposite style drivers? Are we ever on the same page of the driver's education manual? Are the rules of the road the same or different?

Instigator (I-Type) Communicators:

1. Experience the self as interpersonally insensitive.
2. Drive from their strength of genuineness.
3. Forget the past and move on, because failure and rejection roll off the backs of I-types.
4. When stressed, think negatively and then unexpectedly talk out in negative words.
5. Ding their opposite communicator type (E-types) for being too soft and wishy-washy.
6. Listen selectively with one ear, with a goal to catch only the top headlines in the Daily Talk News.
7. Can become lost in the fog of impatience, irritation, and anger (their Achilles' heel).
8. Are strategic experts who are natural-born problem solvers.
9. Suffer from excessive self-esteem or the-glass-is-half-full thinking, which optimizes the negative.
10. Think deeply about impacts of a career, in order to make life changes.
11. Are too thick-skinned; they don't take things personally enough and their feelings don't get hurt easily enough.
12. Regret speaking too much before thinking and not biting their tongues often enough.
13. Are prone to displeasing too much or telling you what you don't want to hear, then withholding compliments.
14. When under severe relationship distress, negatively feel, "You're right. It IS my way or the highway!"
15. Secretly wish to be less aggressive and speak more diplomatically.
16. Are natural-born leaders with strong personalities, to use in the game of life.

Why Adopt the Strengths of Your Opposite Communicator Type?

Neither type is better or worse, just different. The objective of the *Talk to Me*© system is to enable you to understand your own and your opposite communicator type so well that you can adopt the strengths of your opposite communicator type at the Communicator Table. Being able to see the situation through your talk partner's eyes is what makes you a flexible and responsive communicator, one who is positive and who can look like *either* type in nonmanipulative ways when the situation warrants. You will be able to match the type of the client with whom you are working, to instantly build rapport, develop trust, set goals for change, and reinforce changes in ways preferred by either type.

Is this not exciting news? Is the couple with whom you're working not seeing the viewpoint of their opposite communicator types? Is the teenager in conflict with a parent, because mom or dad drive in a different lane on Talk Highway? Does your boss or supervisor not *get* what you're saying? Are the clients with whom you struggle the most your opposite communicator type? Undoubtedly so. When you are able to address communicator type differences, travel to new talk destinations will benefit all talk partners.

CASE EXAMPLE #2: CAN YOU TAKE A LITTLE CRITICISM WITHOUT GETTING ALL TICKED OFF?

Empathizer communicators (E-types) tend to take others' criticisms too personally while they offer criticisms too slowly. Instigator communicators (I-types) tend to offer criticisms too quickly while taking criticisms too impersonally. Do you issue criticisms too slowly or too quickly?

Giving and receiving feedback to encourage change is what good therapy and good communication is all about. Many people, though, have fat ears when it comes to an oversized ego. Can you take a little criticism without getting all ticked off? Can you help a client do likewise? That depends on whether your client is a thin-skinned and self-critical Empathizer or a thick-skinned and other-critical Instigator communicator. Would you like to get a feel for the difference, and will you NOW agree with me that many helpers or psychotherapists are Empathizer-type communicators?

What are Seven Disadvantages of *Not* Knowing Your and Your Cocommunicators' Types?

Empathizer communicators feel and talk differently than their Instigator counterparts. "You can't compare apples to oranges!" gets at the distinctions and preferences of each type. Not knowing if you're an apple or an orange, or if you are working with or against your communicator style, can create disadvantages:

1. You will feel hurt for too long (E-type) . . . or hurt the feelings of others without intending to do so (I-type).
2. You will feel down and dismissed (E-type) . . . or make others feel dismissed and unimportant (I-type).
3. You will be angry at yourself (E-type) . . . or be resented and disliked by others (I-type).
4. You will shy away from being a strong leader (E-type) . . . or not garner creative teamwork (I-type).
5. You will react to problems instead of resolving problems (E- and I-type communicators).
6. You will make less money (E-type) . . . or feel more stressed by the money you do make (I-type).
7. You will feel stuck and blame yourself for feeling bad (E-type) . . . or feel stuck and blame others for your feeling mad (I-type).

