

# The Central Role of Motivation in E-Communication

Dr. Edward Santana-Grace, PhD

Right Motivation is Central to E-Communication. For E-Communication to accomplish its purpose—to build mutual understanding—each participant must be motivated by a sincere desire to know how the other person is thinking about and experiencing the issue under discussion.

I am personally aware from my years of coaching and reflection upon relationship dynamics that one of our deepest longings is to be understood and to feel safe to express ourselves without necessarily needing to be right. In fact, I have seen that, if understood, one is more open to see another person's position and to find areas of mutually satisfying problem solving. This thought-filled compromising added weight to my conviction that "being understood" is vitally important for all societal and human development as well as for the quality of one's relationships whether in the home, at school or the workplace.

I am also aware that negative relationship behaviors can be triggered when one believes they are not understood. That is why I urge each person—whether on a team, in a small group or in a personal relationship—to make every effort to understand the other. I simultaneously advocate the use of E-Communication to achieve that goal as it is among the best and safest ways to insure mutual understanding.

Of course, if a person—intentionally or unintentionally—were to use E-Communication to try to get only their own opinions and desires heard, or to resolve an issue based only on their perspective or to have only their own needs met, he/she would be abusing E-Communication. Each of us needs to check our motivation and make sure we are not abusing the other. Hold fast in your memory that E-Communication's goal is to create mutual understanding; it is not for you to get your own way or to babble on and on.

In other words, if you truly want to enhance your group's dynamics or your personal relationships, use E-Communication correctly. If you use E-Communication with the right motivation, it provides a context in which the dignity of each person is enshrined and their rights to their own opinions, needs, desires, and dreams are safeguarded. Not surprisingly, when this happens, people find mutually satisfying solutions to issues they face.

Growth in Skill is also Important: I also insist that participants become skilled in E-Communication. I encourage skillfulness because competency helps a person do E-Communication well. Obviously, skillfulness also increases one's satisfaction in doing E-Communication, which augments one's willingness to use E-Communication in the future.

Effective Because Highly Engineered: Once a person begins to experience the effectiveness of E-Communication and its two key components, E-Reading *and* E-Sharing, they realize that it is a highly engineered skill, grounded in processes that are universally true of all persons. They also comprehend that E-Communication has been so finely engineered that it keeps anger and anxiety from becoming unregulated during the discussion.

Reciprocity: With a coach, willing participants accomplish the task of E-Reading and E-Sharing for each other—reciprocate—and mutual understanding grows. Without a coach in the beginning, participants can get stuck. Whenever stuck, do not blame, stop trying to do E-Communication, re-center yourselves and set a time to meet with the coach. In the meantime, practice all the other t-Skills and i-Skills and continue to practice E-Reading and E-Sharing separately in other settings.

An example of creative reciprocity: A wife—for whatever reason—was unable to read her husband’s facial expressions and body language. The issue under discussion was their second child. Since the wife could not E-Read her husband, he asked her if he could write down what was going on within him and have her read them back to him. She agreed. She reviewed the note and then shared the essence of what he wrote in a very understanding manner. Afterwards, she said she was relieved to have found a way to reciprocate. After the training session, he told me that hearing his wife share his note back to him was the deepest moment of connection he had experienced in their fourteen years of marriage. He felt truly understood. His remarks reconfirmed to me just how vital mutual understanding is for the quality and enhancement of relationships. It also taught me how vitally important E-Reading and E-Sharing are to accomplish mutual understanding.

Note 1: You can practice E-Reading *and* E-Sharing as separate skills in multiple situations.

Note 2: Make “understanding the other” the concern of your heart and the skill of your mind!

The best relationships are built on the willingness to stay in the conversation. E-Communication is the best tool to do that because it makes it safer and more rewarding to stay in the conversation. [John Loppnow, 2010]

I consider John Loppnow’s reflection: “The best relationships are built on the willingness to stay in the conversation” as radically all encompassing. Whenever I reflect upon it, I see how it applies to almost all conversations in which two or more people are involved, from personal to international relationships.

Of course, if it is not safe to converse, it is always wiser to listen to Prudence and work to create safe conditions before engaging the conversation. [Edward Santana-Grace, June, 2014]