

Assumptions lead to miscommunication

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Some of people's biggest problems with communication come in sharing new information with people they know well, U.S. researchers said.

People often use short, ambiguous messages when talking to colleagues or spouses, unintentionally creating misunderstandings, said University of Chicago Psychology Professor Boaz Keysar.

"People are so used to talking with those with whom they already share a great deal of information, that when they have something really new to share, they often present it in away that assumes the person already knows it," Keysar said.

Making assumptions about what another person knows can have many consequences, Keysar said.

Doctors, for example, often communicate quickly and may not realize the physicians they're speaking to are getting new information, he said.

Brief e-mails between co-workers can also cause confusion, something Keysar said he learned first-hand.

"I once was scheduled to speak and had gotten the day of my talk mixed up. I received an e-mail from the host asking me if I was OK. I wrote back and said I was and didn't find out until later that what he really wanted to know was where I was, as they were waiting for me to talk," Keysar said.

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