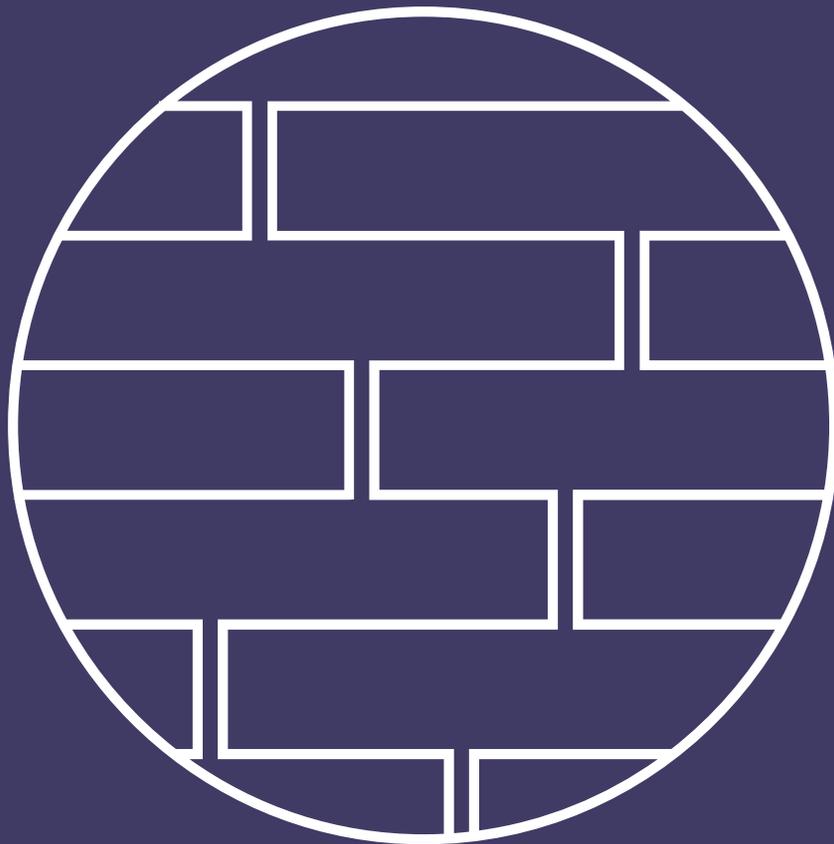


co·wonders



12
roadblocks

12 roadblocks

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What is it about:

- Getting familiar with responses which block communication
- Self-reflection over which roadblocks of communication we tend to use

source: Communication Roadblocks by Thomas Gordon

domains: self-awareness, active listening, empathy

approach description:

12 roadblocks are common responses that get in the way of good listening. They are not necessarily wrong, but they are not listening. They interrupt the person's own exploration, and in order to get back to their own process, the person must go around them (hence the term "roadblock").

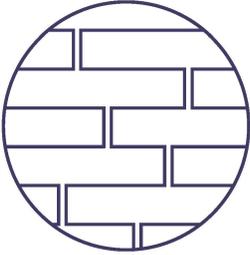
T. Gordon described "12 Communication Roadblocks" as part of his first leadership training program in 1957. Communication Roadblocks started from a study which identified responses used by therapists which blocked their clients' communication.

In 12 categories of listener responses (Roadblocks) is the desire or intent to change rather than accept the speaker. The Roadblocks are kind of a desire for (and often pressure for) the speaker to think, feel, or behave differently. These 12 types of responses act as vehicles for communicating unacceptance. And a climate of unacceptance is very uncondusive to personal growth, development, and psychological health. People don't problem-solve very effectively when they fear arbitrary power to make them change. Such a climate produces defensiveness and resistance to change. Roadblocks tend to interfere strongly with the troubled person's ability to stay centered and continue to explore and talk about their own perception of the problem. Simply put, roadblocks grab responsibility away from the owner of the problem and deposit it in the hands of the listener.



12 roadblocks

The 12 Roadblocks



1. Ordering
2. Warning
3. Moralizing
4. Advising
5. Using Logic
6. Criticizing
7. Praising
8. Labeling
9. Analyzing
10. Reassuring
11. Questioning
12. Avoiding

In Handout 1 there are descriptions of the 12 most frequent "Roadblocks" - responses when another person is experiencing a problem. These 12 typical responses are roadblocks only when the other person signals that they are experiencing a problem. When the relationship is in the "No Problem" area, many of these responses can be productive (like asking questions, joking, instructing), On the other hand, some of them (like name-calling, criticizing, judging) always carry a communication risk.

aim of use:

The activity can serve as an interactive play to recognize the roadblocks of communication and understand their effects.

read more:

- **Article:** The Roadblocks-a visual model by Michelle Adams, Gordon Training International
- **Website:** The 12 roadblock to communication, Gordon Training International
- **Website:** Origins of the Gordon model by Gordon Training International
- **Website:** UN training - handout on 12 roadblocks
- **Canva:** communication canva "Empathy blocks"

communication canvas

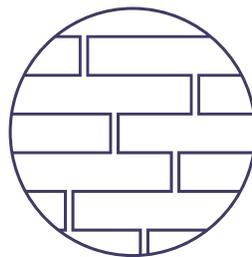


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educational method:

- Present to the participants the background of the “12 Communication Roadblocks”.
- Divide participants in 6 groups and assign to each group 2 Roadblocks (adapt the number of groups and roadblocks per group to the number of participants. To ease the process you can print and cut the Handout 1 for each group).
- Ask participants in each group to prepare a short scene presenting in the plenary the roadblocks they got. The other participants will observe the scenes and try to guess the presented roadblock.
- After presentations of all the groups, show a summary of 12 Roadblocks and possibly its visual model.
- Debriefing. Invite participants for a reflection by asking:
 - How do you feel?
 - How was the process of presenting and guessing the roadblocks?
 - What effects of roadblocks did you spot within yourself (thoughts, sensations)?
 - Can you think of a recent example when you have used one of the Roadblocks when trying to help someone when they own the problem?
 - Why is it important to be aware of the roadblocks and their consequences?
 - What could be an alternative to 12 roadblocks?
- Sum up the activity with inviting participants to learn about the communication approach which boosts and not blocks communication.



