

Strategic Communication in a Climate of Polarization



Andrea Gurney, PhD

Licensed Clinical Psychologist
Professor, Westmont College

AndreaGurney.com

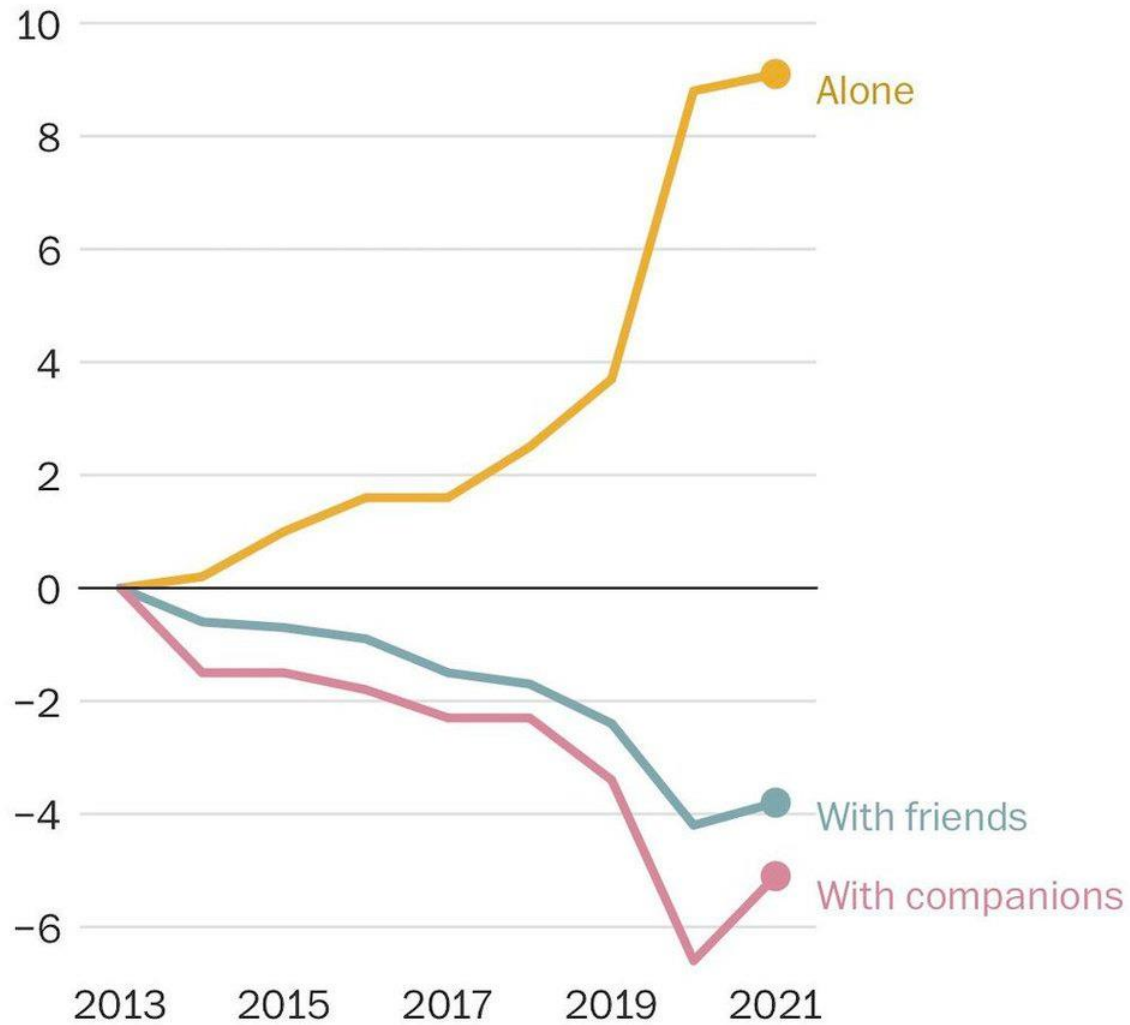
IG: @dr.gurney

Outline

- I. **Cultural zeitgeist**
- II. **Communication fallout**
 - **Four specific dangers**
- III. **Effective communication strategies**



Hours per week



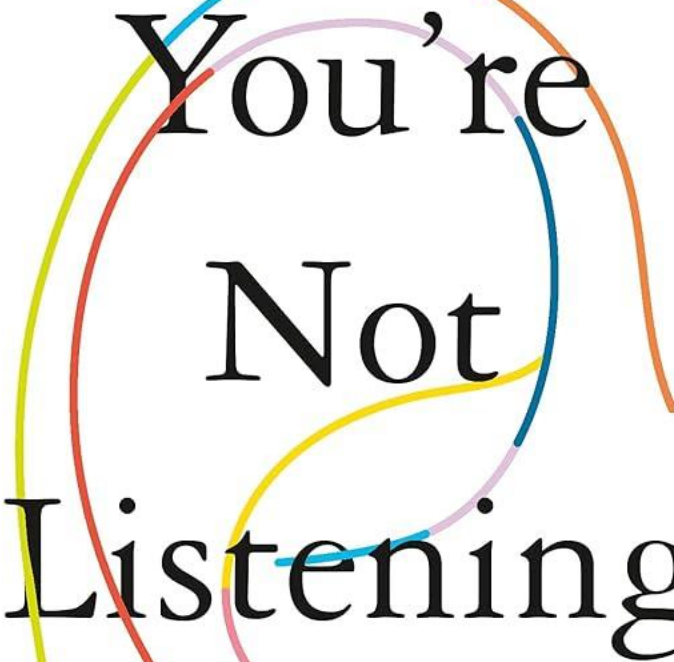
Note: 2020 numbers are not fully comparable to other years because the pandemic impacted data collection.

Source: American Time Use Survey
THE WASHINGTON POST

“An essential book for our times . . . thought-provoking and engaging.”

—LORI GOTTLIEB, *New York Times* bestselling author of

Maybe You Should Talk to Someone



You're Not Listening

WHAT YOU'RE
MISSING AND WHY
IT MATTERS

Kate Murphy

“We must see the soul and the person in its ruined condition, with its malformed and dysfunctional mind, feelings, body, and social relations, before we can understand that it must be delivered and reformed and how that can be done.”

- Dallas Willard

“Our social and psychological sciences stand helpless before the terrible things done by human beings, but the warpedness and *wrungness* of the human will is something we cannot admit into ‘serious’ conversation. We are like farmers who diligently plant crops but cannot admit the existence of weeds and insects and can only think to pour on more fertilizer.”

