



the job of a coach or trainer is all about communication. we meet with people, help them problem solve - we talk. we tell people things, explain and cajole and convince people to do something that is often scary and wildly uncomfortable...

and then we get paid for it.

we often joke that excelling in our profession often resembles a degree of sociopathy. the goal is to be whatever the client needs at that moment. to read and anticipate and fill a role. the agreement is that this is about them. their goals. their process. our job is to accelerate their process. to be a force multiplier, to be a guide, a catalyst. this has made many of us hyper aware of the nuance of communication, the different approaches we need to take depending on our current audience, their state, and where they are in their process.

the internet. the glorious web of interconnectedness, has robbed us all of much of this nuance. not robbed us, but exposed us. in general, i don't recruit the same way i reinforce. i am deliberate with tone and phrasing, and sound different when trying to invite versus trying to incite.

audience, and objective.

we all have been at that crossroads when we can choose between being clever and kind. jokes that make those close to us closer, or vulnerability that invites those who don't know us to step inside and share their experience. arrows and olive branches.

we are told to never watch how sausage gets made, that if we knew it would spoil it for us. that is fine for children, but as we mature we should be able to recognize - and accept - our own behaviors in others. to extend the openness and understanding that we ourselves would like to be afforded. the hard part about that approach is it requires us as the listener to accept that we are not always important. that in many instances, the speaker wasn't talking to us. that certain information was not

for us because to them, right now: we do not matter.

communication is vital, profoundly personal, and infinitely tactical. it always has been and it always will be. if we are forced to perform communication for the world we will have to sacrifice its effectiveness. i don't think there is anyone out there will disagree that context matters. that audience matters. that intent matters. and it is our intent as listeners that we can control. are you trying to learn, or trying to win? are you trying to understand another human or looking for more bricks to fortify you position?

how are you presenting your argument? how are you performing as an audience? in training, we talk about creating behaviors. rep by rep, experience after experience. we are placing our thumb on the scales, lending our will, our actions towards an outcome... so what outcome are you working towards? what behaviors are you encouraging, both in yourself and in the people around you?

if you are unaware you are a liability. worse than that, you can't even be aware of how much of a liability you are. objective is a lens, it has a focus. this focus gives us power, but it does it at a cost. like focus, our reality is also filtered through the lens of our emotion. regardless of how hard we may try to be objective we cannot avoid the aberration that comes from the things we want and we feel, the most we can hope to do is to observe them, accept them, and try and make corrections.

being afraid changes our perception, it changes what we see and how we interpret it. if we fail to recognize our fear, than we can not correct for our bias. we believe that we are being rational, that we are actually under attack. we project our animal instincts on the world around us, and without cooler heads to prevail, we create the "reality" of our nightmares. anger. depression. petty annoyances... its ok if you are angry. it is ok if you are scared. if you are lazy, depressed, or even just pissed off for no reason. if you feel it, then it is effecting you. affecting you. and if you can accept that then you can work with it. make tactical decisions to correct for the distortion. how many relationships are damaged because one person is having a tantrum and cannot admit it? at least if you can admit you are having a tantrum, communicate it, there is some ground to work with. ignoring our emotions is ignoring empathy, and without empathy, it is not communication, it is performance.

in general, i do not fear making small mistakes. in training, in cooking, in communicating with someone close, i am afforded opportunities to course correct. to bracket an idea and through honest exchange and small adjustments - honestly approach the objective. written word lacks that corrective step, and sound bytes doubly so. in jiu-jitsu, if your goal is to improve a large part of your practice will be spent with people more skilled than yourself, will be spent deliberately putting yourself in bad situations and working your way out. if on the other hand your goal is to win, your objective is to avoid any place you are weak and make it impossible for your opponent to be strong. so the question is: are you trying to communicate, or trying to compete? to progress or perform?

both have their place. but first you have to know what you are doing, and what it costs.

then act. clearly. honestly. and with intent.