Handouts for Virtual Effective

Communication Module

Version 5

Handout A: General Points to Consider for Effective Communication

Be respectful. Stop what you are doing, and pay full attention to the other person.

Listen. Communication is a two-way process. You’ll get your message across better if you understand the other person, because understanding comes from listening.

Be aware of your non-verbal cues. Attend to your facial expression, body posture, etc. Use direct eye contact.

Be alert to your tone of voice. Pay attention to how you say something, i.e., the volume, your tone, and the rate of speech. Select your words carefully. Avoid using words that can increase conflict, such as “always” and “never.”

Be kind. Avoid sarcasm and contempt. These have a very negative effect on communication and relationships. Would you want your sarcastic comments to be heard by someone you admire? Include something positive that focuses on a solution.

Stay in the present. During difficult conversations, keep the talk in the present tense and focused on the issue at hand. Make an effort to be positive. If you say “no” to something, try to say “yes” to an acceptable alternative.

Find common ground. Work to discover common ground or reach mutual agreement. Don’t be pushy, but at the same time don’t be a pushover.

Silence can be golden. Silence can often be an appropriate response. This is not the same as

“the silent treatment,” where one person completely ignores the other person.

Be prepared. In difficult situations, know what you want to say and why before you start the conversation.

Speak only for yourself. Use “I” statements. (“When you (an observation), I feel/think (your reaction)”). Avoid “you” statements that describe what you believe or imagine the other person is experiencing, i.e., “You’re so angry when you get home from work.”

Seek clarification. If you are unsure about what is being said or asked of you, ask for clarification.

Be calm. Talk about emotional issues when you are calm. If your efforts to resolve a conflict are not working, take a break and set a time to revisit the issue when both of you have cooled down a bit. Remember, it is a process and will take time to complete.

Handout B: Effective Nonverbal Communication

• Undivided attention: Show that you value what the other person is saying by being fully present and giving them your attention exclusively. Stay focused on understanding what the person has to say. Ask pertinent questions to clarify what you are hearing.

• Body position: Facing the person or standing so that you are looking towards him/her conveys a message that you are open to communication. It also helps you focus on what you hear and what you say.

• Posture: Be relaxed. It is difficult to give a message of being open and welcoming if you are tensed up. Be aware of your posture.

• Physical proximity: This is also known as an individual’s “personal space.” This varies from culture to culture. Standing close to someone can suggest an interest in what they have to say. However, standing too close can be intimidating or intrusive.

• Eye contact: Appropriate eye contact helps to maintain the flow of conversation. It also helps to more accurately assess the other person’s response. This will vary from

culture to culture. It is important to remember that in some cultures, it is considered

impolite to have direct eye contact.

• Speech: It is not just what you say but how you say it that conveys your intent. Pay attention to your tone, pitch, rhythm, rate and flow of speech.

We don’t know what another person is actually thinking or feeling unless they explicitly tell us. If we have questions about someone’s communication, it is important to ask for clarification.

Paying attention to your own nonverbal expressions and asking others to clarify how they feel will help ensure you give and receive accurate messages.

How do you know when you or someone else is distracted while listening? How might these behaviors or actions send mixed signals?

Paying attention to your own nonverbal expressions and asking others to clarify how they feel will help ensure you give and receive accurate messages.

Handout C: Listening Self-Assessment

Check each listening statement that applies to you. What do you notice about your listening style?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Always | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |
| *Compare myself to others* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Listen only to established facts* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Think about what I want to say back**while others are speaking* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Interrupt to get my point across* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Get distracted or daydream* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Assume the other person knows exactly what I mean* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Tune out if I disagree or don’t like**the topic* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Can’t wait to jump in with advice* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Think what I say is ‘right’* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Don’t really pay attention to**gestures or facial expressions* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Make a joke or change the subject**if I am uncomfortable* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Use sarcasm when I disagree or**don’t like what is being said* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Agree to be nice even when I don’t**agree or understand* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Make judgments about what is being said or of the person* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Only really pay attention if I agree* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Change the facts or lie when challenged* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Think I know what the person means, particularly with people I am closest to* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Get impatient if I think the person is taking too long to make a point* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Pay closer attention if I agree with the speaker or like the topic* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Listen just enough to enter the**conversation and argue my point* |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Get loud or accuse others when I**am challenged* |  |  |  |  |  |
| TOTAL NUMBER OF CHECKS INEACH COLUMN |  |  |  |  |  |

