

Team Communication in Veterinary Practice



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BVSc DipCoaching



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About Dr Natasha Wilks & High Performance Vets

Natasha Wilks BVSc DipCoaching CertSEIP, is a Life and Executive Coach who works with professionals helping them accelerate their career success and increase their wellbeing.

Natasha Wilks is a veterinarian with over 15 years experience in large and small animal practice working in Australia and the UK.

Natasha graduated from the University of Queensland in 1999 and started work in central Queensland in a very busy small animal practice. She then moved to the Gold Coast and in 2004 she headed to the UK to work for a group of very busy practices for 2 years, where she gained a tremendous amount of experience.

In 2006, Natasha returned to Australia and spent time in an Equine practice before leaving to start her coach training and coaching practice, Vibrant Life Coaching.

Natasha completed her Life & Executive Coaching Diploma in 2007 and worked with various people from business owners, mothers and executives.

High Performance Vets was created in 2011 when Natasha returned to veterinary practice after taking time off to raise her young family. She recognised the issues that veterinarians were struggling with could be overcome with the knowledge she gained in her coach training.

Since then Natasha has been working with veterinarians to help them succeed in their career by creating career plans, identify their strengths, learning to understand and communicate with clients and increase their income.

Natasha is passionate about increasing the Social & Emotional Intelligence of veterinarians and improving their well-being by implementing Positive Psychology principles, improving self awareness and reduction and management of stress in practice.

Natasha completed a Certificate in Social + Emotional Intelligence Coaching in 2014.

Natasha has been a presenter at the AVAPM conference in 2013, 2014, 2015, the Pan Pacific Veterinary Conference in 2015, the AVA Conference in 2016, the Brisbane Practitioners Conference in 2015 and will present at the Australian Sheep Vets Conference and the AVBA conference in 2016.

She has written articles for the February and March 2015 editions of the AVJ, AVBA In The Black Magazine and VetAnswers Fat D, Dental Purple Paper, in both 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Natasha is a contributing author to the VetCoach 8th Edition book.

She has presented webinars for The Webinar Vet Australia and Veterinary Classrooms since 2012.

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
What is Emotional Intelligence	6
Session 1: Workplace Communication	7
Your Communication Style	7
Representational Systems	7
DISC	11
The Communication Model	16
Components Of Communication	16
Listening Skills	18
The Response	18
Emotions and Communication	19
The Positivity Ratio	20
Workplace Conflict	21
Challenging Conversations	21
Receiving Feedback	25
Summary	26

Introduction

In your university and nurse training, you were building knowledge and skills specific to the veterinary industry. These skills are specifically related to animal health. However, the most critical skills that enable success in your life and career are not commonly taught.

These are life skills, such as communication, leadership, overcoming adversity and coping with common challenges. These skills may be considered ‘soft’ skills but it has been proven that these skills are critical to success in your career and your well-being.

This training is the cumulation of my years of experience as a veterinarian, working in many different practices with various clients and teams. The knowledge and experience I have gained as a result of my coaching training, Social + Emotional Intelligence Coach training and my research into Neuroscience and Positive Psychology also contributes significantly to this workbook.

I recognised years ago the qualities that what made veterinarians successful in completing their veterinary degree, works against them in practice.

High achievers don’t like to make mistakes or fail and hold themselves to ridiculously high standards. In practice, this can translate to not being able to let go of cases, avoiding risk, accepting blame for cases where it was never your responsibility or fault, not being able to sleep at night due to not being able to switch off, taking everything personally plus much more. This all contributes to fatigue, disillusionment, frustration, exhaustion, compassion fatigue and burnout.

I have worked with many people who are looking for change. You can change your behaviour but without creating self awareness about your perceptions and thoughts, the behaviour change is superficial and short term. Your thoughts are the result of your values, beliefs, rules and perceptions. Most of the time these are unconscious as we aren’t aware of them.

Once you build self awareness, you can identify what determines your fulfilment and happiness and what is contributing to your frustration and dissatisfaction. Our mind is the most powerful thing and it creates your reality and your life experiences.

Today, the focus is on self leadership and becoming aware of how to make your mind work for you, to accelerate your success in practice and in your personal life.

Increasing self awareness and seeking to understand yourself, will also help you to understand others which is very important for team dynamics. Ultimately, your professional success is determined by your ability to build relationships with your team and with clients.

A harmonious team creates a strong performing team and a happy workplace.

What is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional Intelligence is the ability to be aware of your own feelings in the moment and that of other's feelings and emotions and to use this information to guide your thinking and actions.

