

# SPEED RAPPERS, POINT-AVOIDERS

## & Other Combustible Communicators

by Ray DiZazzo



People come in various “communication personalities”, and speaking with them can be a delicate task – in fact it can sometimes be like strapping on a flak-jacket and defusing bombs! Put another way, poor communications, can lead to highly “combustible” interactions. And that in turn can “detonate” an otherwise profitable or productive interaction right before your eyes!

Over the years I’ve categorized these various combustible communication types, along with a few simple techniques you can use to make sure your interactions don’t lead to verbal flare-ups. Following is a brief overview of each.

### IDEA GARBLERS

No they’re not speaking from under water, but they might as well be because these folks garble parts of what they say and mix up words and thoughts. Why? At least partly because they have the mistaken idea that *you already know most of what’s rolling around in their head!* Idea Garblers are often busy and contemplative individuals. They’re also usually very intelligent but easily “scattered” or disoriented.

#### Undoing the Chaos of Idea Garblers

*When you’re interacting with Idea Garblers, don’t assume you can read between the lines – especially if it’s an important issue. Instead, slow them down or stop them in their tracks. Be tactful but clear and say something like, “Maybe you’d better Dick and Jane me on this. I’m not 100% clear,” or, “Wait, let’s go back to the beginning. I missed something.” Or you might try, “Something got by me there. Can you explain that again?” Once you feel you’ve got it right, feed your understanding back to them. Say something like, “Okay, now am I right in assuming that....”*

### SPEED RAPPERS

We all know these people. They’re the all too familiar “just the facts” types. Their concept of communication is a rapid-fire barrage that you’re expected to decode in split second intervals. Speed Rappers are often too harried or “scattered” to slow down and communicate clearly. They may even realize this but feel that communication isn’t that important! They can be blunt, terse, and often irritating – especially when you act on their instructions, get it wrong and end up taking the “rap”.

Speed Rappers sometimes use the guise of being in a hurry as a deflector so they won’t have to deal with difficult issues. If you watch and listen to them closely, you’ll recognize this. A sure sign is if they tend to suddenly speed up and get vague every time important issues are at stake.

#### Pulling Speed Rappers to the Curb

*When you’re “taking fire” from a Speed Rapper, the challenge is to slow them down.*

*Try saying, “Wait a minute. I just ‘disconnected’ there. Could you say that once more a little slower?”, or, “I want to be sure I have this right. Tell me that one step at a time...”*

## POINT-AVOIDERS

As you’ve probably guessed, Point-avoiders just can’t seem to get to the point. They deliver lots of quips, anecdotes, side-bars and other peripheral conversation, but very little that’s meaningful. They seem perfectly comfortable skirting all around the real issue but never quite focusing on it. Meanwhile, you’re going bonkers. Sometimes this is personal maneuvering and sometimes an oversight. More often than not, it’s just a plain old poor communication skills.

### Editing Point-avoiders

*Be tactful, but take Point-avoiders to the point and hold them there. You can do this by stating your understanding of the issue and requesting that they confirm it. This means guiding the discussion, yet doing it in a way that doesn’t offend them or appear to be overly aggressive. For instance you might say, “So here’s the way I see the real issue. You want me to....” or, “You feel that I should do this...Is that right?” or, “So when we get right down to it, the issue is....”.*

## ME-ME'S

Me-me's have an unspoken credo -- “Me, me and only me!” Though they’re often very friendly individuals, they’re always jumping in and they don’t really listen to much of what you have to say. The fact is, they’re too obsessed with getting their own two-cents in. In a Me-me’s mind, his or her opinion is all that matters. Watch them closely and you’ll notice they’re always ready to pounce excitedly on your pauses so they can give you their “expert” advice.

### Handling Me-Me's

*Try being firm but tactful. In fact in the case of Me-me's, you may have to be a little more forceful. Try saying something like, “Do me a favor. I want you to listen to what I’m going to say, and don’t think about your answer right away. First, just focus and listen. Then give me your opinion.” Or try, “Think about this – now really...” or, “Okay, put your opinion aside for just a second. Can you do that?” After you’ve said this, *look directly into their eyes for a solid mental connection. Then get your idea out fast before they slip back into their Me-me mode.**

## SPACE HEADS

We all know the Space Heads. They’re friendly, mellow and nice enough, but they always seem to be on some other planet. In a sense, they *are* light years “away”, because *they’re thinking about one thing as they say (or hear) another.* The ever familiar vacant stare is one sure sign you’re talking to a Space Head. Another reliable indicator is when you get hesitant responses like, “Ah, what?” or “Yeah, uh...right,” or, “Sure.... What was that, now?”

### Deflating Space Heads

*Just as with Me-me's, being firm, specific and sometimes even forceful is the key. Ask your Space Head something like, “Are you distracted? Should I come back later? Because when I say this I need you to really listen.” If it happens to be someone you know well, a Space Head “buddy” so to speak, you can wake them up with friendly, “Earth to Bill...” or, “Hellooo...” To be more direct you might try, “It’s going to be a waste of my time to go through this unless I’ve got you focused on me. And I haven’t got the time to waste. Okay?”*

## BARRIER BRAINS

Whatever you do, never talk politics with Barrier Brains. For them, communication is one way

only – *their way*. No matter what you say, they have a defense ready to spring on you. They never stop to listen to your side or consider your point of view objectively because they're completely convinced their opinion is right and it's their duty to set you straight. Though they're a lot like Me-me's, Barrier Brains are often not so nice about it. In fact sometimes they're downright combative. They may refuse to listen even if they *don't* have an "expert" opinion. They feel it's the principle of the thing, but the fact is they're just plain old stubborn. As you may have guessed many teenagers often fall into this category.

### Overcoming Barrier Brains

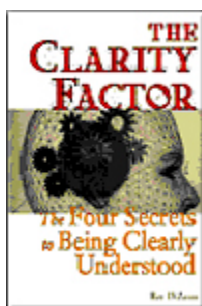
*Barrier brains often need to be given a wake-up call and unfortunately you may be the one to do it – if you want any chance of getting through, that is. Try saying, "Look, I feel like you're just completely closed off. I want to talk about this. I want to share my ideas and I want to share yours. But first I have to feel like you're really considering what I have to say."*

*If that doesn't work, you might become even more blunt and try, "Is it reasonable for me to assume that as your parent (or spouse, partner, etc.) I should expect you to at least listen to my side of this and think about it objectively? That's what I'm after, an open conversation. Not a one-way battle or a verbal war. And that's what we have right now. We're both wasting our time. I'll make you this promise. I'll listen to your opinion fairly and openly if you'll do the same for me. I promise. Let's do this together, okay?"*

## BUT FIRST BE SURE

There is one caveat to all this. *Before you use any of these techniques, do a frank self-assessment. Be absolutely sure you're not part of the communication problem.* Stop and ask yourself: Am I really listening? Am I being open and objective when it comes to *their* ideas? Am I communicating in a constructive and mutually productive way? If you can truthfully answer, "yes" to these questions, dig in and start defusing.

No, you won't always win the battle of the Barrier Brains, Me-me's, Space Heads and other combustible communicators. But if you try these techniques, you'll certainly defuse more bombs than you'll ignite.



### THE CLARITY FACTOR: FOUR SECRETS OF BEING CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD

by Ray DiZazzo goes to the heart of verbal communication in a completely unique way. Covering the essential skills in Business and Personal Communications, this book lays out in an easy to understand and easy to implement the critical elements to effective communication most people take for granted. By implementing and learning the simple steps outlined in this little 107 page book, you can dramatically effect the quality of your business and personal relationships for years to come!

