

LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION

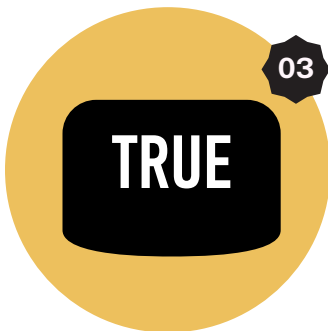


Level 1: Ritual

We communicate at this level with everyone, including strangers. This is the level of the head nod at the person next to you pumping gas or the person you pass on the sidewalk as you're walking your dog. In essence, this is the level of politeness.

Level 2: Superficial

This is the acquaintance level. You know something about these people, so you expect some give and take in the conversation. But you don't know them or the situation well, so you stay at high level topics like the weather.



Level 3: Factual

These are more meaningful conversations, generally with people you know somewhat well. People you converse with at this level you likely call friends, but not the type of friends you invite over for game night. A lot of work relationships fall into this category. Conversations at level three focus on facts about problem solving, personal interests, and general information.

Level 4: Opinions

Level four takes the facts at level three to a deeper level by integrating personal opinion. This level of communication is usually reserved for people with whom we have a solid trusting relationship. These are people who are tried and true, and we feel safe to share our "real" thoughts. Because this level is opinion-oriented, employing active listening, curiosity, and empathy are vital.



Level 5: Feelings

This final level includes not only our opinions, but our feelings about our opinions. Level five requires both the listener and the speaker to move past empathy to compassion, according to Alexander Draghici. "Since sharing feelings about each other involves risk and vulnerability, you need someone you know well and trust. Someone with whom you feel comfortable enough to share intimate aspects of your life," Draghici says. Because of the level of trust needed for these types of conversations, they are generally reserved for our most intimate relationships.