



Steps to Being a More Effective Communicator

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WELCOME!

Most of us communicate all day long. We talk, text, email, Zoom, Slack, and tweet. But how good are we at actually communicating?

Here you'll find our three-step coaching process as well as several tangible tactics to create more vibrant and effective connections at work and at home.

Enjoy!

--Angie Flynn-McIver, Ignite CSP

1 INTENTION

This is the effect you want to have on your audience, whether it's one person or many. You can think of this as the “why” of your communication.

2 ALIGNMENT

Your body language and voice can support or undermine your intention.

3 PRACTICE

What can you do to get better at communicating effectively?

INTENTION

START WITH "WHY"

Intention is the “why” of your communication. What do you want to happen as a result of what you say? What do you want the people listening to you to feel, think, or do? With a little planning, we can create a deliberate, productive intention that helps us achieve our outcomes.

Recently, I got to see first-hand a wonderful and heartening example of deliberate intention at work.

My son started high school in the fall of 2020, during the Covid pandemic, and he had four teachers. One of them, Mr. Jones, is a veteran of the classroom. He is deeply invested in getting the students excited about his subject, and it shows in everything he does.

Because Mr. Jones’s deliberate intention is *to engage every student, every day*, he doesn't leave anything to chance. His intention infuses everything from the way he sets up his classroom, to his posture, to his habits of communication with the students.

INTENTION

FIVE WAYS TO APPLY INTENTION

Here are five of Mr. Jones's tactics and techniques that you can use to create more intentional conversations, no matter your field:

1 KNOW WHAT YOUR DELIBERATE, PRODUCTIVE INTENTION IS.

What outcome do you want? What are you creating? Think of intention as something active. Do you want to engage, to connect, to share, to inspire, to motivate, to persuade, to welcome? Choose an active word that is meaningful to you. A deliberate intention will affect all your choices, from the length of your meeting to the words you use to introduce yourself.

2 EMBODY THE ATTITUDE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN OTHERS.

Mr. Jones is positive, energetic, and fun. He makes a point of showing up the way he hopes his students will.

3 REMEMBER THAT COMMUNICATION IS A TWO-WAY STREET.

You're not done once you are finished speaking, or when you hit "send." You're done once the outcome you're looking for (a response, a decision, an appointment) is achieved. And on that note...

INTENTION

FIVE WAYS TO APPLY INTENTION, CONT

4 LISTEN.

Listen with curiosity. Listen with the willingness to have your mind changed. Listen, not to advance your agenda, but to hear something new.

5 ASSUME GOOD INTENT.

Early in the school year, my son missed a class. Mr. Jones emailed him and called me. When my son reached him, apologetic, Mr. Jones assured him that it was fine, and he understood. He let my son know exactly where he could find the recording of the day's class, promised all this online school stuff would get easier, and left him feeling uplifted rather than chastised.

Imagine if we all thought about doing necessary work for our communication partner. What if we all asked ourselves, "What can I do to make this easier for them? How can I be more clear? How can I think of this conversation as a partnership in which we're creating understanding together?"

Creating a deliberate and productive intention is crucial, especially for conversations that feel risky or high-stakes. What do you want to happen as a result of your dialogue?



TAKE A MOMENT NOW:

What do you have coming up in the next few days that would benefit from one of the techniques described above?

Make a note here or somewhere else where you're likely to notice and act on it!

ALIGNMENT

HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR INTENTION

Alignment is all the various elements that support intention: body language, gestures, posture, vocal tone, volume, and the kinds of words we choose.

Right now I want to focus on everyone's favorite public speaking question:

WHAT DO I DO WITH MY HANDS?

We've all had that feeling.

We use our hands naturally, effortlessly, day in and day out, but certain situations make us suddenly acutely aware of them. What are they doing out there, flopping around? What have I ever done with them in the past that seems comfortable?

When you focus on step #1, creating a deliberate and productive intention, your body and voice are along for the ride. Most alignment issues are a result of a weak intention.

But! We all also have physical habits that sometimes don't serve us as well as we would wish. That's when it's a great idea to get some thoughtful feedback and coaching.

ALIGNMENT

ALL ABOUT GESTURES

DO:

Find a resting spot for your hands that is about three inches away from your torso, roughly in front of your belt line. I like to loosely clasp my hands there, ready to gesture or use a clicker. If you're seated, have your hands in front of you on the table, again available for your use.