12 roadblocks

Handout 1:

• 1. **Ordering, Directing, Commanding**

- You must do this.
- Stop it.
- Go apologize to her.

Such responses convey that the listener wants to be in charge. They carry a high risk of making speakers feel they are being treated like children. It also shows there is no space for collaborative relationships.

• 2. **Warning, Threatening, Admonishing**

- Stop that, or I'll ...
- If you don't do this, then ...
- I warn you, if you do that ...

Messages like this can lead to responses with an attitude of "How do you know?" or "Who says so?". They can cause resentment and resistance.

• 3. **Moralizing, Preaching, Shoulds and Oughts**

- You should do this.
- It is your responsibility to do this.
- I wish you would do this.

Such messages bring the pressure of some external obligation. It may communicate to listeners that the speaker has no trust in their ability to judge ideas and values for themselves, so they should accept what others deem right.

• 4. **Advising, Giving Solutions, Suggesting**

- Let me suggest ...
- It would be best for you if ...
- Why not take a different approach?

Advising can communicate a lack of confidence in the speaker's ability to solve their own problems. It prevents them from thinking through a problem, considering alternative solutions and trying them out.



12 roadblocks

• 5. **Using Logic, Arguing**

- Do you realize that ...
- Here is where you're wrong...
- Let me give you the facts.

These are attempts to influence the speakers with facts, counter arguments, logic, information or strong opinions. Such a persuasive role is more like teaching and makes people feel like they are inferior or inadequate. They can also lead to long discussions over "facts".

• 6. **Criticizing, Judging, Blaming**

- I couldn't disagree with you more...
- You have nobody to blame but yourself...
- You are wrong.

Hearing evaluations probably will make speakers feel defensive, inadequate, inferior, stupid or unworthy. Criticisms also help shape others' self-concepts: self-judgements. Speakers may quickly learn that it isn't safe to reveal their problems.

• 7. **Praising, Agreeing, Supporting**

- You are an intelligent person.
- I think you did exactly the right thing!
- You have always made it in the past.

A "positive" evaluation that does not fit the other's self-image may evoke denial. People also infer that if we can judge them positively, we can just as easily judge them negatively some other time. Also, if praise is frequent, its absence may be interpreted as criticism. Praise is often felt to be manipulative, a subtle way of influencing others to do what you want them to do.

• 8. **Labeling, Name-Calling, Ridiculing**

- Okay, Miss Know-It-All...
- You're talking like an engineer.
- You men always think...

These responses are bound to make speakers feel foolish, inferior or wrong and they can have damaging effects on their self-image. Name-calling can provoke defensiveness and fighting back rather than taking a close look at ourselves.



12 roadblocks

• 9. Analyzing, Interpreting, Diagnosing

- You're saying this because you're angry.
- What you really need is ...
- You probably feel that way because...

Analyzing can communicate that you think you have them all figured out and can diagnose their motives which can be very threatening to them. If the analysis is accurate, it can lead to embarrassment. If the analysis is wrong - it can lead to feelings of anger and resistance.

• 10. Reassuring, Sympathizing, Consoling

- Look on the bright side...
- Don't worry so much about it.
- It's not that bad.

It is very tempting to try to make others feel better by talking them out of their feelings, minimizing their difficulties, denying the seriousness of their problems. Such messages can interfere a spontaneous flow of information.

• 11. Questioning, Probing, Interrogating

- Why did you do that?
- How long have you felt this way?
- What have you done to try to solve it?

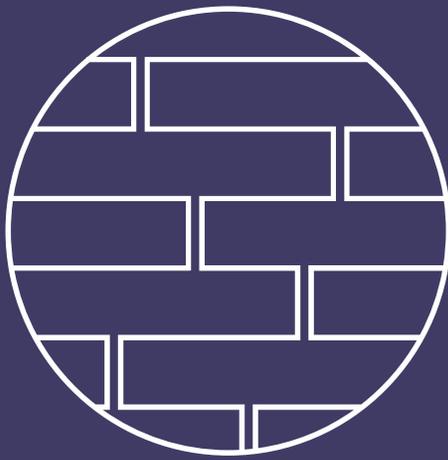
Probing questions ignore feelings of the speaker, which can be interpreted by them as a lack of understanding or caring. If you ask people closed-ended probing questions, all you will get is an answer, nothing more.

• 12. Avoiding, Diverting, Ignoring

- Let's have lunch and talk about something else.
- That reminds me of the time when ...
- Seems like you got up on the wrong side of the bed today.

These messages show a strong desire to withdraw from the problem through ignoring, kidding or changing the subject. Psychotherapists have proven that feelings not acknowledged and accepted often come up again and again. Failing to acknowledge problems and changing the subject can seriously bruise a relationship.





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