There are 4 main quadrants of Social & Emotional Intelligence (S+EI):

Personal Competence - How you manage yourself

1. **Self Awareness:** knowing your internal states, preferences, resources and intuitions.
2. **Self Management:** manage your internal states, impulses and resources

Social Competence - How you handle relationships

3. **Social or Other Awareness:** awareness of others' feelings, needs and concerns
4. **Relationship Management or Social Skills:** how to manage interactions successfully

Before you can successfully build relationships, you must be self aware. You must understand yourself, how you think and how it impacts your behaviour.

You will have emotional reactions to nearly everything that occurs in your life. However, only a small proportion of people are able to accurately identify their emotions as they happen. That means that most people are controlled by their emotions and not skilled at spotting them and using them to their benefit. These awareness skills are not taught in school.

Good decision making requires more than factual knowledge and our brains are wired for emotion. IQ is your ability to learn and it is fixed from birth. Your IQ does not predict your emotional quotient or EQ. EQ is a flexible skill and can be learned.

Your EQ is the foundation for many critical skills and it has been found that it accounts for 58% of performance in all types of jobs. EQ is the biggest predictor of performance in the workplace.

Stress management, resilience, empathy, communication skills, leadership, teamwork are all critical S+EI competencies. These competencies are able to be developed and increased incrementally to improve your S+EI skills.

(EQ and EI are interchangeable)

Session 1: Workplace Communication

Effective communication creating strong professional relationships within a practice

Workplace communication is the process of exchanging information, both verbal and non-verbal, within an organisation.

First you need to understand how you interpret information and your behavioural style of communicating.

Your Communication Style

Representational Systems

Communication starts with our thoughts and we use words, tonality and body language to convey them to another person.

When we think about what we see, think and feel, we recreate these sights, sounds and feelings internally.

We process information from the world via our senses and while using a combination, you will have a predominant sense that you use. This helps you to perceive the world and take in, store and code the information in your mind. This is known as representational systems.

We use the following senses to process information and they are referred to as modalities:

What we see	Visual (V)
What we hear	Auditory (A)
What we smell	Olfactory (O)
What we sense/feel	Kinaesthetic (K)
What we taste	Gustatory (G)
What we tell ourselves	Auditory Digital (Ad)

We use visual, auditory and kinaesthetic modalities most often when making sense of the world.

We use a combination of the modalities when communicating with ourselves and with others.

The three core sensory preferences (modalities) are:

Visual - sight

Auditory - sound

Kinaesthetic - touch

Representation System Preference Test

The test below will discover your own primary representation system.

For each of the following statements, place a number next to each phrase. Use the following system to indicate your preferences:

4 = closest to describing you

3 = next best description

2 = next best

1 = least descriptive of you

1. I make important decisions based on:

- gut level feelings
- which way sounds the best
- what looks best to me
- precise review and study of the issues

2. During an argument, I am most likely to be influenced by:

- the other person's tone of voice
- whether or not I can see the other person's point of view
- the logic of the other person's argument
- whether or not I am in touch with the other person's true feelings

3. I most easily communicate what is going on with me by:

- the way I dress and look
- the feelings I share
- the words I choose
- my tone of voice

4. It is easiest for me to:

- find the ideal volume and tuning on a stereo system
- select the most intellectually relevant point in an interesting subject
- select the most comfortable furniture
- select rich, attractive colour combinations

5. I am best described as:

- I am very attuned to the sounds of my surroundings
- I am very adept at making sense of new facts and data
- I am very sensitive to the way articles of clothing feel on my body
- I have a strong response to colours and to the way a room looks

Step One:

Copy your answers from the previous page to here:

- | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. ___ K | 2. ___ A | 3. ___ V | 4. ___ A | 5. ___ A |
| ___ A | ___ V | ___ K | ___ Ad | ___ Ad |
| ___ V | ___ Ad | ___ Ad | ___ K | ___ K |
| ___ Ad | ___ K | ___ A | ___ V | ___ V |

Step Two:

Add the numbers associated with each letter. There are five entries for each letter.

	V	A	K	Ad
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
Totals				

Step Three:

The comparison of the total scores in each column will give your relative preferences for each of the four major representational systems.

V - Visual

See the world by constructing or remembering **mental images**. They ‘see’ what you mean.

