

Short and Snappy – Effective Communication



Objective

To provide insight and tips for achieving effective communication.

Length

20 minutes

Materials Needed

Depending on the activity you choose:

- Pencils and paper;
- Small/skinny pretzel sticks (enough for everyone to have at least 10-15) and paper towels; or
- Large-type printouts of the quotes listen in the activities section.

Information to Share (spend 5-10 minutes on this section)

Definition of communication: “The act of imparting information for the purpose of invoking understanding”

2 parts: Sending and Receiving

1. “Conveying your messages to other people clearly and unambiguously.”
2. “Receiving information that others are sending to you, with as little distortion as possible.”

Types of communication: (Ask participants to come up with types before giving the answer.)

1. Verbal Communication – the words you use
2. Paraverbal Communication – how you say it
3. Nonverbal Communication – body language
4. Listening

Barriers to communication: (Ask participants to come up with examples for each type of barrier.)

1. Physiological barriers
2. Environmental barriers
3. Attitude/false assumptions
4. Sociocultural differences
5. Lack of training

Tips for communicating effectively:

1. Listen with a purpose (to gain information, to get direction, to solve a problem, to show support, etc.)
2. Practice active listening (use body language, such as a smile, eye contact, and good posture)
3. Give feedback to get clarification (what someone says is not necessarily what someone hears...ask for clarity) “What I am understanding you say is _____. Is that correct?”
 - a. Do this until you both agree on the same message.

Activity (spend 10-15 minutes on this section)

Choose 1 or 2 of the following activities depending on time available:

- Reflecting on Listening

- Using pencil and paper, write down the answers to the following questions:
 - Who are the people it is easiest for you to listen to?
 - What is it that makes it easier to listen to them?
 - Who are the people you listen to the least?
 - What is it about them that makes it difficult to listen to them?

- Pretzel activity

- Participants get into pairs and sit back to back. Place a paper towel down flat in front of each person. Give each person 10-15 pretzels.
- The pair decides who will be the sender and who will be the receiver.
- The sender will go first and make a design/shape on their paper towel with the pretzels.
- They will then explain their design/shape one pretzel stick at a time. Example: "I placed my first pretzel stick vertical in the middle of the towel."
- The receiver of the information cannot ask any questions to clarify the instructions they are receiving.
- Once the activity is completed, look and see how well they match.
- Now it is time to switch roles. The receiver now becomes the communicator, but this time the receiver CAN clarify and ask questions.
- Reflection Questions:
 - What was it like to follow directions and not be able to ask questions?
 - Did you find yourself getting frustrated?
 - What was it like when you were able to ask questions?
 - Why was this easier?
 - Which is better one-way, or two-way communication? Why?

- Stand by your quote (communication quotes)

- Place the quotes written below on the walls--leave plenty of room between the quotes and make certain the print is large.
- Ask the participants to leave their chairs and walk around the room reading each of the quotes (there is no particular order). Then have them stand by one quote that resonates well with their personal views on communication.
- When all participants have selected a quote (you can have more than one person by a quote), have each explain to the group why his or her chosen quote is important to them--share their insight.
- The facilitator can write key ideas or words on the white board. These can launch further discussion questions.
 - "The single biggest problem in communication is that illusion that it has taken place." George Bernard Shaw
 - "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." Tony Robbins
 - "The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said." – Peter Drucker
 - "The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug." Mark Twain
 - "The less people know, the more they yell." Seth Godin
 - "The way we communicate with others and with ourselves ultimately determines the quality of our lives." Tony Robbins
 - "Communication is the real work of leadership." Nitin Nohria
 - "The two words 'information' and 'communication' are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things. Information is giving out; communication is getting through." Sydney J. Harris
 - "I speak to everyone in the same way, whether he is the garbage man or the president of the university." Albert Einstein
 - "Communication is 20% what you know and 80% how you feel about what you know." Jim Rohn