

# Blind Spots – How do they impact your conversations?

Words are not just words. They create worlds and emotions as well as causing neurochemicals in the brain that lay the foundation for trust or distrust. Quite powerful really. Our words can facilitate healthy, trusting conversations — or cause others to shut down with fear, caution and worry.

While there are many elements to improving our communications, one way is to raise our awareness and recognise communication blind spots.



## Blind Spot 1: Assuming everyone thinks like me.

Neuroscience tells us we have 86 billion neurons in each of our brains. No two brains are hence alike. When engrossed and attached to our point of view, we are unable to connect to another person's perspective. Our unconscious picks up on a lack of connectivity (we are not being heard) and we turn on a stronger need to persuade. Sound familiar? Unfortunately, the need to be right fires off a shot of dopamine which is rewarding in the brain further holding us in this pattern.



## Blind Spot 2: Emotions impact on reality

Negative emotions such as fear, trust, distrust release cortisol and catecholamines which effectively shuts down the thinking centre of the brain (the pre-frontal cortex). This then means that our perspective is skewed by an emotional imbalance.



## Blind Spot 3: Fear shuts down empathy

Neuroscience tells us that we have a set of neurons in our brains call mirror neurons. This set of neurons give us a view into what others feel and think. When negative emotions are aroused, our ability to have empathy for another person shuts down.



## Blind Spot 4– I know because I remember what you said!

Do you really think you remember everything that someone says? The hard truth is that you remember what you think was said. Research shows that we drop out of a conversation every 12 – 18 seconds to process what was said and then reengage to take in more information.



## Blind Spot 5– I am listening, so I actually know what you mean

Let's go back to the 86 billion neurons and the fact that no two brains are alike. The truth is that the meaning is in the listener who is forming a picture based on their own mental map. What we need to do is validate that both are the same in our conversations. This happens by way of paraphrasing and asking questions to ensure understanding.

As human beings we all have blind spots. Some of this is about survival mechanisms and some about our ability or inability to process all of the data coming in. Raising our awareness can support us to understand what is happening when conversations are not heading in the intended direction, allowing us to pause, take stock and shift direction – ultimately creating a space of trust and strengthening of our relationships

Acknowledged Source: Judith Glaser – Conversational Intelligence (2014)