



CMG GardenNotes #015

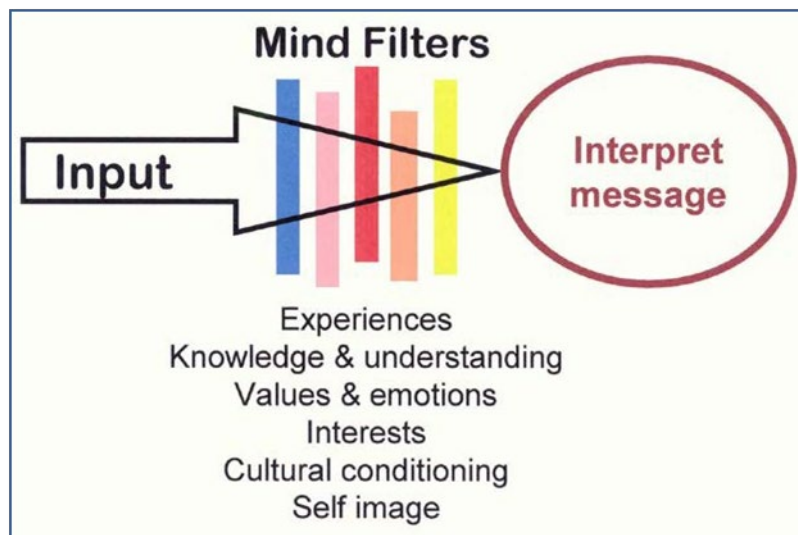
CMG Program – Communications

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Mind Filters Interpret the Message

93% of interpersonal communication is nonverbal. In verbal communication, non-word aspects (tone, speed, inflection, emotions) account for the majority of the message.

We hear a message (verbal and nonverbal), but do we understand the intended meaning in the communication? As messages come into our minds, our mind filters of experiences, knowledge and understanding, values and emotions, interests, cultural conditioning, and self-image filter or interpret the messages. Our interpretation may be similar to or off base from the sender's intended meaning.



“Words do not convey meanings; they call them forth. I speak out of the context of my experience and you listen out of the context of yours; and that is why communications is difficult.”

David O. McKay, Educator and Prophet

Communication becomes more difficult when it involves messages linked to strong emotions or values. Common examples include discussions on money, religion, politics, love, sex, drugs, and violence. Recognizing when emotions and values (from either party) play into the message helps defuse sensitive issues.

Repeating back, in your own words, what you hear is an effective tool in helping to clarify meaning.

Communicating As Gardeners

In the gardening arena, communication barriers may include emotions and values related to pesticides, organic gardening, xeriscaping, expectations of what a garden should look like, and expectations about the time someone invests in gardening activities.

In diagnosing plant disorders, communication is key. The client will describe the situation based on their observations and gardening experiences. The CMG volunteer will interpret based on their gardening experiences. Inevitably, there will be some miscommunication!

In CMG volunteer work, we are often called upon to diagnose plant disorders solely through verbal descriptions by the client. As most clients do not know what to look for in the diagnostic process, the description will typically be lacking in detail. Diagnosis may be impossible.

As professionals, we need to recognize that we have very limited potential to diagnose plant disorders over the phone or in a clinical setting. It is natural to add details about the plant's problem based on our experiences, but details added by our mind filters may be totally off base for the specific situation.

In talking with clients about gardening problems, ask lots of questions and do lots of listening. Ask questions to verify every detail raised by your mind filters. Repeating back in your own words what you are hearing often helps to clarify where mind filters are interfering with communication.

Authors: David Whiting, CSU Extension, retired. Artwork by David Whiting. Used with permission. Revised October 2017. Reviewed June 2023 by Merrill Kingsbury, CSU Extension.

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