

MIGHTY OAK MINISTRIES



They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor. (Isaiah 61:3)

Pat J. Sikora

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Communicating with Warmth

We all need a warm fuzzy now and then. But what does that mean, and why is it important in our communication at home, at work, and in our churches?

"Warmth...engages. It invites. It opens doors. it laughs. It encourages childlikeness rather than childishness."

*Dr. Gary Sweeten, Dave Ping, & Anne Clippard
Listening for Heaven's Sake."*

Last month we talked about communicating with empathy. The next communication skill we need to add is *warmth*, which is defined as *communicating caring love*. Warmth is demonstrated by voice and by subtle nonverbals:

body language, touch and environmental surroundings. It is a key ingredient in the healing function of community.

Voice:

"Don't talk to me in that tone of voice!"

This phrase is common in our family. Each of us has odd tones and inflections that offend or hurt others. I'm sharp. I don't mean to be. I'm just moving too fast and unless I'm in a counseling situation where I'm deliberately paying attention to such things, I'll often ask a question or give a response abruptly and perhaps a little (*continued on page 2*)

Why Didn't You Warn Me? How to Deal With Challenging Group Members

Congratulations to **Lesley Minkey of San Carlos, CA**, winner of this month's copy of *Why Didn't You Warn Me? How to Deal with Challenging Group Members*. Lesley won simply by commenting on the *Why Didn't You Warn Me?* blog.

Win a Copy! Subscribers only

Now it's your turn. Write a comment on my [blog](#) any-time in September and be entered in a drawing for a free copy of the book. More comments = more entries. I'll draw a winner on October 1.

What do you have to lose! Not a subscriber? Easy. [Sign up here](#).

Be sure to request the book at your local Christian bookstore or order online at [Mighty Oak Ministries](#). You can also order the other three books in the series. Want to read a sample? Go [here](#).



(continued from page 1) shrilly. I honestly don't mean a thing by it, but my family often tells me that I sound rude. I'm working on thinking before I speak, lowering my pitch a notch or two, and slowing down. Those changes communicate warmth and in the process, I get a better response and the other person feels valued.

Often our voices communicate anything but warmth. Rather, voice level and pitch communicate fear, embarrassment, pride, anger, frustration, or other emotions. Voice tone can express disrespect and disdain, even when our words are gracious. Reminding yourself that the person you're talking to is another human being created in the image of God will help give your voice a healing tone rather than a harmful one.

The other ways we communicate warmth are non-verbal, through our body language, our eyes, touch, and environment.

Body language

Experts estimate that 55 to 80 percent of our communication is nonverbal; only 7-10% is attributable to the actual words of a conversation. In other words, we communicate more with what we *don't* say than with what we *do* say. When there's conflict between words and body language, we usually believe the body language. It's important to understand the role of these elements in communication, especially when we need to talk with a challenging person.

The head, face, mouth, shoulders, arms, legs, feet, and the body as a whole give clues to how both a speaker and a listener are feeling. Pay attention to your body as well as to the body of the person you're talking to. Try to keep your arms and legs uncrossed in what's known as an open body posi-

tion. If appropriate, smile, but make sure it's genuine. And remind yourself that, bottom line, you love this person. Even if you're uncomfortable, your body can communicate warmth.

Eyes

Your eyes communicate how you *really* feel, regardless of your words. Neuroscience has shown that when we meet a person, our left eye communicates with their left eye, sending a neurological signal to the right side of the brain at the rate of six cycles per second. This cycling is faster than any verbal or conscious communication, and the recipient immediately knows if they are being welcomed or rejected. So before you communicate, especially in a stressful situation, remind yourself that this is a person beloved by both God and you. Communicate warmth and acceptance rather than rejection and your words will carry more weight.

Appropriate eye contact is also important. The key here is appropriate. You want to look the person in the eye without staring and making them feel uncomfortable. Follow their lead in connecting and looking away. Don't gaze around the room, over their head, or at the floor. Don't keep looking at your watch or the door. When you make eye contact, connect. Deliberately let your eyes send the message, "I'm so glad to be with you." And never, never roll your eyes—a signal of absolute disrespect.

Touch

Healthy touch is essential to life. Research has shown that cuddling and caressing premature in-

"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light."

Matthew 6:22

Body Language:
the unspoken communication that goes on in every face-to-face encounter with another human being. It communicates your true feelings and how well your words are being received.

If you didn't receive the FREE PDF download "Making Time for Prayer" when you signed up for the newsletter, you can get it [here](#).

fants increases their survival rate and lowers their anxiety. Babies who don't receive healthy touch often fail to thrive and sometimes die. Adults also need caring, non-sexual touch. A handshake, a safe hug, a holy kiss all communicate warmth and create an environment for relationship and healing. Noted psychotherapist Virginia Satir said, "We need 4 hugs a day for survival. We need 8 hugs a day for maintenance. We need 12 hugs a day for growth." You'll find that many of the challenging people in your life simply don't get enough hugs.

Environmental surroundings

Pay attention to your environment when you are talking to people--and the more challenging the person or situation, the more important this is. If you need to confront or correct a person, avoid doing so in front of others or in a place that might cause embarrassment. Avoid a restaurant or other public place if you feel that the conversation could turn heated or the person may cry. The key is to make the environment as non-threatening as possible and to respect the feelings of the person you are talking to.

Pay attention to physical barriers, too. If possible, stand or sit close enough to give the feeling of openness and acceptance, facing the person, but with your body at about a 45-degree angle. This avoids the more confrontational head-on position. Lean forward a bit, and keep your arms and legs uncrossed if possible. Avoid crossing your arms across your chest, which communicates hostility or defensiveness. Remove barriers between you, like a desk or centerpieces on a table.

When we communicate with warmth, we create an environment that promotes relationship and healing. We affirm the *imago dei* in a person, and then they can heal, grow, and thrive. Next month we'll talk about the third core condition of a healthy relationship—respect.

*Many concepts in the article are from **Listening For Heaven's Sake** by Dr. Gary Sweeten, et. al., available from [Equipping Ministries International](#)*

Bay Area Opportunity

Book signing and mini-workshop featuring Pat and *Why Didn't You Warn Me? How to Deal with Challenging Group Members*.

The Door Christian Bookstore
705 Laurel
San Carlos, CA 94070
September 11, 2007
5:30 to 7:00 pm

Refreshments will be served. *Seating is limited*, so reserve your seat by visiting The Door or by [email](#). Give us the name, email, and phone number of each person attending.

Train your Leaders

It's time to train your lay leaders for the fall. Equip and encour-

age them to effectively minister to the wounded and broken--or just plain folks.

Pat is available for an hour, a day, or a weekend. You can see a sample of topics [here](#). Or [contact us](#) and we can tailor something for your group.



Pat J. Sikora has been encouraging Christians for over 30 years. Her most recent book, *Why Didn't You Warn Me? How to Deal With Challenging Group Members*, gives small group leaders strategies for effectively serving the most challenging people in their groups. She ministers through Mighty Oak Ministries at www.mightyoakministries.com and *Why Didn't You Warn Me* at www.whydidntyouwarnme.com.

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