

Good Communication Skills Make Good Farms

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Many of the logjams and adverse factors in farming businesses have to do with communication and decision-making. This workshop will be a brief overview of some techniques to improve communication and do creative problem-solving.

1. Team makeup - the big picture

Notes I took in the spring of 2004 at a talk by Thomas Moore, author of Care of the Soul and A Life at Work: The Joy of Discovering What You Were Born To Do.

Thomas Moore talked about reading in Jung that marriage is a “container.” He puzzled over this for a long time and finally realized that marriage is “a container for each other’s craziness.” I.e. it is a way to help the couple deal with the fact that both of them have their craziness but that it can be contained and focused through the structure of marriage.

He then went on to speak briefly about relationships at work, and that a supervisor needs to also view the job environment as a container for each person’s craziness. He said the consequence of this is that there is tremendous power in symbolic acts and gestures in terms of employee morale (and I think also in terms of our relationship to the wider community), and that these symbolic acts may not seem logical but they are very important to the development of a good working team.

He also talked about simultaneously having faith in the people around you and also questioning them, and that these are both possible to do at the same time. *I hope in this workshop to share some ways to understand and focus the craziness of your farm team and to touch on some ways to show your faith in each other without denying the need to acknowledge your inevitable conflicts.*

2. Personality Styles: East, North, South, West (handout)

3. Conflict styles: style inventory and explanation (handout)

4. Reasons for Conflict (handout)

5. Ways to escalate and de-escalate conflict (3 handouts)

Active listening (handout)

I messages (handout)

6. Problem-solving steps (handout)

7. From complaints to commitments (handout)