**Interpersonal Communication**

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**Interaction 1:** There was a commotion in the local mall after the announcement of the end-of-season clearance sale. I had agreed to go shopping with my sister Leena before coming back to college after a long session of back and forth arguments which never produced a clear winner. In the end, I had given in with the intention of taking advantage of the sale and buying some essentials for myself. Leena is not fond of spending useless hours in the mall without buying anything. Shopping with her is usually a small and precise affair. It was therefore surprising when we had been cruising from store to store for four hours. There was plenty to show for the time, but Leena’s list seemed to be never-ending. I had just picked the last clothing item I could have found and liked from the sale when she told me we had to visit the grocery store as well. I groaned and said, “I am tired,” before offering to wait for her at the entrance while she shops. Leena became visibly angry at my reaction and told us we were going home. We got back after a silent car ride.

I have a steady and loving relationship with my elder sister. It has slowly evolved from early childhood friction to teenage hostility to finally morph into a reliable familial relationship. I prefer to spend at least a part of my summers with her because of how emotionally secure I normally feel when I am around her. We have survived all our childhood traumas together and grown stronger from the ordeals. She has stood for me in high school drama and continues to lend motivation and support whenever I need it. In turn, I value her opinion more than anyone I know. It is rare for us to get angry at each other and rarer still to show it.

At the mall, the phrase that created miscommunication was when I groaned and told her I was tired. From my perspective, the intention behind the announcement of weariness was a simple attestation to the fact that I understood Leena to shop minimally and specifically which is why after four hours, I was justifiably confused and drained. I later understood that Leena had calculated my response to be rude and obscenely selfish considering the fact that I had bought everything I needed while she had not had the time to go over her entire list. My **static evaluation** had completely **bypassed** the idea that Leena had been waiting for the sale and needed to catch up on important shopping.

This contradiction in our perceptions of the same interaction was the reason why Leena was hurt and angry while I was confused by her anger. She had misunderstood genuine fatigue as a **euphemism** for annoyance. Despite my staying respectfully silent on our way back, Leena had gone straight to her bedroom without a conversation to explain why she was reacting harshly.

A resolution was eventually reached when over dinner I casually referred to my aching back and Leena was brought to the realization that I was actually tired. Leena explained why she believed my behavior was selfish and I apologized that she missed the sale on half of her list. This whole situation could have been easily evaded. By **indexing** my genuine frustration at how tired I was into something specific and real would have conveyed a truer message to Leena. I could have abstained from misleading **illustrators** like groaning or carrying an annoyed expression as these only aggravated Leena.

**Interaction 2:** It was a crisp winter morning and I was meeting Sarah for our usual coffee before the 9 am class. Sarah is my friend and we have been having daily meetings at the café before class owing to a shared love for latte before starting the day. Last Friday we met up at the entrance which was our usual meeting spot and headed inside. Sarah waited at the table while I grabbed our orders as usual. When I got back to our seats holding our coffee, Sarah was looking at her phone and silently crying. She looked away when she realized I had seen her. I offered her the coffee and sat next to her. I proceeded to offer her a paper napkin which she sobbed into for a few minutes before calming down and silently drinking her coffee. Her behavior while walking to class was passive which grew increasingly apathetic during the class. Sarah left after the class without meeting me.

The interpersonal relationship I have with Sarah is a fairly stable friendship that does not exceed beyond casual greetings and morning coffee meetups. It is, however, a comfortable yet casual acquaintance which is something both of us usually look forward to solidifying over time. It is easy to make jokes around her and the healthy discussions we usually have over coffee are an enjoyable part of my routine. I feel cozy enough around her to engage her in occasional political banter. Neither of us have, however, shared intimate personal details with each other so there is no serious depth to the relationship.

On Friday, the non-verbal cue that created miscommunication was Sarah looking away and wiping her face when I came back with the coffee. Looking away was an obvious **emblem** for embarrassment. I understood the gesture to mean that she needed space to compose herself and did not want to create a scene so early in a public place. From my perspective promptly handing her a napkin was an appropriate **adaptor**. Silently sitting with her and waiting for her to feel better was intended as a kindness. However, later I was made to understand that while she was embarrassed, she was hoping for me to console her verbally or physically. Simply handing a napkin and sitting next to her minding my own business was, in her opinion, rude and was worse than what she would expect from a stranger, much less a friend.

Such a stark contrast between how both of us had understood the interaction led to different follow-up behaviors. I was hopeful for an emotional recovery from Sarah after I had demonstrated support by being there for her. Sarah on the other hand felt hurt and betrayed. She was therefore ignoring my remarks or questions all morning which I thought was borderline rude. A scornful disregard was the **affect display** she chose to show me during class. Despite constant effort to start a conversation, Sarah continued to exhibit **regulators** like looking through me or disregarding what I was saying on purpose.

The miscommunication brought about by a simple miscalculation of how much affection Sarah was comfortable with in her hour of need had created a rift in the relationship. This antagonism was eventually resolved when I caught up with her after class and directly mentioned her behavior. A detailed explanation later, both of us had reconciled and shared a few laughs on the miscommunication. It is, however, important to consider that a simple elaboration or physical leaning from either of us would have completely evaded the animosity that we had to deal with later.