People who are visual often stand or sit with the hands and/or bodies erect with their eyes up. They will be breathing from the top of their lungs. They often sit forward in their chair and tend to be organised, neat, well groomed and orderly. They memorise by seeing pictures and are less distracted by noise. They often have trouble remembering verbal instructions because their mind tends to wander. A visual person will be interested in how your practice looks. Appearances are important to them.

A - Auditory

Listen to the world around them by constructing their thoughts and feelings based on what they **hear**.

People who are auditory will move their eyes sideways. They breathe from the middle of their chest. They typically talk to themselves and are easily distracted by noise. Some even move their lips when they talk to themselves. They can repeat things back to you easily. They learn by listening and usually like music and talking on the phone. They memorise by steps, procedures and sequences. The auditory person likes to be TOLD how they’re doing and responds to a certain tone of voice or set of words.

K - Kinaesthetic

Feel the world around them. They interpret their world through physical contact and feelings.

People who are kinaesthetic will typically be breathing from the bottom of their lungs, so you’ll see their stomach go in and out when they breathe. They often move and talk very slowly. They respond to physical rewards and touching. They also stand closer to people than a visual person. They memorise by doing or walking through something.

Ad - Auditory digital

This person will spend a fair amount of time talking to themselves. They will want to know if things ‘**make sense**’. They turn the information from their senses into language. They are very logical and like lists, flow charts and categorising.

DISC

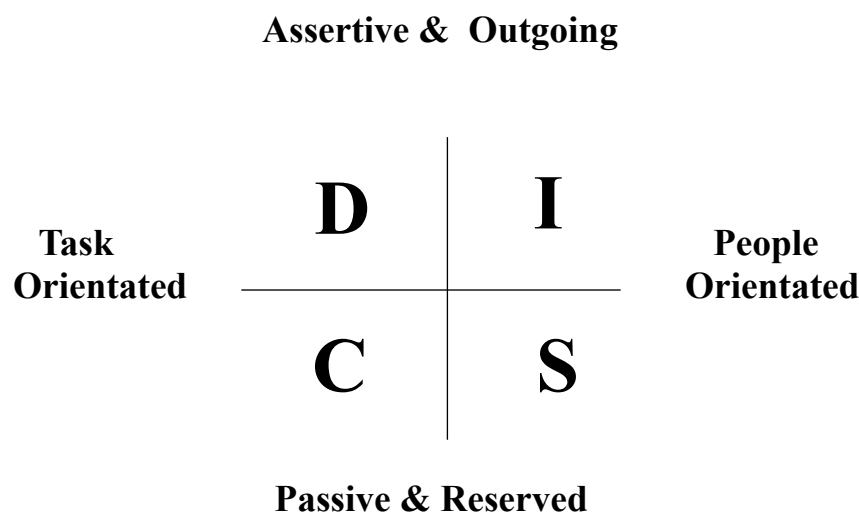
DISC is a behavioural assessment tool that is used to understand a person's behaviour. It provides an overview of the way that people think, act and interact.

Behavioural characteristics can be grouped into four quadrants or styles. People of similar styles tend to exhibit specific types of behaviour common to that style.

There are two axes

Orientation - either task or people

Behaviour - active & outgoing or passive and reserved



People possess traits from all 4 styles to varying degrees. Each style has its own unique needs, wants, strengths and weaknesses.

D - Dominant Style direct, problem solver ** Potential Workaholic

- Direct, outspoken, results orientated, leader, problem solver
- **likes control, to win and is competitive**
- Does not like to waste time, answer questions directly, do not explain too many details
- Be concise and business like. Wants efficient communication. You must be credible.
- **Strengths:** ability to achieve results, leadership and decision making
- **Weakness:** inflexibility, impatience, poor listening habits, not providing enough information, not collaborative and can appear insensitive
- **Irritated by:** delays, feelings, inadequacies of coworkers, inaction
- **D style should focus on:** practice active listening, pace themselves, develop patience, humility and sensitivity, show concern for others, verbalise reasons for conclusions and participate as team players
- 18% population

I - Influencing Style inspiring, people orientated

- Friendly, talkative, enthusiastic, spontaneous, persuasive
- **like variety, connection and being involved and dislikes being alone**
- allow time for socialising first and be friendly
- don't get bogged down in the detail, summarise the main points
- **Strengths:** enthusiasm, persuasiveness, sociability, quickly think on their feet
- **Weakness:** being involved in too many things, impatience, short attention spans leading to boredom, less focussed on facts and details
- **Irritated by:** boring tasks, being alone and not able to chat to people
- **I style should focus on:** control their time and emotions, develop more objective mindset, spend more time checking, verifying and organising, develop more task focus, logical approach to projects and issues.
- 28% population

