
3

The Power and Limitations of Speaking

Complaint: "Nobody understands me."

Answer: "You're right."

As you begin to try these communication techniques, you'll be amazed at how little people remember of what you tell them. You will work for hours creating the most perfect presentation imaginable. You'll pack it with interesting and important facts and deliver it smoothly and confidently. Perhaps you will even use overheads with keywords, graphs, and charts. Yet, when you talk to some of the brighter, more highly motivated people you know, they will remember little of what you say.

Miscommunication is common

The most typical result of communication is miscommunication. Each communication results in a different meaning in the speaker's mind and the listener's mind. So, if you're thinking "people don't always understand me when I need them to," you're in good company.

You can become far more adept at packaging your communication, and thereby optimize its impact. The first step is to master the power, and respect the limitations, of speaking.

What to write/what to say?

One of the biggest problems in professional communication is that people speak when they should write their messages, and they write when they should send voicemail. An essential skill you will learn in this chapter is the ability to analyze a message and decide which parts are best spoken and which parts should be written.

The power of speaking

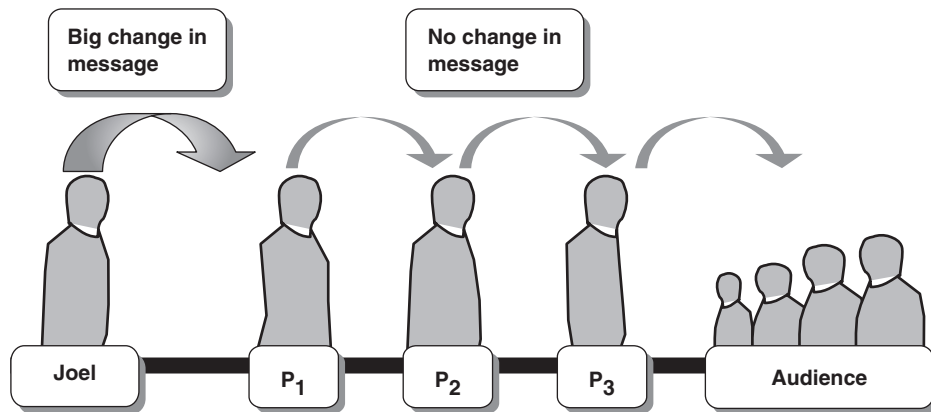
Did you play the *telephone game* when you were a child? The teacher would whisper a message to the first student, who would then whisper it to the second, and so on, until the last person in the class received the message. The teacher told the first student, "It's Darma's birthday today, and we're going to have cake." After 25 kids had passed it on, it came out from the last student as, "Frogs are green." "Where did that come from?" you think to yourself.

If you took one of my classes, you'd witness an experiment based on the telephone game. I've done this exercise hundreds of times, so my students could see what kind of message is best sent by speaking, and what kind of message should be written. You must learn to avoid this most common communication error: Speaking when you should write, or writing when you should speak. Let me tell you about it, and you will see what thousands of people have learned in my workshops and classes.

Story time

Here's how it works: I read a brief story to one person, who tells it to a second person, who then tells it to a third (see **Figure 3.1—Content Loss as Message Is Retold**). Now, the story I read is especially designed to contain message elements that are ideal for speaking, and it also contains parts that should be written, not spoken.

Here's what happens—The first person tells the second person a story that is different from the story I read her. **Now, here's the key:** The second person tells the third person a story almost identical to the story he was told by the first person. Then, the message the third person tells the audience is the same as the message she was told by

Figure 3.1 Content Loss as Message is Retold

the second person. The message remained intact after it had been filtered and processed by the first person's mind. What you may call forgetting, I call *refining*. The first person's mind acted like a miniature communication processing plant. Her brain filtered out all the things that should have been written, and what was left was pure, perfect oral communication.

What was remembered and what was forgotten

People remember the first thing they hear and the last thing said. They forget the stuff in the middle of the story (see **Table 3.1—Remembered in Speech**). You'll learn more about how to use this scientific fact in **Chapter 7—Message Packaging—Strategies for Formatting Presentations: How You Say It**.

Table 3.1 Remembered in Speech

Oral message

What you'll remember:

- First and last things said
- Pictures and stories (events)
- Repetition—things said 3 times (sort of)

The parts of the message always remembered are *sensory-rich* pictures and events that are told. This happens even when the sensory-rich message is said in the middle part of the message. Sensory-rich messages pop clear pictures into people's heads. In the theatre of their minds, sensory-rich messages give them recollections of sounds, tastes, smells, and body feelings.

Repetition does not work—You may have been taught that repetition aids memory. Advertising people are advised to repeat their ideas three times in a commercial. I've learned that repetition does not get your listener to remember. What does aid memory, every time, is things said first, last, and *sensory-rich messages*.

What is always forgotten—The demonstrators forget numbers, names, and other details. They also don't remember any sequence of events. If a story has four steps, people forget the order of when things happen. When you speak, you create a sense that things happen simultaneously, in flashes (see **Table 3.2—Forgotten in Speech**).

Table 3.2 Forgotten in Speech (Should Be Written)

Oral message

What you'll forget:

- Names
- Numbers
- Details
- When things happened
- Sequence of events
- Will tend to create and add

When you talk to people, or give a presentation, do you ever wonder what they will remember? People will reliably remember the strong sensory messages you send them. You can try it. After you've spoken, ask your audience to write down five things they remember. You'll see a consistent pattern of sense memory:

- The pictures you shot into their minds.
- The sounds you suggested.
- The smells and feelings you talked about.

Your "self" was formed over time

The brain is essentially blank at birth. Recently, we've discovered that significant learning occurs when you're *in utero*—you were active

in your mother's womb, in the last trimester. It was a time of great growth, and perhaps, a time of learning. However, for practical purposes, vast regions of your brain were blank at birth. In fact, the first two to three years of your time on earth were characterized by an explosive growth in the numbers and types of brain cells. Did you know that you had more brain cells at age two than you have now? And it's not just because of those undergraduate keg parties. After birth, the brain expands vastly; soon after, it begins to determine which brain cells you'll need. It then reduces the number of cells you will have throughout your life.

Some brain patterns are on-board at birth

We've learned that parts of your brain are "hardwired." You have genetically determined traits that play an important role in your life. But by far, the larger aspects of you—your skills, worldview, knowledge, disposition, and temperament—are the result of the patterns of cellular interconnection in your brain.