**FIRST COMMANDMENT OF GOOD COMMUNICATION:
LEARN YOUR TALK PARTNER'S COMMUNICATION TYPE.**

CASE EXAMPLE #3: THE MILLION-DOLLAR COMMUNICATION TOOL

Would you like to own a million-dollar solution to many of the key relationship communication problems your clients bring to your doorstep each and every day? O.K. then, here it is! If your client is an Empathizer-type (E-type) communicator, he or she doesn't ever want to hurt another person's feelings and so doesn't speak up forcefully. When the courage is mustered to finally speak up, the thought of being too intense or going to extremes makes for one very uncomfortable feeling.

If There's a Communication Gap or Disconnect

Many of my assertively coached, interpersonally sensitive, Empathizer communication clients put it like this:

I am perceived as being wishy-washy or needing direction so often it makes me frown. I-types perceive me as asking for help when I don't need it. I have trouble saying, "This is what I need now!" or "This is what I need for you to do for me." There's a disconnect. I'm not good at stating my opinion right up front, but if I were able, life would be a lot easier.

Can you relate? Who would ever think that being sensitive could irritate communication matters?

To get through to the thicker-skinned Instigator-type (I-type) communicators in the world, the temptation for E-types is to listen to the I-types' opinions *before* stating their own opinions or conclusions. This is ineffective at best, and very confusing to the Instigator cocommunicator, at worst.

A Million-Dollar Communication Solution

So, that's why I say in *Talk to Me*© that Empathizers need to adopt the strengths of Instigators, and the Instigators should adopt the strengths of Empathizers. Here are some black-and-white statements (more easily heard by I-types) which my newly assertive E-types use to be more direct, clear, and upfront about their outstanding opinions, which will benefit everyone involved:

1. I'm not good at stating my opinion right up front, but I feel strongly that we should
2. This is my decision.
3. This is the way it is.
4. This isn't about you.
5. Don't be confused. I'm not asking for your help.
6. I don't need suggestions or solutions to the problem.
7. I've worked out the answers that will get us down the road on this one.
8. There's no room for debate.
9. I don't appreciate your raising your voice with me or talking over me. It shuts me down.
10. I'll ask for your help if and when I need it.
11. What would it be worth to you if my way is the right way to go?
12. My Achilles heel is that before I give my opinion, I want to hear others' opinions and include input that's relevant to the problem's solution.
13. This is what I need now. I need for this to be done.

Are you an E-type who goes along to get along? Enough, already, of the humble-to-a-fault act! Don't start backing down or justifying your decision. Your decision is final and not open for negotiation. I-types will pounce on your apparent indecision every time, and they will make it about *you*, instead of the issue. I-types know about *Conversational Coercion*.

Are You Wrong To Be So Direct?

Instigator communicators respect those who take a stand and won't back down. I-types love to debate, and they are expert debaters, so unnecessary debating with an I-type will make your E-type communication foggy. You need to be a clear and direct communicator who sends the implied message, "I mean business!" After all, if you can fix a problem, why act like you aren't sure of what you're doing?

With a Little Help From Yourself

With a little practice, you and your clients will spontaneously come up with responsive (vs. knee-jerk), nondefensive communication strategies that send the message, "I know what I'm doing. This is the era of the E-type leader, and you would be wise to follow me."

CASE EXAMPLE #4: LET GO OF CONVERSATIONAL COERCION

Conversational coercion is strategically manipulating the outcome of a conversation to gain the upper hand, in order to get your way. For example, I may say, "You're not listening!" when in truth, you're simply not agreeing with me. That example of conversational coercion is a twisted talk trick which shows that it's going to be "my way or the highway" for you. But at what expense? A good relationship?

