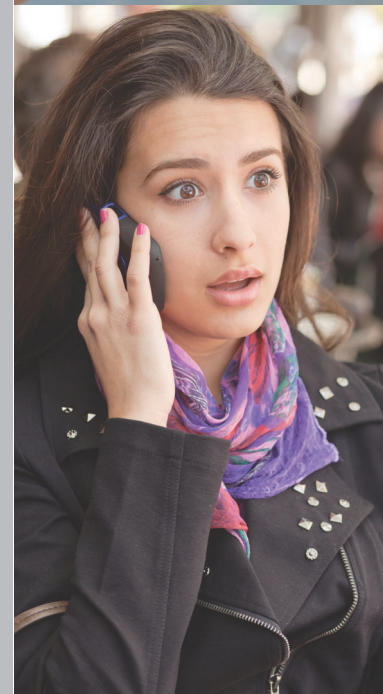


Communication Skills



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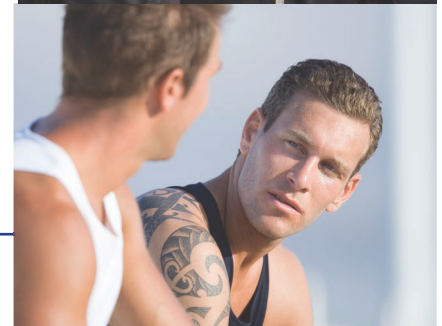
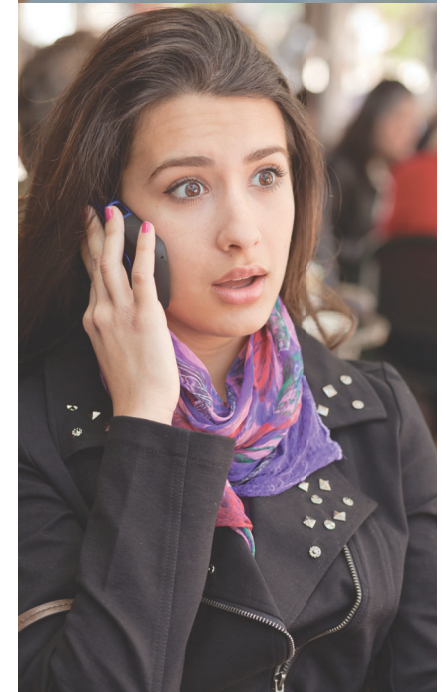
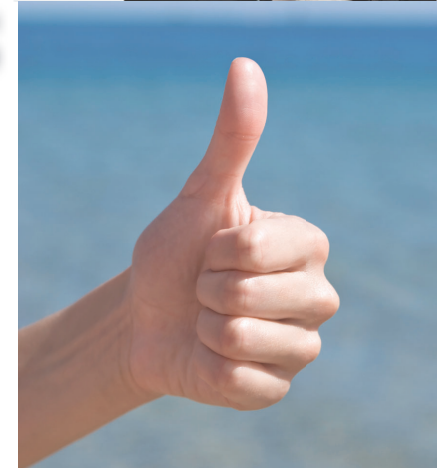
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Communication Skills

Objectives

1. Identify causes of communication problems.
2. Recall the differences between passive, assertive, aggressive, and passive aggressive individuals.
3. Recall ways to communicate messages more effectively.
4. Select ways to communicate positive attitudes.
5. Identify appropriate ways to communicate negative feelings.
6. Indicate ways to be tactful.
7. Match listening skills to their descriptions.
8. Distinguish between positive and negative forms of nonverbal communications.
9. Describe ways to communicate directions.
10. Summarize practices to follow when texting or emailing.



Key Terms

antagonist: a bitter rival

assumption: statement or idea that is accepted or supposed true without proof

cliché: trite (overused) expression or idea

colloquialism: informal speech (such as “fixing to do something” or “dude”)

communication: exchange of thoughts and information by verbal and nonverbal messages

emoticon: a group of keyboard characters or symbols used to express an emotion in electronic messages, such as : -) to represent a smiling face (seen sideways)

empathy: being able to identify with the feelings and thoughts of others

feedback: evaluation returned by the receiver to the sender of the message

flippant: showing a lack of respect by not taking something seriously

hearsay: information gathered through indirect means, without firsthand knowledge (such as “Fred told me that Abby said she liked you”)

jargon: word usage understood only by a particular group, often technical or related to a certain type of employment (such as “throwing PVCs or “data dump”)

message: information being sent (verbal or nonverbal)

nonverbal communication: information expressed without words through posture, gestures, and expressions

optimistic: anticipating the best outcome

pessimistic: having a gloomy outlook

prejudice: irrational opinion directed against something or someone, often because they belong to a particular group (race, gender, etc.)

receiver: the person who must process and make sense of the message when engaged in communication

sender: the person extending the message when engaged in communication

sexism: prejudice based on gender, often against women

social media: websites and services that allow people to communicate by making information public, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and others

