



MISCOMMUNICATION

“What did you say?”

When was the last time you tried to talk with someone and it didn't work?

What happened? Sometimes the most difficult people to communicate with and understand are the people who live with us or the people who work closely with us. **Why do you think we have difficulty communicating with people who know us and we know them?**

Most communication difficulties occur due to a lack of listening. If people do not communicate clearly, then there is a good chance they will not be understood. We cannot understand people who speak too fast. We don't have the patience to listen to people who speak too slowly. We get bored with monotone people who don't inform their tone or their face or their pace that they are truly excited, or scared, or mad. We also have difficulty understanding people who gush out all their feelings and overwhelm people. We also have difficulty hearing people who go off on story tangents and forget to check and see if the listener wants to hear the story. We also don't tend to listen to people who interrupt us. We don't tend to listen to people we don't respect. Our negative stereotypes also get in the way of us listening to certain people. We also don't tend to listen well to people who don't listen to us no matter what we say. In other words, there are many things we can do that make it difficult for good listening and understanding to occur.

But most communication difficulties occur because we don't listen well. We get distracted by many obstacles. **Why not list your own top three distractions to listening well.** If you cannot identify your listening obstacles, just ask the people around you. Listening obstacles range from **external distractions** (TV, music, computer, video games, reading materials, cell phones, mates, kids, pets, unexpected interruptions, and inappropriate comments...) to **internal distractions** (mental preoccupations, anger and frustration build-up, mistrust, dishonesty, secrets, hidden addictions, guilt, apathy, disgust, disrespect for the speaker, fear, worry, fatigue, or just checking out).

When we fail to listen well we only take in a fraction of what is being communicated. This is a recipe for miscommunication. When we only hear part of a message, our response frequently disconnects us from the speaker and can easily lead to an argument or unwanted conflict. Has anyone ever told you, “If you really cared, you would have listened to me the first time I told you?!”

We can avoid miscommunication by asking a person for their full attention, by removing distractions and obstacles, and by using good eye contact. We can improve listening by asking for feedback like **“What did you hear me say to you?”** When we take time to remove obstacles, give and receive feedback, and try again when we missed what was really being said, we can avoid miscommunication and many misunderstandings. Learning to communicate well with people will be a good challenge throughout our lives. We will probably discover that people will listen much more closely to what we say when we have something good to say to them.

- **What are some ways we can prevent miscommunication and conflict between us?**
- **Who serves as a good role model for healthy communication? What do they do that seems to work?**

“Health Talks” are designed to help us learn to talk and deal with one another in ways that build understanding and a healthy, growing, supportive Christian community.