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UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION DYNAMICS IS ESSENTIAL FOR EFFECTIVE INTERPERSONAL INTERACTIONS. ONE CRITICAL ASPECT OF THIS IS RECOGNIZING HOW MESSAGES ARE RECEIVED AND INTERPRETED. A PARTICULARLY INTRIGUING CONCEPT IN THIS DOMAIN IS THE DISCONFIRMING MESSAGE OF “IMPERVIOUSNESS,” WHICH REFERS TO SITUATIONS WHERE A PERSON APPEARS TO LISTEN OR ACKNOWLEDGE BUT ACTUALLY REMAINS UNAFFECTED OR UNRESPONSIVE INTERNALLY. THIS ARTICLE EXPLORES WHAT THE DISCONFIRMING MESSAGE OF IMPERVIOUSNESS ENTAILS, ITS IMPLICATIONS IN COMMUNICATION, AND HOW TO RECOGNIZE AND ADDRESS IT EFFECTIVELY.

WHAT IS THE DISCONFIRMING MESSAGE OF “IMPERVIOUSNESS”?

DEFINING “IMPERVIOUSNESS” IN COMMUNICATION

IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION, IMPERVIOUSNESS REFERS TO A STATE WHERE AN INDIVIDUAL SEEMS TO BE UNAFFECTED BY OR INDIFFERENT TO THE MESSAGES BEING COMMUNICATED TO THEM. WHEN SOMEONE IS IMPERVIOUS, THEY MAY APPEAR TO LISTEN, NOD, OR SHOW ENGAGEMENT OUTWARDLY BUT INTERNALLY, THEY ARE UNRESPONSIVE OR DISCONNECTED.

THIS BEHAVIOR CAN BE INTENTIONAL OR UNINTENTIONAL. FOR INSTANCE, A PERSON MIGHT FEIGN ATTENTIVENESS TO AVOID CONFLICT OR TO MAINTAIN POLITENESS, BUT INTERNALLY, THEY MAY BE DISMISSIVE OR UNINTERESTED. ALTERNATIVELY, SOME INDIVIDUALS MIGHT GENUINELY STRUGGLE TO PROCESS OR ACKNOWLEDGE CERTAIN MESSAGES DUE TO EMOTIONAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS.

THE DISCONFIRMING ASPECT OF IMPERVIOUSNESS

THE “DISCONFIRMING MESSAGE” ASPECT OF IMPERVIOUSNESS STEMS FROM THE MISMATCH BETWEEN WHAT THE SPEAKER PERCEIVES AND WHAT THE LISTENER ACTUALLY EXPERIENCES. WHEN A PERSON RESPONDS WITH IMPERVIOUSNESS, THE MESSAGE THEY SEND CAN BE DISCONFIRMING BECAUSE IT SIGNALS TO THE SENDER THAT THEIR MESSAGE HAS BEEN ACKNOWLEDGED, BUT IN REALITY, IT HAS NOT BEEN TRULY ACCEPTED OR PROCESSED.

THIS CREATES A DISCONNECT, LEADING TO FEELINGS OF FRUSTRATION, INVALIDATION, OR MISUNDERSTANDING FOR THE SENDER. FOR EXAMPLE, IF SOMEONE SHARES A PERSONAL CONCERN AND THE LISTENER RESPONDS WITH A NOD AND A VAGUE “I SEE,” BUT INTERNALLY THEY ARE INDIFFERENT OR DISMISSIVE, THE ORIGINAL SPEAKER PERCEIVES THIS AS DISCONFIRMATION—AN INDICATION THAT THEIR FEELINGS OR MESSAGE HAVE NOT BEEN GENUINELY ACKNOWLEDGED.

RECOGNIZING THE DISCONFIRMING MESSAGE OF IMPERVIOUSNESS

BEHAVIORAL CUES

IDENTIFYING IMPERVIOUSNESS REQUIRES ATTENTION TO BOTH VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL CUES. SOME COMMON BEHAVIORAL SIGNS INCLUDE:

