

# Communicating From the Heart— What Does It Mean?

by Elly V. Darwin, M.Ed., NCC

Communicating from the heart is so important to me that, once I discovered and embraced the concept, I've dedicated my life to it. This is why my business is named Clearheart Communications: It means, above all, be clear with your own heart, and then communicate clearly from your heart. Simple but not always easy.

Your heart is where your soul resides. It is where your deepest purpose, wishes, hopes, dreams, ideas, and creative inspirations live. Within your heart (or heart-center, as some say, to distinguish it from the physical muscle) lies your deepest truth, the truth of who you really are. The job of your heart is to feel with honesty and purity.

Sometimes, though, heartfelt thoughts are filtered through the thinking mind. This can create conflicts or blocks that prevent heart messages from being expressed clearly.

The mind's purpose is to think and reason (as in "use your head"). That's what makes you smart and clever: You can invent things; you can figure your way out of trouble; you can tell funny jokes; you can deceive.

Your mind has another very important job: Part of your innate reasoning power is for protection—far more serious than constructing a clever joke. So, in addition to higher-level thinking, your mind is tasked with handling fear and doing what it takes to keep you safe.

Fear and safety can be physical (uh-oh, a tiger is loose—*hide!*) or social (uh-oh, she's displeased with me—*change the subject!*). When it comes to a perceived need for safety,

sometimes your head can kick into overly protective mode and get in the way of your heart. This is where the head-versus-heart dilemma is born: Your heart tells you one thing, and your head overrules it (uh-oh, what's in my heart might upset others—*stifle it!*).

## Conditioning and Safety

Conditioning is the result of repeated influence or training, such as that which is taught by parents or society. What lies within your heart may sometimes trigger fear-based conditioning, and you might feel vulnerable or foolish, or too daring or irresponsible, or somehow *bad*. Of course, it's not your heart that's making you feel bad. It's that darned ol' head perceiving fear and seeking safety by protecting the status quo: "Oh no, what would they think of me if they really knew what my

heart is saying? I'd better not go there."

Conditioning starts almost from birth and can become deeply embedded over time.

Unfortunately, many people have learned early on that it is better to keep quiet when it comes to communicating their truest, deepest feelings. So their quick-thinking heads devise all sorts of ways to say what they think others want to hear. Eventually they come to accept these fear-based thoughts as their true self. So on they go, speaking from their heads, *thinking* that they're communicating clearly. They're

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not! They're communicating safely.

Granted, sometimes it is better to speak from your head, like in algebra class or in a brief casual conversation.

But you don't have to live a head-versus-heart existence.

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### *Listening to Your Heart*

Heart communication is a two-way street involving listening (an inward process) and speaking or acting (an outward process). The first is listening—not with your physical ears to what others are saying, necessarily, but listening with your soul's ears to what your own true heart is saying. Messages from your heart are the true-you speaking. The true-you is your deepest part—your heart of hearts—telling you who you really are and what your purpose on this earth is. Your heart messages are pure and simple. They don't lie and they don't play games. They are not concerned with awkward situations or what others may think.

How do you know which messages are actually from your heart and are not just your head messing with you? There are some additional characteristics of heart messages worth paying attention to.

### *Identifying Heart Messages*

In the first place, it's no mere coincidence that the symbol for love is a heart (ok, a valentine if you insist, but let's keep going). Your heart messages know only love. They are not snarky or spiteful or mean. "I'll show him" might be a motivator, but your heart wouldn't tell you that. Instead, your heart would tell you to stay focused and steadfast, or perhaps to consider another path, relationship, or situation that's in your best interests. Heart

messages are only positive.

Heart messages are persistent. They can be ignored or resisted or laughed at or fought against, but they don't really go away. They can chirp like a cricket in the dead of night or they can nudge like a gentle breeze from time to time, but they're always there with their eternal wish that you embrace who you truly are and run with it.

Speaking of running, heart messages help to move you in a direction. Because your heart knows only love, it does not want you to remain stuck and unhappy. Heart messages help you grow. Do they immediately part the waters and give you a convenient escape route? Not necessarily. But when working together with your heart, your head can supply you with ideas and strategies to help you work out the details.

Your heart does not want you to be miserable, it wants you to be joyful. Love and joy go hand in hand: loving people are joyful, and joyful people are loving. It is hard to be joyful when you're being beaten up, whether physically, emotionally, or figuratively, whether by others or by yourself. If you're willing to listen, your heart may be telling you it's time to make a change, to take a stand, or change whatever it is that's keeping you miserable.

Your heart only builds up. It never tears down! If you loved your dog immensely, would you continually kick it all around the room? Yet, how many people "kick themselves around the room" by constantly telling themselves they're stupid, or no good, or undeserving of a fulfilling life, or undeserving of love? Your heart wants you to honor and respect yourself. It wants you to love and cherish yourself as the precious being you are.

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Your heart stands for compassion, humility, and gratitude. It loves unconditionally. It encourages understanding and respect. Sarcasm or derogatory and demeaning thoughts and remarks are not the heart's domain. There is no room for put-downs and disrespect. Your heart finds gratitude for all that is good; it does not gripe.

Last but not least, your heart does not distinguish between self and other. Your heart's desire is that all these qualities be expressed universally toward yourself and *all* others. Your heart does not say "except...." It does not distinguish between races, ages, genders, religions, cultures, families, classes, sexual orientations, incomes, football teams, political leanings, education levels, or any other way in which we cross-section or divide our world. Your heart does not say to love your kids but not yourself. It doesn't say to build yourself up and tear others down. It doesn't say you're better, so you're above the law. It doesn't say they're better because they're rich. We are all equals in the eyes of the heart.

Understanding how the heart operates enables you to understand the messages you receive when you are listening to your heart. And when you understand that, you see that the difference between heart and head is pretty simple: *Any message or thought that is contrary to the above is not from your heart.* Any notion that involves manipulating others or creating harm to yourself or to others is not from your heart. Any thought that stifles your greater good and highest potential is not from your heart. Your head may want you to get even; your heart wants you to heal. Your head may want you to win; your heart wants you to love. Your head may want you to stay in your comfort zone; your heart wants you to grow.

Remember, you *need* your noggin. Your thinking mind can serve you well, and it can work together with your heart in wonderful ways. But also be aware of your head's capacity to block your heart's desire by saying,

"Don't rock the boat."

Listening to your heart entails the willingness to be open to its messages of love, growth, and fulfillment of your loftiest purposes in life. Past conditioning can make that challenging at first, but your heart speaks, again and again, whether or not you choose to listen.

### *Communicating from the Heart*

The second half of the heart's equation can be really easy or really hard, depending. But it is ultimately immeasurably rewarding. Beyond being open to listening to your heart, the second half is communicating your heart's messages. There are two parts to this.

### *Self-Communication*

The first one to whom you communicate those loving messages is yourself. Over and over and over! When embarking on any positive change, often the biggest resistance you may encounter is self-imposed. Your head can rear its ugly head and send all sorts of

contrary, fear-based messages:

"Who do you think you are, wanting to go to college when you're

40?" "How dare you not let others continue to push you around?" "You don't deserve to be happy."

Resistance may also come from others, especially if they are accustomed to exerting unfair control or holding expectations. You might need to rock the boat to gain some self-respect. You may decide to rearrange some friendships, or make a career change, or take up a cause, or *whatever* it is your heart is telling you that you need to do.

Following your heart is not always easy, especially if you're not used to it. But your heart ultimately has your own best interests

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literally at heart. The more you honor your heart's messages—and continually reinforce them to yourself—the more strength you gain to push through the resistance.

### *Outward Communication*

The second part of communicating from the heart has to do with behavior toward others. When you are in touch with your own heart and listening to its messages, you cannot

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help but radiate heartfelt qualities outward—to all others, not just a select few. You'll notice yourself becoming more respectful of others. You'll begin to see all others not so much as above or below you but as equals at

heart. Your words will become more kind and uplifting. You'll become less competitive and more supportive. You'll judge less and encourage more.

Authentic, genuine, pure, heart communication reinforces itself, first as a shift in habits, then as a shift in lifestyle. As you continue to gain compassion for yourself,

you'll continue to radiate compassion outward. As you habitually connect with the joy in your heart, you'll habitually radiate joy outward. As you honor and support your loftiest purpose, you'll honor and support others toward their own highest goals and purposes. Despite whatever bumps you may encounter on the journey, you'll realize your life has changed for the better. You won't have to wonder, "What do I want to be when I grow up?" Your heart will tell you—and you *are* growing up.

An acquaintance recently commented to me, "Elly, you're always so cheerful!" I didn't even have to think about my reply. I smiled (people in touch with their hearts do that a lot) and said, "There's so much to be cheerful about and grateful for. Everything else is just little stuff." I wasn't trying to be profound, and I wasn't trying to belittle the fact that there are some serious problems in life. It's just that being clear with my heart makes me cheerful about 98 percent of the time.



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