GATE

By Michele Downey RN MAC LMFT

The GATE is a shorthand version of the basics of communication.
(It stands for Guaranteed Actions To be Effective or Giving Actions to Empathy).

Communication Gate method is a unique/complete version which includes assertiveness, feelings, thoughts, clarification, brainstorming and negotiations skills. I teach the GATE communication method. It involves Assertiveness, Clarification, Feelings, and Behavior. In interpersonal communication, few things are more important to learn. Communication is a skill. It will help without causing problems or introducing confusion.

All the important aspects of communication are being included. These are the basics that Michele teaches her clients.

Feelings vs. Thoughts using the GATE communication method

In the Gate Communication method, the main way we bond with each other has to do with our feelings, not our thoughts. Thoughts are abstract even when expressed Feelings are universal. The problem lies in knowing what our feelings are. Due to culture, school, and family influence, many feelings are not acceptable. Due to our belief systems, we also judge certain feelings as bad or good, right or wrong.

John Wayne never expressed fear; thus, you aren't a real man if you feel fear. Doris Day never looked angry, so, women who express anger are unfeminine and not "a lady". Similar values mean "being Christian" which means you are never angry and only love people.

Feelings are one word. The usual ones are angry, sad, mad, glad, hurt, scared, embarrassed, lonely, happy, confident, content,

Colored Ball analogy in the Gate communication method

If you look at feelings as a colored ball, there may be a similar example that may explain this. We need all the colors to form a rainbow. One doesn't say red is a good color and green is a bad color. We may prefer one color over another, but we don't exclude one color because it is bad or negative.

Happiness may be our favorite and sad not so much. All our feelings need us to know ourselves. The problem lies in knowing their

purpose. Most people get feelings mixed up with behavior. This is where many further problems lie.

Knowing our feelings are the only way we can emotionally protect ourselves. **They are our main barometers for emotional self-protection.**

Gradations of a color analogy

In the Gate communication method, we use a color analogy that we can understand. Let us suppose anger is like the color red and fear is the green color. Each color has a spectrum.

Bright red could be like the feeling of rage. Pastel pink could be the feeling of a tiny bit irritated. The red spectrum encompasses all the feelings of anger. We can do this for Fear. In the color spectrum of Green, we find bright green (terror). This would range to uncomfortable (pastel green).

Assertive techniques with Gate communication

The bottom part of the "GATE" starts with "I would like" or "I prefer" or "consequence". When people are asking for what they need, they always need to know what they will do if denied. Thus, the consequence to any request is born.

Sometimes parents confuse consequence with punishment. Consequences can be pleasant or unpleasant. Unpleasant can be a punishment but we examine the motive.

I teach that the consequence should be educational. I involve education to explain the infraction (more on this in another article). An example could be using the GATE technique

“Johnny, you said you’d clean the room by Saturday at noon and now it is 1 pm Sunday and the room isn’t clean. I feel angry/disappointed because my thought is, and I could be wrong, that you don’t respect the rules in this house. So, I need you to clean this room in 2 hours or you won’t get the keys to the car”.

For more information on assertiveness and the benefits use https://www.nswnma.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Be-assertive_communicate-better_stress-less.pdf

Clarification and Bonding

Few communication classes are ever taught without the all-important clarification response. The GATE communication method ensures that the listener actually heard the message. Few of us listen. Most are busy preparing our responses or interrupting or thinking about something else. The clarification also requires an ability to bond, if we can carry it out.

The GATE says “I hear, I see, I feel “. Then I heard is actually the clarification response. We wish to bond and actually engage in a conversation. We need to be sure that they felt heard and at least understood at some level.

Most people start out by lecturing (when I was your age, in your position, etc.). They start sharing, advising, and give their own feedback or experience.

Start on the backside of the GATE with No Sharing, NO advising. Then “I heard, I saw, I felt”. Then ask if they want the feedback or experience. Most people want to feel heard. Don’t continue until they agree that what you said you heard is what they actually said or meant. Then say what you saw and felt.

Negotiation and Brainstorming

This final piece of the gate is actually 2 things in one. Begin by showing the other party that there are things that you can appreciate. Even if it's 1% of the content, we can all appreciate something. Firstly, we can all appreciate other parties' feelings. Secondly, this is where most people start to defend or attack the person they are talking to.

Coming up with 2 ideas would be the negotiation or brainstorming part of the GATE. Therefore, instead of defending anything, go for 2 solutions. When giving baby vegetables, the parent knows there may be some push back. "Do you want carrots or peas?" The baby says "cookies". The good parent says, "peas or carrots, which would you prefer?".

