



Effective Communication

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Introduction

Good communication skills are key to success in life, work and relationships. Without effective communication, a message can turn into error, misunderstanding, frustration, or even disaster by being misinterpreted or poorly delivered.

Communication is the process by which we exchange information between individuals or groups of people. It is a process where we try as clearly and accurately as we can, to convey our thoughts, intentions and objectives.

Communication is successful only when both the sender and the receiver understand the same information.

In today's highly informational and technological environment it has become increasingly important to have good communication skills.

Target Audiences

- EHC leaders and members
- Adult audiences
- Young adult audiences

Objectives

Participants will gain knowledge about effective communication skills.

Handouts

Effective Communication

Suggestions for Teaching

- Review the lesson guide and handout.
- Make copies of the handout.



Lesson

What is Communication?

The act or process of using words, sounds, signs, or behaviors to express or exchange information or to express your ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc. to someone else.

Types of Communication

- Verbal
- Non-verbal
- Visual

Non-verbal Communication

- Communicating by sending and receiving wordless messages. These messages usually reinforce verbal communication, but they can also convey thoughts and feelings on their own.
- Types of non-verbal communication are: body language- which includes facial expressions, eye contact, body posture, gestures such as a wave, pointed finger, etc. overall body movements, tone of voice, touch and others.

Non-verbal tips

Eye Contact: Maintain consistent eye contact to demonstrate interest and sincerity. Eye contact can show the other person that you are self-confident and a good listener. Keep your eye contact natural. Drop it occasionally so that the other person does not feel like you are staring.

Facial Expression: Allow your face to reflect your feelings, but don't overdo it. Exaggerated expressions can seem insincere. You can also use your face to break tension by maintaining a "soft" expression when a conversation is getting heated.

Touch: Firmness of your handshake can show the other person you are self-confident when you are meeting for the first time. A gentle touch on the shoulder can show empathy when someone is getting emotional. A hug can be friendly, comforting or caring when used with someone you know well. Be careful how you use touch with strangers and co-workers so it is not interpreted as inappropriate.

Gestures: Some people speak with their hands, punctuating their words with expansive hand gestures. This can emphasize your words, but be careful of doing it to an extreme. Keep your hand gestures small and natural, letting them emphasize what you are saying without overwhelming your words.

Verbal Communication

Oral communication is the use of words in delivering the intended message. This includes spoken word, either face-to-face, through the phone, voice chat, video conferencing or any other medium.

Written communication includes traditional pen and paper letters and documents, typed electronic documents, e-mails, text chats, SMS and anything else conveyed through written symbols such as language.

Visual Communication

Signs, typography, drawing, graphic design, illustration, color and other electronic resources. Visual communication usually reinforces written communication, and can in many cases replace written communication altogether. Can you think of examples of visual communication that portrays written communication?

Effective Communication

Effective Communication is important in problem solving, conflict resolution, for positive working and personal relationships, and in reducing the stresses associated with interpersonal interactions.

Why do People Talk to Each Other?

When we talk it is because we have a thought, idea, or feeling that we want to share with someone. We talk to be acquainted, build relationships, express emotions to others, share information and persuade others to understand our personal views. In order to have communication, both listening and speaking are necessary.

Communication Do's

- Shake hands and truly welcome them
- Sit eye to eye and knee to knee
- Listen
- Open your mind
- Keep calm, remain confident
- Establish time limits
- Get to the real issues
- Empathize
- Welcome constructive criticism
- Focus on problems, not personalities

Communication Do NOT

- Interrupt
- Change subject without warning
- Don't complain about your own agenda
- Don't engage in silent combat
- Don't start rehearsing and answer.
- Don't advise unless you're asked
- Don't come across as a know-it-all professional
- Don't let yourself get backed into a corner by a parent who intimidates you

Using I-Statements to Express Yourself in Times of Conflict

- When you are in conflict, you may have difficulty clearly articulating your situation without escalating the conflict. Using an “I” message (also known as an “assertiveness statement”) can help you state your concerns, feelings, and needs in a manner that is easier for the listener to hear and understand
- An “I-statement” focuses on your own feelings and experiences. It does not focus on your perspective of what the other person has done or failed to do. It is the difference, for example, between saying, “I feel that I am not being permitted to participate in office projects to the extent that others are” and “You always let Marge work on office projects, but you never ask me if I’m interested.”
- If you can express your experience in a way that does not attack, criticize, or blame others, you are less likely to provoke defensiveness and hostility which tends to escalate conflicts, or have the other person shut-down or tune you out which tends to stifle communication.
- Ultimately, I-messages help create more opportunities for the resolution of conflict by creating more opportunities for constructive dialogue about the true sources of conflict.

Conflict

A conflict is more than just a disagreement. It is a situation in which one or both parties perceive a threat (whether or not the threat is real).

- **Conflicts continue to fester when ignored.** Because conflicts involve perceived threats to our well-being and survival, they stay with us until we face and resolve them.
- **We respond to conflicts based on our perceptions** of the situation, not necessarily to an objective review of the facts. Our perceptions are influenced by our life experiences, culture, values, and beliefs.
- **Conflicts trigger strong emotions.** If you aren’t comfortable with your emotions or able to manage them in times of stress, you won’t be able to resolve conflict successfully.
- **Conflicts are an opportunity for growth.** When you’re able to resolve conflict in a relationship, it builds trust. You can feel secure knowing your relationship can survive challenges and disagreements.

Think about a conflict you’ve had with someone. Take a moment to write the: subject of the conflict, your reaction, other person’s reaction, did you avoid or address the conflict, what was the result or current state of that event?

Now that you’ve had a moment to think about that...let’s proceed.

Tips for Managing Conflict

Model neutral language. When people are in conflict they use inflammatory language such as profanity, name calling, and exaggerations that escalate the conflict. Restate inflammatory language in a more objective way to help make the information less emotionally laden and more useful for future discussions.

Separate the person from the problem. View the problem as a specific behavior or set of circumstances rather than attributing negative feelings to the whole person. This approach makes the problem more manageable and hopeful than deciding you "can't stand" this person any longer.

Work together. This requires that each person stop placing blame and take ownership of the problem. Make a commitment to work together and listen to each other to solve the conflict.

Agree to disagree. Each person has a unique point of view and rarely agrees on every detail. Being right is not what is important. When managing conflict, seeking the "truth" can trap you rather than set you free. For example, consider the differing testimony of witnesses that all see the same car accident. Truth is relative to the person's point of view.

Focus on the future. In conflict we tend to remember every single thing that ever bothered us about that person. People in conflict need to vent about the past but they often dwell on the past. Often the best way to take ownership of the problem is to recognize that regardless of the past, you need to create a plan to address the present conflict and those that may arise in the future.

Listen for what is felt as well as said. When we listen we connect more deeply to our own needs and emotions, and to those of other people. Listening also strengthens us, informs us, and makes it easier for others to hear us when it's our turn to speak.

Make conflict resolution the priority rather than winning or "being right." Maintaining and strengthening the relationship, rather than "winning" the argument, should always be your first priority. Be respectful of the other person and his or her viewpoint.

Focus on the present. If you're holding on to grudges based on past resentments, your ability to see the reality of the current situation will be impaired. Rather than looking to the past and assigning blame, focus on what you can do in the here-and-now to solve the problem.

Pick your battles. Conflicts can be draining, so it's important to consider whether the issue is really worthy of your time and energy. Maybe you don't want to surrender a parking space if you've been circling for 15 minutes, but if there are dozens of empty spots, arguing over a single space isn't worth it.

Be willing to forgive. Resolving conflict is impossible if you're unwilling or unable to forgive. Resolution lies in releasing the urge to punish, which can never compensate for our losses and only adds to our injury by further depleting and draining our lives.



Know when to let something go. If you can't come to an agreement, agree to disagree. It takes two people to keep an argument going. If a conflict is going nowhere, you can choose to disengage and move on.

Conclusion:

To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.

Evaluation

Please complete your evaluation and return to local county extension office.

References

<http://www.bumc.bu.edu/facdev-medicine/files/2011/08/l-messages-handout.pdf>

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/relationships-communication/effective-communication.htm>

<https://extension.umaine.edu/publications/wp-content/uploads/sites/82/2015/04/6103.pdf>



Effective Communication Evaluation

One thing I learned as a result of this training is:

The one thing I still don't understand from this class is:

I liked:

I disliked:

Three things you intend to do differently (or accomplish) in the near future as a result of this training:
