BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS BY COMMUNICATING SUPPORTIVELY

**Communication Styles**

Task:

In Part 1, four people complain about problems they face in their jobs. Following each

complaint are five possible responses. Rank three of the responses you would be most likely to make, with 3 being your first choice, 2 being your second choice, and 1 being your third choice.

Identify the type of response pattern that you rely on the most by adding the numbers you gave to each response alternative in Part I. The chapter discusses the advantages and disadvantages of each of these response types. The most skilled supportive communicators score 9 or above on Reflecting responses and 6 or above on Probing responses. They score 2 or less on Advising responses and 4 or less on Deflecting responses.

**Part I**

1. I’ve been in this job now for six months, and I hardly know anyone at all in the organization. I just can’t seem to make friends or to be accepted by other people. Most people are extremely busy and don’t take time to socialize. I feel isolated and excluded from what’s going on.

a. Don’t be concerned about not making friends so soon. Things will get better the longer you’re with the organization, you’ll see.

b. When you first meet people, what do you say? Are you the one to be friendly first?

c. Because organization members are so busy, probably no one has time to get close socially. You shouldn’t expect too much.

1. So you’re feeling that people haven’t accepted you in the organization?
2. When I first joined the organization it took me more than six months to get adjusted. I still don’t know some of the people in several departments.

**Answer:**

1. Deflecting response
2. Probing response
3. Advising response
4. Reflecting response
5. Deflecting response

2. I can’t stand my boss. He is the most autocratic, demanding person you can imagine. I’ve never worked around anyone who cared less for his employees than he does. His complete insensitivity and lack of humanity have made this a miserable place to work.

* 1. You sound as if you’re having difficulty dealing with rigid control and authority.
  2. I know how you feel because last year we had a woman in our department who would drive anybody crazy. She was the ultimate domineering boss.
  3. You’re going to have problems unless you work this out. I think you should go to him and tell him how you feel.
  4. You really are having a hard time adjusting to your boss, aren’t you?
  5. Why is it you feel so strongly about him?

**Answer:**

a. Reflecting response

b. Deflecting response

c. Advising response

d. Reflecting response

e. Probing response

1. What I want to know is, what happened on that last promotion decision?  
   I thought I was in line for it. I’m sure no else in the department has my experi- ence, and the scuttlebutt I heard indicated the job was mine for the asking. I’m really disappointed that you brought in someone from the outside over me. I don’t think it’s fair. What does it take to get promoted around here anyway?
   1. What was it that made you think this promotion was yours? Are you aware of the requirements of the job and what kind of person we were looking for?
   2. Don’t be discouraged. Your work is good, and if you’re patient I’m sure other chances will come along. I’ll try to help you be ready the next time around.
   3. I think you have the wrong impression about this. The criteria were very clear for the new position, and the other person was just a better fit.
   4. In other words, you feel kind of puzzled about where you stand with the company.
   5. Are you interpreting this promotion decision as a challenge to your technical competence?

**Answer:**

a. Probing response

b. Deflecting response

c. Advising response

d. Reflecting response

e. Probing response

4.Hey, what’s the idea of not approving my request for a new personal computer? I really need it in the office. We’ve got far more work to do than one machine can handle, and we’re doing things manually that ought to be done on a spread- sheet. And don’t give me that old story about tight company resources again. I’ve been in line for new equipment for a long time now.

a. I understand that you are really upset about not getting your request approved.

b. Why do you need a new computer? Can you borrow one during the times you really feel the crunch?

c. You know, others are facing the same problem. We’re having a terrible time trying to get the necessary work accomplished with the existing machines.

d. If you’ll be patient, I’m sure I can work out a solution to your problem.

e. We turned you down because resources are really tight. You’ll just have to make do.

**Answer:**

a. Reflecting response

b. Probing response  
c. Deflecting response

d. Deflecting response

e. Advising response