

1. I communicate best when. . .
2. Arguments are caused by. . .
3. People who have good manners are. . .
4. A good speaking voice is. . .
5. My friends listen to me when. . .
6. A "put down" makes me feel. . .
7. When people give me unwanted advice, I. . .
8. People frown because. . .
9. A person who talks all the time is. . .
10. I will apologize when. . .
11. My friends get angry with me when. . .
12. I am willing to listen if. . .
13. A good conversationalist is. . .
14. People who are dressed neatly. . .
15. When people criticize me. . .
16. When people listen to me, I. . .
17. I trust people who. . .
18. When I am angry, I. . .
19. I feel uncomfortable with people who. . .
20. I feel most relaxed when. . .

Communication happens at several levels. There are certain expectations for each level. When I expect you to be at level four and you're at level two, then we have a communication problem.

Level 1: Automatic Pilot. Talk at this basic level is the kind that goes on in school hallways: "Hi, how are ya?" Questions that elicit the automatic response: "Not bad." Pretty superficial stuff. But not totally pointless. These mindless exchanges at least acknowledge your existence. If someone *doesn't* respond to your "Hi, how are you?" you feel slighted.

Level 2: Just the Facts. On this level, you report facts about yourself or other people. Not a lot of personal revelation going on here, either. "Jeff got the lead in the play." "I'm trying out for cheerleading." Again, there's a place for this level of talk—a first date, for instance. But people stuck on this level will never have deep relationships.

And there's the temptation to fall into gossip—*Just the Facts (As I Spice Them)*: "Did you hear who Laura went out with?" "I hear Chris is going to dump Laura for Janna." Some "facts" are best left unreported.

Level 3: Brain Talk. I tell you what I'm *thinking*—my ideas, opinions, judgments, beliefs. This gets a little more personal. "I think Mr. Alford's a pretty good teacher." "In my opinion, Amy Grant is the best singer on the radio." But brain talk is still pretty safe. If someone disagrees with us, we don't usually take it too personally.

Level 4: Gut-Level Communication. This is the most personal level. I'm revealing my feelings, and my feelings are what make me unique. I may *think*, "My best friend is beautiful." You may think the same thing about your best friend. But my *feelings* might differ wildly from yours. I feel jealous of my friend but you feel proud of your best friend. It's not easy to understand our feelings. It may be even harder to express them to someone else. We wouldn't spend the effort

Words Worth Listening To

A man finds joy in giving an apt reply—and how good is a timely word!"
—Proverbs 15:23

Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him."
—Proverbs 29:20

The fool multiplies words."
—Ecclesiastes 10:14

Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue."
—Proverbs 17:28

Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few."
—Ecclesiastes 5:2

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."
—James 1:19