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Labor Day weekend. After spending one on one time with my oldest daughter, we reaffirmed something that many of you may mistakenly take for granted.

Randy Johnston • Oct. 06, 2020



A Top Technology Initiative Article – From the October 2020 Issue.

2020 has been such an unusual year that I did not expect to have such a pleasant Labor Day weekend. After spending one on one time with my oldest daughter, we reaffirmed something that many of you may mistakenly take for granted. Social media posts, text messages, and email are not very good ways to communicate on a person to person basis. And the art of conversation seems to be getting compromised.

I am most concerned about how you communicate within your family, with your

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noted the difficulty in discerning people's moods or expressions behind their masks? Frankly, we have had to read behind many clients' masks for years.

So, What Is Good Communication?

Here it is wise to turn to the experts and scientists for the best answers, but at the end of the day, your vision of good communication may be all that matters. Consider your own assimilation of communication skills from your earliest memories in your family to your interactions at school to your first job experiences to your own family today. What have you learned along the way?

It is hard to believe it has been almost 35 years since Robert Fulghum wrote and published *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. Some reminders of the simple [ideas](#) for you to consider include:

- Share everything.
- Play fair.
- Don't hit people.
- Put things back where you found them.
- CLEAN UP YOUR OWN MESS.
- Don't take things that aren't yours.
- Say you're SORRY when you HURT somebody.
- Wash your hands before you eat.
- Flush.
- Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.
- Live a balanced life – learn some and drink some and draw some and paint some and sing and dance and play and work every day some.
- Take a nap every afternoon.
- When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together.

- Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup: The roots go

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Aleph	First Commandment	I am the Lord your G-d who has taken you out of the land of Egypt.
Bet	Second Commandment	You shall have no other gods but me.
Gimmel	Third Commandment	You shall not take the name of the Lord your G-d in vain.
Dalet	Fourth Commandment	You shall remember the Sabbath and keep it Holy.
Hey	Fifth Commandment	Honor your mother and father.
Vav	Sixth Commandment	You shall not murder.
Zayin	Seventh Commandment	You shall not commit adultery.
Chet	Eighth Commandment	You shall not steal.
Tet	Ninth Commandment	You shall not bear false witness.
Yod	Tenth Commandment	You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

But what does it take for good communication to take place? [Alessandra Martelli](#) suggests and explains this list:

- Completeness
- Conciseness
- Consideration
- Concreteness
- Courtesy

- Clearness

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6. Fairness
7. Avoidance of unnecessary conflict
8. Positive attitudes
9. Minimal stress
0. Courage

While I could continue to cite lists and summaries of communications, two final lists from Jane Taylor are published on *Habits for Wellbeing*. Some reminders of the simple [ideas](#) for you to consider include:

Five Barriers to Effective Communication

1. Judging the other person
2. Not paying attention to the person you are talking to
3. Using technical language
4. Giving solutions or unwanted advice
5. Avoiding the concerns of others

Nine Effective Communication Skills

1. Active listening
2. Non-verbal communication
3. Asking questions
4. Being clear and succinct
5. Clarifying and summarizing
6. Being empathetic
7. Providing feedback
8. Developing trust and rapport
9. Being present

And How Can I Apply This?

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- Using smartphones, often for social media or email, while in another conversation.
- Continuing a text conversation that could have been handled much quicker another way.
- Using email when a phone call would have been faster.
- Being confused about the best way to reach someone. Email? Text? Social media? Call?

At a professional level, we have maintained client communication preferences for some time including opt-in or opt-out, sometimes enforced by laws such as the [CAN-SPAM Act](#). Mail vs. email vs. phone vs. text has been augmented by WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Facebook, and other social media. But is an omnichannel approach to communication best? Shouldn't you know your clients' (and family members') preferred way to communicate and use that approach? What is best for you is not necessarily best for them. And communication in bulk or being distracted while trying to communicate may be like no communications at all.

Further, it became apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic that people needed interaction and wanted to speak more, even though their work burdens had increased. Countless articles have been written about the stress and impact of video calling during this period. The increased use of cameras and the acceptance of home settings, and less than professional backgrounds, have become a new normal. Still, only time will tell if that becomes a permanent, acceptable normal. Discern if your family members or clients need more time for a conversation now and spend that time at the beginning or at the end of any interaction that you have with them.

You are likely to get the best results in business and life if you can communicate effectively. For me, it matters most that I communicate effectively among my family. Sometimes I fall down, but I always try to focus on any family member that makes a

request. Sure, I am busy, and it takes discipline to stop, listen, and respond

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- Identify whether your comment might be inspiring to other people
- Speak if your comment is necessary
- Stop yourself from speaking if what you want to say is not kind

If you can have just one better communication because you spent the time to read this column, I would be pleased. It would be even better if you can make better communication a habit. Good communication habits would be best for us all.

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