

USING SENSORY LANGUAGE TO BLEND

By Dr. Rick Brinkman

As a conscious communicator, you know that blending is a proven way to improve the results you achieve with your communication. To dramatically increase your influence and persuasiveness with other people, you need to blend at a very deep, unconscious level – at the level of sensory language.

Sensory Language 101

We have five known senses, and some believe even a sixth. The only way to interact and experience the world is through these senses. However, we don't use our senses equally. Sometimes a smell, sight, or sound can be so overwhelming that it blocks out everything else.

I once had a couple, Jeff and Cathy, come to me for therapy. I immediately noticed something different about them. While Jeff was great at making eye contact, Cathy was not. It wasn't that she wasn't listening. Far from it! She could repeat word for word whatever you said. However, she was a highly visual person – so visual in fact, that if she looked at you, her conscious attention would get so consumed by what she was seeing that she had a hard time concentrating on what you were saying.

As a coping mechanism, many highly visual people learn to focus on something unimportant so that they can pay attention to what they are hearing. We all do this to a certain degree. If you close your eyes to concentrate, you are shutting off visual external clues, thereby freeing some attention to go internal. Perhaps you are driving and need to focus on complicated directions. Most people would turn down the radio so they could concentrate. In this case they are trying to minimize auditory external stimulus to free their attention elsewhere.

Do you ever have a problem remembering someone's name when being introduced? It's because our eyes are so busy taking in their physical appearance that we barely hear their name. The solution is to make the name visual since that's where your attention already is. After you hear a name, repeat it and make an associative image. For example, if you wanted to remember the name "Scott," you might visualize a tartan. "Brooke" could be a babbling brook.

In Jeff's case, he believed that people look you in the eyes when they're listening to you. Because Cathy never looked him in the eye when he was speaking to her, he believed that wasn't listening to him. When they both learned about sensory language, not only did he recognize the reason behind Cathy's listening behavior but began to speak in her language and their relationship improved.

What Is Sensory Language?

To begin blending with people on the level of their sensory language, pay attention to the types of words they use.

Visual words: look, see, picture, focus, bright, colorful, brilliant, light, dark, paint, observe, shine.

Auditory words: listen, talk, speak, sound, harmonize, cacophony, tune, ring a bell, shout, scream, yell, snap, crackle, pop.

Kinesthetic words: touch, feel, soft, hard, blunt, sharp, hot, cold, rough, smooth, heavy, bounce, sit, stand, move, run, walk, slimy, squishy, grab.

Olfactory words: smell, stink, sweet, putrid, foul, odor, floral.

Gustatory words: sweet, sour, bitter, salty, delicious.

There are also words that don't specify a particular sense, such as, think, understand, inform, express, or consider. These are useful because when you use them, you free the other person to consider what you're saying in whatever sense they prefer.

As you learn to use sensory language, continue to add to the lists above to expand your own sensory vocabulary. When you first do this, you will probably come up with more words for one sense than the others. This gives you a clue as to what your sensory language preference is.

Also, start paying attention to the people around you. What language do they use? When considering a restaurant, does your friend say, "What do I feel like?" or "Hmmm, let's see where we should go." If the former, they probably are imagining being at the restaurant and checking out how they feel about it. If the latter, they are probably visualizing the restaurant and the food.

You will notice that people often combine senses in a certain order, "In terms of eating, let's see what we feel like." In this example, they are first visualizing something and then noticing their feeling reaction to it. To blend with sensory language, simply speak with words in kind. "Can you see having Greek food, how's that grab you?"

If you pay attention to sensory language and work hard to blend with those around you, you will be amazed to find that your influence and effect on others will increase dramatically. It is simply because you are communicating with them at the fabric of their reality.