Brain programmed through sensory information

All that you are came from your interaction with the world. Think about it. All the information you have taken in, all the experiences you have had were delivered to you through your sensory organs. If you had no sensory contact with the world, your brain would lie fallow and undeveloped. Through the things your eyes see, the sounds your ears hear, and the sensations of pain, pleasure, heat, and cold that your skin senses, your brain communicates with the outside world.

Table 3.3 Sensory Modality

Our senses: Gateway to the mind	
Sense	Sense Organ
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sight • Hearing • Touch • Smell • Taste • Emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eyes • Ears • Skin • Nose • Tongue • Viscera

The only way your mind can connect with the world is through your sensory organs. The same is true of the messages you send and receive from other people. You communicate through sensory organs (eyes, ears, skin, tongue, and nose; see **Table 3.3—Sensory Modality**). The senses are the only gateway to communication with other people (due respect to those individuals skilled in psychic communication—I don't know how to teach that skill).

A little bit of sensory memory stimulation works wonders

When you work with sensory memory, you don't have to become the master storyteller. It's not necessary to weave a tapestry of words, sights, sounds, and celebration to use sensory memory. In business, if you overdo the description and become too verbose, you'll turn the audience off. It's like cooking with spice: You need a pinch of oregano, not a fistful, to spice up the dish you're serving.

Secret behind using sense memory

St. Augustine said, "God is in the details" (popularized by the great architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe). You activate your audience when you pick a few sensory-rich details and plant them in your message. If you want to bring home the impact of company layoffs, all you have to do is paint a single, vivid picture. Make it a small picture that illuminates a detail.

"It's in their eyes . . . the shocked look in a man's face as he picks up his last paycheck. You know he's thinking, 'What am I going to do now?' . . . and you know he thinks we've betrayed him."

It's easy; we live in a sensory-rich world. You'll find examples all around you:

"Waking up Saturday morning to the aroma of fresh-brewed coffee someone else has already made."

"It's the sinking feeling you get in the pit of your stomach as the elevator starts down too fast."

"You'll see it in the early morning mist on a mirror-flat lake."

Table 3.4 Verbal Clues to a Listener's Preferred Sensory Mode

Listener's preferred sense	
<i>Preferred Sense</i>	<i>Things the Listener May Say</i>
Visual	"I see what you mean." "I get the picture." "That's very clear."
Aural (hearing)	"I hear you." "Sounds good to me." "That doesn't ring true."
Visceral (body/emotions)	"I can't get my hands on it." "I can grasp what you mean." "Things are well in hand."

Determine a listener's preferred sense by the things they say.

"It's a child's laugh, the ring of the cash register; it's the excitement in their eyes."

Make sure your important points are communicated by sensory memory. What you say will be remembered.

Sensory preference— different senses for different people

Some people, in fact, most people are visually oriented—they prefer messages that let them see. They want messages in pictures. They receive and decode what you say primarily with visual sense memory.

Probably because of the years I worked in radio, I tend to be more acoustically oriented. You'll find that each individual you deal with may have a different orientation from your own.

Sometimes people give you clues to their preferred mode of sensory communication. They'll tell you if you listen (see **Table 3.4—Verbal Clues to a Listener's Preferred Sensory Mode**).

Symbols

Introduction to Symbols

Skillful technicians, like surgeons, know their tools; they spend hundreds of hours learning how to make tiny, perfect cuts with a scalpel, or tying intricate surgical knots with one hand. As a skilled communicator, you'll want to know more about the tools you can use. The most fundamental tool we have in communication is the symbol. A symbol is something that stands for something else.

Humans are symbol-seeking, symbol-seeing, and symbol-sending critters. As you read this section, you'll begin to appreciate what a symbol-loving culture we live in, and how much of what you want in life comes your way because you use symbols with skill.

The basic element of communication: the sign

The most basic element of communication is the sign. A sign is a symbol. A symbol is something that stands for something else.

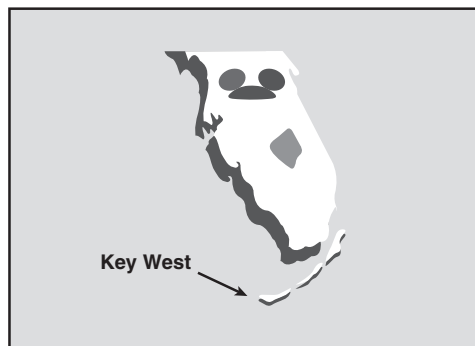
For example, a map is a symbol that represents an actual physical, geographic territory. Look at this map of my home state, Florida and Lake Okeechobee (see **Figure 3.2—Map of Florida** and **Figure 3.3—Lake Okeechobee**).

Here is where you go to play with the mice at Disney World. This is a Mouseketeer hat, in case you didn't recognize it (see **Figure 3.4—Mouse Hat: Disney World**).

These are the Florida Keys, and here is Key West. When you visit Florida, be sure to make the trip to Key West. Get there in time for sunset—it's one of the most magnificent shows on earth. And be sure to rent a convertible: You'll look marvelous with the top down (see **Figure 3.5—Florida Keys**).

Figure 3.2 Map of Florida**Figure 3.3** Lake Okeechobee

Here is Lake Okeechobee

Figure 3.4 Mouse Hat: Disney World**Figure 3.5** Florida Keys

Symbols are not the object they represent

Look at my beautifully handcrafted maps of Florida. They are not really Florida, are they? You knew that, but you agreed for a moment in time, and for the sake of communication, that we'd use my inarticulate squiggles to represent Florida. What did you receive from my communication? Did you see a real Rand McNally map of Florida, or did your mind see an overhead satellite photo of the state? When you looked at the Mouse Hat, did you see Mickey or Disney World? Have you ever been to Disney World? If you have been, then your interpretation of these symbols would be different than if you had seen only Disney World commercials. What sunset did you see in Key West? If you have not seen a Key West sunset, whatever your mind conjured was a pale, inadequate substitute. (You must see a Key West sunset—it's amazing, soul-shaking, and can't be captured on film or video. You have to be there in person. Promise me you'll go.)

Theatre of the mind

The magic of communication is that **you agree to suspend reality for a moment and enter the theatre of your mind.** I cannot force you to do it—to invest the mental effort necessary for a communication event to be shared. If you're pressed for time, or if you find this text unimportant or boring, you may have skimmed quickly, and not expended the mental effort necessary to receive the message I sent you in those maps. See, I did not really send it. I merely offered it to you, held it out for your consideration. If you wanted to take it, you had to bring something with you from your experience, your memory.