Handout D: The Importance of Asking Questions – 20 Questions

Game

The Responder: The group member identified as the “Responder” thinks of a person, place or thing and writes it down on a piece of paper. The rest of the group will take turns guessing what it is. Example: “Is it a person?” Each responder plays for two rounds.

The Group: Group members raise their hands and take turns asking a question as directed below for that round.

Round One - *“*Yes/No” Questions: In this round, each group member asks only questions that could be answered by “yes” or “no.” Example: “Is this person a female?” This continues until someone makes a correct guess.

Round Two - “Clarification” Questions: The same Responder from the first round thinks of a new person, place or thing. This time, group members ask questions for clarification, avoiding yes/no questions. This type of question can have any answer and is often a longer answer. Example: “What do you like about this person?” Play until a correct guess is made.

Asking questions helps us gather more information in a conversation so we can respond appropriately. The following suggestions may help you improve your skill in asking such questions:

1. Ask questions to get more information with increased accuracy.

2. Ask one question at a time so you don’t overwhelm the person or sound like you are

grilling him or her. Listen to the answer, and then ask another question if necessary.

3. In tense situations, ask clarifying questions to help prevent the situation from escalating. Keep the questions simple, and listen attentively to the answers.

4. Avoid “either/or” questions. These questions suggest you are thinking for the person

and boxes him or her into one of the options you offered, neither of which may be the most accurate.

5. Use clarifying questions to obtain additional significant information. For example, “Can you tell me more about that?” Or, “Could you give me an example?” This type of question usually elicits more information than “either/or” and “yes/no” questions.

Handout E: Comparing Importance: Relationship vs. Topic

Box 1 Box 2

Box 3 Box 4

Whether a solution is found through a compromise or not, communication is still the key to maintaining relationships. When you become passionate about an issue, take a moment to evaluate your feelings and your response.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Am I sharing my feelings respectfully, listening attentively and remaining open?

2. Have I considered the possibility of not getting my way? Does the other person’s viewpoint

have value to the topic?

3. Could a solution lie in a combination of both viewpoints?

Try to keep these things in mind the next time you are in disagreement with someone.

Handout F: Saying What You Mean

At times, the person you’re talking to might be listening carefully, but you still might have difficulty getting your message across. This happens when the *facts* of our message get mixed up with *opinions*, *feeling*s and *requests* or when we leave out important parts of our message.

Consider this example: Randall discovers one of his tools is missing and knows that Jamil, his teenage son, borrowed it last weekend. Randall is aggravated and thinks this is typical irresponsible “Jamil” behavior. As Jamil walks by the shed, Randall says:

Randall: (Raising his voice and clenching raised fists) “Jamil, you are so irresponsible!”

Jamil: (Yelling back and storming off) “Gee Dad, what did I do wrong *now*?”

As a speaker, it can be helpful to think beforehand about what you want to communicate in your message. Try breaking up your communication into *facts, feelings, opinions and requests.* Using this example, a complete message with the different parts broken down would look like this:

Randall: “Jamil, one of my tools is missing (fact), and I’m frustrated (feeling) because you were the last one to use it. You probably didn’t mean for this to happen (opinion), but I would appreciate it (feeling) if you would be more careful with my things when you borrow them (request).”

Think of a situation in which you would like to communicate something important to someone.

What are the facts about this situation?

What are your feelings about this situation?

What are your opinions about this situation?

What is your request in this situation?