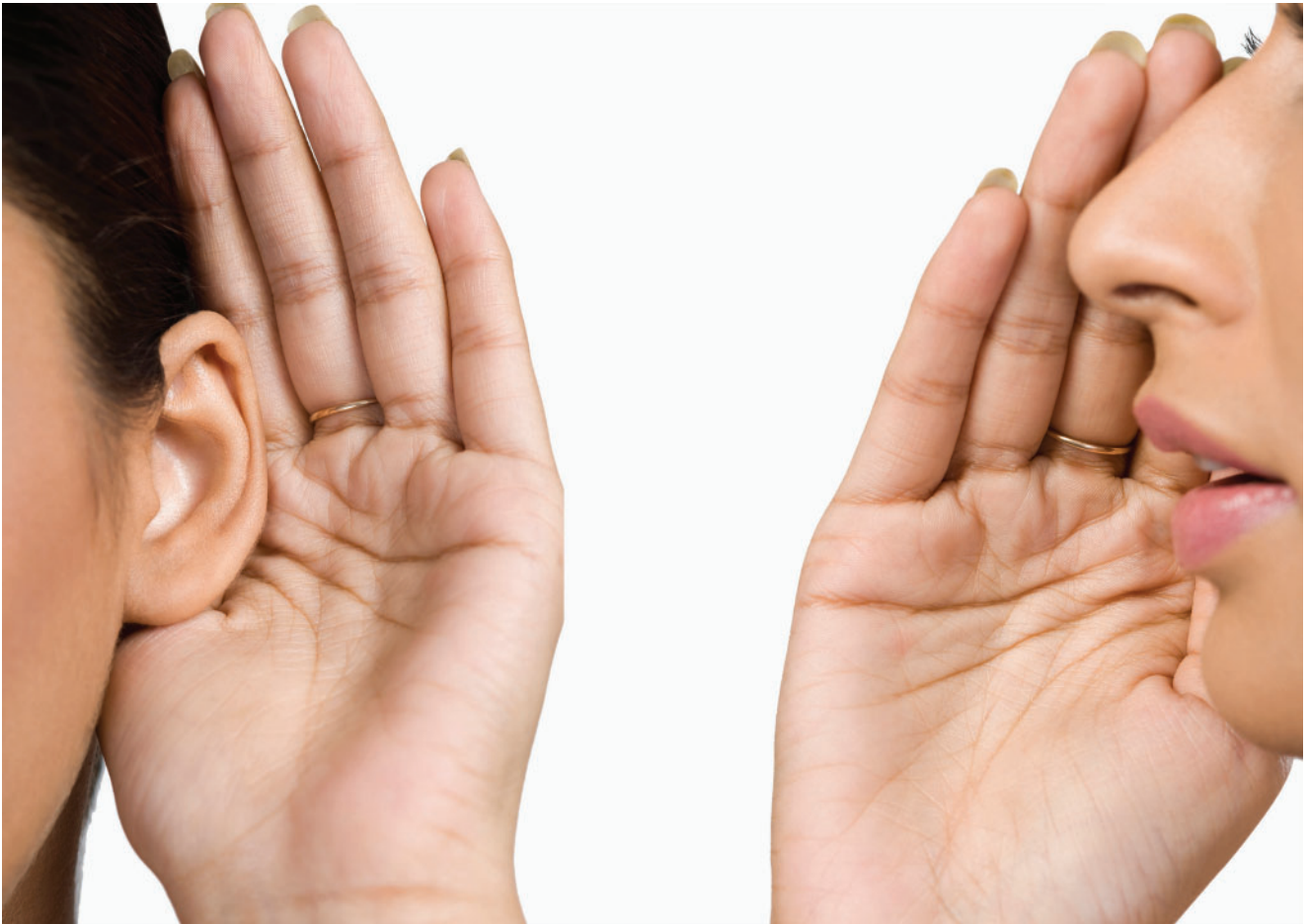
stereotype: the idea that a certain group of people (often based on gender or race) will always have particular things in common or behave in a certain way (such as “athletes are not smart” or “women can’t drive well”)

tactful: ability to do or say the kindest or most appropriate thing

tweet: a text message posted via the Twitter.com website

trite: overused; lacking originality

urban legend: a widely circulated story based on hearsay



We all enjoy sharing our thoughts, ideas, and feelings with others. When we **communicate**, we also listen, observe, and respond. The communication process includes the **sender** (the person who extended the **message**), the **receiver** (the person who must process and make sense of the message), and the message itself. This process comes with plenty of opportunities for misunderstanding. Becoming aware some of the problems that can occur will help you be a better speaker and listener—both of which are important for success at home, work, in relationships, and throughout life.

Causes of Communication Breakdowns

On the surface, communication may seem easy—after all, you’ve done it all your life. But communicating with others can become frustrating and difficult if those engaged in a conversation don’t deal with the barriers that often get in the way. Recognizing and removing communication barriers provides one of the best ways to build lasting personal and professional relationships. Listed next



are some of the most common obstacles and suggestions for overcoming them.

External Barriers

External communication barriers are those found in our environment. If you've ever tried to talk on a cell phone in a stadium during a football game, you can understand how the environment can cause a communication barrier. External barriers can also include such factors as lack of time, physical distractions, loud noises, illness, technology problems, or the inability to speak the language.

The use of **clichés**, automatic responses, **colloquialisms**, **jargon**, technical terms, **trite** expressions, or vague wording can lead to poor communication. For example, think about the number of times you have said, "I'm fine. How are you?" without even thinking about what you were saying.



External communication barriers are often easy to recognize and overcome. When communicating with others, give them your undivided attention. Try to find the best time and location for your conversation to reduce the chance of interruptions. If in a meeting, turn off your cell phone for the duration of the discussion if possible. Also, avoid trying to talk over noisy disturbances. If necessary, reschedule your conversation for a quieter time. Make sure to hold important discussions in a comfortable setting, away from distractions.

Internal Barriers

Internal communication barriers come from within us. These barriers can result from such problems as a lack of interest, misunderstanding, **assumptions**, and inexperience.

Lack of interest or attention — Effective communication takes work. For a message to be truly meaningful, we must internalize it and relate it to our experience. That takes effort and requires staying engaged in the communication process. When you stop paying attention, you only hear parts of a message and you may end up *reacting* to the speaker instead of *engaging* in a meaningful conversation.