Instigators Are the Best Debaters

Instigators, or I-types, will be the first to tell you that the very best ideas stem from a good, fierce debate. What they *won't* tell you is that their ideas aren't always right or the best idea on the block. Truth be told, we all want to get our way. It's just a plain old fact that Instigator communicators are masters at getting their pet ideas heard and acted upon. Are they good, or what? But there is a cost involved: Conversational coercion leaves feelings of frustration and misunderstanding, and it creates a disconnect with others. To put it dramatically, Empathizer communicators can feel conversationally mugged or raped and their confidence assaulted, after a round with the I-type using this tactic.

Techniques Used to Validate and Strengthen a Decision or Position

Coercive communication implies: "I'm doing the right thing here. . . . I'm fighting the fight for good, not evil. . . . It's a battle between right and wrong. . . . I'm taking responsibility, so just take my word on this." There are a multitude of pushy or coercive talk techniques:

- I'm a good person, and I'm not mean spirited, so . . .
- My intention is good, so you should . . .
- This is the right thing to do because . . .
- If it's a bad decision, it's because I made it with limited information. . . .

- If I had it to do all over again, I would make the same decision, based on what I knew. . . .
- Listen to me because I'm older . . . smarter . . . I care for you . . . I have more experience. . . .

"I'm in the right here because . . ." is a coercive talk technique that is a big lie told by small-thinking people. Negatalking coercive talkers hammer you with, "It's my way or the highway!" which is one-way communication of the worst kind. As a result, morale drops . . . coworkers or family members won't go the extra mile, or smile . . . your once-supportive team members leave . . . and your project is left with miles to go before completion. Poor communication can be likened to throwing opportunities and money right out your communicator car window! But that fact alone doesn't stop negatalkers who urge you to bite into the manure sandwich they try to stuff into your mouth.

Summed up, all coercive communicators intimidate their talk partners emotionally and send them packing on a guilt trip in this way: "Since I stand on moral ground, you should listen to me and do what I want you to do!"

Secrets of the Talk Trade

The above examples coerce cocommunicators into thinking that responsibility is exercised in a righteous or moral manner, when in fact, that may or may not be what's happening. A few secrets of the coercive talk trade from my Instigator (I-type) guy and gal pals:

1. I am a tough debater, but I realize I also limit talk options.
2. If you don't agree with me, I claim to be misunderstood.
3. Actually, I become frustrated that I'm not hearing from you what I want to be hearing.
4. Is this working for me? Not really. If the spirit of a conversation is to engage another person, then I shouldn't shepherd or steer them into a position that limits their options.
5. I shouldn't choose Empathizers' positions for them. But I do.
6. I can talk circles around my opponents. Conversational coercion really limits Empathizers' response options and flexibility.
7. This can precipitate a defensive posture with my E-type talk partner. Example: I limit the options so severely that my Empathizer talk partner has to fight his or her way out of a corner.
8. As an Instigator, I'm guilty of "Conversational Abuse," because I can focus the topic on a negative point and draw everybody into the fray.
9. Because I am an I-type, I have no doubt that a good defense (The Deflecting Defense) is a good first-strike offense.
10. As an I-type, I also believe that communication is a chess or poker game. You've got to play to win the point. It either forces agreement or makes the other player come up with a counterargument very quickly, or a siege will follow. Who cares more? Who will be the last one standing? Who will not surrender the point? Who will have the last word? I will!
11. As an I-type, I am doggedly determined, and my mental gyrations and exercises are incredibly exhausting to everyone involved. What I label as "damage control" is a real energy-drainer, and it often causes extreme relationship friction.
12. I can conversationally set the agenda and place individuals into positions they will have to defend. I say authoritatively, "Here's the issue . . . and here's what you think about it!"
13. Not only do I define the issue, but I also attempt to define how the people at the Communicator Table think about it.

14. True, conversational coercion has diminished utility when there is less of an emotional bond or connection, but I employ this approach professionally when someone isn't buying into my plan. I take pot shots when I can, but without trust present, my co-communicator doesn't listen to me.
15. I-types use verbal intimidation and re-directing. I can exert pressure and be verbally disquieting. I also create the urgency to hurry up and decide, because time is wasting.
16. Biggest drawback of being a tough-minded I-type? I can get my way, but it might be at the expense of finding a better way.
17. I restrain Empathizers with my I-type talk tactics. I jail rather than liberate. What is the enticement to enter into a conversation when you're told what to think, how to think it, when to think it, and you have an emotional connection turn out to be a burden rather than a blessing?

