

*Dear Michelle,
I've heard you say that great communication is a
"full-body, full-mind, and full-heart effort."
Can you explain that a little more?*

Living up to one's potential as a communicator is a choice, an adventure, and it means walking a path that doesn't have a finish line. It's not for the faint of heart. Weighing risk against reward and taking calculated communication chances helps us live a full life.

The best relationships are earned through mutual risk-taking to build trust. Expressing our feelings can be scary. We've all had difficult goodbyes and our hearts broken. To get back up as a communicator is not for the weak. It bothers me when communication pursuits are labeled "soft skills." There's nothing soft about striving for excellence in this arena.

If we don't choose to pursue our personal best, we cancel the possibility of reaching our potential. There are a lot of reasons belief in ourselves and our hope for growth can be extinguished. Just a few I've experienced personally or with coaching clients include lack of support, dysfunctional personal or professional relationships, negative self-talk, past hurt from failures that are hard to bounce back from, fear of what others will think or say, and the list goes on. The slings and arrows of life affect all of us. So, this choice to stick our necks out as communicators truly requires courage.

It means we have to activate every tool at our disposal to engage: to listen fully, to speak our truth diplomatically (and often carefully, when we're speaking to power), to open our minds to views different from our own, and to keep our heart in our communication so we don't cause damage intentionally or unintentionally.

Living up to our potential as communicators, should we choose to, requires concerted effort daily.

And it's so worth it! Every baby step we take to grow as speakers, writers, listeners, and negotiators – to name just a few roles we might inhabit - makes life less complicated and more rewarding in the long run.

"Full-body, full-mind, and full-heart" communication isn't just about superior messaging, although that's part of it. If our words are expertly chosen without sincere positive intention, our communication feels off to the receiver. If our intention is noble but we're not thinking about messaging strategy, our words won't resonate as we might hope. Does our body language match our messaging? Just another dimension worth considering.

Great communication happens when we do our best (and please note: I'm not saying perfectly, ever) to align our intellect, emotion, and body language. All three can work harmoniously in service to speaking, writing, and listening. It feels amazing and builds self-esteem when you leave it all on the court, whether you're proposing a toast, speaking in a meeting, training a new employee, parenting a child, facing a tough conversation, or writing a proposal or performance review. Our effort as communicators changes us as it changes our teams, organizations, communities, and ultimately, our world for the better.

Are you dealing with a communication challenge?

If you've got a question, write to Michelle@GladieuxConsulting.com for consideration.

Questions remain confidential and anonymous when published.

COACH'S CORNER

