

# Implicit Demands in Communication

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# Why do People Resist?

- Humans are fundamentally social. They coalesce around each other, which is not always by attraction, but coercion.
- We cannot truly “know” another person, so we create “models” of other people in our own heads that cover up just how much we don’t know. Thinking we know the other person makes them feel safer.
- Social interaction (“reading minds” or “Theory of Mind”) is not really “knowing” others or “reading their minds” but rather depends on the compliance of the other person with what you know, through shared experiences and culture.
- So when someone doesn’t comply (PDA’ers), it destroys our model and that robs us of our sense of safety associated with our sense of predictability.
- As such, people vehemently defend what props up their sense of predictability, even though it doesn’t apply to the PDA’er.
- They also don’t know what else to do, the current traditional model is all they know.

## Cognitive Load Theory

- Cognitive bandwidth consists of skill & energy, and is finite
- Mental health issues consume most or all of it
- Adding pressure usually just piles on, rather than alleviates



# What's a Demand?

A request or expectation placed on one's:

**Actions:** *“Line up at the door,” or, “Time to eat!”*

**Mind:** *“You should feel ashamed,” or, “You’ll love it!”*

**Identity:** *“Good students share the supplies.”*



# Types of Autonomy

There's more than one way to be free:

**Actions:** *Choices, novelty, self-directed learning*

**Mind:** *Justice orientation, preferences*

**Identity:** *Group, goals, dreams*



# Examples of Implicit Demands

1. Why do you play that silly game all the time?
  2. Why'd you attack that other student?
  3. You're not making respectful choices.
  4. Oh, look who finally decided to join us!
  5. I don't get it, you're fine at school, you come home and BOOM.
  6. Come with us, you'll love it!
  7. Grandma loves you and just wants to see you, she won't be around forever you know.
  8. If you don't finish the assignment, I can't give you a gold star.
  9. I know you don't actually feel that way.
  10. Maybe if you tried seeing it from their side you wouldn't have this problem anymore.
  11. Tell me what's wrong. I can't fix it if you won't tell me.
  12. You seem angry.
  13. Your brother's not like this.
  14. You should be out there making friends.
  15. This happens every time, you always make everything so hard.
- A. See? That wasn't so bad, was it.
  - B. I just wish you wanted more out of life.
  - C. I keep telling you what to do, you just don't listen.
  - D. You'll understand someday.
  - E. Wow, I'm so impressed with you, I knew you could do it!
  - F. Why can't you just get along with people?
  - G. Oh, you don't really believe that.
  - H. What will your teachers think? What will your friends think?
  - I. You do you.
  - J. Do you want people to like you or not?
  - K. I do everything for you and this is the thanks I get?
  - L. Do what you want, I don't care anymore.
  - M. I don't like this music you listen to.
  - N. Why would you dye your hair, it's already pretty.
  - O. I had it harder than you and I turned out okay.
  - P. If you spent all this energy on doing the task rather than avoiding it, you'd be done by now.



# Implicit Demands in Communication

Most of the demands below are of thought/feeling or identity.

They are not demands to most people, but PDA'ers boundaries are very sensitive.

## **Imposed Consequences**

Commands  
Threats, ultimatums  
Punishing/public shaming  
Taking away supports  
Tokens/charts  
Rewards

## **Ambiguity**

Vague/abstract  
Implied/subtextual  
Metaphorical  
Mixed messages  
Hidden Curriculum  
Telling isn't teaching

## **Comparing**

Positive Other  
Medical Model  
Evidence-based

## **Judging**

Commentary  
Value-Laden words  
Good/bad  
Entitled to an opinion  
Not an opinion  
Just trying to help

## **Leading/Loaded Questions**

Projection  
Catch 22  
Loaded question  
Precommitment

## **Precommitment**

Predicting an outcome  
Often using emotions  
Like being asked to sign a  
blank check

## **Emotional**

Emotions as words  
Emotions as drama  
Guilt tripping  
Expecting appreciation

## **Adversarial**

Devil's advocate  
Hard pill to swallow  
Normalizing  
Encouraging  
Expecting child to  
articulate

## **Sniping**

Passive aggressive  
Perfect is better than meh  
Demeaning nicknames

## **Zero Sum**

Ignoring, ghosting  
Giving up, love is lost, all is lost  
Love is earned, has a price  
Rejecting reconciliation  
Playing the Hero/Victim  
Adult is equalizing/must win  
Blaming/gaslighting  
"I had it worse and I'm okay"  
"Thank God for me"  
Absolutism ('always, never' etc.)  
Sense of owning the child  
Child owes them something  
Cannot comprehend masking  
Denies child's senses/feelings  
Denies child's pain/needs  
Denies child's personhood



# **Imposed Consequences**

**Sanctions that exceed natural consequences, like punishments, threats, shaming, and even rewards.**

*“Now I can’t give you a gold star.”*

**Can negate the learning from a natural consequence, due to feeling punitive.**



# Ambiguity

**Abstract or implied knowledge for which the student accountable.**

**Vague, abstract words, often value-laden:**

*“You’re not making respectful choices.”*

**Hidden Curriculum:** Unsaid school and social procedures that aren’t taught (well), and assumed to be absorbed from observation, such as how to turn homework in late, or how the lunch line works.

**Teach situations in detail, and be on the lookout for students hiding what they don’t know.**





# Comparison

**Using comparison in a coercive way.**

**Positive other:** *“The other students aren’t acting like this.”*

**Medical Model:** *Built on a foundation of deficits.*

**Evidence-Based:** *Normed, faceless, diluted groups.*

**Only measure themselves against themselves.**



# Judging

**Rendering an opinion that elevates or diminishes.**

**They imply social hierarchy and belonging.**

**Words like:** Silly, rude, lazy, useless, selfish, respect, etc.

*“I don’t like that color.”*

*“Video games are silly.”*

*“This is all your fault.”*

**Qualify, soften, or omit opinions.** *“That was interesting.”*



# **Leading & Loaded Questions**

**Using an assumption to shape the child's response, or to catch them in a lose-lose situation.**

***“Why’d you attack the other student?”***

The child must either accept the use of the word ‘attack’ or object to it, both of which portray them as defiant.

**Be neutral & objective, and check in for understanding:**

*“I heard there was a disagreement, do I have that right?”*



# Precommitment

**Projecting an outcome that hasn't happened yet.**

*"Come outside with us, you'll love it!"*

*"How will you ever go to college when you keep acting like this?"*

**Describe or predict with a healthy margin of error.**

*"Who knows, it might be fun outside."*

*"That movie seemed pretty good."*



# Emotional

**Use of emotions to agitate, invigorate, or coerce.**

**Word choice:** Hope, love, disappointed, concerned, worried, excited

*“You’ll regret doing that.”*

*“I was hoping you’d come with me.”*

*“That’s so sad to your backpack got ripped.”*

**Describe situations neutrally or intellectually:**

*“What do you think will happen?”*

*“Would you like to go with me?”*

*“It’s unfortunate the backpack got ripped.”*



# Adversarial

**Taking a contrarian position, good or bad.**

**They lament, you reassure.**

*“Oh, don’t worry, everyone experiences that.”*

*“No, the other students don’t hate you.”*

**Leveling, normalizing, erasing the difference.**

*“Everyone experiences that.”*

**Listen rather than taking a position right away.**

*“That’s understandable,” & “Why do you think that?”*



# Sniping

**Subtle, passive aggressive statements of frustration, that wound deeply if heard.**

*“Oh, you’re joining us today?”*

*“Why can’t you do that all the time?”*

**These statements are simply best left unsaid.**



# Zero Sum

**When an adult must win, or uses themselves as a measuring stick, especially to justify their bitterness.**

*“I told you so!”*

*“I shouldn’t have to explain myself to a child.”*

*“Well, if they want to choose to fail, they can.”*

*“I had it worse and I’m okay.”*

*“Hey, I’m just trying to help.”*

**Polarized view of them as hero/victim and student a willful perpetrator.**

**Prone to sniping.**

**Won’t recognize the student’s progress unless it’s perfect.**

**Will reject reconciliation, apologies.**

**Can’t comprehend the child’s masking.**





# General Recommendations

**Seek consent/buy-in:** *“I have an idea if you’re interested.”*


**Differentiate yourself and allow dissent:** Make it clear, your thoughts are yours and you don’t expect them to agree. Make space for their input, and make it clear they can disagree with you without fear of emotional punishment.

**Don’t subsume or erase:** It’s not, *“Everyone’s like that.”* Instead try, *“That’s understandable.”*

**Active listening with no agenda:** Listening doesn’t just get useful information, it conveys to them that they matter to you.

**Let them win some things, and don’t tear down their walls:** They need confidence and psychological safety if they are to explore and grow.


**Paradigm:** One good mindset is better than 100 strategies.



What type of implicit  
communication was new to you?

What type do you think is most often  
used in everyday communication?

What type do you think does the  
most damage to a relationship?



# Contact Me



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