How to Stay COOL When Things Heat UP!

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Jan M. McLaughlin, CSP
Jan@YourCommunicationConnection.com
206.818.6689
Essential communication skills

1 Intent
   Purpose—what you want to have happen

2 Criteria, Expectations or Needs
   Relevant factors to be taken into consideration

3 Content
   Subject—what you end up talking about

4 Process
   How we look  _____ %
   How we sound  _____ %
   Words we choose  _____ %

What lies in our power to do, lies in our power not to do.
—Aristotle

IF our message is incongruent!
Focus on a specific situation

Practice: Think of a recent exchange you had with someone when things heated up. Focus on a situation where you weren’t pleased with the outcome or how you dealt with the situation. This is for your eyes only!

Describe the SITUATION—focus on the facts

How did you EXPLAIN this situation to yourself? What meaning did you give this event? How did you interpret it?

Situation

What EMOTIONS came up? How did you feel?

Explanation

What did you DO? Focus on specific, observable behavior.

Emotion

Communication works for those who work at it.
—John Powell
What you are thunders so, I cannot hear what you say.
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Body language and facial expressions**

- A ______ is the most important expression for communicating.
- If we avoid ________ ________ with people, they may perceive us as dishonest, uninterested or cold.
- Be sure to keep cultural differences in mind!

**Avoid gestures that are**

- Aggressive
- ExTRANEOUS
- Or communicate resistance

**The sound of your voice**

Tape yourself... yes, that’s how you sound! Check your

- **Tone**
- **Volume**
- **Pitch**
- **Pace**

Listen to your voice:

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________
   a. ____________________________
   b. ____________________________
3. ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________

Think about the situation you described. How might the way you looked and the way you sounded have helped escalate the situation?

Looked. ____________________________________________________________

Sounded. ____________________________________________________________
Reduce the differences...improve communication

Clarifying

Asking **open-ended questions**—who, when, where, what, how—to gain a better understanding of the other person’s position and move them toward a solution. Be careful with “why” questions—they can be perceived as accusatory, putting the other person on the defensive!

Pacing

To **subtly mirror** the communication style of the other person—their posture, facial expressions, gestures and the pace, volume and energy of their voice. **Special note:** You do not ape or mimic them!

Backtracking

Similar to paraphrasing only you concentrate on using some of their **actual words**. These are called **essence words**—when you use their essence words, they feel heard. **Single out** by repeating a word they use and following that with an open-ended question—especially if you’ve received a single-word answer to a previous question.

Practice: In groups of three, **Person A**, ask **Person B**, “What do you consider your greatest challenge when things heat up?” **Person B** tell them whatever you think is important for them to know about you. **Person A**, your job is to **listen actively**—employing attentive body language and facial expressions while practicing pacing, backtracking and clarifying. **Person C**, you are the observer. **Please note specifically** how **Person A** uses pacing, backtracking and clarifying and how their body language and facial expressions let **Person B** know they were listening.

You will have **four minutes**. At the end of that time, **Person C** will share specific examples of what they observed.
Keep Your COOL!

Exercise Verbal Aikido

A form of martial arts, the goal of Aikido is to unify mind, body and spirit to effectively neutralize an attack while maintaining the safety of the attacker and defender. When attacked—accept, redirect and affirm. In other words, when pushed, pull; when pulled, push.

► Selective Agreement
  • Look for something you can agree with in what the person is saying
  • “You may be right, _____”

► Limited Response
  • Respond only to the subject of the remark, not the emotion behind it
  • This is an excellent technique for responding to sarcasm!

Perception Checking
  • State your observation
  • Offer your interpretation
  • Ask for verification or clarification

Stress the benefits to them
  ► Condition/benefit
    “We / I will / can ..............................................
    if / when you will / do .................................”

Insanity: Doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.
—Albert Einstein
Take care of yourself

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.
—Eleanor Roosevelt

No matter what you do or say to me, I’m still a worthwhile person.
—Jack Canfield

You grow up the day you have your first real laugh at yourself.
—Ethel Barrymore

Psychological

- Visualizations

- Symbols

- Intercepts

- Reaffirm your intent—what question will you ask yourself?

Physical...remember to breathe!

- Sit quietly—with both feet on the floor if in a chair, perhaps legs crossed if on the floor
- Relax hands—hold nothing—resting them on knees or in lap
- Close your eyes
- Initially, for practice, place your palm flat on the front of your waist between the bottom of your ribcage and your abdomen.
- Breathe in through your nose with your mouth closed
- Feel your rib cage expand as your shoulders remain still (that’s your diaphragm expanding)
- Exhale sloooooooowly through your slightly open mouth—pulling your diaphragm toward your spine.
- Now try inhaling to a count of 3. Hold for 1 count. Exhale to a count of 3. Hold for 1 count.
- Breathe rhythmically

And laughing...

- Exercise for your internal organs!
Your action plan

Look back at your situation on page 3 and ask yourself:

What was my intent? What did I want to have happen?

What might I have done to help create that difficult situation?

What could I have said or done to turn around the exchange?

What do I need to do to calm myself when faced with this situation—or a similar one—again?
Suggested reading

Banville, Thomas G. *How To Listen—How To Be Heard.* Nelson-Hall, Chicago, 1978. (Note: out of print—check Amazon)


Mackoff, Barbara, Ph. D. *What Mona Lisa Knew.* (Humor) Lowell House, Los Angeles, 1990. (Note: out of print—check Amazon)


[www.crucialconversations.com](http://www.crucialconversations.com) for *Style Under Stress* assessment and role-play rehearsals

[http://www.yourcommunicationconnection.com/preview.htm](http://www.yourcommunicationconnection.com/preview.htm) for links to Jan’s blog posts and tweets for support