- Dallas Willard



The Dangers of Polarization

1. Dichotomous thinking
2. Dismissiveness / Avoidance
3. Us verses “them”
4. Villainize the “other”



OUR BLESSED HOMELAND

THEIR BARBAROUS WASTES

OUR GLORIOUS
LEADER

THEIR WICKED
DESPOT

OUR GREAT
RELIGION

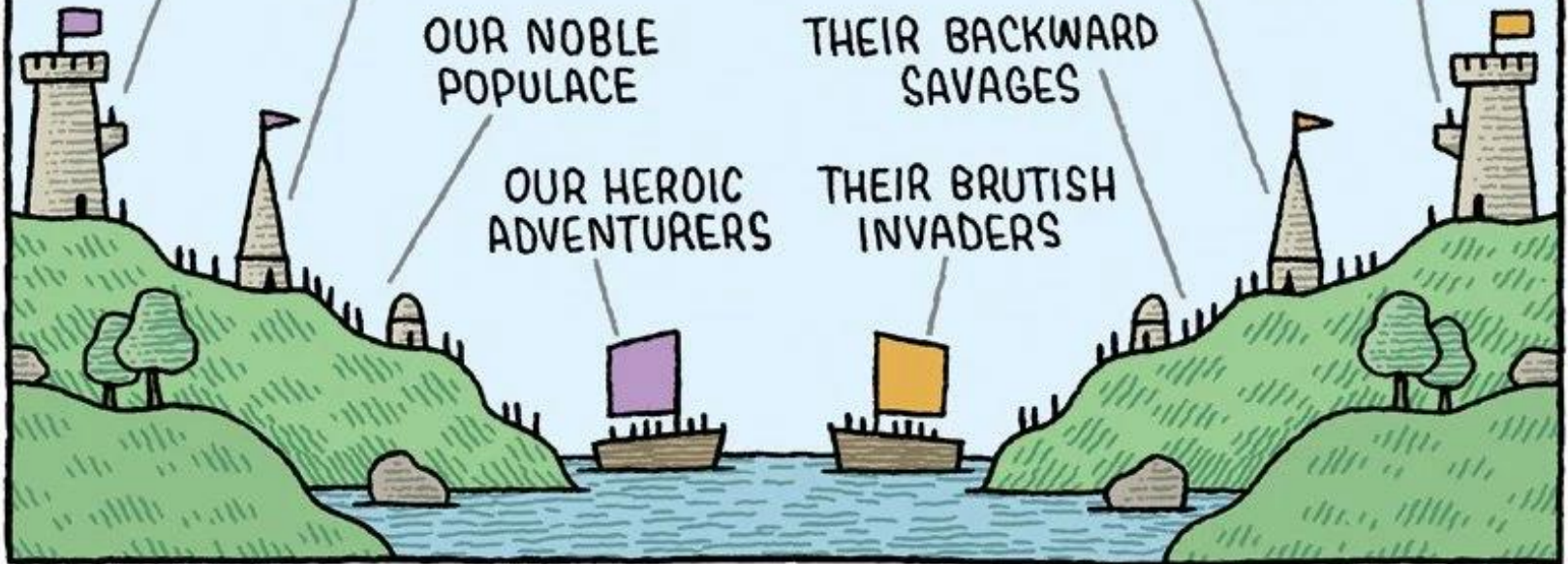
THEIR PRIMITIVE
SUPERSTITION

OUR NOBLE
POPULACE

THEIR BACKWARD
SAVAGES

OUR HEROIC
ADVENTURERS

THEIR BRITISH
INVADERS



TOM GAULD

Strategic Communication

1. Acceptance & Acknowledgement
2. Awareness & Self Examination
3. Curiosity
4. Diversify & engage in cognitive flexibility
5. Actively listen
6. Empathize
7. Cultivate patience, humility, and charity
8. Embrace compassion, kindness, and honesty

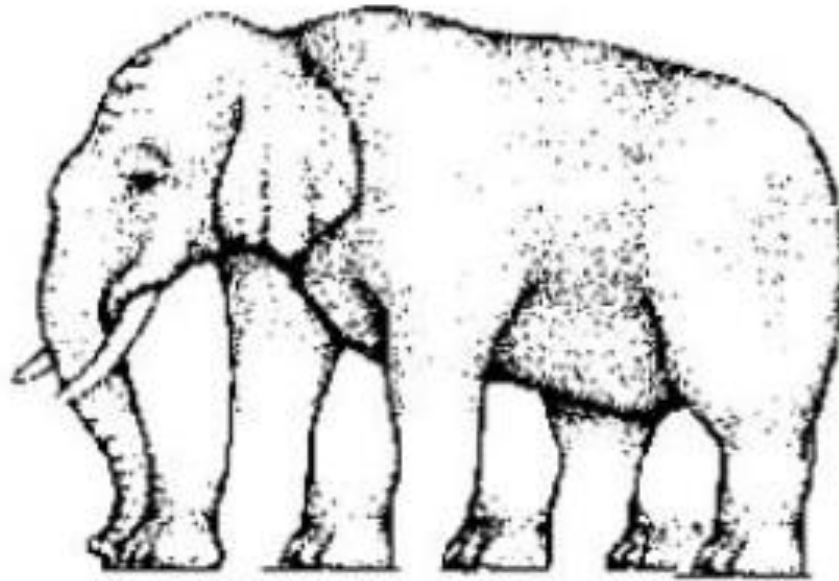


Awareness & Self-Examination

1. What happened?
2. What am I feeling?
3. What's the story I'm telling myself?
4. And what purpose is it serving?
5. What does the Gospel say?
6. What act do I need to move toward?



Cognitive Fixedness



How many legs does this elephant have?

AndreaGurney.com



Connect with me!