



## What You Heard Isn't What I Meant

Exploring Mercury and How We Communicate or NOT

By Cayelin K Castell

This is an ongoing work in Progress...for now going with DONE is better than PERFECT!

Mercury is the planetary teacher most known for our intended style, or what we are learning about, in the arena of perception and communication in the current life. The sign Mercury is in at birth - along with the Mercury Star Phase, Overtone, Sun Sign and outer planet aspects – are potent clues that help us with a comprehensive understanding of this intent. These aspects form what we could call our Mercury Signature creating additional understanding beyond the sign Mercury is occupying natively.

This article focuses on the sign Mercury is in as a place to begin understanding the Mercury Signature and how we can experience challenges in communication. Stay tuned for follow up articles that will cover additional aspects of how to understand our Mercury Signature and intended style of creative communication and perception.



### Communication Styles

Genuine, heart-felt communication can be one of our best experiences. Miscommunication can be one of our most challenging and can happen for many reasons including misunderstanding the spoken and unspoken cues we are receiving from another person that may trigger an unintended or unconscious response.

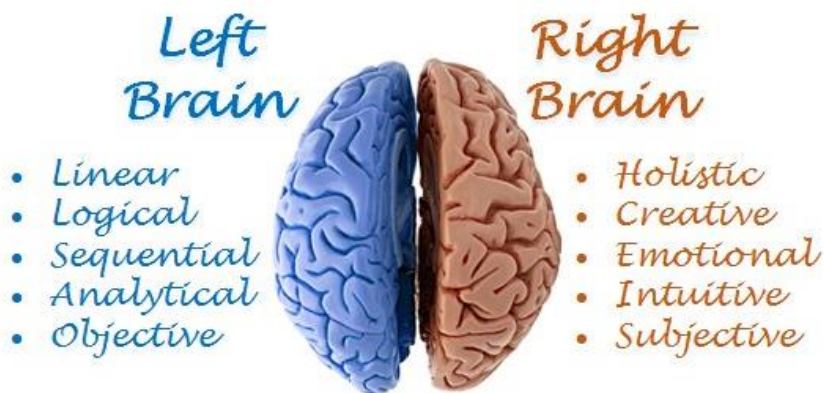
This can happen at any time but often is heightened near or during Mercury Retrograde. For more see this article <https://cayelincastell.com/mercury-retrograde/>

Something I have found is really helpful around minimizing miscommunication is understanding the different communication styles represented by Mercury. This helps sort out some of the challenges we might encounter with another person who has a very different communication style from us.

Eventually I will write more about this but for now here is a brief look at how the elements of the astrological signs give us a way to understand how this is intended to work.

### The Right Brain, Left Brain Elements of Mercury

Fire and Water Signs operate from the right brain (intuitive and creative) perspective and Earth and Air signs operate from the left brain (logic and reason) perspective. These different elemental styles all have an intent around processing information and communication, briefly described as follows:



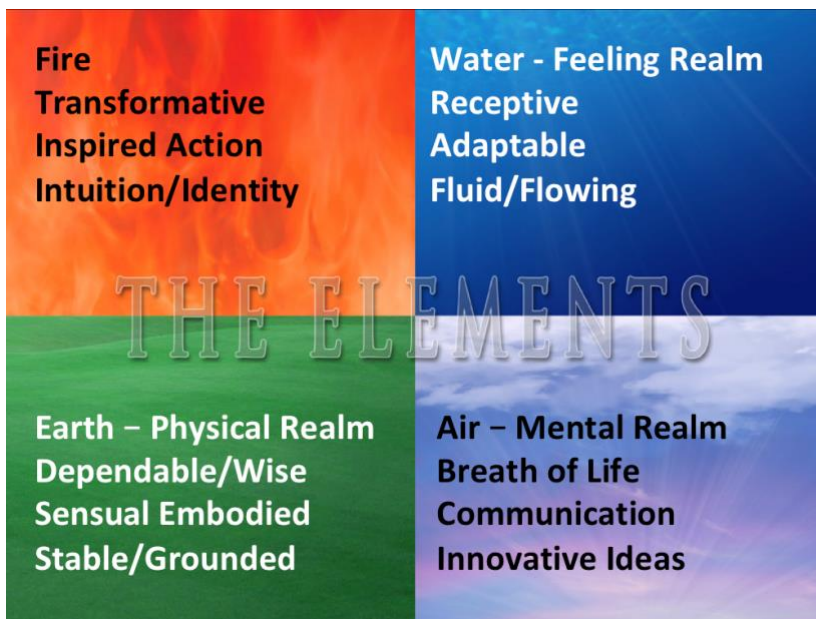
**When Mercury is in a Fire Sign (Aries, Leo, Sagittarius)** the tendency is to skip over the logical thought processes our culture says is the way to come to a valid conclusion. Fire has the ability to quickly arrive at an understanding or knowing that doesn't necessarily make rational sense. This is because Mercury in a fire sign works in mysterious ways beyond the limits of the rational mind. This is about "seeing" or "knowing" in ways that others may not "see" or "know".