DO:

Use your hands to emphasize your points, if you typically gesture when you speak. It will make you feel more relaxed and natural.

DO:

Video yourself presenting so you can see what you're doing with your hands. Evaluate in a calm moment. If you notice repetitive gestures that might be distracting to the audience, work on minimizing those.

DON'T:

Overthink your hands: they'll know what to do if you concentrate on connecting with your audience.

DON'T:

Trap your hands, either behind your back or by your sides. It's okay to let them off the leash!



TAKE A MOMENT NOW:

What physical habits do you have that are your strengths?
Maybe you have a lovely speaking voice or great posture.

What habits might you have that don't serve you as well?
Make a few notes below to capture what's working and
what could be improved.

PRACTICE

... WHEN IT DOESN'T MATTER

One of the best-kept secrets about practicing communication skills is that, surprise, it's like practicing anything else. You have to put in the boring, repetitive work before you can really rely on these skills to be there when you need them. This means regularly practicing in low-stakes situations before the big meeting / interview / presentation comes up.

You can practice: eye contact, tempo, inflection, and volume of your voice, deliberate movement and gestures, and most importantly, coming to the interaction with deliberate, productive intention.

If you make time to practice in regular meetings, on the phone, and even in casual conversation, you'll expand what feels comfortable and natural. You'll start to see the range of behavior that's available to you, and you'll notice the impact this kind of presence has on other people.



TAKE A MOMENT NOW:

What opportunities do you have coming up when you can practice one of the alignment issues you noticed?

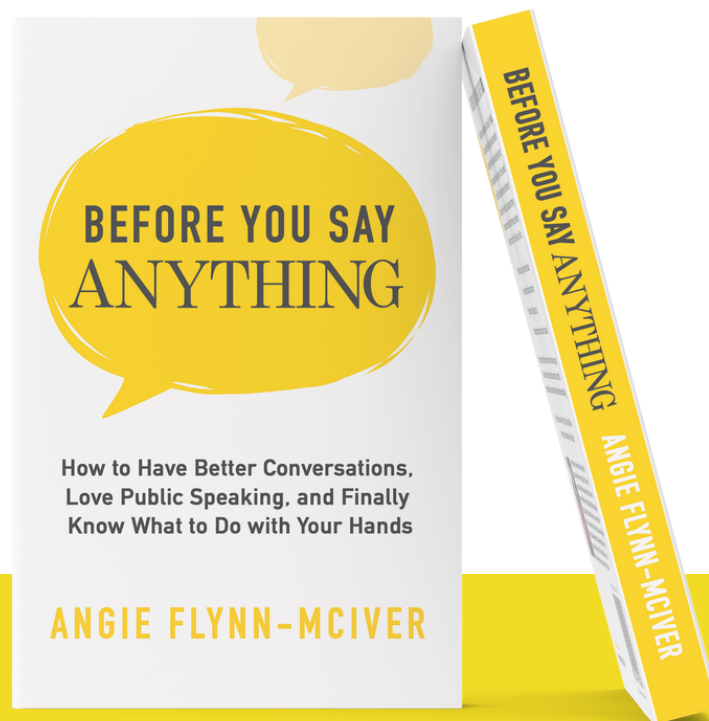
Think of trying a new behavior as an experiment--what happens when you try a slower vocal pace, pausing, or more intentional eye contact?

Commit to trying one or two new behaviors at an upcoming meeting.

Jot any notes below!

Having a hard time getting your voice heard in meetings?
Does the idea of public speaking make you want to hide under the table?
Do you dread difficult conversations or feeling put on the spot?

Learn the secret to unlocking confident and effective communication,
whether you're talking to one person or one thousand!



Before You Say Anything describes a new and innovative approach to connecting, creating results, and feeling confident about how you communicate. You'll understand why you're speaking, how to support your message with your body language and voice, and how to practice so that you're ready for the big speech and the off-the-cuff opportunity.

Available now in ebook & paperback formats.



ABOUT

Angie Flynn-McIver is the author of *Before You Say Anything: How to Have Better Conversations, Love Public Speaking, and Finally Know What to Do with Your Hands*

Angie's company, Ignite CSP, brings leadership coaching and communication skills training to individual clients and organizations worldwide.

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1 Know what your deliberate, productive intention is.

2 Embody the attitude you would like to see in others.

3 Remember that communication is a two-way street.

4 Listen.

5 Assume good intent.



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