

What's Your Intention?

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Communication ranges from building a relationship or gaining consensus to controlling an outcome. According to Susan Campbell, author of Saying What's Real, almost 90% of all communication comes from the intent to control. She cautions that the more we aim to control, the more out of control we feel. When we feel unsure or fearful of the outcome, the need to control gets magnified. As a leader, it is important to recognize that we get things done faster when others feel respected and their opinions valued. As you think about your next meeting or critical conversation, consider your intent. If it is to protect the relationship, pay attention to any telltale signs that you are moving in the wrong direction. Notice the following signals.

Your focus is on the outcome YOU want right from the get-go. You quickly start to dismiss the opinions of others. You react to their point of view with annoyance. You argue, defend or blame when challenged. After all, you just need people to do it! You say things like, "My solution is the one that makes sense for right now. We are wasting our time even talking about anything else."

When you are trying to control, you notice it in your gut. Your whole body tenses. There is tightness in your chest. You hear yourself getting louder, your voice more strident. You may frown or point. Your hands may curl into fists. You may even find yourself sighing out loud or rolling your eyes. You no longer seem able to monitor your body language or what comes out of your mouth.

If you purposefully desire to relate, you do all you can to protect the relationship.

That is first and foremost. Nothing you say or do risks the relationship. You listen very carefully. You do not interrupt or talk over. Then, you summarize their interpretation with unbiased language:

"I think I am hearing that overall you like the idea but you are very concerned with the stress on our people. Did I get that correct?"

Relaters also ask questions to demonstrate they are trying to put together a complete picture. They do not jump to conclusions:

"I know you have said you are very worried about the people this will affect. Can you put more words around why? Is there something I am not aware of?"

When a problem is considered very important, cooperation is highly important. That only comes when all parties feel respected and heard. To gain cooperation and commitment, leaders must put aside personal issues and focus on relating, rather than controlling.

Question: *If you find yourself shifting to control, what corrections do you make? We're interested in your reaction to this article. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

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