S - Steady Style supporting, pace

- team player, stable, consistent, maintains the status quo, peacemaker, patient
- **likes to be reliable, dependable and consistent and dislikes interpersonal conflict**
- tends to trust easily and may be shy
- take it slow and easy and use lots of proof and statistics
- be sincere and quiet, simple explanation
- may require multiple contacts for reassurance and revisit the facts as wants to think about it
- **Strengths:** very people orientated, good actively listener, develop strong networks, building trust
- **Weakness:** dislike interpersonal conflict, unassertive and easily bullied, overly sensitive
- **Irritated by:** pushy, aggressive behaviour
- **S style should focus on:** learn to say 'no' occasionally, reach beyond comfort zone to get goals that involve risk, delegate to others, build assertiveness skills.
- 40% population

C- Conscientious Style correct, procedures

- Logical, organised, data driven, methodical, perfectionist, detail orientated
- **like to be given space mentally to process the conversation & dislikes involvement**
- May be suspicious so you will need to provide proof and proven results
- usually not talkative
- needs time to absorb details and digest the facts before the next step
- usually doesn't like new or change. Prefers proven products
- **Strengths:** accuracy, dependability, independence, follow through and organisation
- **Weakness:** procrastination and conservative which can be seen as picky and overly cautious
- **Irritated by:** disorganised, illogical people
- **C style should focus on:** show concern and appreciation of others, try short cuts occasionally, be more flexible with change and disorganisation, improve timely decision making
- 14% population

*** You will have a natural style and a style that you revert to when you are in times of stress or high challenge.

Relationship Stress

Pace and Priority

Pace is the natural rate of speed of an individual and priority is what the person sees as important in accomplishing a goal.

I & S - priority on relationships

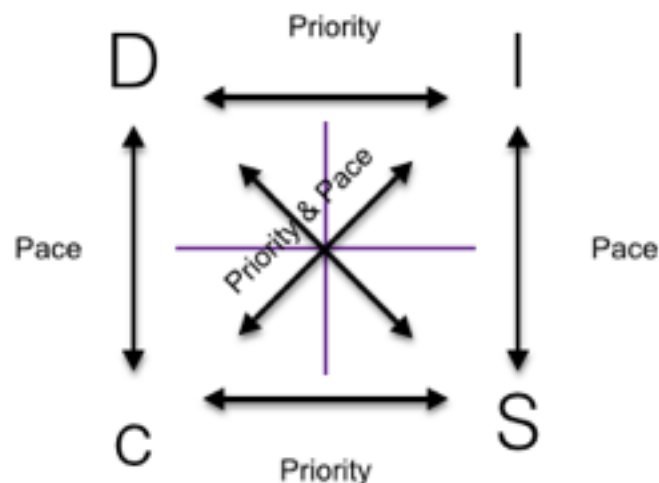
D & I - desire a faster pace

D & C - priority on tasks

S & C - prefer a slower, steady speed

Tension Amongst the Styles

Tension occurs when there is a difference between priority and pace. Tension management involves meeting the behavioural needs of the people in the relationship. Treat people the way they want to be treated.



Backup Behaviours

Each style has its own unproductive manner of ‘dumping’ stress on another. People under stress seek to reduce it and usually this occurs by psychologically dumping it on the person ‘responsible’ for the tension.

Dominant style: become overbearing, pushy, uncompromising and dictatorial to control anyone or anything that gets in the way

Influential style: verbally attacking the person who causes the stress

Steady style: gives in or submits. The purpose is to avoid conflict at all cost and leads to resentment and tension.

Conscientious style: withdrawal from the person or situation. They will flee from it rather than deal with it.

Compatibility task wise

(This is different to social compatibility)

Naturally compatible

Conscientious - Steady

Dominant - Steady

Influencing - Steady

The Steady style gets along with everybody in a task situation. They are supportive workers who exert a calming, stabilising influence.

Moderately compatible

Conscientious - Conscientious

Steady - Steady

Influencing - Conscientious

The Conscientious style is not as easy going as the Steady style but they are sensitive to other's feelings and have a passion for excellence.

Least compatible

Dominance - Dominance (competitive nature and need for control can affect cooperation)

Dominant - Conscientious (a clash between pace and priorities)

Dominant - Influencing (both want to delegate)

Influencing - Influencing (least productive)

Behavioural Adaptability

Behavioural adaptability is making strategic adjustments of your methods of communicating and behaving to meet the needs of the other person. This involves adjusting your openness, pace, directness and priority to match the other person's preference.

