

Communication Styles

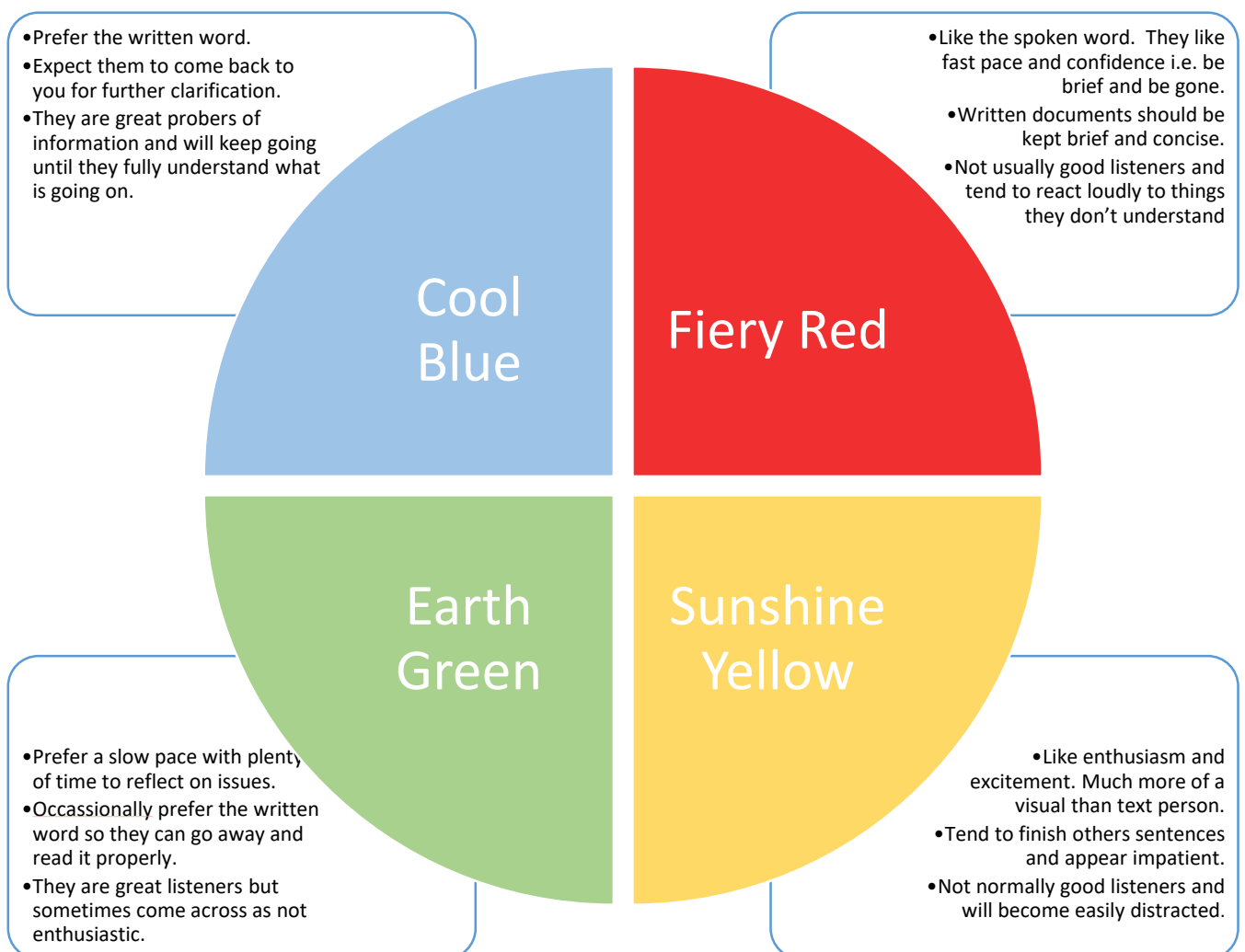
Another way to build good relationships is to understand your own and the communication styles of others. There are many ways to categorise these styles (explained further below), you may have a gut feeling as to which of these you might be!

It's important to be mindful about how others might perceive your communication style, and also to remember that sometimes others will not communicate in a way that suits your preference. The coaching team at British Canoeing do a lot of training on communication, but it's not a simple topic and we're continuously trying to get better at our interactions with athletes, parents, and staff.