Types of symbols

Human beings are symbol-seeing critters. Everything in our world we can visualize or sense has symbolic meaning and can be used in communication. The more able and facile you are at summoning, selecting, and sending symbols, the better a communicator you'll become. (See if you can say that last sentence without slobbering.) Now, come with me on a little road trip, as we explore some symbols, and see what they mean to us.

Types of meaning

As you may suspect, communication scientists have decided that symbols are so important to the world that they should be given different names and assigned to precise, functional categories. Two of these symbolic categories have important information that will help you deliver more effective messages.

Denotative Symbols

Businesspeople love using *Denotative Symbols*. As Gil Grissom, from TV's *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, is fond of saying, "We let the evidence speak for itself." When you present hard data, you use Denotative Symbols. A Denotative Symbol is a concrete object and the sign attached to it, for example, the **Grand Canyon**.

As you read the words *Grand Canyon*, little error is produced when that symbol is shot into your mind. The chance is good you've pictured the huge natural wonder in the American West. The only chance for miscommunication is if you had never seen or heard of the Grand Canyon, or if your brain had slipped a synapse, and you had

thought of Grand Cayman Island—another natural wonder like the Grand Canyon, only much more moist. The communication is accurate, and the probability of error in transmission and reception is low. When you want your message to be accurate, you select Denotative Symbols from your lexicon. Businesspeople need to send many accurate, factual messages loaded with Denotative Symbols. **Denotative Symbols are popular with businesspeople, but poor persuaders. Denotative Symbols are easy to remember.**

The problem with Denotative Symbols is that they are not persuasive. If you build your message with mostly factual, accurate symbols, you'll inform your listeners, but you may not move them. If you want to be persuasive, you must mix in the right dose of Connotative Symbols.

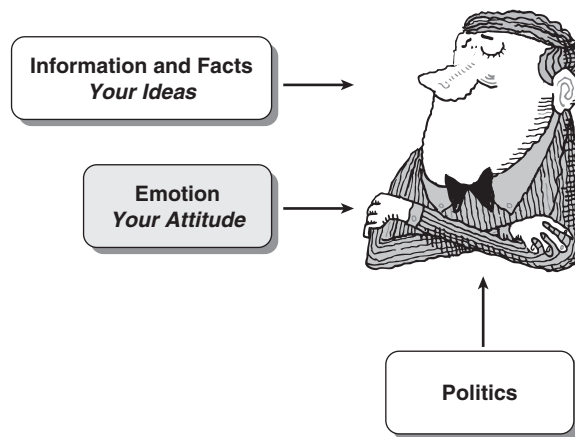
Connotative Symbols

As you may suspect, because Denotative Symbols are accurate and easily remembered, the other major category of symbols, *Connotative Symbols*, will be inaccurate and easily forgotten. You're right. The inaccuracy comes from the rich constellation of meaning that surrounds Connotative Symbols. The meaning of a Connotative Symbol varies from person to person. For example, the meaning of the symbol *excellent meal* will change from person to person, and event to event. An *excellent meal* to some people is measured by the quantity of food served; for example, *country buffet* or Shoney's *All-You-Can-Eat Breakfast Bar* would constitute an excellent meal to a group of fraternity boys after a beer party. Compare the meaning of an *excellent meal*, in the context of entertaining a senior executive: selecting a restaurant that furnishes a large bib, a bucket, and big spoon to each diner might not be an appropriate choice. You and the executive might seek an *excellent meal* at one of the city's elegant dining establishments.

The meaning of a word can change from person to person based on their experience. For example, the word *mother* brings to mind a warm, feminine, nurturing person. However, among the lessons society has learned in the past 5 years is that the word *mother* can also signify an alcoholic and/or drug-addicted, abusive, pain-inflicting source of despair. In another dimension, think about other Connotative Symbols, such as "love" or "fairness" or "success." Compare the meaning of "love" for a newlywed couple and for a recently divorced mother of five children. Or compare the meaning of "success" between a business major and a student of philosophy, or the fine arts. Who would tend to equate dollars and cents with success?

I am sure you are aware that Connotative Symbols are imprecise. Senders must be aware of the impact of these symbols on their listeners. The meaning will vary from listener to listener, and from time to time for the same listener. The power that Connotative Symbols deliver is their ability to arouse emotion in the speaker and the listener. These are the words that inspire us. When Franklin Roosevelt wanted to stir the souls of the American people during the Great Depression (1929–1940), he selected the simple, but rich, Connotative Symbol “fear.” Roosevelt told the American people, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” Certain Denotative Symbols can arouse emotion, but they must be linked to a strong sensory modality. For example, when Winston Churchill appealed to the people of Britain in 1940 to rally behind him through the Blitz bombings, he selected a set of Denotative Symbols: “blood, toil, tears, and sweat.” As they affect our emotions, Denotative Symbols can produce a reaction. “I’ve torn my guts out over this presentation.” “There was blood all over Wall Street today.”

Figure 3.6 Persuasion = Facts & Emotion: Denotative and Connotative Symbols and Meaning



Think of Persuasion as *Facts wrapped in Emotion*

Persuasive messages contain both Denotative and Connotative Symbols

Accurate Denotative Symbols appeal to listeners’ heads. They allow you to reason with them. But reason will not move most people.

You can't depend upon people to act on facts alone. Often, the facts don't have meaning without a context for analysis: their impact upon the firm, its employees, and customers. This impact is best presented—given meaning and salience—through Connotative Symbols that arouse the listener. It's not enough to present the facts for decision making. You must also provide the motivation for action. Providing facts for consideration is a staff-level function. Motivating people to action is leadership, an executive quality (see **Figure 3.6—Persuasion = Facts & Emotion: Denotative and Connotative Symbols and Meaning**).

Contextual meaning

We give symbols meaning based on two types of context:

1. The physical and social environment in which the symbol is used.
2. The symbol's semantic context with other symbols, i.e., words modify the meaning of other words.

For example, the physical/social environment will change the meaning of the meaning-rich symbol of a bathing suit. Visualize yourself in a bathing suit on the beach. You're standing with volleyball players, sun-soakers, and people whizzing by aerobically on skates, on bikes, or jogging. What symbolic meaning does your suit have? Perhaps positive messages such as "dressed appropriately" or "with-it fashionable" or "athletic" or "sexy" or "summertime" or "fun"? Or perhaps, negative, shameful messages such as "human stick" or "beached whale" come to mind. Now, visualize yourself wearing your bathing suit on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. There you stand, in that huge open room with hundreds of frantically active people each wearing a multicolored barber jacket, symbolizing their firm affiliation. What messages come to mind: "nut" or "embarrassment" or "exhibitionist" or "lawbreaker"?

