

Book Interview Questions

Title:

Taking the War Out of Our Words!

Sub-Title:

The Art of Powerful Non-Defensive Communication

Author: Sharon Ellison

The new communication paradigm presented in Ellison's book provides fascinating interview material. Sharon can compare/contrast how we traditionally communicate using the "rules of war" with how we can effectively alter our personal, professional, and community interactions — even our approach to solving global problems — once we learn to communicate non-defensively.

The following categories of questions can be used in radio, TV, magazine or newspaper interviews about the *Powerful Non-Defensive Communication* process. Interviewers can put the questions in either a personal or professional context.

In addition to these sample categories of questions, Sharon can focus on any topic that involves communication or respond to current events. Below, the topics are listed in two categories: questions about real life situations, and questions about the book.

Categories of Questions about Real-Life Situations:

Interviewers can ask questions about how non-defensive communication applies to many different situations people daily deal with at home and at work, such as someone who:

- Continues to interrupt you
- Won't listen to what you are saying
- Puts down your ideas
- Is accusatory and blaming
- Is argumentative
- Is sarcastic
- Is bossy—a back seat driver, for example
- Gives double messages
- Acts upset or sullen but won't say what is wrong
- Gossips

- Makes excuses for not completing certain tasks
- Is often late for meetings or social engagements
- Breaks commitments
- Makes comments that show prejudice
- Refuses to hear feedback about her/his part in a problem
- Has an anger problem
- Refuses to take responsibility for her/his actions

Categories of questions about the book:

- What is your book about?
- How common are defensiveness and power struggle?
- What is the “War Model” for communication?
- What is “Powerful Non-Defensive Communication”?
- How can we ask disarming questions instead of being interrogating?
- How can we get others to listen to us without trying to convince them of our point of view?
- How can we set clear limits/ boundaries without using threats?
- What are the greater societal ramifications of changing how we communicate?
- How did Sharon Ellison develop this process?
- How does Sharon Ellison’s work compare to others—e.g., Deborah Tannen, John Gray, or Marshall Rosenberg?

Defensiveness and Power Struggle

How often do you think people are defensive?

Do people usually know when they are being defensive?

Is most defensiveness aggressive?

You talk about six defensive modes we all use. What are they?

Do men and women use different defensive styles?

Do we need to be able to be defensive to protect ourselves?

Will others “walk all over us” if we are non-defensive?

What effect does being defensive have on us?

What effect does being defensive have on the other person?

What are the different types of defensive reaction?

Can a person defend him/herself without getting into a power struggle?

Why do you say that power struggle is an addiction?

Do you think it just human nature to be in power struggles?

The “War Model” For Communication

In your book, you call traditional ways of communicating, the “War Model.” Can you explain what you mean by that?

Do people from all different cultural backgrounds use this “War Model?”

How pervasive is it?

Where does it come from?

How do you outline or describe for people how the “War Model” works?

What effect do you think this “War Model” has on our interactions with family, co-workers, and others?

The Powerful, Non-Defensive Communication Model

What is the basic difference between the “War Model” and the Powerful, Non-Defensive Communication model you have developed?

Is it difficult is it to learn this new way of communicating?

Why do you call the process “Powerful, Non-Defensive Communication”?

What would happen if one person uses this non-defensive communication and the other person doesn't?

Is this just another new technique for manipulating others?

What do you mean when you say in the book that this communication process is disarming?

To what groups of people do you teach these skills primarily?

How responsive are people in various environments when you teach them this process?

Will people lose their personality if they try to be non-defensive all the time?

What kind of changes have you seen people make using non-defensive communication?

Would you give an example of how someone has used PNDC in a difficult situation and turned it around?

Do these methods work in situations where one person has more power than another, at work or even in a family?

What can "PNDC" do for me that other communication methods can't do?

How much effect do you think the way we communicate has on the kind of person we are or become?

What kind of effect does this way of communicating have on a person's self-esteem and confidence?

How much difference do you think it makes in a person's life when he/she communicates non-defensively?

Interrogation Versus Non-Defensive Questions

How do we ask questions that make others react defensively?

How are non-defensive questions different from defensive ones?

Can you give an example of how a non-defensive question sounds compared to a defensive one?

Should we be asking questions more often than we are?

Is it invasive to ask other people too many questions?

What kind of effects do you see when people ask non-defensive questions?

Argument Versus Non-Defensive Statements:

Do you think we need argument to spice things up and get people to think?

Are you saying that we shouldn't ever try to convince others to agree with us? How would we have any influence if we don't?

What is the problem with arguing or trying to convince others?

Will we become passive if we never argue or stand up for what we think?

Can people speak non-defensively and still get their ideas across?

How is a non-defensive statement different from being argumentative? Can you give an example?

Threats Versus Non-Defensive Limit Setting

Is limit setting just for children?

If you set limits with your own partner (husband, wife, spouse), will they feel like you're taking a parental role?

Is limit setting like making a threat?

How is non-defensive limit setting different than threatening some kind of punishment to get someone to do what you want?

Why would we want to set limits with each other as adults?

What do you think happens when people don't set effective limits?

What is the purpose of limit setting with children? With adults?

Do you set the same kind of limits with children and adults, or are they different?

Do you advocate setting limits with your co-workers? Your boss?

How do adult relationships change when people set non-defensive boundaries?

Societal Ramifications

How can you say that violence isn't "just human nature" given our history?

You suggest that non-defensive communication is an evolutionary step that is essential to the survival of the human race. Can you explain that?

What do you mean when you say that when we communicate non-defensively, we are "using power in a different way?"

Does non-defensive communication have less power, the same, or more power than traditional communication?

Do you think people in this country are ready to learn to be non-defensive?

Why do you place so much importance on communication as a psychological, social, and/or political problem? What about economic injustice, racism, sexism? Aren't other things bigger problems?

How can non-defensive communication work when we face situations such as dealing with terrorists?

To what degree do you think how we communicate influences human reality?

How much effect do you think this book can have on how people deal with conflict and even violence?

What do you think the relationship is between how we communicate and how we go about solving world problems?

If everyone were to use this new communication process, what effect would it have on our world?

How Sharon Ellison developed this process

What motivated you to develop this way of communicating?

How did you develop this process?

How long did it take you?

How long did it take to write the book?

How Sharon Ellison's work compares to others—e.g., Deborah Tannen, John Gray, or Marshall Rosenberg

How does your work compare to Marshall Rosenberg's

Do you agree with John Gray's point of view—that men and women have different communication needs and patterns?

What do you think about Deborah Tannen's idea that men and women communicate from a whole different perception of reality?

Does your work support or contradict people like Gray and Tannen?