

Chapter I

Talk Cards and Talk Games

Introduction

In the introduction, I described the three important components of the Card Talk idea.

- **A Talk Card** is the package of messages that are communicated in playing a specific role. To play any role competently the communicator needs to have a strong list of messages ready to go that others believe effectively reflects that role. So in essence, I can't be a good husband unless I can "talk" like a good husband.
- **A Talk Game** reflects the goal the messages are designed to accomplish. Winning means both parties accomplishing their goals.
- **A Card Deck** is the set of cards that we have available to play a card game at any given moment. We have both a Personal Deck and a Professional Deck of cards and we must develop both decks well to succeed as communicators.

To understand better about how and why we play card games, let's turn first to some examples of card games that show how they work in practice.

The Scheduling Game. Imagine the student supervisor who is new on the job and has not really developed a Supervisor Card yet. One of her first duties is to create a work schedule of student employees and enforce that schedule to make sure all hours are covered. She must talk with each student and figure out when each can work. Imagine that one of her employees, who happens to be a really good friend comes in to get some special time off to attend a wedding. This person makes the request using her Friend Card. Yet the supervisor cannot



relent. She must play her Supervisor Card and refuse the request. This is a tough lesson in learning to be a supervisor: She will be making some unpopular decisions and possibly losing friends along the way.

The Parenting Plan Game. I conduct a lot of research in the area of divorce mediation. In this context a neutral third party sits down with divorcing parents and tries to help them create a parenting plan for their children after the divorce is final. This facilitator must have an effective Mediator Card to deal with the parties who will alternatively play their Husband and Wife Cards and their Mom and Dad Cards. Typically, the mediator's goal is to encourage parties to play their Mom and Dad Cards so they can focus on the task of building a parenting plan. If they play their Husband and Wife Cards repeatedly, they move away from playing a Parenting Plan Game and more toward a Marital Argument Game, which the mediator would like to avoid.

The Patient Care Plan Game. A third game of interest that I referenced briefly in the Introduction focuses on how physicians play their Doctor Cards to create an effective treatment plan for their patients. The challenge is that doctors must play the game so that patients open up and provide accurate information about their feelings, their history with the health issue, their family, and even their job pressures. All of this information is vital if the physician is able to win the game by creating a plan that will help the patient get better.

Let's use these three games to illustrate some key principles about Talk Cards, Talk Games and Card Decks. We will begin by diving more deeply into the concept of Talk Cards.

Talk Cards

We know from the Introduction that a **Talk Card is the package of messages that are communicated in playing a specific role.** To perform any personal or professional role well the communicator needs to have a strong list of messages ready to go that others believe effectively reflects that role. The message "package" consists of two elements: **content** and **style**. The **content** part is the idea or topic you want the other communicator to understand or to do: Go here, play there, I want this, I care about that. The **style** part deals with how friendly, how formal, and how powerful you want to appear in presenting that topic or idea. Style gives emphasis and fills in meaning about the topic. They work together in the message package.

Card Style. We mix and match three elements in formulating our style. The first is **liking**. We include words, gestures, eye movements, and other facial expressions to show how much we like or dislike someone. Showing extreme liking might involve smiling, getting physically close to someone, or even touching. Showing extreme dislike might start with a scowl and an angry tone. When divorcing parties in mediation play the Marital Argument Game they often show this extreme dislike for one another that the mediator must redirect to keep the focus on the Parenting Plan Game.

The second style element is **formality**. A really formal message is one that includes big words, proper grammar, and long sentences. Of course, a more

informal style might include shorter words, slang, sentence fragments, and perhaps an exaggerated accent. People are often very informal when they want to show a lot of liking. When they are angry, sometimes they are also very informal and use profanity, for example. But, they might also use very formal language it is typical of someone being scolded.

The third style form is **power**. Messages always include information about the speaker's status or power in the relationship. Big-power messages might include threats or other reminders of someone's role to indicate their ability and willingness to enforce their will. When the divorcing male plays his Husband Card he might try to intimidate his ex-wife by yelling or using threatening language as a means of increasing his power to impose a solution on the parenting plan.

One way of exercising power that some people use is shoving a card in another person's face. That means really playing that role in a forceful manner. For example, the student supervisor might need to do that if the student she's talking to refuses to play her Employee Card and continues to play his Friend Card to get time off to attend the wedding. The supervisor might have to say, "Look, here's the hours you're going to work because you have the lowest seniority. I don't have any choice!"