If You Seek to Create Communication Freedom

What should you do if you seek to deepen the bond, create communication freedom, be open and visible, and be free to come up with more effective ideas? You must recognize that throwing punches of conversational coercion simply does not work to accomplish positive intent.

I-Types – Try this Positive Self-Talk Tool:

I will practice changing my habit of dominating a conversation, which leads to disconnecting and quashing disagreement. I will practice traveling in a middle zone instead of always trying to monopolize the dialogue. I will stop limiting the options of my talk partners. Empathizers have a right to speak up, too. I will approach an emotional topic with a cool-headed openness for both input and possible outcomes.

Your Communication Rights

What are your communication rights and how do they help enforce a speed limit on drivers traveling along the Communicator Highway? We all know that respect is both given and earned. What do you and I want during intense times of respectful disagreeing?

- 1. We want respect.**
- 2. We want our opinions to be worth something.**
- 3. We want our talk partners to actively listen to us.**
- 4. We want positive effort put into communicating effectively with each other, because we want to.**
- 5. We want our wisdom to be recognized, considered, and utilized when warranted.**
- 6. We want to have genuine and trusting experiences with each other, during which we can be open and honest.**
- 7. We want to be credited for progressing and becoming better communicators.**
- 8. We want communication to be a two-way street instead of a one-way, dead-end alley.**
- 9. We want what we have to say to have an impact.**
- 10. We want to be able to speak assertively while being enlightened listeners.**
- 11. We want to be able to process negative or positive feedback without taking it too personally or too impersonally.**

Respectful communication is built on a foundation of trust, fortified with an open exchange of ideas which could benefit everyone.

CASE EXAMPLE #5: WHY PARENT-TEEN TALK – OR CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK – IS A HARD NUT TO CRACK

Are you willing to tell teens something that will make them as mad as a hornet? Of course you are. You don't fear telling teens what they don't want to hear, because maybe they won't listen, or maybe they'll hate your guts, along with harboring a bad attitude toward you. I ran into the issue of giving corrective feedback with my new teenage driver recently. It's a hard nut to crack!

Teaching a Teen to Drive on the Two-Way Communicator Highway

The Driving Problem: I was stunned when I spotted my newly licensed teenage daughter driving down the highway with one hand on the steering wheel and the other hand holding a cell phone up to her ear. That wasn't the agreement! I was ready to let it rip to make my point.

Reactionary Knee-Jerk-Me-Jerk Feedback: I could have let loose and spewed from a negative Instigator reaction (see The Communication Matrix on p. 166) like this: "Hey, Erin, what were you thinking? That's right! You *weren't* thinking!! Did you think you could get away with this? Fat chance. . . . Are you trying to get yourself killed? Young lady you've lost your driving privileges for a month!"

To Whom Are You Talking, By Type? Erin is a sensitive, Empathizer-type (E-type). If she were a thicker-skinned Instigator-type (I-type) communicator, I could have probably gotten away with dressing her down like that in private – but not in public. Why? Because I-types let the water of criticism run off their backs like the proverbial duck. However, Erin is an E-type communicator, and she might easily have written me off for a very long time – or for life! Why? E-types are very sensitive; like to be liked; fear disapproval or being harshly criticized; fear making mistakes or appearing foolish or stupid; tune in to the volume of the voice tone and amplify the negative words; take criticism to heart; replay criticisms in their mind so much they might have difficulty sleeping at night; criticize themselves for small mistakes; and, when defensive, throw up a wall or emotionally shut down in depression. Erin is a sensitive E-type communicator – a little criticism goes a long way!

Who Are You To Talk? What if the speaker – Dad, your boss, your mate or friend – is an I-type? Well, if my style were to be a straight shooter . . . a problem-solver . . . a mapmaker and responsible change-agent . . . a tell-it-like-it-is-type person when others are shying away from telling the truth – specifically, if I were an Instigator-type communicator – then I would be prone to switching talk lanes and saying something foolish that I would regret for a long time, such as, "You're going to turn out to be a dizzy female driver who ends up in an expensive accident like so many women, if you keep this up, young lady!" Not a good attitude for a young woman to adopt, I think. But wasn't the deal *no cell phones used while driving*, due to safety issues?

