Communicating With The Opposite Sex

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Are men or women more likely to:

- Connect - show interdependence

- Problem solve, seek to gain status

- Be secure in hierarchy

- Be secure in networks

Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen, as a part of their seminar at Harvard last summer, presented useful information on communicating with the opposite sex. The purpose of communication for women is generally to connect or share feelings. Women tend to emphasize interdependence and a web of relationships. Men generally seek as the purpose of their communication to problem solve, gain status and show independence. Women ask questions; men make statements. Women speak from personal experience; men speak in absolutes. Women are more likely to hypothesize while men conclude. The zone of comfort sought by men and women is particularly different. Women generally seek to communicate and work in networks and are comfortable with private talk. Men are more secure in hierarchical organizations and are comfortable with public talk.

We suggest you consider the "AWARE" strategy to improve your communications with the opposite sex:

Aware - be aware that there often are differences in how men and women communicate with one another so that you can seek to "decode" what you hear.

Wonder what you can do to better communicate with the opposite sex - be it your co-worker or your spouse. Perhaps you might want to switch some of your own communication patterns.

Ask if what you believe has been said is the intention of the speaker, especially if you are confused or upset by the apparent communication.

Respond to the true communication being raised rather than to the attitudes about the communication.

Exercise your flexibility when communicating, listening and giving feedback to the opposite sex so that you will be understood.

By improving your skills to communicate with the opposite sex, you will be considered one of the smartest people in the world because they will feel understood!