An analysis of the supervisor's message reveals low liking, low formality, and high power. This is a typical profile for a message of this kind. She could have said, "I appreciate your concern but I must insist on scheduling you at this time." This message shows medium liking, high formality, and medium power. It certainly contains a different style than the previous "Look" message.

Relational Messages. As it turns out, our topic and style selections send very specific relational messages. Maybe it's the relationship we have in place and maybe it's the relationship we want to have in place. The full Supervisor Card references an employer-employee relationship. The Friend Card reinforces the relationship between the two primarily as friends and not co-workers.

Establishing the employer-employee relationship by using the Supervisor Card is a big challenge. When her friend asked for time off to attend her cousin's wedding the supervisor was probably caught off guard. She thought her friend/employee was coming in to play the Casual Conversation Game and suddenly she changed it to the Scheduling Game and asked for time off. Now the new supervisor has to access her Supervisor Card and talk about the policy that says no special time off is allowed. Pulling out that topic has relational consequences. As indicated above, the supervisor has to discuss the topic with the relational goal of not alienating her friend. That's difficult to do. As she becomes more skilled at her job and develops her Supervisor Card, she will be much more comfortable playing the Scheduling Game and other Business Meeting Games.

This raises the point about the size of our cards. A card is large if we have command of many topics and many different styles in displaying those topics. Once the supervisor learns to develop her Supervisor card she will know how to shift back and forth easily between her Friend Card and her Supervi-



supervisor Card when talking with her employee-friends with whom she has worked with for some time. In fact, learning a job means developing the cards associated with those jobs.

Personal and Professional Decks. As the supervisor example illustrates, card decks are generally divided into two categories—Personal and Professional. The Personal Cards are typically the ones we develop first within our families and friends and we use them most often when we communicate. In contrast Professional Cards focus on job-related duties.

You can probably empathize with the student supervisor who has to learn the hard way how to develop her Supervisor Card. Not only must she explain policies to people, she has to learn how to train new employees, talk to customers, resolve customer complaints, and deal with her boss, the owner of the establishment. These are all topics she is expected to be able to discuss and she must make the right style choices with each one to be effective. For example, when a customer comes in and plays the Customer Complaint Game with her, she has to know how to a) present herself as a competent problem solver, b) send positive relational messages to avoid alienating the customer, and c) creatively solve the problem to keep the customer happy.

Physicians have these same challenges. When talking with a patient the physician must often switch between Personal and Professional Cards. The physician might play a Friend Card with a patient she has known a long time by sharing personal information about her family. That kind of conversation sets a relaxed, friendly tone to the interaction so when the physician switches to the Doctor Card, she can more easily interview her friend about her health concerns.

Card Play Is Reciprocal

This Physician-Patient Card Game illustrates an important point about card play. When someone plays a card, he or she is **asking the other person to play a card** that typically matches or goes along with the card the person is playing. In other words, **card play is always reciprocal**. For example, when playing the Doctor Card, the physician is asking the patient to play a Patient Card and carefully listen to the physician's instructions. Typically when playing their Patient Cards, people might get nervous and not listen well or feel comfortable asking questions. That's when the physician is wise to switch to a Friend Card which then asks the patient to also switch to a Friend Card and start opening up more as a friend. When people talk casually they reveal a lot of important information to the physician that might impact a good treatment plan.

When the student supervisor's friend came in to ask for time off, she was playing her Friend Card, which essentially asked the supervisor to play her Friend Card in return. But, the supervisor had to play her Supervisor Card in response to do her job and deny the friend's request. The denial could certainly be friendly, and the supervisor could show a little of her Friend Card. But, she had to reject her friend's request to only play her Friend Card and give her the time off.

The key point is this: don't just think about the card you should play. Think also about the card you are asking the other person to play. Is it the right card for you to accomplish your goals?

Talk Game Goals

Types of Goals. What drives us to play talk games? Every time we form a message to communicate we work to accomplish three goals. The first goal is related to our **identity**, or how we define ourselves. These are called **self-presentation goals**. Each person wants to be perceived in a particular way to be accepted and respected by the other person and/or his or her group. Or the person might want to show that he or she is not a part of that group. But, whenever we exchange information in whatever medium, we have self-presentation goals. We will talk more about these self-presentation goals in Chapter 3 which focuses on self-concept and identity needs.

