

I've been closing messages for quite a few months by saying "Keep showing grace and kindness." This feels more important with each passing week as we struggle with a multitude of divisive issues – mask/no mask; open schools/keep schools online; and so many political issues.

My chapter this week of Dr. Tim Elmore's book "Habitudes – For Career Ready Students; The Art of Preparing for a Career" focuses on communication skills.

Communication skills are complex and need practice to be effective. However, we begin practicing these skills before we can speak. I started reading to my kids when they were tiny babies and, while they had no clue what I was reading from the newspaper, they were learning about tone, inflection, and the interaction that happens when we have a conversation.

Having effective written and verbal communication skills is extremely important in a workplace. We are different people with different histories and different skill sets so good communication is crucial to successfully navigating those differences for effective teamwork. This is just as important if you need to discuss time off with a boss or if you are presenting to an executive board.

In Dr. Elmore's book, he addresses the need for "clear, complete, empathetic communication" from employees for their companies. He notes that this is a challenge because:

- 1) Most of us grew up in a world of screens where messaging is different
- 2) Genuine communication requires hard work and we get lazy
- 3) Half of communication is listening and many of us don't do that well
- 4) Often workplaces are filled with team members from multiple generations
- 5) We tend to assume our listener is on the same page we are on

Dr. Elmore quotes Sydney Harris in saying, "The two words information and communication are often used interchangeably but they signify quite different things. Information is giving out; communication is getting through."

As I read comments on news articles, the hatefulness that too many automatically revert to is, frankly, appalling. So much of communication can't happen effectively on a screen so the tone and inflection of our opinions can be taken wildly out of context.

I really appreciate Dr. Elmore's statement in this section, "Authentic communication usually requires me to step into the shoes of the person I am speaking with and imagine what they will need in order to understand my message. What words will best be comprehended? What voice tone should I use? Do I need to give an example of my point? .....How can I listen well and earn my right to speak? What methods of communicating should I use: email, text, phone call, social media, or face-to-face conversation?"

He goes on to quote psychologist Rollo May, "Communication leads to community, that is, to understanding, intimacy, mutual valuing."

Mutual Valuing – I like that! It says that we can disagree but I can still respect and appreciate that you also have a view point that is impacted by your background and life experiences. In other words, Be Kind!

Keep learning. Keep showing grace and kindness!

*Michelle Beran is the 4-H Youth Development Agent in the Cottonwood Extension District. For more information on this article or other 4-H Youth Development resources, email Michelle at [mberan@ksu.edu](mailto:mberan@ksu.edu) or call 620-793-1910.*

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