Talking to Anyone About Anything

Why does all this matter in the *Talk to Me*© system? *Knowing* that Erin is a sensitive, Empathizer-type communicator, and that I was *feeling* like an insensitive, Instigator-type communicator, I chose to deliver my corrective feedback thusly:

(Standing in the garage) *Erin, I am going to speak for 1 to 2 minutes and you are going to listen. This is about your driving. After I'm finished speaking, I will remain quiet while you talk to me for 1 to 2 minutes. There are to be no interruptions.*

I know I must have been seeing things. I passed you driving on Highway 48 and saw you with one hand on the steering wheel and one hand pressed up to your right ear. You were holding in your right hand what appeared to be your cell phone, and you appeared to be talking. It was about 3:30 P.M., and you would have been returning home from work. I just know this couldn't have actually taken place. . . .

The intent of the rule of "no cell phone use while driving" is to make sure you concentrate on your driving. You are a new driver, and a very good driver. However, statistics show that you have a good chance of getting into an accident when you're not paying attention. Only having one hand on the steering wheel is not paying attention. I know you are a careful and responsible driver, and I know this must have been a mistake, one that you won't repeat.

In terms of punishment, I am in my full rights as a parent to suspend your driving privileges for a week or longer. I am not going to do that. I figure you must have been excited to share your job news or whatever. But this won't happen again, I just know it. I consider this conversation sufficient to get the result that we all want – that of you being a safe driver. Perhaps later I will allow cell phone use, but for now, pull over and park whenever you need to take or make a call.

In fact, I don't care if the President . . . Pope . . . or your Papa calls, don't answer it! Now I've used my time, and it's time for you to talk.

Talking . . . Listening . . . Talking

Erin apologized for talking on her cell phone. She confirmed that she was talking on the phone to her mother, who had called. Erin worried that perhaps it was an emergency. She didn't feel dressed down by me, and I no longer felt upset and disappointed. My intent was to stress safety and clarify the rules, one more time. The rest was up to her. I have great faith in my daughter. If I had suffered from a case of "mistaken identity," that Erin was a tough-minded Instigator communicator instead of the sensitive E-type, I would have talked real tough – perhaps even yelled at her – and I would have lost the battle and perhaps the entire identity and psychological individuation war.

The lesson to be learned? Know the communication type of your talk partner. Otherwise, you're going to make people mad who don't need to be – and you're going to fail to make people uncomfortable, when they ought to be.

ARE YOU AN OPTIMISTIC DRIVER ON THE TWO-WAY COMMUNICATOR HIGHWAY?

Positive communicators are optimistic drivers on a *two-way* Communicator Highway. Their way is only one among many by which to travel. In contrast, *negative* communicators are closed-minded drivers on a *one-way* Communicator Highway. Their way is the *only* way to travel (and they're happy to tell you so).

Don't worry if all traits in any of the lists don't fit you exactly, because one size car doesn't fit all communicators. Just get a feel for the talk *pattern* for each type, then identify your talk partner's type to triple the power of your talk tools! Knowing your talk partner's and your own communicator types makes two-way, positive communication travel on the Communicator Highway more sane, predictable, and enjoyable. And, once you learn to use new talk road maps and new driving strategies, you'll find that life is a lot easier everywhere – and your communication trips will net greater, more positive results than you could have imagined.

Cliff Notes: Empathizer vs. Instigator Communicators – Controlling Negative Emotional States

Bad communication makes people feel distressed. When life partners (or employees, bosses, kids, friends . . . any talk partners) feel bad, you don't get their best – of anything. Everyone loses something, and no one wins much. Are you an optimistic driver on the two-way Communicator Highway? Negative emotional states (feeling blue, anxious, angry, guilty) act like fog that makes traveling at normal speeds on the two-way Communicator Highway impossible. *The problem:* To get rid of negative emotions, we often hand them off by sticking them in the mind of a cocommunicator.