The physical/social environment changes the meaning and the impact of your language on other people. Think of the meaning and impact of using profanity in church versus saying those same words during a softball game. A more subtle change takes place in the impact of your words when you use the full extent of your considerable vocabulary and skill with technical words—in a business meeting, or talking with the car mechanic. In the business meeting, you'll be accepted and probably effective. The same use of your expansive vocabulary, when you speak with a mechanic or other blue-collar worker, may create a distance. You'll emphasize the difference in your

social group and relative status. You might alienate the mechanic and cause your bill to increase.

Words also take on meaning as they are nested together in sentences. Remember how you learned to read? You discovered the meaning of new words, as a detective would, by studying the other words in the sentence. You did not have to go to an adult to find the meaning of new words you encountered. This was an important step, as you became an independent learner.

Color

Colors are rich in symbolic meaning. What does the color red mean? (See **Table 3.5—Meaning of the Color Red.**)

Consider the color green. (See **Table 3.6—Meaning of the Color Green.**)

Do you ever think of business dress as a costume? Would the costume you wear to a first job interview be different from the way you might dress after you get the job? It might not. Would you wear the same outfit to a meeting with your banker, to present a business plan seeking a loan, as you would to a meeting with the creative group at your advertising agency?

Imagine you're walking down a public street at 9:30 p.m. You see Harry coming the other way. Now, you don't know Harry, but he starts walking toward you and says, "Hold it right there." What do you do?

Table 3.5 Meaning of the Color Red

Blood, violence, death
Stop sign
Anger
Hot
Communist

Table 3.6 Meaning of the Color Green

Money
Environment, ecology
Oxygen tank
Life
Lemon/lime flavored soft drink
Envy

Scene One Harry is 5'10" tall and weighs approximately 175 pounds. He is about 35 years old. Harry is wearing an old, soiled, army-issue, olive drab field jacket. His shoes are ancient, nondescript, and shabby. He is wearing a black watch cap.

What do you do? How would you treat Harry?

Scene Two Harry is 5'10" tall and weighs about 175 pounds. He is about 35 years old. His shirt is light blue. He is wearing black pants, and on his feet are bright, *spit-shine* black shoes with rubber soles. The hat he wears is a peaked military type, with an interesting badge on the crown. What really commands your attention is his accessories. Harry is wearing lots of chrome with leather accents, including handcuffs, truncheon, badge, mace, and most impressive, about 5 pounds of gunmetal blue pistol in a worn leather holster.

What do you do?

The only difference between the Harrys is what they are wearing. A business costume is as important as any public safety officer's uniform. It helps identify us, and helps us take command. Just as a police uniform increases the power and authority of an officer, the correct business clothing will send out the right signals about you.

Lines

Here are two people (see **Figure 3.7—Person A and Person B**).

Figure 3.7 Person A and Person B



- | A | B | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Which person would you like to sit next to on a four-hour plane trip? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Which one would you like to dine with? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Which one would you like to have as a project team member? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Which one do you want to handle your lawsuit against a bungling, substance-abusing surgeon who has mutilated someone you love? |

Now that you've made these important decisions, consider what you've just done. You made decisions of varying importance—issues from your travel comfort to the future care of a disabled loved one—from two different lines on a sheet of paper. Your ability to get deep meaning from symbols is a tribute to your intelligence and experience. It's one of humans' greatest and most valuable capabilities.

Space

Countless messages are communicated by how people use the space about them, how they claim that space for themselves, or how they share it.

Researchers, led by Nancy Henley, director of the University of California at Berkeley Women's Studies Center, traveled the world taking hundreds of candid photographs of people in public places: as subjects sat on park benches, walked in malls, and dined in restaurants. The people were not aware they were being photographed, so they

were captured in their “natural state.” Among the many interesting things Dr. Henley noticed in the photos was how men and women use space differently.

Dr. Henley noticed that men sprawl and take up lots of space, while women tend to be more compact and hold themselves in. Men sit back with legs splayed and form a tent over their heads with arms and hands folded behind their necks. Women sit with their hands placed in their laps, legs tucked inward and held near the body. According to Dr. Henley, men communicate superior power or dominance in a group by taking up more space and making themselves appear bigger. Women show less assertiveness, even submission, by making themselves appear smaller. Next time you are seated at a conference table, watch how men and women tend to use space, including how they place their papers and other materials on the conference table, and on adjoining chairs. You might find that men and women are still occupying different amounts of space, not indicated by relative rank in the group, or in the organization.

Subtle symbols: power and confidence

You must effectively communicate your status and power to others. People, particularly men, feel comfortable when they know where they stand in the pecking order (Tannen, 2001). You can push the envelope of your power by subtly using power symbols less obvious than a raised voice or accompanying physical gesture. For example, the way you enter a room can communicate your confidence and power. The next time you attend a meeting in a large room—for example, a hotel ballroom or large conference room filled with people—notice how the less confident people enter the room. They move quickly through the door and find a seat. Or if they are at a cocktail party, less powerful people immediately try to find a part of the room where they can feel comfortable. They make little, if any, eye contact with others. They act as if they want to be invisible.

Now watch the more powerful, confident people. You’ll notice that when they enter a large room they pause just inside the door, scan the room, survey the layout, notice the people within, and then select where they want to go. They take a moment to decide where they want to be. They stand in the entrance and allow others in the room to look at them. Their power and confidence are conveyed by their attitude that they belong in the room; and they select the part of the room and/or the people they will join. Less powerful people, rather, try to enter unnoticed, to avoid making any impression.

Space = relationship

Next time you're in a public place with a few minutes to observe people, notice how couples (male and male, female and female, female and male) walk and stand with each other. You will be amazed by your ability to guess the nature of their relationship by noticing how much space they maintain between each other. You will be able to discern if they are business associates or lovers. Their use of space will tell you if they are just beginning the relationship, for example, on a first date, or if they are in a long-established union. You'll also spot those having a fight, or feeling the flames of love. As you study these couples, describe what you see in words. You'll find that the way they use space has great symbolic meaning to their relationships. If you were to ask them how they decided to set the distance between each other, they would look at you blankly. Most of the time, we don't make this decision consciously—but if the space is not correct, you know it and adjust.

Touch

Like space, touch says volumes about the relationship. When you touch someone, you can communicate understanding, joy, friendship, or power and dominance. For example, imagine you and I were to meet in an Effective Communication workshop. What do you think it would feel like to reach out and touch me on the shoulder? You would probably feel an invisible barrier preventing you from touching me. I'm a senior, Caucasian, male professor. Because of our relative ranks and roles within our professor/student relationship, you would be aware that touching me would not be appropriate—even though you know it would be just fine with me if you did. Now, I don't feel the same barrier with you. I would feel comfortable touching you, in a neutral area, of course: top of arm, hand, or top of back on the shoulder.

Between equals, touch has a different meaning than it does between people of different rank. When people of the same status touch each other, it communicates comradeship. However, the appropriate amount of time must have passed since the initial meeting, or the friendly touch may be interpreted as an attempt at dominance and communicate the wrong message.

When a relationship is forming, and you want to take dominance or communicate friendliness, measure the time you've spent and determine the dynamics of your relative status. Then, go ahead and try a cordial touch (on a neutral body part such as the forearm), or give a pat on the back; you'll communicate lots of good things. If the

person jumps, as if touched by a live electric wire, you'll know that your good-natured touch was made too early in the relationship.

Smells

Olfactory sense memories are among the most powerful we have. Our minds recall things we have smelled with maximum clarity. Scent is able to kindle volumes of other memories. When you recall the smell of pine, you might remember a forest with the hushed rush of air through the trees or the soft, loamy feel of the pine needle carpet beneath your feet.

Smells can have symbolic meaning, too. Realtors suggest that if you want to sell your home, you should put cinnamon sticks in a pan of boiling water. The homey scent will communicate just the right message to potential buyers. I coached a homebuilder client to have his salespeople bake cookies in the model home's kitchen. The scent of fresh-baked cookies sent the same signals as the boiling cinnamon. The cookies gave the salespeople a chance to share food with prospective buyers, and thereby build a closer relationship.

A theme that runs through all I've told you about symbols is meaning. Have you noticed that symbols and meaning have an important relationship? Is the color red really more active than green? Is cinnamon really a homey smell? Tell me, what is inherently homey about cinnamon? That spice's meaning comes from your prior experience growing up with that smell: Your memories of kitchens, cooking, families, and holidays give cinnamon the rich meaning it has today.

Emotions and Fear

Persuading angry people

When you see someone who is angry, what you are witnessing is largely defensive behavior: Angry people want to protect themselves; they are afraid. Before you can persuade, you must get them to lower their defensive shields. They will not listen to you with their shields up. They can't think with so much noise in their heads. In this defensive state, they will filter everything you try to say to them through a thick fog of anger. You can't communicate your ideas to a person in this agitated psychological state. You'll waste your time and just make them angrier. But angry people can be managed.

Here's how to manage people who are in fear

Fear transmits and spreads like disease. Other people's fear will cause you to become afraid, too. Different people show their anger in different ways. Some people are quite demonstrative; they communicate their anger with loud talk and an angry tone. Their face might be contorted into a hateful expression. Angry people's gestures might be choppy, as they move their hands in fast, short thrusts.

Other people—particularly managers—try to hide their anger, and may even deny to themselves that they are angry. These types may behave in a manner opposite to the angry person described above. They will speak quite softly and not move at all. Their facial expression may be passive, but their eyes will contain a spark.

When you deal with the demonstrative types, you must manage your fear. Their raw, emotional energy will tumble across the air space between you, making you fearful, and perhaps angry. It's okay to feel it, but you must not communicate your rising fear to them. It will only pour gasoline on their raging fire. You must remain calm.

Step one: Let them talk it out.

People might have a great fear—usually based on experience—that you will interrupt, disagree, and not let them talk. Most people do interrupt angry people. People might have fearful expectations that you will not listen to them. As you listen, you remove that fear. When you encourage people to talk and air their complaints, you may gain information that will help you find resolution. If angry people hear themselves speak, they may realize, as they listen to themselves, that the source of the fear is not quite so threatening. Don't interrupt, except to help them find the right words, or to show you're listening. People must talk it out to get a handle on their anger.

Step two: Show they are safe with you.

You may be a threat to them. It's important that you do not present any threat. Keep your voice level, soft, and reasonable. Focus intently and show you are listening.

Step three: Provide them with feeling words.

You may find that people have difficulty expressing what they think and feel. Many people have a limited vocabulary of emotional words to describe how they feel. If you say, "You look angry," or "If I were you I'd feel discouraged," and then shut up and let them talk, you may find that people will begin to bond with you, and trust you a bit more. They may find that giving their feelings *words* helps them understand the problem and be less fearful.

Step four: Communicate to them that their feelings are normal.

After emotions begin to abate, people might become concerned that you'll think they have behaved foolishly. Their shame can cause more emotion and defensiveness. People might not feel comfortable with anger in a formal business setting. When you say, "If I were you I'd feel exactly as you do," you help remove this source of shame, and thus reduce the chance of further anger.

Handling angry supervisors and customers

The above steps do apply if you wish to handle angry supervisors or customers. However, you are in a more delicate position when handling complaining customers or supervisors than you are when dealing with peers, because your power over management and customers is limited. Supervisors hold legitimate power over you. Your customers can freely take their business elsewhere, and complain to management about you.

You can handle people who have authority and power over you if you apply a little psychological judo. In judo, people's superior force can be used against them. After you've gone through Steps One through Four, and people have a chance to calm down, continue to empathize with them. Use your imagination; try to think of all the negative ramifications and problems the situation has created for them. Feed back this information to them. As you describe the problem, they will begin to agree with you and, perhaps, take back the floor because they want to talk more and continue with their complaint. That's great—this is just what you want people to do. Let them air it out. Soon they will reach a point where they are satisfied with your understanding. However, at this moment, you must continue to escalate and exaggerate your description of the problem and its impact. You make it bigger and bigger until they say, "No, it's not that bad." "You've done everything that could be done. It's okay." You keep describing the negative, fearful outcomes until you exceed their perception of the situation. At that point, people will shift position—they will no longer be angry and will tell you, "It's okay, it's not that bad." As in all persuasive business communication, you must be sincere and honest in the things you say. If you try to blow smoke at people who are in this state, and they realize you're patronizing them, you're dead meat. If you wish to be persuasive, you must develop the ability to see things from other people's perspective.

If you'd like to learn more about how to deal with fearful people (and business is full of them), Dale Carnegie's (Carnegie, 1981) excellent book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, offers good advice on how you can handle angry people and win them over to your way of thinking.

