



Eight Minutes, Not Eight Hours



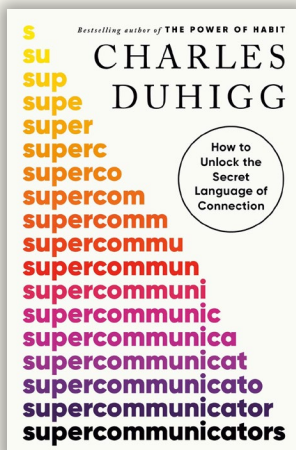
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Supercommunicators

How to Unlock the Secret Language of Connection

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Charles Duhigg, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter and author of multiple New York Times bestsellers, explores the practical, emotional, and social aspects of communication, offering insights on how to improve and build connections. This book explains why communications often fail and encourages readers to develop a deeper understanding and empathy by focusing on three types of conversation: Practical (What's This Really About?), Emotional (How Do We Feel?), and Social (Who Are We?). Duhigg uncovers the hidden layers of different conversations and presents the tools to make communication more effective. Drawing from various scientific studies and anecdotes, he inspires and teaches readers to become supercommunicators in all areas of life.

Key Quote

"The goal of looping isn't parroting someone's words, but rather distilling another person's thoughts in your own language, showing them you are working hard to see their perspective, and then repeating the process until everyone is aligned." (p. 165)

KEY POINTS AND CONCEPTS

Anyone Can Learn to be a Supercommunicator

Supercommunicators "are likely someone that you know who will make you feel better, who can help you think through a thorny question or share a moment of heartbreak or joy." (p. xiv)

The three types of conversation are practical, emotional, and social. Practical conversations focus on decision-making, emotional conversations focus on what people feel, and social conversations focus on identity. Knowing which type is occurring provides a framework for applying the ideal skillset to form a better connection during discussions. (p. xvii)

The Practical Conversation: What's This Really About?

The two goals of the What's This Really About? conversation is to determine what participants want to discuss and how the discussion will unfold. (p. 35)

In this type of conversation, the goal is to “figure out: What does everyone want? And how will we make choices together?” (p. 41)

In some cases, the objectives and rules for a discussion are stated clearly at the start of the conversation.

In others, the objectives and rules reveal themselves as the conversation progresses. (p. 41)

After establishing objectives and rules, the next step of the conversation is to determine if the discussion is practical or empathetic. During a practical discussion, “people want to solve a problem or think through an idea.” In contrast, during an empathetic discussion, “they want to apply their compassion, talk about values, discuss matters of right and wrong in making joint decisions.” (pp. 57-58)

Understanding which type of discussion is happening allows participants to select a “mindset they find persuasive” to synchronize with their peers and make decisions together. (p. 67)

Case Study – How a Doctor Learned to Communicate: Dr. Behfar Ehdaie, a prominent surgeon specializing in treating prostate cancer at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City, was struggling to advise low-risk patients against risky surgery. Although active surveillance presented less risk to his patients than surgery, many still insisted on it despite practical appeals from Ehdaie. He contacted Harvard Business Professor Deepak Malhotra for help with his patient issue. Malhotra recommended that Ehdaie adjust his approach from presenting practical medical data to asking open-ended questions to determine what the patients really wanted from a discussion with their doctor. Recognizing that individual patients had different wants, Ehdaie moved from lecturing patients to asking questions, leading to effective dialogues. “The number of patients opting for surgery fell by 30 percent.” (pp. 42-49)

The Emotional Conversation: How Do We Feel?

Knowing how other people feel is important to making a connection. “Emotions shape every conversation.” (p. 77)

“When it comes to discussing emotions, listening is essential. We need to listen for vulnerabilities, hear what is unsaid- and...we must show we are listening. (p. 77)

Case Study – The Power of Questions: Nicholas Epley, a psychology professor from the University of Chicago, describes his experiences as a teenager speaking with a counselor following two drunk driving traffic stops, both ending with only warnings from police. Unlike his parents or the police, Epley’s counselor did not attempt to lecture or sympathize with him. “Instead, she simply asked a series



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of questions...The questions themselves didn't ask about Epley's emotions, but, inevitably, he became emotional as he responded to them." The conversation with the counselor helped Epley recognize his emotions and inspired him to listen. Once he understood his emotions, Epley could better understand why and how he needed to make a change. (pp. 80-84)

Case Study – The Right Questions: In 1995, psychologists at the State University of New York Stony Brook "launched a study to see if there was a 'practical methodology for creating closeness.'" The team developed a series of questions known as the Fast Friends Procedure. Like the questions used to help Epley identify his emotions, the Fast Friends Procedure asks "deep questions about feelings, values, beliefs, and experiences" to create vulnerability and trigger emotional contagion. When people reciprocate emotions, emotional contagion makes them more willing to share and establishes a deeper connection. (pp. 88-93)

Non-Verbal Communication

"From infancy, even before we could learn to speak, we absorb how to infer people's emotions from their behaviors: Their body language, vocal inflections, glances and grimaces, sighs, and laughs. As we grow older, however, this capacity can atrophy." (p. 108)

Emotionally intelligent people recognize unspoken emotions during conversations. By understanding what others are not saying in a discussion through their expressions and body language, emotionally intelligent individuals can synchronize emotions to make others feel heard and understood, creating connections. (pp. 110-114)

Recognizing nonverbal cues like a person's positive or negative mood and high or low energy is "usually enough to figure out how to align, and whether we should feel safe or alarmed." (pp. 116-117)

Responding to Emotions

"One of the most important aspects of emotional communication is showing others we hear their emotions, which helps us reciprocate." Researchers call the technique for showing others we are listening "looping for understanding." (p. 164)

During a conversation, recognize what is truly being said by asking questions to loop for understanding. Then, summarize what was previously said and ask if the summary is correct. Repeating the loop until those involved in the conversation agree that all involved correctly understand their feelings. (pp. 164-165)

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The Social Conversation: Who Are We?

“In a meaningful conversation, we bring not only just ourselves to the discussion, but everything that brought us to this moment: Our histories and backgrounds, our families and friendships, the causes we believe in and the groups we love or deplore. We bring, in other words, our social identities.” (p. 169)

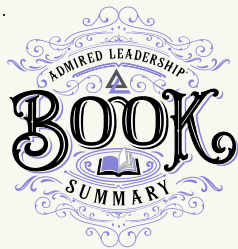
“We all possess multiple social identities... that intersect in complicated ways,” shaping how we interact. During a social conversation, “we need to find an identity we can share” to move past other differences. (pp. 174-188)

Establishing guidelines, encouraging others to speak, drawing out others’ goals, and acknowledging emotions like discomfort during a hard conversation create opportunities to learn and connect. (pp. 231-234)

Case Study – Enemies Playing Soccer: In 2018, Salma Mousa, a PhD candidate at Stanford, distributed flyers in Qaraqosh, Iraq, announcing a new local soccer league. One of the rules of the new league was that each team was to have three additional Muslim players, which presented a challenge to the Christian Qaraqosh teams, who had fled Iraq a few years prior following attacks by ISIS. The point of Mousa’s league was to test the contact hypothesis, “the theory that, if you bring people together under specific conditions, you can overcome old hatreds.” Equal playing time and responsibility distribution were among the league’s conditions. These boundaries allowed Christians and Muslims to share an identity as soccer players and bond over shared interests despite their differences. (pp. 188-192)

Preparation before a discussion is vital to making hard conversations about identity easier. Asking questions about what the goal of a discussion is, how the conversation will start, what obstacles might appear, and what the benefits of the dialog are can help make tough conversations less difficult. (pp. 228–230)

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