

# COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN : speaking and listening

## INTRODUCTION: (10 min)

- Teach/present information on COMMUNICATION
- Have handout to give to students at end of evening.

## COMMUNICATION GAME: The Zin obelisk

- Divide students into teams
- Attached you will find the necessary pieces of information for this exercise (26). Print out one copy per team. Mix up pieces and hand out approximately an equal number of pieces to each member of the team doing the exercise.
- Someone should be allocated to observe each team and to complete the attached 'observation sheet'.
- Instructions to teams
  - *In the ancient city of Atlantis a solid, rectangular obelisk called a ZIN was built in honour of the Goddess Tina. The structure took less than two weeks to complete and your task is to determine on which day of the week it was completed.*
  - *You may share the information you have on the cards, but you must not show your cards to other players.*
  - *You are also only allowed to speak if you have the **'talking stick'**. You may not snatch the talking stick from someone else but you can indicate that you wish to have the stick so that you can say something.*

**(PLEASE NOTE** that this instructions is optional and should not be used if time is very limited nor if English level is poorer as it will make the whole exercise much, much harder. For the 'talking stick' simply used a 12" ruler.)

- The object of the exercise has nothing to do with finding the correct answer or completing the exercise within the set time limit. The primary aim of this exercise is how well the team worked together. However the answer is included for those who want to know!

## FOLLOW-ON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Ask students to comment on the exercise – not so much on the difficulty but how they worked together as a team
- You could ask them who they thought participated most or least. Do their answers agree with observers?
- What problems did they experience in their team work? Are there ways they could improve on their communication? Encourage feedback from observers.
- What aspects of their own personality or culture influence the way they communicate? Are these positives or negatives?
- What did they think of the teaching that was presented at the beginning of the evening? Did it raise any questions for them?

## COMMUNICATION:

There are 4 main aspects to the subject of communication: READING, WRITING, SPEAKING and LISTENING

Tonight we will look especially at speaking generally (not in the sense of public speaking or presentation) and listening.

We live in a multi-cultural world if we're not careful there is real potential for misunderstanding and conflict.

At its most basic level communication is words on the printed page, it is the means by which information is conveyed.

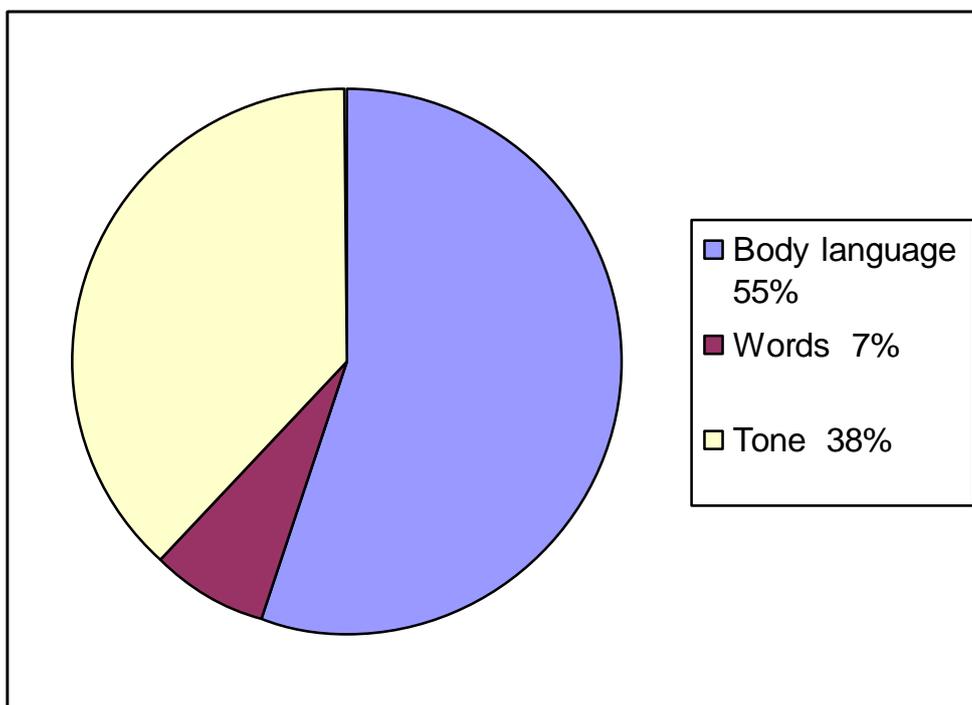
Really effective communication is more than just words it's also the process of conveying meaning and the means by which real relationship is established.

Communication is a two-way process - it's not just about what you've spoken, it's also about what the other person has heard.