Keys to the Ignition of Good Communication, Empathizer Style

Here, then, are a few key summary points about how Empathizer-type communicators drive and operate quite differently on the two-way Communicator Highway . . . in the lanes of *Emotions and Talks*.

Empathizer-type communicators:

- Are *intimidated* by the I-types' debating skills.
- *Desire* approval and recognition.
- By nature, are *shy* about speaking up or disagreeing.
- Are too *sensitive* to hurting others.
- Won't *push* their points of view, nor will they push back effectively.
- *Enjoy* more compliments.
- *Fear* corrective criticisms.
- *Stew and brood* when talks aren't going well.
- "It's only business, it's nothing personal!" rings untrue.
- Are *de-motivated* by criticism over the long haul.
- See sincere compliments as being *motivational*.
- Are *person* vs. policy focused.
- Are behind-the-scenes *workhorses* who may feel underappreciated.
- Are *relationship*-centered.
- Worry that they aren't *achieving* enough.
- Find that, when their *mood* is down, *performance* goes down.
- Are *intimidated* by booming voices or facial signs of disapproval.
- Can't hear logical arguments when *emotions* run high.
- Find that public *scolding* leads to personal *stewing*.
- When *distressed*, will act up and do something *stupid*.
- Will *yield* when they should push back and stand their ground.
- Are good *listeners* to a fault.
- Can see the "elephant in the room."
- Have solutions to pesky problems, but may not be able to lead the charge toward change.

If you are an E-type, you have uncommon common sense and easily intuit solutions to vexing problems at work.

Changing the Flat Tire of Bad Communication, Instigator Style

Here are a few key summary points about how Instigator-type communicators (O'Grady, 2005) drive and operate quite differently from E-types, on the two-way Communicator Highway . . . in the lanes of *Beliefs and Behaviors*.

Instigator-type communicators:

- Are intimidated by the E-types' relationship skills.
- Value protecting loved ones, their country, their company.
- By nature, are big thinkers who don't mind disagreeing.
- Dislike hurting others but are too insensitive to the others' feelings.
- Will push their points of view, and push back effectively.
- Enjoy talking confidently and persuasively.
- Act like they don't fear corrective criticisms.
- Give themselves huge challenges on a regular basis.
- Have the attitude of, "It's only business, it's nothing personal!" to keep resentment in check.
- Are fired up by unfair criticism resulting in, "Well, I'll show you. . . ."
- See compliments as unnecessary, perhaps insincere, and demotivational.
- Drive the mood of the office or household, for better or worse.
- Are comfortable being in the middle of the action but can feel weary.
- Are progress- and change-centered, and they tend to be smart workers.
- Are achievement-centered throughout life.
- Are impatient if results don't come quickly enough for them.
- Find that, when their energy is down, driving performance speeds up.
- Are bored by soft voices, drooping postures, or facial signs of disinterest.
- Will stick to repeating logical points when emotions run high.
- Are prone to excessive self-esteem but can feel insecure.
- When distressed, can't bite their tongues and will say something stupid.
- Will be stubborn like a mule when they should sit back and listen up.
- Are doers to a fault and have trouble being in a relaxing pose.
- Use a this-is-now approach: "Since I apologized for my mistake, let's move on and get moving down the road!"
- Can't see how only talking about the "elephant in the room" helps clean up the piles of dung or mess left.
- Are cool under pressure, putting out fires, but they may stir the pot.
- Rely on the mind and intellectual powers as prime driving forces. (pp. 148-149)

If you are an I-type, then you are a natural-born leader, willing and able to take charge any time. You understand that your words say as much as your actions.

THE COMMUNICATION MATRIX DIAGRAM: NEGATIVE VS. POSITIVE EMPATHIZER AND INSTIGATOR COMMUNICATOR STYLES

The following Communication Matrix© is a powerful, visual, summary tool to help you assess to whom you are talking, by communicator type and by type of energy attitude. As one previous seminar participant quipped, "It was my 'Aha!' moment of 'Now I know why some-

one hates me!” Just look at the adjectives and put your finger on the quadrant that best describes where you and your cocommunicator are and where you would like to be.

