

What are Psychological Barriers in Communication

Differing backgrounds

- ◆ No two persons have the same background. Backgrounds can be different due to different education, culture, language, environment, financial status, etc.
- ◆ Our background plays a significant role in how we interpret a message. At times, something not experienced earlier is difficult to interpret or appreciate.
- ◆ Think of a class where the professor talks about his rock-climbing adventure.
- ◆ Students who have experienced rock climbing may be able to appreciate the professor's talk, while others who have been into adventure sports may not find it interesting at all.
- ◆ The representative of a computer company would not make much sense to a group of doctors if in his/her presentation he/she goes into details about the hardware aspects of the computer that he/she plans to install in a hospital.
- ◆ To enhance communication skills, it is necessary to know the background of the audience.

- ◆ This information can accordingly be used to construct the message. Empathy or identification with another person is the solution to this barrier.
- ◆ We must make an effort to understand what the listener can find difficult to comprehend in our message because of the difference between our background and that of the listener.
- ◆ The language understood by the receiver should be used to avoid ambiguity and reduce multiple meanings.
- ◆ The exact meaning of a word resides in the mind of the speaker; therefore, one ought to be cautious while using words.
- ◆ The multiple meanings of a word can astronomically increase the problem of communication barriers.
- ◆ A word can have several connotations (implied meanings) and definitions. The more a word is prone to multiple meanings, the greater are the chances of it being misunderstood.
- ◆ A conscientious speaker is careful to explain her message in context by rephrasing and repeating words that can be confusing.

Wrong inferences

- ◆ Suppose you have returned from a business trip and you find that two of your colleagues are absent. They do not turn up for several days.
- ◆ Since there is a recession on, you draw an inference that they have been laid off.
- ◆ The fact is that they have been promoted and sent to another department. This is an example of fact-inference confusion.
- ◆ It has happened because you failed to distinguish between what actually exists and what you had assumed to exist.
- ◆ Inferences are more dramatic than facts, and for this reason they can provide more scope for gossip and rumour to spread.
- ◆ When professionals analyze material, solve problems, and plan procedures, it is essential that inferences be supported by facts.
- ◆ Systems analysts, marketing specialists, advertisers, architects, engineers, designers, and others must work on various premises and draw inferences after collecting factual data.

- ◆ When presenting any inference in the course of your work, you could use qualifiers such as ‘evidence suggests’ or ‘in my opinion’ to remind yourself and the receiver that this is not yet an established fact.

Blocked categories

- In general, we react positively to information only if it is in consonance with our own views and attitudes.
- Conversely, when we receive information that does not conform to our personal views, habits, and attitudes, or appears unfavorable to us, we tend to react negatively or even disbelieve it.
- Rejection, distortion, and avoidance are three common, undesirable, and negative reactions to unfavorable information.
- Communication and other technologies are advancing so rapidly today that many people find it difficult to quickly adapt themselves to these developments.
- Instead of taking advantage of these developments, which help expedite the communication process, such people tend to resist and criticize them.

- This is a result of having a closed mind. Such people are called misoneists. They tend to ignore variations and differences, which leads to unreliable conclusions.
- Some people have certain prejudices so deeply embedded in their mind that these cannot be challenged.
- Similarly, people who are very rigid in their opinions may face problems in communicating effectively.
- For example, one of your fellow students may think that only students of science are good in reasoning; another might be of the opinion that young executives are more efficient than older ones.
- Such people fall into blocked categories, because they may not be able to accept any deviation from their points of view.

Categorical thinking

- People who feel that they ‘know it all’ are called pansophists.
- This type of thinking exists in people who feel that they know everything about a particular subject, and therefore refuse to accept any further information on that topic.
- For example, in a general body meeting of your organization, you are to be briefed about the annual budget.
- However, you do not pay attention because you feel you have already been briefed about it by your secretary the previous day.

- Later you propose that new vehicles have to be bought.
- Imagine your embarrassment when you realize that the topic was discussed and a decision has already been taken in the general body meeting.
- This type of thinking can pose a major barrier, leading to a failure in communication.
- In such instances, the receivers refuse information because of their 'know-it-all' attitude.
- The clue to detecting this barrier in ourselves and in others is the use of words like all, always, everybody, everything, every time and their opposites like none, never, nobody, and nothing.
- If a message contains too many of these words, then there is a fair chance of the communication getting distorted.
- To avoid this barrier, substitute these words with phrases like 'in most situations' or 'most likely'.
- Label your opinions with phrases like, 'it appears to me' or 'the evidence indicates'.
- If your data is insufficient, it is better to admit that you are unaware of the rest of the information rather than being indirect. To sum up, good communications should:

- Be non-judgemental
- Listen, and above all, paraphrase
- Be empathetic
- Remember that generalization do not always hold good in all situations

- Not assume anything
- Stick to the subject

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