The second kind of goal we pursue is **relational**. Each person inserts information in their messages designed to pull the other closer or push the other further away. Pulling closer is accomplished by using a friendlier, informal style of communication. We work to establish relationships that enable us to accomplish our primary message goals. The first judgment people generally make toward an individual is how “friendly” the person looks or acts.

The third aim of every message is the goal that most communicators focus on most directly—our **achievement** goals. This goal relates to the task that we want our messages to accomplish—some job that must be accomplished. I want to give you some information, persuade you to change your mind, or entertain you with a story. The achievement goal is generally the label we use to describe the purpose of a message. For example, someone might want to tell you about their new job, or persuade you to get a cup of coffee with that person. These are achievement goals and they are often the main motivator for communicating with one another.

However, messages can be motivated primarily by self-presentation or relational purposes. For example, for the newly-appointed supervisor whose employee/ friend comes in asking for time off probably wants to play her Friend Card to her newly-designated supervisor. She wants to present herself as a competent employee (presentation goal), reestablish her friendship (relational goal), and get release time for the wedding (achievement goal). These goals work together for the employee. By playing her Friend Card she emphasizes the relationship, which should afford special privileges. She also shows that she's a good employee by asking for time off rather than just calling in sick.

What's really interesting about this request is how it illustrates the way these three motivations combine to play a communication game. To achieve her goal of getting time off, the employee/friend will want to emphasize the Friend Card while playing the Employee Card, again to get special consideration. Using the Friend Card, she accesses a topic from the card that she and her new boss have probably talked about when they were friends. Pulling a familiar topic from the Friend Card indicates that she wants to play the Casual Conversation Game first to set up the request. So, she might say, “Hey, did you

hear my cousin is getting married? I think you guys met. She's really cool." After a few exchanges, the employee/friend might begin to show her Employee Card and say, "By the way, I would really like to go to her wedding so I need some time off."

Winning Card Games. How should the new student supervisor handle the request to "win" the game? Recall that winning means that each person accomplishes his or her goals in the conversation. The supervisor can only win if she is successful in accomplishing her **achievement goal** (getting the employee to work), **relational goal** (keeping the friendship), and **presentation goal** (being a competent employee). On the other hand, her friend probably has the same relational and presentation goals but a different achievement goal (get time off). The best the supervisor can hope for in this exchange is to accomplish her own achievement and presentation goals, but she might sacrifice her relational goal of keeping the friendship. She'll have to play her Supervisor Card in such a way to minimize that, if possible.

These games are difficult to play so that all players achieve their goals. In this context, "winning" a card game means that both parties play the cards in their hands to accomplish their self-presentation, relational, and achievement goals. We "lose" a game if, after the cards are played, one or both parties fails to achieve their goals. For example, the supervisor would lose if she has to say no to her friend in a way that really angers her. She can only win by playing the Supervisor Card carefully while playing some of her Friend Card as well by gently saying no and explaining the policy in a friendly way.

As this example illustrates, Talk Card Games start by one person showing a specific card, the other person seeing the card, and then either reciprocating or not reciprocating with the same card. As this process evolves people get a sense of what they're doing—they define the activity. This activity then becomes "the game." This example also illustrates that games can change quickly. What started as a Casual Conversation Game quickly turned into a Scheduling Meeting Game. And, just as in conventional card games, leading with the wrong card can end in disaster. It was unfortunate that the friend/employee played her Friend Card to try to use her friendship to get a favor from her new boss. Leading with that card may have cost her a friendship just to get a day off.



In many circumstances, misreading cards, and by extension misreading proposed games can have severe consequences. In the Parenting Plan Game, the mediator's goal is to read the couple's cards and figure out if they are playing the Husband and Wife Cards or their Mom and Dad Cards. Then, when they are showing the right cards, are they playing a game that will result in winning the game, which is creating a parenting plan for the children? A key skill in effective communication is reading the other's cards. That awareness is essential in then playing a game that will result in achieving the goals and winning the game.

Card Development

Style Switching. As you recall the underlying motivation to create cards is to satisfy our self-presentation, relationship, and achievement goals. Striving to accomplish these goals when faced with very diverse communication settings creates a need to be able to switch quickly from one style to another and thus develop bigger cards. My senior roommate in college was an African-American guy who was very adept at switching styles (friendliness, formality, and power). When Ron played his Friend Card with me he had learned to speak using a typical Standard English accent. However, when his African-American friends entered the room, Ron immediately adopted their more urban accent when playing his Friend Card with them. That accent is important in establishing friendliness, informality, and equal power. It honors the culture and establishes a connection.

We talked about this switching extensively. He felt that it was very important to switch styles to show solidarity and respect for his African-American friends. He felt that his ability to hang out with them hinged on using that style in their presence. Similarly, he felt that using the more Standard English style was important when hanging out with his White friends.

Actually, we all learn to make subtle shifts in their style to satisfy their needs. High school students will often use the word “like” every fourth or fifth word in communicating with one another. Including this word shows solidarity with friends. When these students speak to older folks they often avoid this word to play more of an Adult Card. Women will play their Female Card by introducing subjects and styles that appeal to their female friends when exchanging social topics. Men display similar quirks in their speech to appeal to their buddies when they play their Man Cards.

Card Origins. As people mature and spend more time outside their families, they learn to expand their cards because they have to fit into more groups. Their identity becomes more complex as they age. Kids go to school and must create both Friend and Student Cards. As friend and family groups expand, they put more cards into their deck as a way of fitting in. By the time we mature into adults, we require a fairly elaborate set of cards to be effective in relating to our increasingly diverse world.

The Ron story illustrates where cards originate. We know what cards we have from two sources. First, we play cards and see how people react to us. If they respond to the cards we play and we achieve our goals, then we know we can hold and play those cards. If they don't respond well, then we probably realize that we don't have or can't play those cards well. I am constantly reminded that I don't have a Youth Card when I can't participate in conversations about new bands, video games, or current fashions. I don't care much about those issues so my cards are small or even non-existent. This is especially difficult for people trying to go back to school and learn a new craft after being laid off. They have to learn to communicate in a whole new fashion for that new career. Many people get comfortable playing the same cards over and over again and never find new ones to play.

Second, we learn about our cards when people reflect on our personalities. They might comment on the style with which we play our cards, for example. “That Sara is a really sensitive,” means that she prefers to play her Friend Card frequently by taking time to listen to people she really cares about. Or, “That Bill is a good dad,” means that, to that person, Bill’s Dad Card really impresses the casual observer.

Card Deck. Your card deck consists of all the cards you have available for any and all communication situations. It’s very broad. An easy way to think about your deck is to look in your closet. What sets of clothes do you have for which situations? If you’re typical you have various outfits for different situations. You have dressup clothes for formal occasions, business clothes for your job, casual clothes for going to class or hanging out. You can think of these clothes as part of your Card Talk Deck. For example, when you put on your business clothes for your job and you also play your Job Talk Card at work. When you help customers or talk to the boss in your work clothes you present the whole business package to these people. You might even have jewelry or other accessories to complete your deck.



Research generally supports the idea of having as many cards in our deck as possible to manage the broad range of communication challenges we face in life. By virtue of my diverse life experiences, I have been in many situations and learned to build a big deck. And I work with people who are pleased to tell me about my cards and how they’re working. So I have many opportunities to learn about my cards.

Imagine what the doctor’s card deck must look like. Personally she will need to create a Mom, Wife, Friend, and Daughter Cards. Professionally she will need to create Doctor, Colleague, and Employee Cards in working at the hospital. If you also have a diverse set of life experiences and jump in and out of different situations, then you probably hold many different personal and professional cards. And, you often switch very quickly between these cards as you switch between different card games. One minute the game is Casual Conversation and then next minute it’s a Family Chores Game discussing who does what around the house.

Card Tricks. What about card tricks? A card trick involves playing a card or initiating a Card Talk game with the specific intention of hiding true self-presentation, relational, or achievement goals. People do this all the time when they want to fake interest or attention. For self-presentation purposes, I might want to play a card I am asked to play, and I go along, but I really don’t want to play that card. These are innocent little diversions that are common in conversation.

This was the challenge that the student supervisor faced when her friend asked for time off. Her friend came in and immediately played her Friend Card and initiated a Casual Conversation Game. Then, she switched immediately and played the Scheduling Game. The switch was a bit of a trick because the Casual Conversation Game was simply a cover for the real achievement goal of getting time off. When both parties show the same or compatible cards over several exchanges and both parties believe they are playing the same game, they have achieved **synchrony**.

When it becomes clear that they are not playing the same game, it is called **dissynchrony**. In extreme circumstances individuals can trick others into believing they are playing one game when in reality they are playing something else. If the mediator allows either divorcing party to play a Husband or Wife Card while the other is trying to play a Mom or Dad Card then dissynchrony might emerge. The party changing the card works to change the game to accomplish different goals other than creating a parenting plan. The mediator must constantly watch for this trap and redirect it when necessary.