Moreover, the following *negative* traits can be either *effective* or *ineffective*, depending upon how the trait is applied. For example, being *demanding* can *improve* performance but *unreasonably tax* a relationship.

Additionally, the following *positive* traits can sizzle in one situation but sour in another, like milk left out of the refrigerator too long. For example, being *slow-moving*, like the Tortoise, can *tax* the patience of the Hare, while being a *hard driver* can make *robots* out of people, when a human touch is needed the most.

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><u>Negative E-Type Communicators</u></p> <p>(-) Empathizer-Types Compliant Sap Modest Implosive Imitator Wishy-washy Yes, agree-able Doesn't push back How you play the game Sad</p> | <p><u>Negative I-Type Communicators</u></p> <p>(-) Instigator-Types Demanding Sarcastic Arrogant Explosive Intimidator Unbudging No, disagree-able Debates Winning is everything Mad</p> |
| <p><u>Positive E-Type Communicators</u></p> <p>(+) Empathizer-Types Slow movers Followers Sensitive Regard Emotional Intuits solutions Expert listeners Relationship-focused Flexible</p> | <p><u>Positive I-Type Communicators</u></p> <p>(+) Instigator-Types Hard-drivers Leaders Insensitive Genuine Logical Problem-solvers Expert mapmakers Results-focused Unbending</p> |

The Communication Matrix*

GOOD COMMUNICATION ISN'T A FLUKE

Good communication isn't a fluke. It involves a simple system of enlightened moves, which are all laid out in the *Talk to Me*® textbook (O'Grady, 2005). Additionally, *Talk to Me*® system tools can be accessed, at no cost to you, in the more than 200 articles at www.drogrady.com. The typecasting and other skills you learned in this contribution are all you need to start talking more positively and effectively today at work and at home. Why plug

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in to this system? The *Talk to Me*® system helps you better handle the fear of confrontation and conflict, while helping you avoid unnecessary miscommunications that could blow up in your face. *The best news:* Your clients will feel you truly *can* walk in their shoes and, based on this trust, accomplish needed changes faster, making everyone smile.

Communicator Prejudices*

Critiques of E-types by I-types

I-types think:

- You are too sensitive
- You are too generous
- You are too passive
- You are too codependent
- You are too conforming
- You worry too much
- You are too depressed
- You don't take very good care of yourself
- You talk but never put your ideas on the table
- You are too laid back
- You are too easy-going
- You are too prudent
- You are a perfectionist
- You are too wishy-washy
- You are too emotionally needy
- You are too downhearted
- You are too demanding
- You pout like a big baby
- You can't stand going it alone
- You are dense as a rock
- You get along with everyone
- You don't know what you want
- You can't ever be satisfied
- You can't let go of fear and relax
- You beat up on yourself
- You shut down when you're hurt
- You're too good for your own good
- You're drug down by guilt
- You don't let anything go
- You're too patient
- You're afraid of success
- You're afraid of conflict
- You can't stand being happy

Critiques of I-types by E-types

E-types assume:

- You are too insensitive
- You are too selfish
- You are too aggressive
- You are too independent
- You are too rebellious
- You don't worry about a thing
- You are too optimistic
- You only take care of yourself
- You talk too much
- You are too driven
- You are too critical
- You are too imprudent
- You are a workaholic
- You are stubborn as a mule
- You don't need anyone
- You don't feel anything
- You don't care
- You don't get mad, you get even
- You are a loner
- You are too smart for your own good
- You can't get along with those who disagree with you
- You only think about your wants
- You ought to be satisfied with what you've got
- You're mad and grumpy too much of the time
- You don't listen to corrective feedback
- You can't think straight when you're mad
- You think I'm bad when you're mad
- You don't feel guilty enough
- You want to get past the past or throw in the towel
- You're too impatient
- You're afraid of failure
- You love conflict
- You can't buy happiness

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