Fire signs tend to communicate in the moment saying whatever is occurring to them spontaneously without thinking it through. The challenge may be fast-acting fire is not considering how their words are affecting others. Also, a fiery style of communication often doesn't realize how their gestures and actions may seem impatient and quick to judge or reach a conclusion because of course fire signs move through the mental process as fast as possible.

**When Mercury is in a Water Sign (Pisces, Cancer, Scorpio)** understanding and knowing, and therefore communication, work best when accessing the deep feeling/intuitive realm or deep inner knowing.

Again, this does not operate from the logic and reason we have been conditioned to value in our culture. In a way, we could say this knowing comes from a deep inner *felt* place that can't be logically explained. However, when you trust that knowing and act from there it is amazingly right on.

Water signs communicate best when they are feeling safe and supported. If they feel threatened or unsafe they may shut down and/or withdraw because they can't access what is true for them under stress.



Water tends to go with the flow whenever possible and that can sometimes come across as a meandering way to communicate, tell a story or make a point. You can imagine this would be challenging for those Mercury positions that want to get to the point as quickly as possible.

**When Mercury is in an Air Sign (Aquarius, Gemini, Libra)** the ability to perceive and communicate about this reality is very much in the mental realms where logic and reason are valued, appreciated and helpful. There is often a clear stream of logic that can lead to new mind-expanding insights and understanding beyond what we previously thought. Our culture values this style of thinking - so that is why many with this type of Mercury do well in a logical and rational oriented education system or work settings - unless they have an outer planet influence or Sun sign that add a right brain component or create doubt through heightened sensitivity.

Air signs tend to see things from a broader perspective processing information and insights quickly and coming up with brilliant ideas that leave many wondering if they can ever catch up. This element is gifted at seeing how the pieces of the puzzle fit together with lightning speed. They also tend to talk fast and may find they get bored easily with those who take a long time to communicate an idea or message. These signs often lack compassion or understanding for those who need a lot more time to process.

**When Mercury is in an Earth Sign (Capricorn, Taurus, Virgo)** the logic stream is focused on getting the best results for different reasons based on the sign. Capricorn logic is focused on how to make the best decisions to get the best results, now and in the future. Taurus logic is focused on how to create the most amount of pleasure, beauty and security. Virgo logic is focused on how to honor life as sacred and attune to the patterning of this reality, so they are working with the best most efficient ways possible.

Earth signs appreciate logical steps in communication and may need time to process new ideas and ways of looking at life. Something worth noting is they usually have an amazing memory for details and events that happened a long time ago unlike the fire or air signs that move at the speed of light and may not remember all the details. Also, it takes the Earth signs more time to digest or assimilate ideas and get their value unless they have a fire or air Sun sign.

**Remember these are brief examples** and there are many other factors affecting the intent of Mercury including what has already been mentioned based on the Mercury Signature but also the family and culture you were raised in will affect how you communicate or hear what others are saying to you.

I love how supportive this can be when we understand the many different communication styles – especially when we are communicating or at least trying to communicate with others whose style is different from our own.



This perspective about different communication styles has helped me hone my own communication skills and not leap to conclusions. When I have quickly reached a conclusion, I now practice remembering to take a step back to consider what really is going on. Many times that is not easy

especially if I am triggered into a habituated response. I am continually struck by how often I find what is really going on, what the real communication is meant to be, is often so different than what I might have initially thought.

**Communication is Often Nuanced** (characterized by subtle shades of meaning or expression that may not be obvious) **and Therefore Often Not What It Appears to Be On the Surface**

How many times have you been offended by something someone said and later realized that wasn't what they were saying at all?

How many times have you communicated with someone and they mistook what you were saying for something else entirely? Perhaps they took offense, got angry, or maybe even ended the relationship due to this misunderstanding.

The miscommunication may have been due to your different communication styles and what you thought you were saying was not what the other person was hearing or what the other person was really saying to you was not what you were hearing.