General strategies in Relationships

With D's: be efficient and competent

With I's: be interested in them

With S's: be warm and sincere

With C's: be thorough and well prepared

Communicating with Another Style

With D's: Listen to their suggestions, course of action and results they are considering. Find areas where you agree and work backwards to gain agreement on the results you both want.

With I's: Listen to their personal feelings and experiences in a responsive interaction and unhurried conversation.

With S's: Be ready to do more talking than listening. Clarify any key items with them and stay organised and move forward steadily to ensure they understand and accept what is being said.

With C's: Be organised and clear in your communication as they are searching for logical conclusions. Ask your questions in a discreet, non-judgemental manner.

Motivating Each Style

D's: Describe the big picture, provide them with options, discuss achieving goals and set boundaries but let them take charge

I's: create short term objectives that don't require long term commitment and let them speak about their achievements

S's: Show them how their work benefits others, the whole team and how it can strengthen their relationships with others.

C's: Appeal to their need for accuracy and logic and keep your approach clear, clean and procedural.

Complimenting Each Style

D's: Focus on their track record and achievements

I's: General praise

S's: Focus on their teamwork and dependability, how well they are regarded and what they have done

C's: Praise their efficiency, organisation, persistence and accuracy with simple and concise praise that is genuine

Counselling Each Style

D's: State the facts and talk about results, then discuss concerns. Focus on tasks rather than feelings.

I's: Give them the opportunity to talk about what is bothering them and pay attention to facts and feelings. Involve them by asking how they could solve a challenge or problem.

S's: Draw them out through questioning and listening and reduce their fears by showing how specific changes will benefit them and others.

C's: Ask them "How would you...?" questions about problems. They need to plan for change so allow time for this and to investigate repercussions.

Correcting Each Style

D's: Describe the desired results and show the gap between the actual and desired results

I's: Let them know the challenge and define the behaviours to solve the problem and confirm a mutually agreeable action plan

S's: Reassure them that you only want to correct a specific behaviour, not them personally. Use non-threatening language.

C's: Specify the exact behaviour that is indicated and how you would like to see it changed and mutually agree on checkpoints and timeframes

The Communication Model

Now that you understand and appreciate your preferred communication behavioural style and how others can be different, we will discuss the details of communication.

When communicating there is a sender and a receiver. Communication isn't as simple as the words that are spoken. It is more complex and just because you can talk doesn't mean you are communicating effectively.

Good communication isn't as simple as agreement by the receiver. The sender must ensure there is clarity and understanding of the message.

The components for communication:

- **The Outcome**
 - What is the outcome you desire for your communication

- **Message**
 - Verbal
 - words you use
 - your language
 - tone of your voice
 - timbre
 - pace of your speech
 - pitch and rhythm
 - volume
 - Non-Verbal
 - physiology of your body
 - facial expression
 - stance

The words contain the content of the message and the non-verbal cues contain the context. Together these make the meaning of the message.

- **Transmission**
 - information is sent from one individual (the sender) to another individual or group (receiver)

- **Channels** - how the message is sent
 - Face to Face
 - Phone - missing body language
 - Written - missing non-verbal communication and a significant portion of the verbal component of communication
 - ** This is why email communication can be misinterpreted so easily!!

- **Filtering**
 - When a message is received, it is filtered by the receiver. Their brain will be interpreting not just the message but also all the verbal and non-verbal signals as well. The message will be filtered by the receiver via their values, beliefs, attitudes, emotions and differing communication style.
 - This is where communication can be misinterpreted and misunderstood.
- **Feedback**
 - the response to the message
 - this loops back to the beginning and the receiver now becomes the sender

Important Points:

1. Your Language

- your language determines your reality
- your language also gives others insight into your perceptions, filters, attitudes
- your language can be empowering or disempowering

2. Non Verbal Skills

- your physiology or the way you hold your body is a major component of communication
- it is important that your non-verbal skills match your message or the receiver will see a mixed message. This contributes to miscommunication and misunderstanding but also can lead to distrust.

3. The meaning of the communication is the response it gets

- there is no guarantee that the person understands the meaning of your message
- you must use your acuity skills to see if the person understood the outcome of your communication
- otherwise use flexibility to change your message until you receive the desired outcome
- *** YOU are responsible for ensuring the receiver understands your message

Listening Skills

Poor listening skills is the biggest contributor to poor communication. There are 4 types of listening.