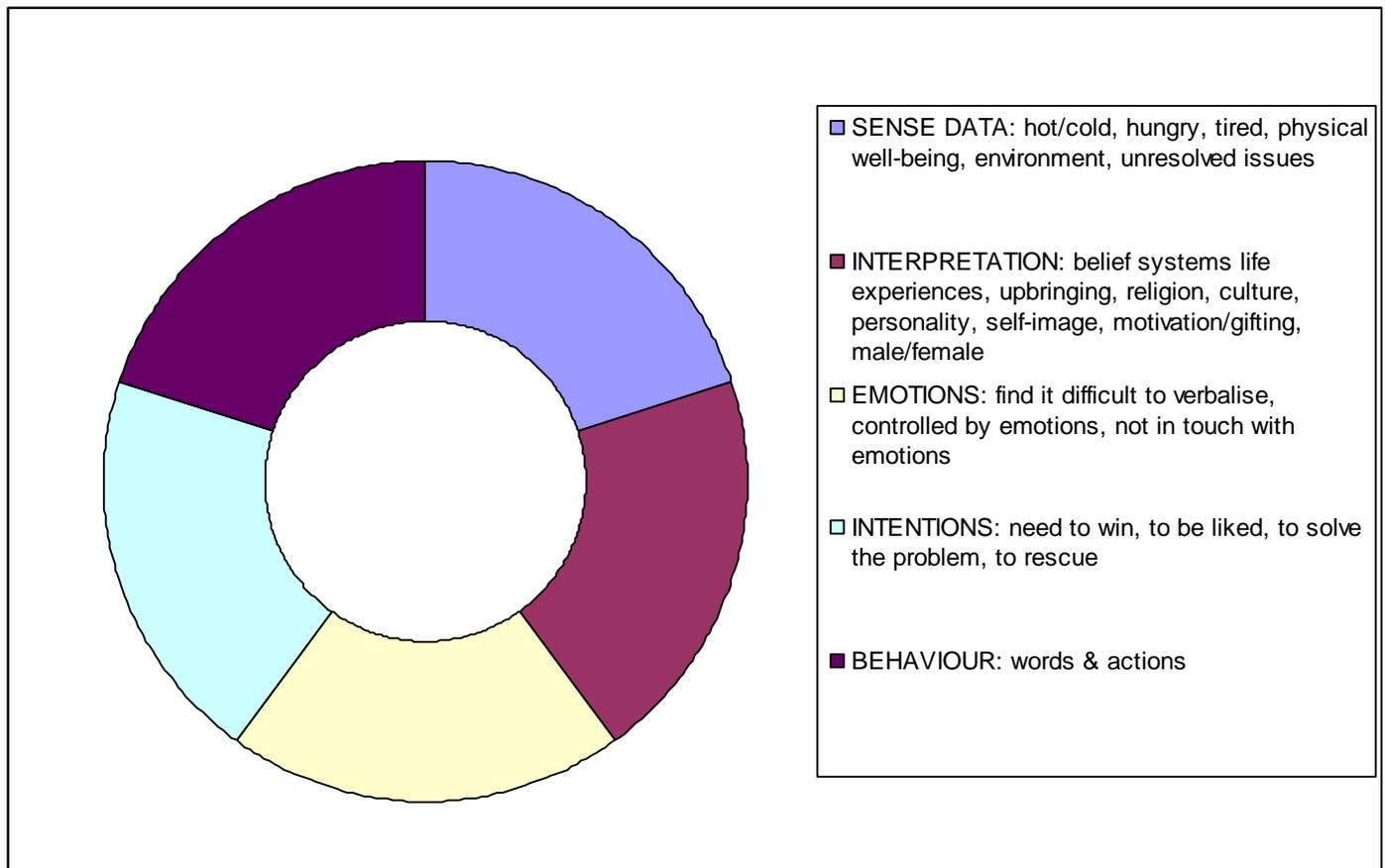
Essentially communication is the ability of one person to make contact with another and for understanding to take place. BUT we need to note that understanding does not always equate with agreement!

Ineffective communication is at the root of many of our relational problems.

Communication is both verbal and non-verbal - it's made up of words, tone of voice and body language.



## THE COMMUNICATION WHEEL



### SENSE DATA

This is the beginning of the communication wheel for the receiver but can also influence the quality of communication from the giver.

We are often unaware but all the time our 5 senses are reporting various data to us. This data might be related to our environment or physical well-being, telling us we're too hot, too cold, tired, hungry, etc. or it may be directly related to a particular communication event.

As the communicator we need to be aware of what sense data we're giving out. As a communicator if we use words but the wrong tone or body language it will totally contradict and destroy the message.

Problems begin to arise when we are not aware of this sense data, or when we don't take time to sort through conflicting data. When there is incongruence between words and body language what do we choose to believe - generally the negative part of the message.

## **INTERPRETATION**

This can be an almost instant response. Interpretation is our own frame of reference - our assumptions, evaluations, opinions, conclusions.

Our interpretations are not only based on the present immediate situation, they are also coloured by previous life experiences, our upbringing, religion, culture, personality, etc.

Interpretation is the responsibility of the receiver. We need to try to slow down the interpretation process.

