

COMMUNICATION

Lesson 8

Workbook Assignment

Let's Talk
Listening

Overview

This lesson is a continuation of Lesson 7. The students will discuss the role of body language in communication and will work in groups to practice basic communication skills. The skills presented will include learning to more effectively send messages and improve listening abilities.

Objectives

- ◆ Students will be introduced to the basic principles of verbal and nonverbal communication.
 - ◆ Students will be able to describe ways in which feelings, needs, and information are communicated.
 - ◆ Students will demonstrate their understanding of how to effectively receive messages by practicing paraphrasing.
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Vocabulary

body language	cues
verbal	nonverbal

Key Concepts

- Sending and receiving messages more clearly are skills that can be developed with practice.
 - Verbal and nonverbal communication work together to create meaning.
 - Body language includes movement and posture, touch, our use of personal space and territory, eye contact, body type and facial expression.
 - Misunderstanding between individuals may be a result of miscommunication and/or vague communication.
 - Guidelines for listening are: be attentive to the speaker, make eye contact, let the speaker finish his/her statements before you answer, be sensitive to feelings the speaker may be expressing verbally or nonverbally, avoid being judgmental, you don't have to agree with the other person in order to listen to them.
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Preparation for Lesson

The teacher will need:

- Five 3x16 tagboard strips with one of the following labels written on each strip: Listen to Me, Tell Me I'm Wrong, Ignore Me, Make Fun of What I Say, Respect Me
 - Overhead transparency **Guidelines for Listening**
 - Worksheets *Let's Talk* and *Listening*
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Teaching the Lesson

Select five volunteers to come to the front of the classroom to demonstrate a group conversation. Without letting the participants see what is written on the tagboard strips, place one of the strips on the head of each of the five students. They will be able to read each other's label, but should not be told what is on their own label. Ask the five students to choose a topic they would like to discuss, and allow them a few minutes to prepare their ideas. When they are ready, have the volunteers begin a brief discussion. They are to respond to each other based on the labels each one is wearing. Allow the discussion to continue for about 4-5 minutes before ending it. Let the participants remove their labels and read them.

- Ask the students who were part of the audience what patterns of communication they began to observe developing between the participants. Have the five volunteers describe how they felt when the group members responded to their statements. Those who had positive responses will have different feedback from those who had negative ones.
- Through brainstorming, ask the students to identify any body language cues they have just observed during the discussion. Have them suggest ways to tell if someone is happy, sad, bored, angry, etc. Using workbook page *Let's Talk*, allow a few minutes to fill in the blanks on the upper part of the page.
- To complete the assignment, divide the students into groups of two and follow the directions for telling a story at the bottom of the page. This part of the assignment should take approximately ten (10) minutes to complete.

- The second part of the communication exercise is found on the following page entitled *Listening*. Ask the students to think of behavior techniques they typically use when they don't feel like listening to someone, for instance, a parent, teacher, classmate, or boy/girlfriend. Point out that communication is both *sending as well as receiving* messages. The purpose of communication is to determine meaning, so we tune in to both the verbal as well as the nonverbal information coming to us.
- Focus students' attention on the feelings that are generated when we know someone isn't really listening to what we are saying. These feelings are usually negative and can last a long time. Ask the students to complete the first part of the lesson on this page.
- Point out that being a good listener takes practice and is a skill that can be improved. Assign the Listening Exercise at the bottom of page 29, again dividing the students into groups of two.
- Allow time at the end of the exercise for discussion questions and use of the **Guidelines for Listening** transparency.

LECTURE NOTES:

CONCEPT: This activity helps to demonstrate how Eric Berne believes we form our life scripts. According to Eric Berne we can have one of four possible life scripts:

1. I'm O.K., You're O.K.
2. I'm O.K., You're Not O.K.
3. I'm Not O.K., You're O.K.
4. I'm Not O.K., You're Not O.K.

SENDING MESSAGES

In their book Family Talk - Interpersonal Communication in the Family, Beebe and Masterson offer guidelines for understanding communication within the family unit. Because the family patterns are relatively stable over time, these same patterns will carry over into other relationships as well. In Chapter 7 the *climate* of the family was introduced, but in Chapter 8, the focus is directed toward practicing communication skills.

Communication with others involves self-disclosure, the process by which we reveal ourselves and our inner world to another person. Self-disclosure is a choice that we make and involves risks, but we cannot hope for others to know us fully if we are not willing or able to tell them who we are. Communication is most comfortable when individuals within a family or relationship self-disclose at the same level. Acquiring a better understanding of both verbal and nonverbal communication patterns may help individuals understand each other better.

Verbal communication is both what we say and the way we say it. In addition to tone of voice and style of communication which help establish the climate of communication within the family, it can also be useful to look at what family members talk about. Varying patterns of communication have been identified and families will use any combination of them. It has been suggested that all communication has both a *content aspect* (the substance of the communication) and a *relational aspect* (information about the quality of the interpersonal relationship). Four different communication types have been designated: (1) Topic messages - focus on things, events, ideas, places, or people, (2) Self-messages - focus on personal experiences, thoughts or feelings, (3) Partner-messages - focus on your partners experiences, thoughts, actions or feelings, (4) Relationship-messages - focus on comments that deal with personal involvement with others.

In order to improve the verbal communication climate we live in, it is recommended that we focus attention on the importance of making statements that build the self-worth of those around us. When these types of comments are used, individuals begin to value themselves more. Five examples of confirming comments are: (a) *direct acknowledgment* of the thoughts, actions, or feelings of another person, (b) *expressing positive feelings* by offering encouragement, support or genuine praise to the other person, (c) *clarifying responses* is a way of asking questions or gaining additional information based on another's statements, being able to (d) *empathize* with the feelings being expressed by someone else, and (e) *agreeing response* allows the other person to feel validated in their statements.