1. **Passive listening.** The listener hears the words but is not present and no communication is taking place. Referred to 'in one ear and out the other'.
2. **Selective Listening.** The listener is hearing the speaker but not paying full attention. They are thinking about their response before the speaker finishes. They usually interrupt or filter the message to their bias.
3. **Active Listening.** The person is listening closely to understand the message and the meaning.
4. **Reflective Listening.** Active listening is being used as well as asking questions to clarify the message to ensure that they have understood the message.

*** This is the type of listening that is the most effective for communication.

The Response

There are four styles of responding to communication.

1. Active Constructive - authentic, enthusiastic support
2. Passive Constructive - understated support
3. Passive Destructive - ignoring the event
4. Active Destructive - pointing out the negative aspects of the event

It has been found that responding actively and constructively will build strong relationships.

Example:

You buy a new car and excitedly tell a friend. This is an example of your friend's response.

Active Constructive - "How exciting! What did you get and what colour is it?"

Passive Constructive - "That's nice."

Passive Destructive - "I can't decide what to buy for the party"

Active Destructive - "How are you going to afford that on your salary? You know it devalues the moment you drive it out of the yard."

EXERCISE:

Split into pairs and I want you to come up with some exciting news and your partner will try all the different ways of responding. Note how each one makes you feel and how you feel about the responder.

Emotions and Communication

“When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but with creatures of emotion.” Dale Carnegie

Emotions are physiological, behavioural and/or communicative reactions to stimuli that are cognitively processed and experienced as emotional.

Emotions are internally experienced through physiological changes such as an increased heart rate, a tense stomach, flushed face, tense muscles or a cold chill.

If these changes are not noticeable by others and only within yourself, this is intrapersonal communication.

If you exhibit a behaviour change or you communicated your state verbally or non-verbally, this is interpersonal communication.

It is important to become aware of any physiological changes within yourself. Sometimes people lack self awareness (critical EI skills) of their own emotions or what is creating these emotions, so they don't recognise what they are reacting to or what is causing the emotional change.

Have you ever had a conversation with someone that produced a significant emotional reaction that you weren't expecting? This is because it reacted with them emotionally as it was filtered through their belief system.

Belief

Emotional Consequence

Delight

Joy

Personal achievement

Pride

Accepting & peacefulness

Serenity

Violation of your rights

Anger

Real world loss or loss of self worth

Sadness, depression

Violation of another's rights

Guilt

Future threat

Anxiety, fear

Negative comparison to others

Embarrassment

If you believe you can communicate logically and be effective, you are mistaken. All communication involves emotion.

You need to strengthen your self awareness but also your social awareness to read the person you are communicating with. This is where you need to build acuity and flexibility to change and tailor your communication for the person you are communicating with.

One size doesn't fit all

Contagious Emotions

Emotions are contagious through our neural networks. We are interconnected. Your brain is constantly processing the feelings & the mood of the people around you. In a group the most emotionally expressive person transmits their mood to the others within two minutes. This can explain how one grumpy or stressed person can bring down the mood of a room or one happy person can lift the mood of a room.

Workplaces have their own group emotion. The behaviour, both verbal and non-verbal, of the employees will contribute to a shared emotional norm within the group. This can explain the difference in culture in differing workplaces as it is a reflection of the mindsets, emotions and behaviours of the leaders and the team.

Be mindful of the emotions you are exhibiting physiologically, behaviourally and what you are communicating on a consistent basis.

You will leave a 'wake' behind. I want you to consider if you want this wake to be positive or negative.

Positivity Ratio

Positive emotions aren't always good and negative emotions aren't always bad. There can be negative emotions such as fear or anxiety to warn you about an imminent threat. People may seek positive emotions which are harmful for them e.g. drugs.

Barbara Fredrickson and Marcial Losada carried out research that suggests there is an optimal balance of positive to negative emotions.

This is called the Positivity Ratio or Losada Line.

Positive Psychologists have found that it is the frequency of feeling positive emotions that is important rather than the intensity.

The threshold for flourishing is 3:1 - 3 positive for every 1 negative.
In a workplace you can consider it the praise to criticism ratio.

***** In a workplace or marriage, aim for 5:1 - 5 positive to 1 negative**

I want you to consider your communication and experiences at work. Are you meeting the 5:1 ratio?

If the workplace is below 3:1, negativity begins to invade the workplace and performance declines. You will notice this in the language people use, their physiology, their communication and conversations.

High performing teams have 6:1 ratio. Medium performing teams where 2:1. Poor performing teams had a 1:3 ratio.