Based on your answers, write a complete communication statement that you might say to address this situation. *You may want to do this one as a large group.*:

Handout G: “I” Statements

The use of “I” statements can help us communicate more effectively. Specifically, they:

• Allow us to take responsibility for our comments.

• Identify our opinions as opinions rather than hiding them as facts.

• Tend to reduce blaming and arguing.

• Reduce judging of the other person.

• Keep the focus on solutions as opposed to problems.

• Can keep tempers from flaring.

• Are efficient.

Change the statements below into “I” statements. “I feel/think (feeling or thought)

when you (behavior or action).” Then identify the feeling being communicated.

1. You never tell me when you are upset. You just yell at me.

2. You always correct me in front of other people.

3. You make me mad when you don’t listen to me.

4. You don’t value my ideas about anything.

Handout H: Tips to Get Your Anger Under Control

Adapted from: [mayoclinic.com/health/anger-management/MH00102](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/anger-management/MH00102)

Take a timeout. Although it may seem silly, counting to 10 or going for a walk before reacting really can reduce your temper. This can be very useful before verbally responding.

Get some space. Take a break from the person you're angry with until your frustrations

subside a bit. Before taking a break, identify a time to return to the issue. This is also helpful in

sending electronic communications, such as emails or texts. Take some time before responding to be sure you have thought out exactly what you want to say.

Once you're calm, express your anger. It's healthy to express your frustration in a non- confrontational way rather than in an intimidating manner. Stewing about it can make the situation worse. Use relaxation or stress-management techniques to calm yourself down. Identify what you want to share and what you hope to accomplish. Then, talk.

Get some exercise. Physical activity can provide an outlet for your emotions, especially if you're about to erupt. Go for a brisk walk or a run, weed the garden, swim, lift weights or play a sport. Any physical activity can help use up the energy your anger brought on.

Think carefully before you say anything. Otherwise, you may say something you'll regret. It can be helpful to write down what you want to say so that you can stick to the issues. When you're angry, it's easy to get sidetracked.

Identify solutions to the situation. Instead of focusing on what made you angry, work with the person who angered you to resolve the issue at hand.

Use 'I' statements when describing the problem. This will help you avoid criticizing or placing blame, which can make the other person angry as well as increase tension. For instance, say, "I'm upset that I didn’t get any help with the housework this evening," instead of, "You should have helped with the housework."

Don't hold a grudge. If you can forgive the other person, it will help you both. It's unrealistic to expect everyone to behave exactly as you want.

Use humor to release tensions. Lightening up can help diffuse tension. Don't use sarcasm, though. It can hurt feelings and make things worse. Laugh at yourself, not the other person.

Practice relaxation skills. Learning skills to relax and de-stress can also help you control your temper when it may flare up. Practice deep-breathing exercises. Visualize a relaxing scene, or repeat a calming word or phrase to yourself, such as, "Take it easy." Other proven ways to ease anger include listening to music, writing in a journal or practicing yoga.

Pay attention to how you are communicating. Understand that words are a small part of communicating. How you use tone of voice and volume and how you position your body are an important part of communicating. Be sure your words and actions are consistent.

Handout I: Text Appeal

The following illustrates the advantages and disadvantages of using technology to communicate:

• Ease: For many, texting and instant messaging are quick, easy ways to send a message. It can also become tedious if it ends up being a long back-and-forth exchange.

• Connection: Social media can allow for easier connections with loved ones across the globe. However, some people may feel disconnected or even ignored without face-to- face visits or telephone calls.

• Communication Overload: There are many ways to communicate. One’s time can be consumed with receiving and sending messages on multiple devices and in a variety of formats. We can instantly give and receive information all day long, but always being connected can be both tiring and unhealthy.

• Convenience and Miscommunication: Although often more convenient, electronic

forms of communication increase the potential for misunderstanding. The missing tone of voice, real-time explanations, and other lost cues can lead to assumptions, judgments, and emotional responses.

