



Reading Between the Signs: Transparency & What's Your Limit?

When it comes to exchanging information, we all have our limits. Maybe you have a deep, dark secret that you would tell only your best friend. Or there is some information you are dying to know from an acquaintance, but you don't dare ask because you're worried she might become angry.

In many of my workshops, this exercise has sparked spirited debates between Deaf and hearing participants. One Deaf woman complained that her hearing coworker let her go around for half the day without informing her that her blouse was unbuttoned. A hearing man was not sure how to answer a direct question from a Deaf acquaintance about his finances. We have already established the fact that politeness is relative and that a question that would be perfectly acceptable in one culture could be seen as rude in another. The first step is to figure out what our limits are and then to ask ourselves if we are willing to stretch them to better accommodate others' expectations.

Directions: Place a mark in each box: X = yes, O = no. You may add additional comments such as "maybe" or

	hearing friend	hearing acquaintance	Deaf friend	Deaf acquaintance
1. I will inform someone if				
a. she has spinach in her teeth.				
b. his fly is down.				
c. she has a big pimple on her face.				
d. he looks tired.				
e. she looks ill.				
f. he has gained weight.				
2. I will tell someone				
a. what I did last weekend.				
b. why I am late to class.				
c. about my medical condition.				
d. about my recent surgery.				
e. about my fight with my lover.				

3. I will ask someone				
a. about how much she paid for her outfit.				
b. how much he paid for his car.				
c. how much money he earns.				
d. how much she paid for her house.				
e. why he got divorced.				
f. why she doesn't have children.				
4. I will tell someone, if I am asked,				
a. how much I paid for my outfit.				
b. how much I paid for my car.				
c. how much money I earn.				
d. how much I paid for my house.				
e. why I am not married.				
f. why I don't have children.				