The smart parent is focusing the child on the choice, and this is a huge asset. The baby thinks that this was their choice. Smart parent knows, either way, the vegetables are from where the choice comes from.

In another analogy dealing with adult people, if carrots and peas can't work. Broccoli or cauliflower may be an option. As a result, this continues until the agreed-upon conclusion arrives, endorsed by both parties.

Keeping it simple with the basics

There are nuances when dealing with communication.

Some rather obvious conditions must be in place. For example, the other party has to be rational and able and willing to work with communication. People have various kinds of difficult histories. "Trigger words" may cause problems. With trauma or PTSD, be aware that they are operating from an adult viewpoint. If addiction is present, communication becomes complicated.

When bitter disputes have longstanding histories like married couples, it can be difficult. Be sure these are not present. If present, use extra counsel before proceeding.
If you want to learn more or have any questions, feel free to contact me here

Before you usually communicate, you want to give a gift. American Indians passed a peace pipe and Japanese businessmen usually exchange gifts before any negotiations. It's an act of goodwill.

In the example below, it's like an Oreo cookie. You sandwich the good stuff or icing in the middle of the two black cookies. Give someone a compliment or say things like what I appreciate about you (or this situation). Another way to begin is I'm really glad about XYZ.

The second part is the feeling. Feelings are not wrong or right, good or bad, positive or negative.

THE FULL COMMUNICATION GATE:

Give the Gift…. (the Oreo cookie example)
(Compliment…. What I appreciate about you…. I really am glad about…)

Then get to the "I feel or when xyz happens, I feel…"

It appears to me and I could be wrong (pink elephant, humbleness knowing you may have a distorted
Thought process or perception)…

I'm sure you didn't mean to…
I'm sure you didn't know >>>>>>>>>>>
(Always give someone the chance to save face, you don't want him or her to feel cornered or
Defensive.)

So, I came up with some ideas for how we might approach this subject…
How about XYZ or ABC? (Remember Peas or Carrots)
(You offer Baby peas or carrots knowing they are the vegetables the baby needs. Baby picks carrots
Thinking he made the choice. Win-Win situation for both.)

And you continue to brainstorm and negotiate until you reach a mutually agreed upon arrangement.

FEEDBACK RESPONSE COMMUNICATION:

Another Communication is when someone gives you unpleasant, critical or negative feedback.
Regardless of the way it was presented, you need to inventory if there is any truth in what they are saying…

A response might be:

I can appreciate how you might feel…….
I understand how hard it is to …….
I know that you really care about…….
(So they feel they have been heard)

If appropriate at that time and a response is absolutely necessary:

However,…….
Or
…….
Or
I'm sorry you feel that way. (Watch your tone of voice)
Or
I'm sorry you feel that way, it was not my intension to ….XYZ

COMMUNICATION GATE GUIDELINES:

Gate I feel …… when (you)…… or
When (you)……..happens, I feel…….

If appropriate and you know it's NOT JUDGMENTAL OR LOADED,

Because my thought is…… or
Because it appears to me, and I could be wrong, ……..
Remember that your thinking may be distorted (Pink Elephant Thinking).

Feelings are Mad, Glad, Sad, Scared, Lonely, Guilty, Embarrassed, etc. (Look on the "Feeling Ball" or the "Feeling Chart" if you have a hard time with this.)

(Remember: Guilt Anger you don't feel you have the right to express.)
Confused is a "cover" emotion for something else you don't want to feel or admit.
Anger underneath: Anger is either Hurt and/or Fear
Bored is really Lonely
All feelings boil down to two: Fear or Love.

When you say, "I feel **that**…… " You have automatically entered a thought not a feeling.

When you are dealing with a touchy subject, remember people can hear better if you aren't
looking angry.

One feeling per Gate. Otherwise the communication becomes confused.

Assertive parts of the gate include:

I need (for you to)……. or …… (consequences).

Consequences can be openly discussed or simply what you are aware of you will do.
Consequences reinforce your "bottom lines"
Or
Example: I would like……. or (I will leave the room, be confused, be upset, etc.)

Be sure of your motives behind any action. The same communication can be dysfunctional and
Manipulative in a negative way if the motive isn't pure and instead is being used to sway someone else into doing something.

(When asking for something or attempting to negotiate a problem)
Never present a problem without at least 2 solutions:

I thought we might try……
How about ABC or XYZ?

COMMUNICATION FORMULA PART II:
(More advanced)

TRY TO ALWAYS CHECK YOUR MOTIVE, INTENTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS. IF THIS IS EMOTIONALLY LOADED OR POTENTIALLY COULD BE FOR EITHER SIDE. CONSIDER BOOKENDING THE CONVERSATION (CALLING SOMEONE FIRST TO DISCUSS AND PREPARE AND THEN AFTER THE EXPERIENCE TO EVALUATE).

SOMETIMES IT'S HELPFUL TO WRITE THESE THINGS OUT FIRST TO CLARIFY THINGS. IT'S OK TO DO THINGS BY LETTER OR PHONE OR EMAIL, IF THIS IS A VERY DIFFICULT THING TO DO. AS LONG AS YOU ARE INVOLVING SOMEONE IN A SECOND OPINION FOR A REALITY CHECK ON YOUR PARTICULAR SITUATION.

GIVE THE GIFT FIRST:
I REALLY APPRECIATE… I CAN REALLY UNDERSTAND WHY… I VALUE YOUR… YOU ARE SPECIAL TO ME BECAUSE… ETC…

GIVE THE FACTS:
I CALLED YOU ON XYZ DATE… I ASKED YOU TO DO ABC THINGS… YOU PROMISED ME YOU COULD CONSIDER RST BEFORE ABC DATE… ETC.

HELP THEM SAVE FACE: (KEEPS DEFENSIVENESS DOWN)

I'M SURE YOU'VE BEEN BUSY… IMAGINE YOU GET SO MANY PHONE CALLS… I'M OK WITH YOU NEEDING
MORE TIME IF THIS TOO RUSHED… I KNOW YOU WOULD NEVER DO XYZ ON PURPOSE… MAYBE YOU
DIDN'T GET MY PHONE CALL. MESSAGE, MEMO, NOTE… ETC.

IF THERE IS A CONTRACT, REMIND THEM OF YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THIS AGREEMENT (SPOKEN OR UNSPOKEN/WRITTEN OR VERBAL), WITHOUT ACCUSING.
SINCE WE, AGREED WE WOULD BE HONEST ABOUT WHAT WAS BOTHERING US… (REMEMBER, HONESTY
WITHOUT COURTESY IS BRUTALITY)… I THOUGHT WE HAD AGREED TO ABC AND XYZ… BUT I COULD BE
WRONG… ETC.

SHARING/BONDING/PERSONAL HISTORY. (ONLY IF APPROPRIATE & SHORT/BRIEF/NON-DISTRACTING OR OFF TOPIC)
I KNOW HOW HARD ABC IS BECUZ THIS HAPPENED TO ME… IN MY PAST, I ABC OR XYZ… I'VE BEEN
REALLY BUSY MYSELF… LAST WEEK. XYZ FORGOT TO GIVE ME THE MESSAGE FROM ABC… THIS
DISCUSSION IS REALLY HARD FOR ME BECAUSE I USUALLY DO ABC… ETC.

ENLIST THEIR HELP TO OBTAIN THE SOLUTION
I REALLY WOULD APPRECIATE IF YOU COULD HELP ME WITH… I WONDER IF THIS IS THE BEST WAY TO GO ABOUT THIS… NEED HELP IN THIS AREA…

BRAINSTORM IDEAS:
I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT ABC (PEAS) OR XYZ (CARROTS) WHAT DO YOU THINK MIGHT WORK?

NEGOTIATION: (ONLY IF YOU KNOW YOUR BOTTOM LINES WELL ENOUGH)
I'D BE WILLING TO DO ABC OR XYZ IF YOU COULD DO 123 OR 456… I'D CONSIDER ABC…
&
COMPROMISE: (ONLY IF YOU KNOW YOUR BOTTOM LINES WELL ENOUGH)
ONLY IF YOU CAN DO THIS WITHOUT ANY RESENTMENT OR IRRITATION (SIGNS OF CODEPENDENCY CROSSOVER).
BUY SOME TIME LINES TO THINK ABOUT IT:
LET ME THINK ABOUT THIS AND GET BACK TO YOU ON …OR BY…
I LIKE THE WAY THIS IS SHAPING UP BUT GIVE ME A FEW DAYS TO CONSIDER THIS …
I'LL NEED A LITTLE TIME TO CHECK MY SCHEDULE AND I'LL CALL YOU OR LET YOU KNOW BY…