Nonverbal communication is behavior that does not rely on written or spoken language to create meaning between individuals. It is also known as body language. The listener can derive meaning from another person's physical appearance, surroundings, posture, movement, eye contact, and/or facial expression. When others are communicating with us, it is thought that more than half of the information being received comes from nonverbal cues. Our first impression of someone may be based on their nonverbal communication. Beebe and Masterson offer the following statements:

1. Nonverbal messages have a major impact upon how we interpret the behavior of other family members.
2. Nonverbal cues are the primary way we communicate feelings, attitudes, and emotions toward others.

3. Nonverbal messages are more believable than verbal messages.

Verbal and nonverbal communication work together to produce meaning for the listener. However, nonverbal cues are more reliable because they are difficult to mask. With practice, it is possible to improve our skills for reading nonverbal cues.

RECEIVING MESSAGES

Most of our communication time is spent listening. Listening involves more than just hearing. It involves four distinct processes: *selecting* what we want to hear from all the sounds that surround us, *attending to* or focusing on specific information coming our way, *understanding* what we hear by relating it to something we know, and *remembering* what has been said.

Some of the things that keep us from being a good listener are: *information overload* when there is too much information coming in at one time or the listener is fatigued over time, *becoming wrapped up in personal concerns* allows our own thoughts and feelings to take priority over those of someone else, *outside distractions* from additional sources or activities going on at the same time someone is trying to talk with us, and *deciding that a topic is not interesting* will greatly reduce our willingness to listen effectively.

Becoming a better listener takes time, but with practice, an individual can improve his/her listening skills. Some suggestions might include:

1. Try to understand why you are listening to a particular set of information (for enjoyment, to learn something new, to evaluate the information, etc.).
2. Try not to be distracted by an emotion-arousing word or phrase. Someone else's meaning for a word or phrase may not match your own.
3. Adapt to the speaking situation. Try to choose an appropriate time for the topic to be discussed. Be sensitive to factors in the environment that might contribute to reduced listening ability (heat, fatigue, noise, etc.).
4. Practice your listening skills.
5. Listen to the whole person - both the verbal and the nonverbal communication. How something is said has more impact than what is said.

LET'S TALK

Learning how to communicate effectively takes practice. Along with the words we say, people also “read” our attitudes, expressions and body language. Some people are better at reading these signals than others, but with help, we can improve our skills. Think of some common **body language** cues that people use which alert you to the true meaning of their conversation. Make a list of these cues and then share them with the rest of the class. The following exercise is designed to give you the opportunity to use your communication skills with a classmate.

COMMON BODY LANGUAGE CUES

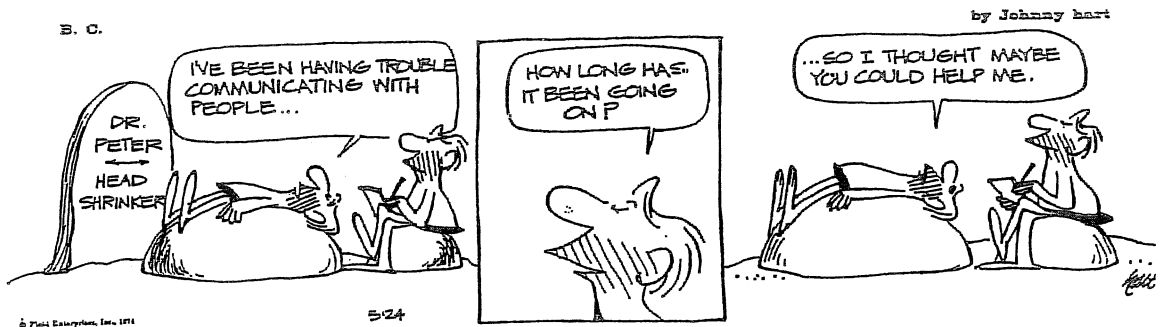
- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

TELL A STORY

Choose a classmate to work with for the next two parts of this exercise. Take turns telling each other a story from your past. The story you share should be one that you are comfortable telling. Choose an event (birthday, vacation, etc.) that is a pleasant or funny memory. You will be observing each other for body language cues. Write down the different ways your classmate's **nonverbal communication** matches the story he or she is telling. Show each other the list when you are finished.

Story Notes: (Use this space to record information about the story being told to you.)

LISTENING



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Being a good listener is not easy. There are many reasons why we simply “tune out” when another person is talking: we are bored, in a hurry, preoccupied, distracted, etc. It is embarrassing when others ask us a question and we have to admit that we weren’t really listening! In relationships, being a good listener is as important as being a good communicator in promoting better understanding between the members.

You’re Not Listening!

List some of the ways that you can tell when someone is not listening to what you are saying. Notice that these behaviors may be verbal or nonverbal.

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

How does it *feel* when others fail to listen to you? _____

What message are *you* sending when you fail to listen to others? _____

Listening Exercise:

Choose a classmate to work with and tell each other a story. This time, briefly tell about a disappointment that you have experienced. The event should be one that you are comfortable sharing with someone else. **Do not take notes.** Instead, after your classmate has finished, **tell the story back to him/her.**

Discussion:

How well did both of you do? Were there parts of the stories left out? Why is it difficult to listen accurately? What could be done differently to be a better listener?