### **Examples from My Personal Experience**

One of the first times I was more consciously aware of this occurred in the late 1990's when I mentioned to my second husband that it might be fun to go on an adventure to an exotic/sacred place **someday** (note the emphasis on someday).

I was inspired by an advertisement about an adventure to a sacred site that looked like a lot of fun.

It is important to know I made this statement during the time we were raising 4 children, so financially and time wise it wasn't at all practical. Hence why I said *someday*. I was dreaming into the future.

His response was something like: "I am an inadequate husband. I am not a good provider. I am not good enough for you."

"What?" I so did not expect him to say that nor was that at all what I meant by that comment.

He felt I was shaming him when that was the furthest thing from my mind. I quickly realized **what he heard was not what I meant** AND my comment had triggered his feelings of not being good enough.

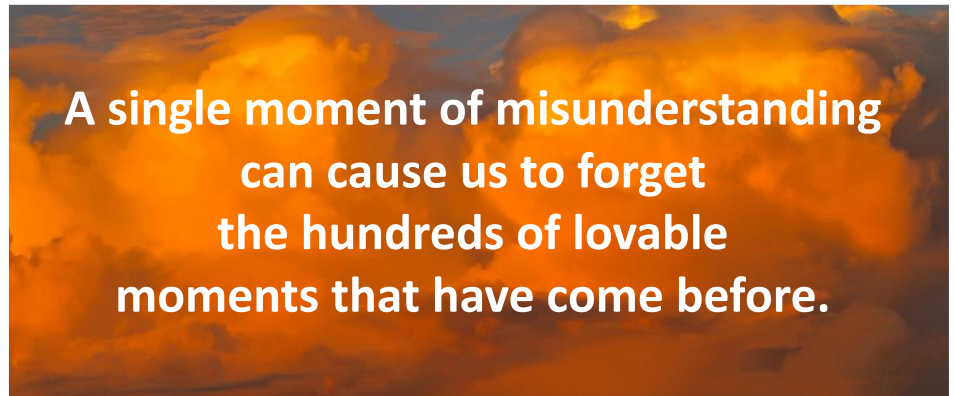
**Another example:** On a hike one day in late 2001 a friend of mine and I had an idea about a group process that would be fun to incorporate in a sacred circle process and community. We had co-facilitated a circle of women through this process 3 years earlier.



We contacted the person who had created the original process as she had just returned to live in Tucson. As luck would have it, we got her voicemail.

In our message we were careful to acknowledge her work and all she had done to bring forth a life changing process.

Then we told her we had an inspired idea we would like to discuss with her. We also made it clear we weren't attached to being the ones to bring it forth especially if she had plans to facilitate another circle. We assured her we only wanted to share the idea to see if it could be woven into what was already being done.



**What she heard was not what we said or meant.** She felt threatened. She felt our plan was to compete with her and we were trying to take over what she had created. Her angry response was shocking and no matter how many times we tried to tell her (through various voicemail messages) we simply wanted to share the idea, her reaction intensified, and she seemed to become more and more convinced we were undermining her.

Now mind you if we were going to “steal” this from her, we wouldn't have contacted her. So logically it wasn't our intent to compete with her or steal anything. Ironically what we wanted to share was an inspiration we got around how our growing community could work more collaboratively to accomplish so much more together. Her reaction was so over the top intense and angry we never got to share that with her.

**Clearly what she heard was NOT what we meant** but what she thought she heard triggered her so deeply all her survival fears were activated. She leaped to conclusions and then said the only way she would ever talk to us about any of this was if a compassionate communication facilitator was present because she didn't feel safe.

I was stunned. How could she possibly believe I was trying to compete with her? Over the many years I had known her I had stepped up to support her and her work - going above and beyond to help her because I so honored what she was creating. So, to me her reaction and request made no sense.

Not only that, she also demanded that we each contribute to the cost of the mediator, and she gave us a very limited number of dates and times she was available. At that time, it wasn't doable for me financially and she knew that. She knew these demands made it impossible for us to meet with her.

The end result was it took nearly five years before we reconnected.

In 2006, I reached out to her by sending a card thanking her for all she had done for me and so many other women when I found out she had undergone a recent surgery for breast cancer. I was surprised when she reached back acting as if nothing had happened. She made it clear she didn't want to talk about what had happened 5 years earlier.



The worst distance between two people is misunderstanding

She said she was only looking forward and not looking back. I honored that request because I didn't know how much time she had left on the planet and it was clear I had been forgiven for whatever wrong she thought I had done to her. It turned out she only had two and half more years – so that was a good call on my part.