Communication is more than simply the words we choose to speak, it involves the way words are spoken and the body language accompanying it. What is important here is to consider both the content (the words spoken) and the context (how the message is delivered e.g. tone of the message).

Following on from the 'Being an Elite Sports Parent' Webinar this document covers the Insights approach to communication (Lothian, 2004) which explains the different type of communication colour energies people tend to adopt; **Cool Blue**, **Earth Green**, **Sunshine Yellow** and **Fiery Red** along with communication strategies you could implement.

Insights into Effective Communications



Talent Parent Programme: Communication Styles

Do's and Don't

In Table 1 are some do's and don't when communicating with individuals who possess the following colour energy traits:

Colour Energy	Do	Don't
Cool Blue	Thorough and well prepared. Important things are put into writing. Let them consider all the details	Invade their personal space. Be flippant on important issues. Change their routine without notice.
Fiery Red	Be direct and to the point. Focus on results and objectives. Be brief.	Hesitate or waffle. Focus on feelings. Try to take over.
Earth Green	Be patient and supportive. Slow down and communicate and their pace. Ask for their opinion and give them time to answer.	Take advantage of their good nature. Push them to make quick decisions. Spring last minute surprises onto them.
Sunshine Yellow	Be friendly and sociable. Be entertaining and stimulating. Be open and flexible.	Bore them with details. Tie them down with routine. Ask them to do it alone.

Table 1: Do's and Don't for communicating based on the Insights Model (Campbell, 2018)

Question: Consider how your communication style might differ from your child's. What communication barriers could these differences cause?

How could you alter your style to better suit your interaction with your child?

Behaviour vs Intention

'What we say and do, and how we say and do it, is our definition of behaviour. The broad grouping of the things a person tends to say and do most often is called behavioural preferences: ways of talking and acting that we feel comfortable doing, that we come to like in ourselves and in others. These ways of behaving can sometimes become so habitual that they can get in the way of our intentions.' (Merrill and Reid, 1981)

e.g. You may intend to critique your son/daughters race performance fairly and honestly (by talking about their race point by point in a methodological way), but that behavioural preference of yours (thorough and logical) may result in your child saying you are too harsh and picky, which you may conclude as 'A total waste of my time'

What is important to understand here is that behaviours can affect others. If the athlete could have understood the judgement their parent was making was fair and with the intention of helping them this could have been useful. The parent would be able to see that their child hasn't reacted well to this style of communication and perhaps another method of communicating about their race performance would have been more useful.

Active Listening

Listening is a key element in effective communication. The best listeners are active listeners; someone who listens with a purpose. The conversation purpose can vary; it could be to gain information, understand others, solve problems, show support for the other person etc.

Active Listening takes more energy than speaking; the receiver must decode the verbal and non-verbal messages, understand the meaning and then verifies the interpreted meaning through reply. When using your listening skills your natural preference colour energy is likely to show through here. Common traits of active listeners with high levels of the following colour energies are listed below:

Cool Blue

Do not typically finish the sentences of others.

Consider not answering questions with questions.

Does not dominate the conversation.

Be aware of the biases, we all have them.

Analyse by looking at all the relevant factors and by asking open ended questions.

Earth Green (exactly the same as Cool Blue)

Do not typically finish the sentences of others.

Consider not answering questions with questions.

Does not dominate the conversation.

Be aware of the biases, we all have them.

Analyse by looking at all the relevant factors and by asking open ended questions.

Sunshine Yellow

May want to consider spending more time listening than speaking, do not dominate the conversation.

May want to consider not finishing the sentences of others.

Consider planning your response after the other person has finished speaking, NOT while the other person is speaking.

Fiery Red (exactly the same as Sunshine Yellow)

May want to consider spending more time listening than speaking, do not dominate the conversation.

May want to consider not finishing the sentences of others.

Consider planning your response after the other person has finished speaking, NOT while the other person is speaking.

It is important not to label someone into a category, because we are all different and complex so no one individual which solely fit into a category when they communicate. This tool, as with other tools, is meant to be a guide to allow you ideas but the best learning is through trial, error, reflection and trying again.

References

Campbell, Colin, Insights Learning and Development: Insights into effective communications, 2018.

Lothian, Andrew, Insights, Scotland, 2004.

Personal Styles and Effective Performance: Make your Style Work for You by Dr. David Merrill and Roger Reid (Radnor, PA.: Chilton, 1981)