Problems arise when we jump to conclusions or when we do not ask enough questions or take the time to process the sense data. If we don't take the time to process we will normally choose to believe the negative that is being communicated.

We need to be committed enough to being an effective communicator that we take time to check out if our interpretations are correct.

## **EMOTIONS**

Our interpretations will in turn rapidly spark off certain emotions.

Whether we are aware of them or not our emotions are a powerful force which can strongly influence our behaviour. They might trigger an outburst of anger or cause shut-down and denial of what's going on inside.

We need to be aware of what our emotions are saying, but not allow them to control and determine our lives. We need to be willing to take responsibility for what's going on inside of us and learn how to communicate that.

Difficulties will arise when we are unable to identify what we're feeling, or when we're uncomfortable sharing our emotions, especially the negative ones.

## **INTENTIONS**

These are the motivation, or driving force, that gives birth to our behaviour. What is it we are wanting to accomplish?

The majority of us don't listen with the intent to understand, we listen with the intent to reply.

If our intention is to prove we're right we have just stepped onto a slippery downhill slope. You may end up winning an argument, but you won't have gained any points in the effective communication stakes.

Our intention needs to be that unity of relationship is more important than being right. Maintaining unity sometimes involves things that are painful - like honesty, admitting fears & doubts, talking things out.

## **BEHAVIOUR**

We need to be aware of the punctuation marks of our behaviour - such things as tone/volume of voice, body language, facial expressions.

Remember that your behaviour becomes the other person's sense data!

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Once the Communication Wheel begins turning it is a rapid process - we need to learn to slow that process down. We need to seek to change what is in our power to change! We need to be honest and we need to be committed to growth in this area.

We need to develop greater sensitivity to our words, tone, body language and actions. If we want to learn and grow we shouldn't be afraid to ask people to feedback what they understood from our communication.

# THE ZIN OBELISK

## INSTRUCTION SHEET

1. In the ancient city of Atlantis a solid, rectangular obelisk called a ZIN was built in honour of the Goddess Tina. The structure took less than two weeks to complete and your task is to determine on which day of the week it was completed.
2. You may share the information you have on the cards, but you must not show your cards to other players.
3. You are also only allowed to speak if you have the **'talking stick'**. You may not snatch the talking stick from someone else but you can indicate that you wish to have the stick so that you can say something.

The basic measurement of time in Atlantis is a day

Day 3 in the Atlantian week is called Sharkday

The Atlantian day is divided into Schlibs and Ponks

Workers each lay 150 blocks per Schlib

The height of the ZIN is 30 metres

A decimetre is a tenth of a metre

The ZIN is built of stone blocks and each block is 30 cubic decimetres

Day 4 in the Atlantian week is called Mermaid-day

Day 1 in the Atlantian week is Aquaday

There are 5 days in the Atlantian week

The working day has 9 Schlibs

Day 2 in the Atlantian week is called Neptimus

There are 8 Ponks in a Schlib

Each worker takes rest periods in the working day totalling 16 Ponks

Only one gang is working on the construction of the ZIN

At any time when work is taking place there are 9 people on site

Each gang includes two women

No work takes place on Daydoldrum

Day 5 in the Atlantian week is called Day-doldrum

One metre equals a megalithic yard

One member of the gang has religious duties and does not lay blocks

The ZIN is made of green blocks

The depth of the ZIN is 6 metres

Green has a special significance on Mermaid-day

The length of the ZIN is 9 metres

Work starts on the first day of the Atlantian week

# **OBSERVATION SHEET**

Who made the first move?

Who participated most?

Who participated least?

What could you read in people's body language?

Did people listen well?

How could team relationships have been improved?

How did the team go about solving the problem?

What hindrances were there to accomplishing the task?

## **ZIN OBELISK**

### **ANSWER SHEET**

The object of the Zin Obelisk exercise has nothing to do with finding the correct answer or completing the exercise within the set time limit. The primary aim of this exercise is how well the team worked together.

However, for those of you desperate to know the answer and how to get there, here it is:

- The dimensions of the obelisk are 30 x 6 x 9 metres or 300 x 60 x 90 decimetres
- If you multiply 300 x 60 x 90 you end up with 16,200,000 decimetres
- Divide this figure by 30 (which is the size of each block) and you arrive at a figure of 54,000 – which is the number of blocks needed to build the obelisk
- Each team consists of 8 people who actually do the work (one is exempt for religious reasons) and each person actually works for 7 schlibs in each day. Each schlib a person lays 150 blocks.
- Therefore multiply 8 (people) by 7 (schlibs) by 150 (blocks) and you discover that the team lays 8,400 blocks per day
- Divide 54,000 by 8,400 and you find that the obelisk was completed on the 7<sup>th</sup> day
- Work began on day one (Aquaday) and no work is done on Day-doldrum

Therefore work was completed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> week - SHARKDAY!