

Repairing Communication in Relationships

L.R
Interpersonal Communication Speech 5
Professor Kahn
MW 9:00-10:50 a.m.
Conflict Written Assignment
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I always imagined meeting the perfect man, falling deeply in love, getting married, buying a house, having babies, and living happily ever after. I hoped that my life would turn out just as happily as it turned out for Disney's Cinderella. Little did I know that, that was not exactly how things turn out in real life. No one tells you that outside the wonderful world of cartoon fairytales relationships require a lot of hard work. I have been in a relationship for the past two year. Suddenly after the two years, everything came to a screeching halt, our communication completely broke down and we didn't know how to tell each other what was wrong. After a three-month break we have started talking once again in an attempt to work on the problems plaguing our relationship, not to mention our communication. In this paper I will discuss the conflicts we have faced and ways that we have attempted to fix our communication inefficiencies.

One of the main conflicts in our relationship has been our inability to openly disclose our true feelings, or rather to do so in person and face-to-face. Since the beginning, we have always felt more comfortable opening up via text messages. Joseph De Vito in his book *Interpersonal Message* says about text messages, "often these messages interfere with more important matters, and they may be easily resented. And, of course, if you don't respond as the message sender thinks you should, conflict of a different sort can be generated," (2008, P. 243). There is a freedom in saying things via text messaging, you can send them whenever you please and there is no fear of facing the sender directly. My boyfriend and I learned and recognized that this type of communication has proven very problematic in our relationship. One of the ways that we have tried to solve this problem has been by simply avoiding text message

communication. Sending spur of the moment, emotion filled messages was prohibited. If a problem were to arise we would call or meet in person to discuss it. However, this strategy has proven ineffective. After two weeks of avoiding punching keys on a cell phone and the send button, all goes back to the way things were.

Oblivious to our watchful text-messaging eye, was the fact that there were deeper issues associated with our mode of communication. Through our text-mediated communication, our problems of avoidance and defensiveness went rampant. It took us a while to recognize this issue. Again, DeVito in his interpersonal communication book describes avoidance as it taking the “form of emotional or intellectual avoidance, in which you may leave the conflict psychologically by not dealing with any of the arguments or problems raised,” (2008, P. 253). And, on a different spectrum defensiveness is described as “an attitude of an individual ...characterized by threats, fear and domination” (Devito, 2008, p. 269). My boyfriend was guilty of the former and I was guilty of the latter.

Coincidentally through this interpersonal communication class and by reading of *A New Earth*, I have learned that much of our conflicting behaviors have much to do with our egos. Virginia L. Dowie in her book *Together: A Relationship Survival Kit* describes the ego as “a part of your mind that maintains an idea of who you are and how you are” (2006, p.19). Through our defensive and avoidant strategies my boyfriend and I, or our egos, are trying to protect ideas of who we think we are. My boyfriend in most of our arguments believes that he is correct; when I disagree he tends to want to avoid the conversation all together in fear that I may be right. In his avoidant strategy I feel he is trying to hold on to the image he has of himself, or rather that image the ego believes him

to be. I on the other hand respond defensively when he is avoidant. I act fearful, dominating, and even threatening toward him. My ego insists on being right and having the last word to the point that it takes control over my thoughts and words without really thinking about the consequences. This problem with our egos has led to a tug of war and stagnation in our relationship.

One of the ways that we have now tried to deal with our conflicts is through presence and awareness. *A New Earth*, another book that centers on recognizing the ego and breaking it down, advises that in order to free ourselves of the ego we must be ever present in our lives and aware of the ego at all times (Tolle, 2006. p164). This style of conflict management has proven more helpful. Both my boyfriend and I try to avoid ego-ridden arguments or text messaging. We try to be aware of our egos as much as possible, although this has proven difficult, especially when our feelings get hurt with the truth. We try to be present in the moment, rather than be consumed by thoughts of “I am right, he’s wrong” and vice versa. Something else that we have tried while communicating is argumentativeness. Joseph De Vito defines argumentativeness as “willingness to argue for a point of view, your tendency to speak your mind on significant issues” (2008, p. 259). The easy way out of not discussing emotions, the truth and problems is not an option. We talk through our problems and respectfully use argumentativeness to get our point across to the other person.

Communication just like relationships is ever evolving. The only difference is that communication drives relationships, without it relationships cannot function and grow. Relationships reach points of stagnation as experience and science have proven. To get past the break point communication has to exist, it has to guide people to a level of

understanding, acceptance, and hopefully to the happily ever after. By recognizing and continually being aware of avoidance, defensiveness, egos, and limiting the number of text messages I hope that our relationship can succeed and grow. Hopefully my boyfriend and I can hurdle past the difficult points gracefully and live our happily ever after.

References

DeVito, J. (2008). *Interpersonal Messages Communication and Relationship Skills*. MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Downie, V. (2006). *Together: A Relationship Survival Kit*. CA: Downie Communication.

Tolle, E. (2006). *A New Earth Awakening Your Life's Purpose*. NY: Plume.

Please note although the above student has used the textbooks as references. I would prefer that students find other sources from the school database to support your paper.