Three months before she died she unexpectedly turned to me while we were out for a walk and asked me if we had anything left to clear? I was stunned and didn't quite know how to respond at first.

In that conversation she admitted to me that looking back at her reaction to what she thought she heard made no sense to her now. She admitted she had reacted from a place even she didn't understand. I was grateful for that conversation because it helped me realize I hadn't done anything wrong. She admitted to having been triggered by what she thought she heard and because she was so triggered she wasn't able to hear anything else for a long time.

That reconciliation was a gift to me that I didn't expect. It was also a powerful example of how important it is for us to be aware of our reactions to what we think is being said. It also reminded me to take time to step back and consider what I am hearing and if what I am hearing is what the other person is really communicating.

I had done my best to hear her concerns in the best way I knew how at the time, but I also knew what she heard wasn't what I meant and there was nothing I could do at that time to change her perception of what she thought she heard.

### **The Challenge of Not Being Heard**

Perhaps you have had a similar experience? Maybe you have shared - with a friend, a family member or someone you have worked with or done business with – an idea for a plan of action that will expand something you are both connected too and be beneficial to a lot of people.

Maybe the person says “sure, that sounds great”. Then you find out the reality is they weren't really listening because either they didn't see how it was about them or they simply weren't interested.



The hardest times for me were not when people challenged what I said, but when I felt my voice was not heard.

QUOTEHD.COM Carol Gilligan  
American Psychologist

Then suddenly, it could be weeks, or months, or even years later, they are furious because they have concluded you purposely left them out of the loop when in fact you had more than one conversation with them about whatever it was. Now you realize they weren't listening.

This kind of reaction usually happens when what you are doing has suddenly become successful and now they feel betrayed or threatened in some way and they create a different scenario about what you have done and what is happening, refusing to acknowledge that you ever had a conversation about it.

No amount of apology, explanation, or evidence you present will change their mind. Their perspective is right and you are wrong. They have reached their conclusions and refuse to consider that what they heard (or didn't hear) was not what was meant or even what was really said.

This type of communication breakdown often leads the threatened person to lash out, attack, dismiss your explanation, and accuse you of things that were never true. Even if you apologize for the misunderstanding the other person (this usually happens when they are a narcissist) often continues to shame and blame you for what they "think" has happened refusing to consider they might not have been paying attention in earlier conversations.

### **This Is What Happens when you are Communicating with a Narcissist**

If something like this has happened to you then you are most likely dealing with a narcissist and they will NOT hear what you are genuinely communicating unless you are praising them – something they crave.

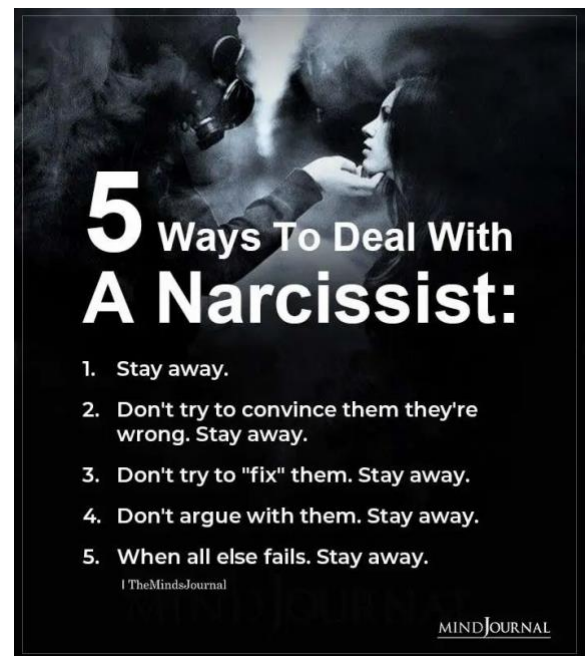
If the narcissist perceives you are saying or doing something that makes them look bad or somehow less than, even if that is not what you are actually saying or doing, they will react with an intensity that is often shocking.

You will be blamed, because a narcissist will accuse you of doing what they are in some way doing. This is so they can get those uncomfortable feelings away from them.

If you are being accused of being deceitful, dishonest, lying, unethical etc. then it is most likely the narcissist is projecting onto you. The sad reality of this tactic is it is very likely they are not even aware that is what they are doing.

A narcissist can't see that they are doing anything wrong - ever. Everyone else is wrong and they are always right and they will never be accountable for their actions or behavior because you are the problem – not them.