• Nonverbal Communication: In using technology to communicate, nonverbal information is lost. It can be more challenging to interpret what someone is saying when tones of voice, facial expressions, and other body language cues are missing. The use of emojis, emoticons, different icons, and images can aid in getting feelings and subtleties

across. However, they do not always convey the intended message.

• Serious Discussions: Technology and social media options can be positive and helpful by allowing regular communication during deployments or across distances. At the same time, technology makes it easier to avoid unpleasant encounters and to substitute superficial texts for important in-depth conversations, which can cause relationships to suffer.

Handout J (Two pages): Things I Can Try to Maintain and Improve

Communication

Think about your preferred way of communicating and of receiving communication, and think about those around you and how they communicate. Do they match? If not, how can you communicate in ways that work for both of you? Use the chart on the next page to help.

• Journaling

• Blogging

• Vlogging

• Sending letters through the mail, such as cards, pen pal letters or “open when…”

letters that specify a time or event to open the letter.

• Exchanging care packages

• Using art to express yourself

• Emailing

• Sending text messages

• Sending instant or electronic messages

• Using voice messaging apps

• Using social media, including photos, messages and videos

• Making telephone calls

• Holding phone video calls

• Using computer virtual hangouts

• Chatting or holding virtual calls through gaming apps

• Having virtual movie nights via websites or apps that allow screen sharing or video calls to play a film at the same time

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| F-t-F | (Face to Face) | TXT (Text) | SMP (Social Media Platforms) |
| VID | (Video Chat) | EM (E-MAIL) |  |
| TEL | (Telephone) | OTH (OTHER) |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| PEOPLE | MEANSUSED MOST OF THE TIME | ADVANTAGES | DISADVANTAGES |
| SIGNIFICANT OTHER/SPOUSE |  |  |  |
| CHILDREN (YOURS OR OTHERS) |  |  |  |
| PARENTS OR OTHER PRIMARY CARETAKERS |  |  |  |
| SIBLINGS/OTHER CLOSE FAMILY IN YOUR GENERATION |  |  |  |
| GRAND PARENTS/ AUNTS/UNCLES, EXTENDED FAMILY |  |  |  |
| FRIENDS |  |  |  |
| PROFESSIONALS |  |  |  |

Handout K: Becoming Self-Aware through Mindfulness

Practicing exercises that encourage mindfulness helps you focus your mind on your internal and external experience, which can improve your self-awareness. Below are some things you can do to practice mindfulness every day.

1. Breathing exercises

2. Connecting with others and giving them your full attention when with them

3. Gratitude practice

4. Journaling

5. Meditation

6. Activities that de-stress, including exercise

7. Practicing giving loving, kind thoughts toward yourself and others

Here is an example of a mindful breathing exercise you can do any time you need to refocus on the present:

Get into a comfortable position. Place one hand over your belly and the other over your heart. Now, start by exhaling all of your air out while drawing your belly in toward your spine. Now, inhale as you fill your belly with air, like inflating a balloon. Hold for a couple of seconds, and then slowly exhale again. Repeat this a few times on your own. As you do this, try to direct your thoughts to the breath and to your expanding and contracting belly. As thoughts make their way in, notice them and then bring your awareness back to your breathing.

Handout L: Gratitude Practice

Practicing gratitude encourages your body to release hormones that allow positive feelings and thoughts. The results can be an awareness of joy, peace, happiness and increased self- acceptance, which in turn increases your ability to respond to others more positively.

We have no control over that which life throws our way, but we do have control over how we choose to respond. It is important to spend time connecting with ourselves. The body responds to self-love and compassion. If we are open to self-appreciation, then gratitude can be expressed toward others and toward ourselves.

Practice gratitude every day by:

• Thinking of one thing in your life that makes you smile.

• Thinking of one thing about yourself that you appreciate.

You can keep track of them in a gratitude journal, on post-it notes or just by thinking of them in the morning or before bed.