Using fear to persuade

Compared with *love messages*, *fear messages* are far more powerful. People react far more extremely to fear messages. It makes sense that

we would rather avoid harm than seek gain. Our primary instincts are directed at survival. The human brain is designed first to protect us from danger. The cerebral cortex shuts down when the brain stem detects sufficient danger (see **Chapter 4—When You’re Afraid to Communicate: *Understanding Anxiety and Fear***).

In experiments, people have eagerly spent 2.5 times as much money and effort to avoid *fear* than they would to achieve a *gain*. *Fear* motivates people 2.5 times more than *gain* (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Tversky & Kahneman, 1992; Brooks & Zank, 2005).

Fear messages can backfire—watch out: *Fear appeals must be handled carefully*

Research has shown a strong negative correlation between the effectiveness of a fear message and the audience’s education and intelligence. Simply put, the higher the audience’s education and intelligence, the less fear appeals work. Less educated people and children are more responsive when they are threatened, but managers are not.

With a manager’s higher education and intelligence (not compared to yours, certainly; I’m comparing managers to the general public), an ill-conceived fear message will be transparent—they’ll realize that “they’re just trying to scare us.” If you try to scare management into action, and your appeal is seen as a ploy, it will backfire; you’ll not be credible or persuasive.

Fear appeals can work with management, *but* the peril you predict must be plausible. **There must be a real danger, the potential for real loss.**

***Buyer’s Four Big Fears*[®]**

All people have four basic fears when they make a business decision or a personal purchase. The bigger the decision or purchase, the bigger the potential fear.

Fear one: I won’t get what you’re promising.

Buyers frequently view persuaders skeptically—our desire to sell may cause us to exaggerate, or worse, lie to get our way. Sales and advertising have a great tradition of acceptable exaggeration called *puffery*. People are well aware that persuaders tend to inflate their promises. For example, when you eat at Denny’s, does the food ever taste as good as it looks in the photos on the menu?

Fear two: I'll pay too much for it.

It's not solely the loss of money that makes this fear so big; we don't want to be fools. Is there anything worse than making a major purchase, such as a DVD player or giant-screen TV, and then finding it on sale? Cost-cutting strategies, currently rampant throughout corporate America, make "paying too much" a form of fiscal treason. Beyond monetary cost, buyers may be concerned that they'll pay too much in terms of psychic energy; for example, they'll have to undergo training before they can use your plan. Consider the time cost for evaluation and installation, from the buyer's point of view.

Fear three: My significant other(s) will say I was crazy to have bought it.

Most people buy with someone, real or imagined, looking over their shoulders. Significant others include supervisors, spouses, in-laws, professional associates, and even nosy neighbors and golf partners.

Job Interview Tip—Remember, when you interview for that next great job, that the person who interviews you is afraid of making a mistake. They don't want others in the firm, especially the boss, to say, "I can't believe you hired him."

Tip ✓ Be sure to tell the interviewer how well your previous interviews went with others in the firm. "I've met some nice people at this firm; Mr. Friendly (the interviewer's supervisor) and I had a wonderful conversation."

Fear four: I won't like my self-image; it's not for people like me; firms like ours.

Self-image may apply more to consumer products, and the things we buy for ourselves, than to corporate decisions. But companies have images too. A corporation holds a market position, and it seeks to define and regulate its corporate culture. So, your plans must be right given the firm's ethos. I recall an MBA candidate who wanted to sell a new computer system to his supervisors at an old and well-respected bank's trust department. He asked for my advice as he prepared his presentation. He planned to begin his pitch by emphasizing the computer's features that appealed to him: high speed, the latest equipment/hardware, plus advanced, high-tech performance. I pointed out that the attributes of his proposed computer system might frighten his conservative, risk-averse supervisors. He was successful. He

emphasized the system's fail-safe redundancy, the error-checking features, and how it would protect the customers.

Another important message is that "this idea or product" is used successfully by firms like yours (or ours) and by firms you admire (or we admire). You can counter each of the *Buyer's Four Big Fears* and be persuasive (see **Table 3.7—Message Strategies to Counter the Buyer's Four Big Fears**).

Fear one: I won't get what you're promising.

Message Strategy—Remind buyers, subtly of course, of your credibility (expertise, trustworthiness, and goodwill). Credibility lets people believe what you predict and promise them. You can rely on your trust relationship with people (see **Chapter 6—Making People Believe You: Persuasive Communication**). A list of satisfied customers and performance data objectively shows that others have received what you have promised. When you offer objective data, you allow buyers to evaluate the potential outcomes—not solely your opinion.

Table 3.7 Message Strategies to Counter the *Buyer's Four Big Fears*

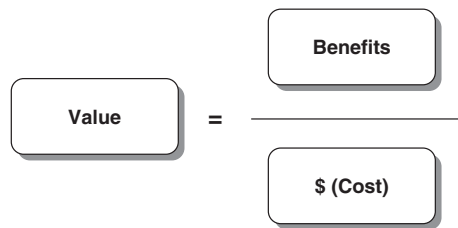
<i>Buyer's Four Big Fears</i>	
<i>Fear</i>	<i>Message Strategy</i>
I won't get what you're promising.	Credibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfied Customers • Performance Data
I'll pay too much for it.	$\text{Value} = \frac{\text{Benefits}}{\$ (\text{Costs})}$
My significant other(s) will say I was crazy to have bought it.	Inoculation: Build set of anticipated objections and answers
I won't like my self-image; it's not for people like me; firms like ours.	We have satisfied customers <i>just like you.</i>

Fear two: I'll pay too much for it.

Your message strategy is a sales classic. When buyers have objections about price (monetary, psychic effort, time, risk, costs), your message is to sell value; that is, increase the buyers' perception of the good things they'll gain. People want to maximize their return for the costs

they pay. **Figure 3.8—Source of Value** shows the two fundamental strategies you can use to increase *value*. Value is the *benefits* people will gain when they follow your plan, divided by the *costs* incurred to buy the *benefits*. To increase *value* and get people to adopt your recommendation, you can increase the *benefits*, or lower the *costs*.

Figure 3.8 Source of Value



People buy the alternative idea or product that has the greatest level of Value. Value is determined by the Benefits people will receive, divided by the Costs they must pay. Persuaders can raise Value by lowering the Costs, or by raising perception and awareness of the Benefits.

Fear three: My significant other(s) will say I was crazy to have bought it.

It's best to anticipate the players who may be in the "decision group"—the group of deciders, influencers, recommenders, gatekeepers, and evaluators who have some say or influence in the decision to adopt your plan. Know what their needs, prejudices, and viewpoints are likely to be. I always recommend that you take time to establish a relationship with all members of the *decision group*. As you make mini-presentations, you can establish a strong support base and learn, in advance, of any objections or problems they may have with the plan. With this intelligence, you can formulate your "Inoculation Strategy."

Inoculation Strategy—The idea behind an *Inoculation Strategy* is, if you know your buyers will hear negative comments from the opposition, then give the buyers a dose of those negative opinions *before* they hear them from others. Like a medical inoculation, a *message inoculation* is a weakened strain that allows buyers to develop antibodies, in this case, counterarguments that will resist the negative influence of others. You give buyers "what they may hear from others," or "some misconceptions that others may hold."

Be a two-edged knife—One of the great 19th-century orators, U.S. Senator Theodore Gillmore Bilbo (a noted sleazeball), was called the Two-Edged Knife, for his ability to debate any issue, from either side, with equal zest and skill. Bilbo was a shifty guy who did not stand for righteousness and good; however, I know you do. You must know the reasonable and fearful arguments against your ideas. You must build a set of anticipated objections that other people may raise, and develop counterarguments. Be wise; touch on both sides of the issue. It makes your presentation more balanced, and shows that you have considered other viewpoints, as well as your own, and that you've looked at the downside as well as the upside of your plan. Thus, you demonstrate the level-headed decision making that people want and demand of business leaders.

**Fear four: I won't like my self-image;
it's not for people like me; firms like ours.**

The best solution is to offer evidence that “we have satisfied customers just like you,” that firms like yours, whom you admire, use it and have benefited from this approach. People you respect have embraced this idea.

Dr. Jekyll becomes Mr. Hyde during your presentation—When the stakes are high, and rational, level-headed people are asked to make a decision, they frequently become a bit nuts. **Figure 3.9—The Emotional Buyer** shows the psychological change **the buyer undergoes** during the decision, or buying, process. The figure represents your buyer's state of mind, from the start of the persuasive process until the end, when buying takes place. Look at the left-hand side of the diagram (where the buyer evaluates your ideas), and compare it to the right-hand side (where buying takes place). As you begin the persuasive process, the buyer is in a more rational than emotional state. However, when it becomes time to decide, you can see that the ratio of rational to emotional thoughts has reversed. You now have to deal with an emotional, and only slightly rational, person. The nice, intelligent executive you first met has become a different person. Businesspeople might not show their emotion by action or tone of voice: Executives are great poker players who know how to maintain a blank face. However, one clue that something is going on is when the person says things that make no sense. Suddenly the buyer decides, “It costs too much,” when you've demonstrated the cost-effectiveness, and earlier the executive agreed the price was right. The buyer

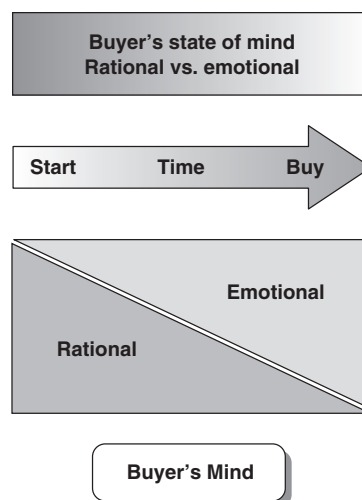
might say, "I've got to think it over." This makes no sense because all the facts are laid out, the thinking is over; it's time to do. You now must contend with a fearful buyer. One or more of the big fears are probably at work.

Strategies to persuade Mr. Hyde

Your first task is to help turn Dr. Jekyll into Mr. Hyde. The diagram in **Figure 3.9—The Emotional Buyer®** is axiomatic; it has to happen. If buyers don't get emotional, they don't buy. When you ask executives to make decisions that involve significant consideration and risk on their part, you must be prepared with persuasion and message strategies. On the emotional side, a buyer must become excited at the prospect of obtaining the benefits you're offering. A buyer will undergo some form of emotion that will reduce the mental space for rational thought. You have to prepare for this.

To turn Dr. Jekyll into Mr. Hyde, you must reduce rational thoughts and raise the emotional state. First, you make more emotional (connotative) statements than rational (denotative) statements.

Figure 3.9 The *Emotional Buyer*®



The figure shows the change in the buyer's mental state, from the time he or she begins to evaluate a product/idea, to the time he or she decides to buy. The buyer passes from a mental state dominated by rational thought into an emotion-driven state of mind.

Look for the physical signs—After buyers are excited and see the benefits, you'll often notice that they begin to slow their thinking through their physical movements. Another sign that listeners are undergoing the shift—from mostly rational thought to emotional thought—is that they distract themselves. They may pick up something and read it, or pick up the phone and make a call. They might change the subject abruptly. This type of behavior is an unconscious effort on the buyers' part to reduce the uncomfortable mental state they are in. Remember, their perceived risks give rise to their fear. With this non sequitur-type behavior, they gain some form of relief from their fear.

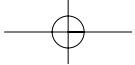
Turn down their emotions

Now that they have become emotional, it may be necessary for you to reduce the buyers' emotional state, and raise the rational thoughts. Continue to tell the buyers to accept the plan, and remind the buyers of the reasons why they wanted it. Review and show rational facts that support why your idea is sound. Use objective cost and performance data. Rely on your credibility and relationship. Follow the recommendation of the master sales trainer, Frank Bettger, and say, "If you were my own cousin, I'd tell you what I'm about to tell you now: 'Adopt the plan; it's right for you.'" If you want to persuade people from outside your department or outside your firm more effectively, read Bettger's (Bettger, 1986) *How I Raised Myself From Failure to Success in Selling*. That book is worth every minute you spend reading it.

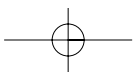
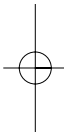
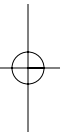
Manage your own fear—Remember, fear transmits like a disease, and you're likely to get it. Tell yourself: "Stay cool." Take a deep breath. Make an effort to relax as much as possible. Fill yourself with positive feelings. You can help the buyer relax with your calm, positive manner. Remember, when you get to the emotional part, you stand at the threshold of success. If you have carefully studied the buyer's needs, and believe to the best of your professional judgment that the plan is wise, you have a professional obligation to help the buyer make the right decision.

The professional loser

A common, but undesirable, type of salesperson is called the *Professional Visitor*. This type is a nice, friendly, well-mannered individual who may be knowledgeable about his or her products and how they can help prospective customers. The *Professional Visitor* does



make some sales, but not enough to be outstanding. This salesperson has a big problem dealing with people when they become emotional. When it comes time for the buyer and the *Professional Visitor* to sign a contract, the salesperson's emotions and fears rise because he or she doesn't have coping or self-management strategies. *Professional Visitors* can take prospective customers to the edge of the decision, but in the face of the customers' fears, they are not equipped or trained to help customers make the decision. When *Professional Visitors* do sell, the buyers are unafraid, or can make fearful decisions on their own.



Persuasion Ethics

I believe that you, as a seller or persuader, have two primary, ethical obligations. First, you must be professionally trained to diagnose other people's needs, and make a determination if the prospective buyer does, indeed, need your product or service. Second, if you determine, in cooperation with the buyer, that the product or idea will benefit the buyer, you have a professional, ethical obligation to help the buyer overcome fear and make the decision to adopt your idea, product, or service. The fact that you made an effective presentation and "let the buyer decide" is not enough. I believe that if the buyer is fearful, you must help him or her through that difficult period.

Professional emotional management—You must work to regulate your emotions if you are to help your buyer make a decision. You must be able to turn up your emotions to help the buyer become activated and excited, to anticipate and see the benefits your ideas offer. And you must be able to turn down your emotions so you can help the fearful buyer.

Decide to be persuasive—After you read this book and begin to practice its ideas, you can be more persuasive, and thus more successful—if you want to. The fact that you know how to persuade is not enough. You must have the courage to try to persuade other people. You may not have that courage. With all due respect to you, my reader, I have seen too many intelligent, well-trained, charming, and dynamic businesspeople fail at persuasion. They failed because of one thing: They were not willing to take responsibility for the outcome of their own ideas. I believe they were cut short in their careers because they did not have the courage and character to make a commitment to another person—to promise another person, based on strong faith, that their ideas will come true. You must commit yourself to help the deciders through the difficult, emotional process they have to undergo.

If you make that emotional, ethical commitment, and if you continue to study and practice persuasion, you will find the success you want. You will not stop until you reach your goals.

Waiting for “Yes”—For example, research, and my own experience, show that you may have to ask the buyers to adopt your plan after they have said “No” three times. The fourth time you ask, they will probably say “Yes.” The first three “No’s” were part of their decision process, part of thinking it over.

Feel love; feel positive—The key to persuading the emotional buyer is your attitude; how you feel when you talk. If you feel love and not fear, or more accurately, love in spite of the fear that runs through you, you’ll win.

If you’re a guy, you may have a tougher time—I’ve noticed often that men can’t deal well with emotion. Their emotional circuits are too simple: They are either “on,” and they experience anger, or they’re “off,” and they are cool. Persuasion requires a more complex range of emotions than anger or cool.

I’ve noticed that, for whatever genetic, biological, or social/learning reasons, women handle their emotions well in difficult business discussions. I’ve seen many men frightened to their core; they want to fight and go to court (“I’ll sue the SOB.”). Then, I’ve seen a woman step into the same troubled situation, cool, calm, with no fear, and prevail.

Perhaps this emotional sophistication has helped women to take the lead in many sales categories, particularly in the sale of intangible goods, like advertising, meeting and convention services, telecommunications, and public relations. Men largely dominated these fields until women entered. Women have rapidly risen to the position of market dominance in these sales categories.

I believe that women have succeeded in selling complex products and plans because they manage emotion better than men. I also believe that men can learn to deal well, be persuasive, and lead others through emotional conflict.

Key: Emotional management is a vital skill for successful persuasive communication.

Chapter 3 Summary

The Power and Limitations of Speaking

Key Ideas

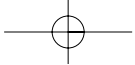
- 🔑 Miscommunication is common. Each communication results in a different meaning in the speaker's mind and the listener's mind.
- 🔑 **A big communication problem is:** People speak when they should write, and they write when they should speak.

People remember:

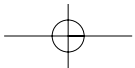
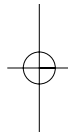
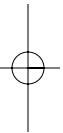
- The first thing they hear
- The last thing that is said
- Sensory-rich messages: recollections of sounds, tastes, smells, and body feelings

People forget:

- Numbers
 - Names
 - Details
 - Sequence of events
- 🔑 Visual sense is most people's favorite. When you send messages designed to stimulate people's senses, you give them "Felt Sense."
 - 🔑 Your past experience with symbols gives them meaning. A symbol is something that stands for something else. Symbols include colors, costumes, lines, spaces, touch, and smells. Persuasive messages have both Denotative (factual) and Connotative (emotional)



symbols. A Denotative Symbol stands for a concrete object, is easily remembered, and is *not persuasive*. A Connotative Symbol represents an abstract concept whose meaning varies from person to person, is hard to remember, and *arouses emotion*.



Emotions and Fear

Key ideas

🔑 Angry people are afraid and will try to protect themselves. You can expect them to hide this and deny that they are angry. You must get them to lower their defensive shields, or they will not listen to you.

Fear transmits and spreads like disease. *Fear* is 2.5 times more motivating than *gain*. Fear appeals must be handled carefully.


Less educated people and children are susceptible to a threatening message, but managers are not.

Buyer's Four Big Fears

1. I won't get what you're promising.
2. I'll pay too much for it.
3. My significant other(s) will say I was crazy to have bought it.
4. I won't like my self-image; it's not for people like me; firms like ours.

🔑 As you begin the persuasive process, people start in a more rational than emotional state. When it is time to decide, they become more emotional and less rational. Emotion is good; if people don't experience emotion, they will not be persuaded. Facts and emotion combine to form the persuasive experience.

Persuasion ethics

-  Persuaders have an ethical obligation to determine if the prospective patient, client, or buyer needs their product or service. The persuader has an obligation to help the patient, client, or buyer overcome their fear and make the best decision.

Communicator's Checklist

- Deal with angry people
 - Step One** *Let them talk it out.*
 - Step Two** *Show they are safe with you.*
 - Step Three** *Provide them with feeling words.*
 - Step Four** *Communicate to them that it is normal to feel as they do.*
- Lower anger and build trust
 - Fully explore the anger.
 - Talk about the cause of the person's anger.
 - Consider all the negative ramifications and problems that the situation has created for the angry person.
- Persuade using emotion
 - To persuade, you must reduce the rational thoughts and raise the emotional state of mind.
 - First, you make more emotional (connotative) statements than rational (denotative) statements.
 - After the buyer becomes emotional, you reduce the emotional state and raise the rational thoughts.
- Manage your emotions
 - Work to regulate your emotions.
 - Turn up your emotions to help the buyer become activated and excited.
 - Turn down your emotions so you can help the fearful buyer.
 - Take responsibility for the outcome.