

Dealing with MasterTalk

© 2005 Al Turtle

Introduction

I use the three terms, **Master**, **Slave**, and **Friend** to refer to the three positions from which and to which communication can be addressed. These are similar to the positions in Transactional Analysis of Parent, Child, and Adult. No one is a Master, they just speak, and perhaps think, from the Master position. No one is a Slave, they just speak from the Slave position. MasterTalk seems extremely easy to identify in conversation and writing.

One challenge for us all is that most books and articles seem written in MasterTalk. This is sometimes called the "third person, omniscient" voice. These books are written as if the author knew everything (omniscient) like god. I've become comfortable that in real life, there is not place to go, no mountain to climb, for me to find out what is "really going on." I have to remain comfortable with my point of view and remind others that all they can share is their point of view. Reality exists, we just have different points of view about it.

My definitions:

MasterTalk is any sentence that implies there is a single truth – a single reality. The Master form implies that the speaker owns the truth or has that reality. The Slave form implies that the speaker doesn't own the truth or doesn't have that single reality.

Some words are clues to MasterTalk: truth, right, wrong, correct, real, fact, know, lie, false, should. Also most sentences that begin with "We..." or "You..." seem to be MasterTalk.

Boundary Insert: a short sentence fragment that is inserted into a statement that indicates who's point of view is being shared. This can be inserted by the sender to make listening easier. It can be inserted by the receiver during mirroring to a) remind the sender that they are sharing a point of view and to create a sense of room for differing points of view.

Before I give examples of responses to MasterTalk, I'll give samples of the various combinations of speaking.

MASTERTALK EXAMPLES

Master to Slave (statements made, assuming no contradiction. I've found these statements communicate "threat" to listeners.)

- "We're going into town this afternoon."
- "He really liked that yesterday."
- "It is hot in here."
- "Your partner is a liar."
- "You are Bi-polar."
- "Everyone likes icecream."

Slave to Master (Statements made, avoiding contradictions or conflict. I've found these statements communicate anticipation of "threat.")

- "What should we do about this?"
- "What is the right way?"
- "What happened yesterday?"
- "I don't know."
- "What should I do about my problem?"

Master to Master (Statements made assuming contradictions. I've found these are Argument starting statements.)

- "You are wrong."
- "That is not right."
- "That is not what happened."
- "You are full of errors."
- "Everything you are saying is B.S."
- "That is a flat lie."

Slave to Slave (Statements made to others, jointly avoiding sharing diversity or contradictions.)

- "None of us know what to do."
- "Let's not talk about it."
- "I like the weather."

DIALOGUE EXAMPLES

Friend to Friend: (Statements made to others, assuming and affirming space for other points of view.)

- "I like chocolate icecream."
- "I recall seeing a man running away."
- "I believe we should wait for a while."
- "I see things differently than you see to."
- "My thoughts seem similar to yours."
- "Of course we see it differently. Here are my thoughts...."
- "The label I would put on you condition is Bi-polar."

Friend response to Master (Mirroring with boundary inserts, affirming the statement but adding reference to the point of view, thus making room for other points of view. Optionally referring to the existence of that other point of view.)

- "So you want us to go into town this afternoon." Optionally added, "I see it differently."
- "So you think he really liked that yesterday." Optionally added, "I see it differently."
- "So you feel hot in here." Etc.
- "You believe my partner is a liar."
- "You think I am Bi-polar."
- "You imagine that everyone likes icecream."

RESPONSES TO MASTERTALK

Friend quick response to a Master (A boundary insert, and invitation to continue.)

- "We're going into town this afternoon." Response, "Oh, that's your proposal. Say more."
- "He really liked that yesterday." Response, "That's your memory. Say more."
- "It is hot in here." Response, "Oh, that's how you feel. How come you brought that up?"
- "Your partner is a liar." Response, "Wow! That's your belief! Say more."
- "You are Bi-polar." Response, "That's how you see me. Tell me more about your observations."
- "Everyone likes icecream." Response, "That's your belief. Say more."

Friend response to Slave (Mirroring with boundary inserts, affirming the statement and inviting expression of the Slave's point of view. Optionally referring to the existence of other point of view, but not adding them until the speaker is finished.)

- "So I hear you wondering what we should do about this. Optionally added, "I have some ideas on the subject but first..." "What are your thoughts?"
- "So I hear you looking for a right way. What are your thoughts about how to do it?"
- "I hear you wondering what happened yesterday. What have you seen or heard?"
- "So you are not sure. What are your guesses or theories?"
- "I hear that you are wondering what to do about your problem. What ideas do you have so far?"

Reference: [Master/Slave Paper](#):