Failure to listen — Just because you hear the words does not necessarily mean you comprehend what is being said. You can miss the real meaning of the message if you become preoccupied with preparing a reply, think about something else, ignore nonverbal cues, or have preconceived ideas. Many people don't realize that effective communication depends more on the ability to understand others, rather than being understood.

Failure to clarify comments — Paraphrasing back what you have heard ("I'm understanding that you'd like to run for president of the math club, but you don't

think the members will support you.”) and asking questions (“Why do you think you would not be supported by the majority of math club members?”) are ways to clarify the meaning of a comment.



Childhood teachings — Some people are taught from childhood not to express certain feelings and impulses, so they have difficulty discussing emotional issues or personal topics. Unfortunately, some people also learn **prejudice** at an early age.

Failure to see a person as an individual — False beliefs can limit your understanding and acceptance of others. Value judgments, labels, prejudice, **sexism**, and **stereotypes** can prevent you from seeing other people as they really are. For example, the statement “teenagers are irresponsible” falsely implicates all teenagers. While this statement *may* be true about some teenagers, not all teenagers are irresponsible.

Interruptions — If you interrupt a speaker, you give the impression that you are in a hurry, are self-serving, or do not believe that the speaker has anything important to say. It’s considered rude and it interferes with communication.

Lack of self-confidence — Fear of rejection or ridicule prevents some people from saying what they really mean or expressing how they feel. This state of mind causes people to become overly dependent on the approval and reactions of others to the point where they lose their own identity. A fear of rejection fuels peer pressure because people begin acting in a certain way to receive acceptance within a group.

Ignorance of your projected image — Sometime people are unaware what their body language or tone of voice communicates to others. In order to be clearly understood, your body language and verbal communication must be consistent. Effective communicators make eye contact, use the proper tone for the message being communicated, and are mindful of their facial expressions, hand gestures, and other body movements. Such cues show your interest in the listener and will generate a much more favorable dialog.



Being a good listener during a disagreement can:

- Improve the other person’s perception of you
- Help the other person feel better about him/herself
- Bring about a resolution more quickly
- Strengthen your relationship
- Reduce the level of stress
- Improve overall health



KNOWLEDGE CHECK

1. Name three examples of external communication barriers.
2. Explain how low self-esteem interferes with communication.
3. Discuss possible consequences of having poor communication skills.

“Am I Assertive? What Do You Think?”

An old adage says, “I may forget what you said, but I will never forget how you made me feel.” Have you ever engaged in a conversation in a way that you later regretted? At one time or another, most of us have thoughtlessly interrupted someone or responded to another person in a hurtful or angry manner that silenced them.



Aggression means interacting with other people without showing respect for them, making another person feel inferior or powerless, or sending the message that others dare not disagree. Aggressive communication can negatively affect relationships in all parts of a person’s life,

because aggressive individuals alienate others, experience more personal stress, and act defensively. Violence represents aggression in its most extreme form. But people can also show more subtle signs of aggression through body language by rolling their eyes, glaring, or pointing. For example, when Akira was interrupted while speaking, she said “Would you just shut up and let someone else talk for once?” This is an example of an aggressive response.

Passive individuals are nearly opposite of those who are aggressive. They are easily dominated or intimidated, continually yield to others, go along with the crowd, and may seem to lack the will to defend themselves when engaged in a discussion. These individuals rarely raise questions and often avoid becoming noticed to stay clear of any type of confrontation.

For example, when Eduardo was interrupted while speaking, he said nothing. When his friend said “Eduardo, what did you start to say?” he said “Nothing, never mind.” This is an example of a passive response.



Rather than expressing feelings openly, people who are **passive aggressive** express resentment or other negative feelings in an unaggressive way. This type of behavior may be expressed through actions or statements. For example, rather than declining an invitation, someone who is passive aggressive may choose to show up late. A person may also show signs of passive aggression by inserting subtle verbal jabs or

slightly critical comments in a conversation. It is important to note, however, that a person may have good intentions and be completely unaware of their passive aggressive tendencies.

For example, when Bree was interrupted while speaking, she sighed and said “Oh, excuse me. I guess you have something more important to say.” This is an example of a passive aggressive response.



Showing aggression is not the same thing as being **assertive**. Effective communication relies on assertive behavior. Clearly expressing beliefs and opinions leads the way to a healthy discussion—one in which individuals show mutual respect and value the opinions of others. Assertive communication allows people to disagree without being disagreeable and enables them to compromise and arrive at solutions. Remember, that old adage—the one about never forgetting how another person makes

you feel—can work in a positive sense as well.

For example, when Dara was interrupted while speaking, she said “Excuse me; I do want to hear what you have to say, but please let me finish first.” This is an assertive response.

Depending on the situation, we all use a combination of these four styles of communication—assertive, passive, aggressive, and passive aggressive. The way we communicate with others largely depends on what past experience has taught us will work best to meet our needs. Understanding these communication styles will help when you’re confronted by a difficult person. Likewise, you may also begin to recognize instances when you use manipulative behavior to get your way. You always have a choice in the way you engage and interact with other people. By being more assertive, you can diffuse anger, ensure trust, and build stronger personal and professional relationships.



KNOWLEDGE CHECK

1. Compare aggressiveness and assertiveness.
2. Give an example of passive aggression.

Communicating Messages Effectively

Poor communication habits can interfere with learning capabilities, personal relationships, and productivity. Fortunately, bad habits can be corrected. Deciding you want clearer interaction in your life is the first step toward improving your communication

skills. Listed below are strategies to put you on the right path.



Maintain a pleasant tone of voice. People enjoy listening and talking to others who are positive, pleasant, and easy to converse with. Use a cheerful yet professional tone. This becomes especially important when talking on the phone. Even if you've had a long, stressful day, it should not be evident in your voice. To avoid droning or sounding too monotone, practice varying your pitch and using a dynamic speaking voice. Use the appropriate volume for the setting—speak softly in a close setting and more loudly when you need to be heard across a room.

Vary your speed. Listening to someone who speaks at a constant clip can become monotonous. Speaking much too quickly can make it difficult for others to understand you. It can also signal to others that you are nervous or insecure. Slowing down your speech enables you to pronounce words correctly. However, speaking too slowly can cause your listener to want to finish your sentences for you. Including slight pauses

helps punctuate your speaking.

Choose your words carefully. Keep listeners in mind by using terms they will understand and phrases that give a clear explanation. Also, avoid hinting—be polite, but direct. Indirect messages can be misleading and confusing.

For example, Brendan told his coworker Josie "I wish I didn't have to work Friday night. I'd really love to see a movie that night." Later, Josie told her friend "I think Brendan wants to go out with me. He was hinting that he'd like to go to a movie with me." But Brendan told his friend "No, I can't go to the movie. Josie knew I wanted off, but she wouldn't switch with me."



Use "I" messages rather than "you" messages. "I" messages make the communicator responsible for the message and convey an opinion without casting judgment. "You" messages are often used to criticize or blame others. For example, a statement such as, "You do not understand what I'm saying" blames the listener for the communication breakdown, when *you* may be at fault for being unclear. Instead, say, "I'm sorry; I must not have expressed myself clearly."

Use a person's name. Repeating a person's name aloud often helps you remember the name, and it also sends the message that you care about the listener. Remembering names of people is an important job skill, especially those who have frequent contact with the

public.

Use the appropriate nonverbal cues. Nonverbal communication plays an important role in face-to-face communication. Your gestures, tone, and facial expressions should all be in agreement. Also, making eye contact can be a way of showing self-confidence.

Ask meaningful questions. Asking questions allows you to receive more information, and the way you ask questions can reveal your listener's level of understanding. Questions can also be used to show a sincere interest in the other person. Keep in mind that simple "yes" or "no" answers seldom provide adequate interaction or meaningful **feedback**, so be sure to ask open-ended questions. For example, instead of asking, "Did you enjoy your trip?" ask, "What was your favorite part of your vacation?"

Choose an appropriate time for communicating. Interruptions damage the outcome of discussions. Try to select a time when the other person will be most receptive to visit. Do not initiate a deep conversation when the other person appears preoccupied, emotional, or tired. Also, allow plenty of time and do not rush the discussion.



KNOWLEDGE CHECK

1. Name five strategies for improving communications skills.
2. List three characteristics of a pleasant speaking voice.

Think Positive!

William Shirer, a famous 20th century American journalist and historian, once said,

"Most true happiness comes from one's inner life, from the disposition of the mind and soul." In other words, each person is ultimately responsible for his or her own happiness. Being **optimistic** and cheerful help you develop a positive mental attitude. Ways to communicate positive feelings are listed below.

Say positive things about yourself and others. A positive attitude begins with a positive self image. Sometimes, squelching critical thoughts can be difficult. But focusing on your positive characteristics can increase your energy, motivation, and success. Likewise avoid saying bad things about others. Think about how you would feel if other people said bad things about you, and keep in mind the fact that everyone has flaws. In addition, you can demonstrate leadership by defending those who are targeted by gossip, rather than staying out of the discussion.

Avoid critical and sarcastic remarks. A little sarcasm can be witty, but too much is tiresome. And humor at someone else's expense can be hurtful. Destructive messages cause people to feel judged and unworthy. Positive messages that validate people make them feel good about themselves and enable them to be receptive to constructive suggestions if they are needed.

Be the first one to make eye contact. Making eye contact is a way of expressing interest in other people and showing self-confidence. However, proper eye contact is not the same thing as staring, which can make people feel uncomfortable. To avoid staring, glance briefly off to the side and then back again.

Smile, look happy, and act cheerful. Say "hello" when greeting others. Your body and posture communicates your attitude and self-image. Hold your head up, keep your shoulders back, and sit up straight rather than slouching. Adopt a relaxed but confident body language. People will place

more emphasis on your nonverbal message if it conflicts with your words, so make sure your posture and expression are not canceling out what you are trying to say.



Be optimistic. Optimism comes more easily to some people than others, but anyone can learn to take on a more positive outlook. If you find yourself being **pessimistic**, stop for a moment and try to see something good in the situation. Realize upfront that success does not happen 100 percent of the time. Prepare yourself for the inevitable stumble. Should something bad happen, learn from your mistakes and try again. Surround yourself with people who can lift you up, and seek out successful role models who can inspire you.

Let others know that you care. Show concern for others by asking about things that are important to them. If people come to you to discuss a problem, demonstrate **empathy**. Let them know you understand how they must be feeling. At the same time, refrain from giving advice unless you're asked. They may simply want you to know what they're going through, and they may not expect you to solve their problem.

Offer compliments when they are deserved. We all need positive reinforcement. Acknowledging a job well done gives back the positive energy people need to begin the next challenge. People who feel good about themselves are better at building relationships and achieving results. Delivering a genuine and well-deserved compliment can defuse tension and make it easier to resolve conflict. When someone gives you a compliment, always say "thank you."

Some people find it difficult to accept a compliment. Really, all you have to do is just say "Thank you."

If your accomplishment was part of a group effort, acknowledge the input of other people ("Thank you. Ben and Lisa worked on this project too; they're so talented.") You might also choose to use the compliment as a conversation starter ("Thanks... my grandfather gave me this bracelet; it belonged to his mother.")

What should you not do when someone gives you a compliment? Don't deny or refuse their kind words ("Seriously? Oh no, I look *horrible* today!"). Don't feel you need to immediately return the compliment, since that can look insincere ("You like my shoes? Thanks! I like your, um, dress!").



KNOWLEDGE CHECK

1. Explain how making eye contact conveys a positive attitude.
2. Describe how you can portray a positive image.

Positively Negative—A Positive Thing!

We all occasionally have negative feelings. But when strong negative feelings are allowed to build, held inside, and not expressed, they can lead to frustrations, deep anger, and resentment. Expressing negative feelings in a constructive way can prevent feelings of resentment and help put the situation behind you.



Recognize responsibility for personal faults and understand that you cannot blame others or outside events for what you do. Acknowledge that you are responsible for the choices you have made and that you must address the consequences of your actions. We are often reluctant to admit guilt when we've done something wrong, but an apology goes a long way in undoing the damage. Have you ever been in a situation where you said, "It wouldn't be so bad, except she won't admit she did anything wrong! I'd forgive her if she'd just apologize!" In addition, understand that you cannot be responsible for the actions of others. Once you do this, you may be able to get past the negative feelings.

Discuss your negative feelings with the person whose behavior causes you the problem. Express your concerns in an open and respectful way. If you don't voice your feelings, resentment will build and the situation will likely remain the same or get worse.

Describe the issue or behavior without emotion and concentrate on the facts. You must be able to step back, observe, and assess the situation without letting your emotions get the best of you. Stressful situations and the actions of others can greatly influence your emotional state. Keep in mind that just because people occasionally behave thoughtlessly doesn't necessarily mean they are bad people.

Use "I" messages when you talk about emotions. "I" messages enable you to express your feelings without verbally attacking or laying blame, and they can help facilitate an open and constructive dialog. If you feel someone has been inconsiderate, explain to the other person why you feel that way and what they can do to help resolve the situation.

Discuss your problem without making accusations or unkind comments. Even though the other person may be the instigator, avoid becoming defensive. If it turns out that you were wrong about the other person, this could result in others making accusations about you.



Do not bring up already-settled issues or rehash previous disagreements. Bringing up such matters only stirs up additional hard feelings.

Follow the guidelines for effective communication throughout your

discussion—maintain open body language, use friendly gestures, and choose your words carefully. Try to end the exchange on a friendly note by saying something positive about the person or the situation.

Conflict resolution provides a way to bring two opposing sides to a peaceful resolution. This process addresses a wide range of sources of disagreement, whether they occur between two individuals or two corporations. When individuals within the same organization require assistance in solving their disputes, the process is usually called peer mediation. With the help of a mediator or facilitator, the conflicting parties explain their position, listen without interrupting, and voluntarily agree to work cooperatively to resolve the issue. After finding a point of compromise, the moderator drafts a formal agreement that outlines actions that both parties agree to take.



KNOWLEDGE CHECK

1. Explain why it is important to vent negative feelings in a positive way.
2. List three suggestions for communicating negative feelings.

Act With Tact

Tactfulness has to do with the ability to speak and interact with others in a way that doesn't offend them. Tactful individuals use good manners and express thoughtful consideration of others. Using



tact regarding sensitive issues can help you avoid creating an uncomfortable situation.

Do not tease other people. Sometimes teasing takes place with good intentions. For example, teasing can be meant as a joke or an attempt to make someone feel part of the group. However, good intentions do not make teasing okay. Situations can easily escalate, which can hurt feelings, destroy friendships, and make for tense working relationships. Teasing can turn into hazing or harassment, and it can even result in physical violence. When jokes are made at another person's expense, it is rarely funny to them and it gets old in a hurry.



Respect the personal beliefs, culture, or heritage of others. Don't be an **antagonist**.

Allow each person the right to his or her own opinion. Not everyone is the same, and we all have individual talents. In addition, people from different cultures are not better or worse, they're just *different*. With our society becoming increasingly global, there's a strong possibility that someday you'll work or do business with people from another culture.

Don't gossip or say bad things about people. Remember the old saying, "If you don't have something nice to say, then don't say anything." Avoid gossiping and speaking poorly of others. If people around you start to gossip, simply respond by saying that you don't know the person all that well or that you are unfamiliar with the situation, and then change the subject.



There is a fine line between teasing and bullying. Teasing is playful, and no harm is intended. If you mean to hurt someone, or if you continue after you know your teasing bothers them, it's no longer teasing — it's bullying. Bullying can take on many forms: name-calling, purposely excluding people, shoving, posting threatening comments to social media, or sending threatening text or email messages are all examples of this type of harassment. If you or someone you know is being bullied at school, tell a teacher, counselor, or your principal. If a person is in immediate danger, call 911.



KNOWLEDGE CHECK

1. Explain why teasing is dangerous, even if it is meant as a joke.
2. Describe what you should do if others around you start to gossip.

Exercise Your Ears

Most of what we learn, we learn by listening. We spend approximately half of our waking hours listening—far more time than we spend speaking, reading, or writing. Yet, we often don't develop and practice effective listening skills. It stands to reason that people sometimes need to hear a complex message more than once in order to process its meaning and fully understand it.

Prepare to listen. Eliminate physical distractions, such as background noise and possible interruptions. If possible, learn about the topic before you hold the discussion.

Listen to what the speaker is and is *not* saying. Watch for cues and be aware of body language of others. The speaker's body language or the speaker's manner and tone of voice may conflict with the verbal message.

Concentrate. Pay close attention to the message the speaker is trying to convey. Develop interest by focusing on an aspect of the topic that relates to you. Put other distractions out of your mind and avoid mentally drifting or daydreaming, and give the speaker respect by listening to the message.

Be empathetic. Have you ever made some sort of announcement only to be disappointed by the response you

received? Imagine how you would feel if you told your friends you were planning on finally paying off your car today, and one of them **flippantly** answered, “So? I paid off my car six months ago.” Compare that to how you would feel if your friend said “Congratulations! I know it felt great when I paid off my car. I’m happy for you.” Try to understand the speaker’s point of view.

Have an open mind. Emotions often affect how a speaker is interpreted. Listeners should try to control emotions, overcome prejudices and biases, and not let the speaker’s status, accent, or physical appearance affect your willingness to listen. Be careful not to prejudge people based on their appearance or previous experience that you’ve had with them.

Judge the content, not the delivery. An awkward speaker may have something important to say, yet someone who is well spoken may have nothing to offer. Get beyond the delivery and judge the message, not the words used or the way they are spoken.

Repeat what you think you heard for clarification. “Active” or “reflective” listening is used to paraphrase what was said to let the speaker know his or her message was heard and understood. We can listen much faster than the average person speaks. This gives us time to process what we hear, ask ourselves questions about it, note related ideas, and form opinions about the message. Being actively engaged with the message helps us understand and remember it.

Provide feedback. Let the speaker know he or she was heard by providing feedback, both verbal and nonverbal. For example, make eye contact, nod your head appropriately, and inject encouraging comments.

One of the biggest problems with the spoken language is that humans listen faster than people speak. Most people speak at about 125 words per minute but are able to listen at a rate of about 400 words per minute, which means that people are able to think ahead of the person who is speaking to them! In addition, most people remember only 20 percent of what they hear. This shows why being a good listener doesn’t just happen — you have to work at it.



KNOWLEDGE CHECK

1. Name a way to prepare to listen to someone.
2. Discuss the possible consequences of prejudging others before hearing what they have to say.

Nonverbal Communication Speaks Loudly

Even without words, you can send strong messages through subtle signals. Nonverbal communication, or *body language*, includes the messages sent by our gestures, posture, movements, and facial expressions. When you are engaged in face-to-face interactions, nonverbal actions—including where you stand, how you sit, and how loudly you speak—communicate something about you.

Understanding a message requires paying as much attention to body language as to the words being spoken. For example, a

nonverbal cue such as a pat on the shoulder can convey the message of a job well done, even if no words are spoken. Body language can also contradict the spoken word, such as when your coworker begins tapping on his phone after saying he is interested in hearing about your business trip. A gesture such as throwing your hands up in the air can accentuate a message of jubilation.

The following table outlines forms of positive and negative communication. As you travel or join the business world, it's important to remember that nonverbal communication may have different meanings in different cultures. Also, keep in mind that these are general statements and they may not be the same for all people.

Making a Good First Impression

This unit discusses some of the inherent dangers of making snap judgments of others. But that's exactly what an employer must do when interviewing job applicants. Employers have a limited amount of time to determine whether or not a person is a good fit for a job. That's why a good first impression is particularly important when meeting with prospective employers.

Be sure to dress neatly and conservatively for an interview. Avoid clunky jewelry, and remove body piercings. Hair should be neatly groomed, and men should be clean shaven. For women, guidelines include conservative makeup, neutral nail polish, and a mid-sized purse. Also, many companies have a dress code. When in doubt, dress a little nicer for the interview than you would for the actual job. For example, if the employer allows workers to wear jeans, wear khaki slacks to the interview.

Arrive on time to the interview. Be pleasant to everyone you encounter, because subordinates often influence a supervisor's hiring decision. Don't assume that people want to be called by their first name. Of course, do not smoke or chew gum. During the interview, stick to business and avoid talking about personal issues. Answer all questions honestly, but don't ramble. Be sure to send a thank-you note to the employer within a day or two.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Positive Forms	Negative Forms
Open body—open palms up, hands away from body, arms swinging freely	Closed body—clenched fist, palms down, crossed arms or legs
Head held high, shoulders upright; body leaning toward other person's body	Erect body, holding head and body stiff or drooping head and shoulders
Relaxed, alert manner of sitting or standing, turned to listener	Biting fingernails, pulling at hair, fidgeting with clothing
Smiling, pleasant expression, nodding in agreement	Frowning, raised eyebrows, clenched teeth
Natural gestures	Aggressive gestures—finger pointing, hands on hips
Frequent eye contact	Avoiding eye contact—shifting gaze, looking up or down Staring, not blinking

Charles Darwin was the first scientist to publish a report on the study of nonverbal communication and body language. In 1872, in his book, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, Darwin noted that all mammals show signs of emotion in their facial expressions. He wrote, "...the young and the old of widely different races, both with man and animals, express the same state of mind by the same movements." In other words, according to Darwin, some facial expressions are universal. Can you think of anything that might cause facial expressions that look the same on babies, adults, and even animals?



KNOWLEDGE CHECK

1. Name three positive forms of nonverbal communication.
2. Name three negative forms of nonverbal communication.
3. Explain why is it important that our nonverbal cues match our verbal message.

Giving Directions

Being able to communicate directions clearly helps ensure that a task can be completed right the first time. Whether in the kitchen or on the road, giving and receiving directions helps us accomplish our goals. This is especially true in the business world. No company or organization has the resources to continually correct errors or start over on projects—time is money.

Give directions in a way your intended audience will understand. We all mentally process information differently. Visual thinkers may need for you to demonstrate a task, provide a diagram or sketch, or show them an example. You may also need to present directions in more than one way. In addition, some people prefer to take notes when learning the steps to complete a complicated task.



When giving verbal directions, explain the importance of the directions and why they should be followed. Most people listen more attentively if they understand why something must be done. For example, “Painters will be working in the office this weekend. These filing cabinets are currently too heavy to move, so we need to empty the top two drawers into boxes before quitting time. Please stack the filled boxes in Marisela’s office.”

State your directions clearly and in simple steps. Do not give more instructions than a person can easily remember—no more than three directions in order. For example, “Our storewide sale starts tomorrow, so let’s start getting ready today. Jada and Andre, please move the jeans rack to the east wall, mark the jeans down 30 percent, and make a sign to put on the wall.”

When giving written directions, make sure they are legible. Write at a level the reader will understand. Written directions should answer who, what, when, where, why, and how the task should be performed. However, keep directions concise and provide only the information that’s needed. Number the steps for performing the task if they must be completed in a certain order. Also, make sure your directions are written in a courteous manner by including “please,” “thank you” and phrases such as “I appreciate your help.” When possible, ask an uninvolved third party to double-check your written instructions to make sure they are clear and correct.

After giving instructions, be sure the person fully understands them. If necessary, politely ask if he or she can tell you what needs to be done, where it should be done, the expected timeframe or deadline for completion, and the importance of the task. Give the person an opportunity to ask questions.



KNOWLEDGE CHECK

1. What might you do in order to help a visual learner understand the steps for completing a task?
2. What can you do to ensure that written instructions are clear?
3. What should you do after giving instructions?

Sending Effective Email and Text Messages

Technologies such as the internet and smart phones allow users to communicate with each other almost effortlessly. Through email, texts, and **tweets**, users can send messages back and forth much more quickly than when having to compose a formal printed letter. However, while the convenience of electronic messaging makes it a powerful tool, it can also create problems if users become careless.



Keep your electronic messages short and to the point. Keep it simple. Reading and responding to messages takes a good deal of time out of a person's day. People rarely want to wade through a lengthy message. At the same time, be thorough enough to answer any potential questions.

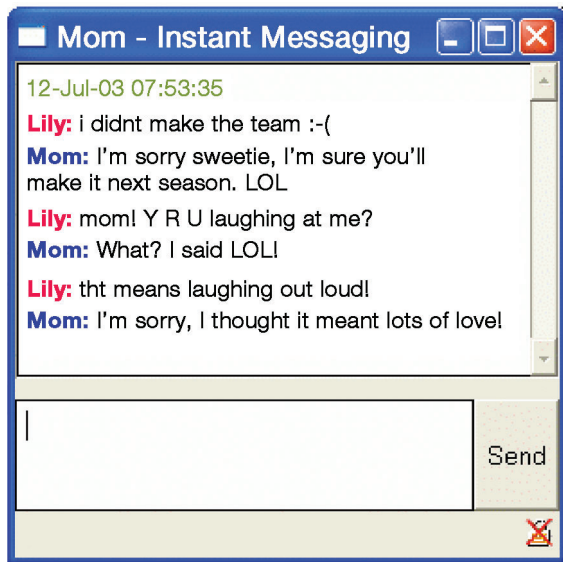
Only send messages when necessary. Do not forward chain messages. Passing along unsubstantiated rumors or **urban legends** only perpetuates misinformation. Avoid sending unnecessary file attachments, because many messaging systems have a limited amount of storage space. People who send too many messages can quickly become a pest.

Choose the best media for the message. Sending a text message can be a good way to contact someone while they are in a meeting or other situation where it would be rude to accept a phone call. Email messages work well for when you need a more thoughtful response. At the same time, certain discussions may be more productive if held in person or over the phone.

Take a few moments to proofread your message. Even though electronic messages are much less formal than hardcopy letters, once you hit "send" your message could potentially become public. Embarrassing mistakes are all too easy to make. Always double-check to see who your message is addressed to. With the wrong click of the mouse, you could accidentally send highly personal information or a crude joke to everyone on your email list. The safest bet is to never send questionable content to others. **As good rule of thumb, never write something in any electronic message if you wouldn't want to say it on television.**

Be mindful of the tone of your message. Be careful when using humor (especially sarcasm), because they may not realize you are joking. Unlike the spoken word, with electronic messaging, the receiver does not have the benefit of hearing your tone of voice and other nonverbal cues. Smiley faces (like :-)) and other **emoticons** can help indicate when you're trying to be funny. Also, do not send electronic messages when you are angry. When you are annoyed, it becomes all too easy to fire off an angry response that can come back to haunt you. Even if you feel you have the right to be angry, it's best not to express that anger in writing, where it can be forwarded to others, taken out of context, and used in ways you cannot predict. Take the time to calm down, carefully compose your thoughts, and wait awhile before answering.

Pay attention to the way you structure and format electronic messages. Avoid adding unnecessary line spacing, because readers may not realize they need to scroll to see the rest of the message. This may cause them to overlook important information. Also, be sure to use appropriate salutations and closings.



Be polite and courteous when choosing words and symbols. Do not use all uppercase letters, which is the electronic equivalent of shouting. Also, avoid using punctuation for emphasis—such as multiple question marks or exclamation points—especially in business messages.

Use abbreviations sparingly. Although they may seem common to you, some people may not be familiar with such abbreviations as FYI (for your information), BTW (by the way), FWIW (for what it's worth), or IMHO (in my honest opinion), and they may interpret the letters in a way you had not intended.

Reply to messages to continue the thread of thought. If contributing to a discussion, don't start a new message. If you must start a separate follow-up, include enough information to help your audience understand your references. You may also want to cut and paste a portion of the original message in your follow-up. Most email programs will do this automatically.

Trim content that isn't necessary in order to shorten messages, especially after several replies.

Include your contact information in your message if you expect a response. Some messaging systems may not embed your name and email address. If your message ends up being forwarded by your recipient, your email address could be stripped out of the heading. Also, be sure to include your name in your closing.

Employers, university admissions offices, and other organizations commonly use **social media** websites, such as Facebook or LinkedIn, to learn what they can about their applicants. For this reason, it is a good idea to put some thought into what you list as your interests and activities on your personal page. Filter the postings of friends who frequently use foul language. Likewise, photos that show you or your friends using alcohol or engaging in questionable activities could become embarrassing—and they could potentially prevent you from getting a scholarship or cost you your job. The easiest way to make sure people don't find embarrassing things about you on the internet is to make sure such things never exist in the first place. Use your social networking page as a personal billboard to help you put your best foot forward.



KNOWLEDGE CHECK

1. Why is it a good idea to avoid getting in the habit of sending too many electronic messages?
2. Describe possible consequences of not proofreading an electronic message before it is sent.
3. Explain why it is important to consider your message before choosing which media to use.

Business Cell Phone Etiquette

- When in a meeting, turn off the ringer and let your calls roll over to voicemail. If you are expecting an important call, set your phone to vibrate and leave the room before answering.
- If you need to respond to an important message, discreetly send a quick text message, when possible. If you absolutely must take a call, excuse yourself from the meeting area.
- Do not discuss sensitive business topics or private matters in a public setting.
- When talking on a cell phone, speak at a normal volume. Avoid being overly loud or angry when talking on a cell phone in public, because your conversation could intrude on other people.

Career Spotlight

COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

Communications specialists are immersed in managing both internal and external “or public” messages of an organization in print, video, broadcast, and online media. They can be involved in news writing, public relations, marketing, advertising, employee recruitment, fundraising, or other related fields.

Advances in communications technology affect all workers, but perhaps none more than the role of a communications specialist. State-of-the-art communications technology enhances the pace at which an organization’s audience obtains information. As a result, communications specialists must not only be highly proficient in the technology needed to perform their job, but also the forms of technology that is widely used and accepted by the target audience. In addition, they must constantly monitor future trends in technology in order to keep their organization viable.

A communications specialist must have a wide range of skills, especially when working for smaller organizations. A communications position typically requires a four-year college degree in journalism, strategic communications, English composition, or marketing, with a master’s degree preferred. They often work in publishing, business, and education, although many types of companies hire communications specialists.

Source: WiseGeek.com

Unit Summary

Clear communication provides the means for sharing ideas and feelings with other people. In other words, communication is the key to understanding. Having effective communication skills helps resolves conflicts—and it also prevents them from occurring.

There are many ways to actively improve your ability to engage in communication, regardless of whether the message is in a written or verbal form. Good communicators are assertive, attentive listeners, able to articulate their message, and tactful. They also exude a positive attitude, communicate negative feelings effectively, and use appropriate nonverbal signals.

1. Identify at least five external barriers to communication.
2. Identify at least four internal barriers to communication.
3. Compare aggression to assertiveness.
4. Explain how being passive aggressive is different from being passive.
5. List at least four ways to make sure you communicate your message effectively.
6. List at least four ways to communicate positive feelings.
7. List at least four ways to express negative feelings in a constructive way.
8. Explain why you should avoid teasing.
9. How can you help someone who needs to be rescued from an uncomfortable conversation?
10. List at least five ways to be a good listener.
11. List at least four positive forms of nonverbal communication.
12. List at least four negative forms of nonverbal communication.
13. Describe how to give verbal directions.
14. List at least six guidelines for sending effective email and text messages.

Key Terms - define the following:

antagonist

assumption

cliché

colloquialism

communication

emoticon

empathy

feedback

flippant

hearsay

message

nonverbal

communication

optimistic

pessimistic

prejudice

receiver

sender

sexism

social media

stereotype

tactful

tweet

trite

urban legend

How To Use Less Paper

In spite of all the revolutionary advances in communications technology beginning in the early 1990s and the promise of a “paperless society,” offices and households still use a tremendous amount of paper. Millions of trees are cut each year simply to make paper junk mail, catalogs, and unnecessary photocopies. However, cutting down on paper usage is easy to do, and it is one of the best ways to reduce your carbon footprint. Whenever possible, consider the following ways to reduce your overall paper consumption.

- Use email instead of paper memos and letters.
- Avoid printing something if you can read it on your computer.
- Print only the necessary pages or the paragraphs.
- Before you start a large print or copy job, print a “test page” to make sure everything is correct.
- Check your printer settings before printing to ensure you print what you intended.
- Make use of scrap paper — use it for grocery lists and notes.
- Manage your finances online to cut on printed bills and mailings — many organizations let you sign up for “paperless billing.”
- Use double-sided copies.
- If several people must have access to a printed copy, route or circulate one copy instead of printing a copy for each person.
- Keep mailing lists up to date.
- Consider using a smaller font and single-spacing when composing documents, so that you can print more on a page.

Sources: SimonStapleton.com, EzineArticles.com