By blaming you, accusing you, and questioning your motives they put you on the defensive. If you react to that and defend yourself it proves to them you are all the negative things they think you are.



## How do you deal with this?

No amount of genuine communication will ever change a narcissist's point of view. So, the challenge is to learn how to be okay with it and not take it personally. It really isn't you that is the problem, you are just being accused of being the problem.

No amount of apology will satisfy the narcissist. You have to be wrong so they can be right and when you own your mistakes and try to apologize, the narcissist will find a way to continue to make you wrong. The only time a narcissist will ever admit to having made a mistake is if they think it makes them look good in the eyes of others. It's not genuine, it's manipulative.

For many highly sensitive people, it is very challenging to NOT take it personally. It might help to remember you can never be good enough or say or do the right thing that will change the narcissist's perspective.

**It helps to realize you didn't cause their reaction, you have no control over their reaction, and you can't fix their reaction.**



No matter what you say it will not be heard in the way you mean it. If the narcissist feels criticized in any way, they will continue to lash out. They can't take responsibility for their actions and feelings because that would mean admitting they are wrong - so they tend to constantly blame others. They need a target, someone to blame and if you are the target - no matter what you do you will continue to be blamed and demonized.

There is nothing you can do to change that reaction, so when it happens the only workable strategy is to walk away from the abuse because no amount of trying to communicate what you really meant is going to get through.

By walking away and no longer being the target it is easier to look at the situation objectively and begin to forgive yourself and ideally the other person for what happened. Forgiving the narcissist doesn't change anything for them but it does change everything for you.

### **I was raised by a Narcissist**

Some years ago, I was seeing a counselor who (after several sessions) concluded my father was a malignant narcissist and that there was nothing I could have ever said or done to get his approval – even if I had perfect communication skills. That was a huge relief and helped to begin to forgive myself for all the ways I was sure I had failed and of course had been told over and over I had failed.

My father disowned me in 1996 and never spoke to me again before he died in 2012 - saying I hurt him more than anyone ever had. He accused me of horrible things that left me uncertain and doubting myself.



The best gift I got from that counselor was the realization that it really wasn't about me and the greatest gift my father could have ever given me (and my children) was to cut off communication. That perspective was a huge relief that helped me let go of a lot of guilt and it gave me permission to stop blaming myself.

I am still practicing forgiving myself and my father because those imprints are very deep and even though I have often felt I have moved passed them - they do sneak up on me from time to time. However, the good news is I have created a life I love so I know I have made tremendous progress. YAY...

### Summing It Up

Some miscommunication situations can be rectified and healed as in the example with my mentor. Some can never be healed while we are in this life - as in the example with my father - so it is up to us to do the healing within ourselves. Mercury style healing often involves some kind of creative expression or creative communication that originates from within. It might be art, or music, or dance, or writing or something else?

Journaling is a powerful tool that can help you tap into your feelings and then get beneath the surface to discover what is really there and also give you an opportunity to express any hurt, fury, rage, guilt, unfairness, sense of injustice etc.



**Mercury is a messenger** so one of the best strategies I have found is to ask questions because the messenger will bring you answers. Sometimes they will feel like a whisper in your ear and other times it may sound like a megaphone or perhaps it is a microphone or simply something you read or hear in an unexpected place.

Then journal around those questions, using stream of consciousness to receive answers. This is a practice that works surprisingly well to help you tap into and communicate with the part of you that knows.



How you ask the questions is important. More about that here <https://cayelincastell.com/the-power-of-questions/>

**Here are some ideas to get you started and of course feel free to adjust or rewrite these questions in a way that works for you!**

- How can I trust myself to know the best way to honestly, genuinely and competently communicate with others?
- What would it take for me accept responsibility for my part in any communication challenges I have had, am having or will have and to know when there is nothing more I can do to change it?
- What would it take for me to trust it is okay to stand for myself and end any communication that has become too abusive and painful with no end in sight?



And here are some Why Questions because the Universal Creative Force loves to answer them.

- Why am I such a wonderfully, thoughtful and creative communicator and getting better all the time?
- Why am I feeling stronger and more masterful at communicating in ways that support me and those I am communicating with?
- Why am I so good at learning and growing from all my experiences including deep listening and conscious communicating?



Remember it takes time to sharpen your communication skills, in fact it might take a lifetime. So be sure to celebrate your successes and forgive your failures.

If your heartfelt intent is to have honest and compassionate communication beyond the shame, blame and complain game you will experience ever more masterful communication that is fulfilling and even FUN – even when Mercury is Retrograde!

