



The Art of Communication

Communication is the process by which people exchange information or share ideas. There are three types of communication: speaking, listening and non-verbal communication.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION: *Your actions speak louder than words.*

A University of Pennsylvania study reported that the majority of communication is transmitted non-verbally. 70% of communication is body language, 23% is voice tone and inflection, and only 7% is your spoken words! The goal is to have your non-verbal message match your verbal message.

1. Tips for Body Language:

- Mirror the other person's body language to convey understanding.
- Respect personal space.
Most people need a "Bubble Area" which is equal to about 3 feet or arm's length away from another person. The goal is to be close enough to be attentive but be far enough for comfort.
- To create a positive message, think SOLER.
S – Smile
O – Openness
L – Lean Forward
E – Eye contact
R – Relax

2. Voice Tone and Inflection:

Vocal sighs, groans, coughs, tone of voice, volume, intensity, speech patterns (slow or fast), and emphasis on words can affect how you communicate your message or how your message is received by others.

More Tips to Consider:

- Feelings are communicated nonverbally. It is *impossible* NOT to send a non-verbal message.
- Non-verbal communication can leave your message open to interpretation – i.e. it may reinforce or contradict your spoken message.
- Non-verbal communication can send a double message and can distract from the other person understanding what you are trying to communicate.
- Use the other person's non-verbal communication as a tool to ask more questions. When you ask questions, you can often find the true meaning of the communication.

Aurora Employee Assistance Program



SPEAKING: *Be aware that the words you chose will be heard and interpreted.*

When you speak:

- Be honest and specific.
Requests for a change of behavior should be direct, honest and to the point. Examples: "I prefer..., I want..., I like..., I do not want..., I would appreciate..., Please...."
- Be sensitive to the other person's reactions and their non-verbal communication.
- Use a positive, moderate tone of voice.
- Match your facial expression to your message.
- Use "I" statements versus "you" statements.
"You" messages send criticism, complaint, threat or put-downs.
"I" messages describe another's behavior, the effect that action has on you, the feelings you have about the action, and what the person can do to continue to modify the behavior.

LISTENING: *Receiving the message*

We can listen at about twice the speed the average person talks. That means we can speak at a rate of 125 to 150 words per minute, but we can hear, process, and analyze at a rate of 400 to 800 words per minute.

The extra time between what you say and what is heard can be used positively or negatively in the communication process.

Positive Uses:

- Actively focus attention on speaker and avoid distractions.
- Think about questions you can ask to get clarification.
- Be aware of the non-verbal communication and consider it's meaning.
- Think about how the speaker may feel.
- Take notes, if appropriate.

Negative Uses:

- Making assumptions.
- Being defensive.
- Daydreaming/Being distracted/Acting impatient.
- Interrupting.
- Looking away.
- Doing another activity while listening.