Workplace Conflicts

Conflict can occur in a workplace for various reasons:

- **Understanding who should do what** - when a person feels that someone else should be performing a task or lack of clarity about who's role it is to perform the task
- **Disagreements over how things should be done** - everyone has their own style and usually there will be a practice norm for how things are to be done. Conflict occurs when change occurs, either a new person joining the team or a change to the process a procedure is done by.
- **Personality conflicts** - conflict occurs due to differing behaviour and communication styles
- **Lack of communication** - lack of specific detail or clarity in the message or using a channel which is open to misinterpretation.

Be mindful that you don't communicate the way you like but for the style of the person for whom you are communicating with.

Avoiding Conflict

You should have clear and specific communication and expectations about who's role it is to perform specific tasks for each shift and the standard expected. You must be mindful that there are many ways to complete a task and as long as the task is completed within the allotted time to the desired standard, then this is appropriate. We have discussed the various behaviour and communication styles of people.

Don't let minor frustrations fester into major conflict. Address any issues before they become a problem. Face to face communication is the best way to discuss any issues. If you feel you are unable to do this, then speak to your head nurse or a senior veterinarian/practice owner.

Challenging Conversations

If there is a conversation you need to have, but you are feeling anxious or nervous about it consider these 3 questions.

1. What is happening?

Determine the specific behaviour that upsets you.

2. What do I feel about it?

It is essential to identify what you feel, not what you think otherwise you will be attacking the person rather than their behaviour.

3. What would I like to be different?

This transforms what would have been a complaint into a constructive comment or request.

Steps to Work Through an Event or Incident

When an incident occurs, the problem that develops is that people become reactive. They jump to conclusions and make assumptions about the other person without being aware of all the facts. This then directly affects their communication and they have an emotion laden conversation that usually ends badly and conflict arises!

What should the individual do instead? They should take a moment to seek to understand what exactly occurred and become curious about the other person rather than being judgemental. They need to work through these questions to determine the facts and become aware of what assumptions and judgements they are making about the other person.

Work through the following when you have identified an event occurring

1. **What exactly occurred? Describe the behaviour, not the person.**
2. **How is it supposed to be?**
3. **Are you aware of why this occurred? Determine if this is a environmental issue (very busy or not able to do it) or personal (lack of ability/ skills or lack of motivation).**
4. **Is your interpretation correct and do you have all the facts?**
5. **What could be the reason?**
6. **How are you planning to address this?**
7. **What would you like to occur in future?**

Example

Prue saw Norma leave at the end of her shift and the place is a mess. Nothing has been done. Prue is annoyed! She is sick of having to clean up after everybody! Prue is now huffing and puffing and telling everyone what a lazy, selfish person Norma is.

Prue works through the questions

Q1. What exactly occurred? Norma left without cleaning up.

Q2. How is it supposed to be? The place is supposed to be clean, tidy and everything refilled for the next shift.

Q3. Are you aware of why this occurred? Norma is just lazy!

Q4. Is your interpretation correct and do you have all the facts? I asked and found out that they were multiple emergencies overnight and the previous nurse left early as she was sick. Norma spent the beginning of her shift cleaning up for the previous shift and she also had a very busy day.

Q5. What could the reason be? She had to clean up from the previous shift and that put her behind for the rest of her day.

Q6. How are you planning to address this? I would like to speak to the shift supervisor to ensure I'm not always stuck cleaning up other's mess. I would also prefer if the previous nurse explains what happened so I don't feel like I am dumped with everything.

Q7. What would you like to occur in the future?

Work through these steps when you have felt reactive after an event occurring

1. **What exactly occurred? Write down what occurred. Step by Step.**
2. **What emotion did you feel as a result of the event?**
3. **What did you think or make the event mean as a result of what occurred?**
4. **How did you respond?**
5. **What did I delete or filter about the event?**
6. **How should you have responded?**
7. **What did you learn?**
8. **What would you do differently next time?**
9. **What is the next step?**

Example

Sally had a client ask her about their pet. She took them into a consult room and began to discuss the issue. Kym came out to find the reception area unstaffed while clients were waiting. Kym asked Sally to finish quickly with the client and come back to the reception area.

Sally became frustrated and snappy as she felt she was rudely interrupted and was just doing her job looking after clients. She feels unappreciated and unsupported.

Sally works through the questions.

Q1. What exactly occurred? I was asked to stop serving a client and go back to reception. I took the client into a consult room where it was quiet.

Q2. What emotion did you feel? Annoyed and frustrated.