Winning for both the mediator and the parents depends largely on achieving synchrony by: a) reading one's own and the others' cards correctly, b) determining if parties are playing the same game, and c) knowing how to expand the rules of the game to widen synchrony opportunities. While we have covered "a" and "b," we have not focused on game rules and how they work. Let's take a look at rules and how to play with them.

Talk Game Rules

What are Game Rules? Each talk game is organized by a set of rules required to play it properly. Of course, the rules that apply to the game depend on how communicators define the game. Once that tacit understanding has occurred, then we recall the rules necessary to complete that activity successfully. But when parties have different definitions of the game, either intentionally or unintentionally, then there are two or more sets of rules. The question is, what are game rules and how do they work?

Card Talk rules regulate the topics and styles that are acceptable in playing the game. If the game has a formal definition, like the Patient Care Plan Game, then the rules are clearer, but also more constraining. When doctors interview patients the purpose of the talk is to understand the issues and create a patient care plan to improve the health status of the patient. In a rigid situation like this, a relatively few number of topics are acceptable to discuss while others are out-of-bounds. It would be appropriate to talk about medically relevant issues but inappropriate to talk about the relative success of various sports teams.

Styles are also constrained in Card Talk. In casual conversation, use of bad grammar or mildly profane language signals a very informal situation. But in a job interview, if a candidate uses this style combination, it suggests that the candidate does not know how to communicate properly in formal situations. The interviewer might even say, "We don't use that kind of language here."

Bending the Rules. Rules are constraining because the person might be prevented from using a style that is more effective in that situation. For example, the doctor might notice that the patient seems overly nervous playing the Patient Care Plan Game. The doctor might decide to break out of the formal interview mode just to put the patient more at ease. So the doctor might play a Friend Card and talk about family issues with the patient.

People bend game rules all the time. Mediators are constantly on guard for parents that try to bend the rules during a mediation session to try and gain an advantage. One of the important rules that mediators try to enforce is the “no interruption” rule. That is a power style move aimed at establishing dominance in conversation. To avoid that show of dominance mediators like to establish the rule that when one person is talking, that person is allowed to complete his or her thought. But instead of overtly interrupting, the husband might make a noise or roll his eyes or doing some other disruptive act that isn’t “technically” interrupting. Since many divorced people are not cooperative, the mediator is constantly watching for these rule violations.

Modeling the Card Talk Elements



Let’s take a broader look at the Card Talk process by modeling its various components. Every communication event contains these elements and we will refer to them throughout this book.

Sources and Receivers. Every communication event includes at least one source and one receiver. The process of communication is different than simply sending information to unknown receivers. That process is simply information dissemination. The process of communication is a higher bar. It means that a source wants to impact a receiver in some way—changing attitudes, beliefs, values, or behaviors in some way. When the source has impacted the receiver even minimally, then we can say that communication has occurred. A source who has a self-presentation goal of looking “cool” and walks into a room with a “hot” outfit and gets the desired reaction of people staring, is communicating. The source had a goal, the clothes and outfit was the message, and receivers were impacted.

Messages. Every communication event involves a message. It might be verbal, written or nonverbal in nature. Using the language for this book, the message shows the talk card that the person is playing, and probably the game, as well. This means that messages are complex. What is the person trying to say, what card or cards are they playing, what game is happening, and what are their goals? Many factors impact these conclusions and we’ll talk about those in the model as well. But it’s important to note that the receiver’s first job is to figure out what the source is communicating and then what it means, and then what should be done (if anything) about it. The source’s main job is to send messages, or play cards and games that are most likely to impact the receiver in the intended way. The wrong messages at the wrong times, as we have seen, will not connect with receivers or are taken the wrong way.

The Channels. The channel is the method you use to communicate whether it’s face-to-face, electronic, postal mail, or others. If you were a television star, you could say “hi” to your mom using television. Channels are either broad, or narrow. Broad channels carry a lot of information, whereas narrow channels carry much less information. A channel is broad if it involves most of your five senses and narrow if it involves only one sense. Most people control their channels strategically depending on what card they want to play. If the card requires maximum impact, then a face-to-face channel might be best. If self-presentation or relational issues are not critical, then a text might be

fine. The key is matching the message with the channel. If you try to send a message through a channel the other person does not use, or if you select a channel that inappropriately fits the message, your communication will most likely fail.

Noise. Noise consists of anything that distracts from, or competes with the intended messages. For example, a patient might have a nervous twitch or be looking around the room while the doctor is trying to conduct an interview. Anything that distracts from playing the intended game is noise. You can think of noise as a ratio—the **Signal-to-Noise ratio**. The Signal is the message sent to accomplish intended self-presentation, relational or achievement goals. It is the numerator or top part of the ratio. Noise is the denominator or bottom part of the ratio. The goal in communicating a message is to have a very strong signal and minimal noise. Playing a card that sends a clear message with little interference is likely to get through much better than a confusing message or a weak message that cannot be heard above the clutter.

Culture. Every message given from every card contains information about the sender's cultural orientations. As we shall see in a later chapter, culture is represented by an individual's values and behaviors. As individuals play their cards, they might use a specific accent or wear a particular outfit to satisfy self-presentation goals that will be viewed positively by their peers. The cards that people select and the style with which they choose to play the cards always reflect their cultural orientations. People want to be categorized into some group to receive acceptance by that group and they will display their cultural orientations accordingly. If I want to be viewed as a member of the hip-hop culture, what cards would I need to have in my deck, what styles would I use to discuss certain topics, what would I have to wear, and what accent would I need to use to present myself as a member of that culture? Gender membership asks the same questions. To be seen as male or female, what cards should I hold, how should I play them and in which settings? We will talk more about culture and gender later in the book.

Contexts. Every time you play a card, you adjust to the context. You read the situation and figure out what game people are playing, what card you've been asked to play, and what the rules are for playing that card to accomplish your goals. What are the elements you analyze? You look at the relationship between yourself and the other party to determine what kind of style to use in covering the topic you play on your card. You scan for the amount of noise in the situation and adjust your card playing accordingly. If there's too much noise, you keep your play shorter—or wait for a different situation. It is important to note that while you are playing cards you are also creating the context as you go. Any given game builds momentum and the rules for playing become clearer as the context becomes clearer.

Impacts. We have talked extensively about the impact of playing cards. The most visible impact of playing a card is reciprocation. Did the other person play the same card you played? Did this exchange satisfy your self-presentation, relational and achievement goals? We tend to look first for evidence of these intended impacts. However, we should also scan the environment for unintended impacts. For example, I might play a card to accomplish the self-presentation goal of being viewed as an authority on a subject. But the audi-

ence might not respond as intended. I had a colleague who was perceived by many female students as very attractive. Even though he played his Professor Card during lecture, it was obvious that some of the female students were not responding to that card. The point here is that, controlling communication means having a CLEAR idea about what goals you want to accomplish with your communication. Many people fail because they do not really know what impact they want their communications to achieve.

Lessons Learned

Here are some key lessons from this chapter that should help you both understand Talk Card Games and play them more effectively:

- **Understand what cards you have in your deck.** A talk card is the package of messages that are communicated in playing a specific role. To play any role competently the communicator needs to have a strong list of messages ready to go that others believe effectively reflects that role. It is also important to have the right cards in a deck to be able to switch games quickly and effectively.
- **Understand the cards you are asking the other person to play.** Remember, whenever you play a card, you are also asking the other person to play a card as well. Is the card you are asking the other play going to help win your Talk Card Games?
- **Understand the game you are playing at all times.** By looking at the other's card and how he/she is playing it, you can guess the game the other is playing. If it's a game you like you can continue to play. But people pull card tricks and switch games. It is difficult to win if you don't understand the game.
- **Understand the rules for playing that game.** Once the game becomes clear, a set of rules is established for how to play the game properly. When you play the games long enough you understand the rules and then how to bend them to give you a better chance of winning.
- **Try to win the game for both parties.** Ideally, communication is played as a cooperative event. The more you can approach communication with that goal the more you can select cards and play games that will help everyone accomplish their goals. Sometimes that's not always possible, but we should work hard to do so.
- **Try to minimize noise in the communication process.** Concentrate on organizing the communication process so there is very little noise or interference in getting the message across. The signal strength should be strong and noise minimized.

It is difficult to be a winner consistently if you don't have good cards and don't know the rules for playing the game. This book will walk you through a number of situations that present difficult challenges to most people in their daily lives. Hopefully, you will walk away from this course playing with a full communications deck and winning more games.

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