Q3. What did you think? They don't care about clients and how well I do my job.

Q4. How did I respond? I was short with Kym as she doesn't appreciate me.

Q5. What did I delete or filter about the event? Yes. I left the reception area unstaffed while clients were waiting. They do care about clients as they are concerned about the clients who were left unattended. I forgot about all the times I have been appreciated in the past.

Q6. How should I have responded? I should have realised that I can't leave the reception desk unattended and asked someone to help the client or cover reception for me.

Q7. What did I learn? That I am so focussed on an individual client that I forget about the others

Q8. What would I do differently next time? I will ask for help and recognise that when I am being given feedback, they aren't attacking me.

Q9. What is the next step?.....

The Conversation

1. How to begin the conversation

You can use any of the following conversation openers.

(From JudyRinger.com)

- I have something I'd like to discuss with you that I think will help us work together more effectively.
- I'd like to talk about _____ with you, but first I'd like to get your point of view.
- I need your help with what just happened. Do you have a few minutes to talk?
- I need your help with something. Can we talk about it (soon)? If the person says, "Sure, let me get back to you," follow up with him.
- I think we have different perceptions about _____. I'd like to hear your thinking on this.
- I'd like to talk about _____. I think we may have different ideas about how to _____.
- I'd like to see if we might reach a better understanding about _____. I really want to hear your feelings about this and share my perspective as well.

2. Discuss the topic

Calmly discuss the topic. State what occurred or what the issue is. Describe what occurred. Keep this to facts, not feelings. Ensure you have open body language, use a calm tone of voice and come from a place of 'seeking to understand'.

Use I-Messages, not You-Messages.

eg I noticed..... not You didn't....

3. How did it make you feel

Now discuss how to event made you feel. Keep it brief.

This isn't designed to give the other person a guilt trip. This is to give the person an insight into how the behaviour/event affected you and/or the team.

eg I felt frustrated, let down, disappointed...

4. The Effect

Discuss the effect the behaviour/event had on you or the team

eg We were behind for the rest of the shift. We couldn't do the procedure.

5. What do you want

Discuss what behaviour is expected in the future.

6. Listen

Listen to their response. Do not think about what you are going to say. Focus on what they are saying. You are looking to understand what exactly occurred and giving the other person an opportunity to give you their explanation or interpretation of the event.

Receiving Feedback

When you are receiving feedback about a situation, task, your behaviour or an incident, it is very important that you listen and not become defensive. If you become defensive, you will not clearly hear the feedback that you are given and you will not learn.

There are many talented people who will never reach their full potential as they are unable to receive feedback about what has occurred, the impact and how they can improve. These people become unapproachable and normally move from job to job never recognising that they may be the cause of the problems, not their employer.

Suspend your judgement and listen intently to understand what is being said. Ask questions to clarify what specifically the issue was and what feedback you are being given. Ask for specific examples regarding the feedback to ensure you understand. Thank the person for their feedback.

Summary

Communication isn't as simple as the exchange of words. Just because you can talk doesn't mean you can communicate well.

Everyone has a representational system for how they interpret their environment and for maximum effectiveness in communication, you want to communicate in their style.

Understanding your DISC behavioural style will allow you to understand why you immediately connect with some people and not others. Learning the different styles will allow you to understand others and develop social awareness and empathy.

Being aware of the steps involved in communication can help you understand where and why miscommunication occurs. By improving your listening and responding skills, your communication effectiveness will increase.

We are trained to be logical but every workplace is full of emotions. Aim to create strong relationships with your colleagues with respectful communication and be mindful of the wake you leave behind. By considering the current positivity ratio in your workplace, this may help you understand any current challenges you may be experiencing.

Your ability to communicate effectively is essential for career success.

Final Thoughts

Your brain is the most precious organ you have! What your mind is capable of is incredible.

The great news is that you are very capable of changing your brain and changing your life. If you change your thinking, you can change your behaviour and results.

Brain fitness and brain training should be considered just as important or even more important than physical fitness. Developing your mental fitness will provide you with a buffer in times of adversity and challenge.

Self awareness is the first step. It is of vital importance to become aware of your thought patterns and beliefs, your patterns of emotions and behaviours and how these contribute to your reality in your life and in your career.

Once you identify these, you can determine whether they are working for you or limiting you in your career and life.

Only you have the power to change your beliefs and that should bring you hope and excitement as you are capable of changing your life for the better.

I look forward to hearing of how this training has brought changes into your life.

Warmly,

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