INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Main Theme: This chapter deals with communication styles (both verbal and nonverbal) between two people, and techniques used. It also provides guidelines for developing a more effective communication style.

THE PROCESS OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION:

Communication: defined as the process of sending and receiving information that has meaning.

Interpersonal Communication: the face to face transmission of meaningful messages between two or more people. To qualify as interpersonal the following must apply:
  a. at least two people must be involved
  b. this is a process (composed of a series of actions)
  c. the process is interactional (both send & receive info)

Components of the Communication Process: David Berlo's four basic components.
  1. the SOURCE of the message
  2. the MESSAGE itself
  3. the CHANNEL
  4. the RECEIVER

Importance of Communication: good communication can enhance satisfaction in relationships, while poor communication can hinder and harm them.
NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

The transmission of meaning from one person to another through means or symbols other than words. This takes form in a number of ways: a. interpersonal distance
   b. facial expression
c. eye contact
d. body posture
e. movement, gestures, physical touch
f. tone of voice

General Principles of Nonverbal Communication:
1. multichanneled
2. frequently conveys emotions
3. relatively spontaneous
4. may contradict verbal messages
5. relatively ambiguous
6. very culture-bound

Personal Space:

Proxemics - the study of people's use of interpersonal space.

Personal Space - a zone of space surrounding a person that is felt to "belong" to that person.

Anthropologist Edward Hall described four interpersonal distance zones accepted in American culture:

1. Public distance (12 ft. and beyond)
2. Social distance (4 - 12 ft.)
3. Personal distance (18 inches - 4 ft.)
4. Intimate distance (0 - 18 inches)

Facial Expression:

Conveys emotions. Six primary emotions that have distinctive facial expressions are:

1. anger
2. disgust
3. fear
4. happiness
5. sadness
6. surprise

These are universal, although there may be cultural differences in how these emotions may be displayed.

Eye Contact:

Also called mutual gaze. It is the duration of eye contact between people that is most meaningful. The degree of eye contact that takes place might be interpreted differently by different cultural groups.
**Body Language:**
*Kinesics* - the study of communication through body movements.
Gives information about the level of tension or relaxation that a person feels.
Body posture can also indicate a person's attitude towards you and can also convey status differences.

**Hand Gestures:**
- *Referencing gesture*: used to refer to an object or person who is the topic of conversation.
- *Gesture of emphasis*: used to stress a point being made verbally.
- *Demonstrative gesture*: mimic what is being said

**Touch:**
Touch can convey intimacy and can also convey messages of status and power as well.
When unwelcomed, as in sexual harassment, the above does not apply.

**Paralanguage:**
Refers to how something is said rather than what is said. Includes all vocal cues other than the content of the message itself.

**Detecting Deception:**
The spontaneous nature of nonverbal communication usually makes it a better indicator of a person's true feelings or level of honesty.
Cues associated with dishonesty:  
*Vocal*: -hesitations & stammering
- speaking with a higher pitch
- shorter answers
*Visual*: - excessive blinking
- pupil dilation
- touching self more than normal
Involves sending and receiving messages through written or spoken words.

**General Principles of Verbal Communication:**
1. speaking & listening are essential components
2. we’re often careless & sloppy speakers
3. we’re often inattentive & preoccupied listeners

**Self-Disclosure: The Key to Intimacy**
The voluntary act of verbally communicating private information about yourself to another person. Intimacy is the degree to which we are open and honest with people. Disclosure is characterized by *breath* (variety of topics discussed) and *depth* (degree to which we disclose personal information).

**Why Do We Engage In Self-Disclosure?**
1. helps us clarify thoughts & feelings
2. helps us to express our feelings
3. aids in social comparison and understanding
4. is crucial in developing interpersonal relationships

**Inappropriate Self-Disclosure:**
1. divulging personal information to almost anyone, regardless of the nature of your relationship
2. sharing private information with the wrong person

**Who Reveals What To Whom & Under What Circumstances?**

**Who:**
- females tend to be more openly self-disclosing than males
- females talk more often about negative feelings while males more often disclose feelings that are positive or neutral in tone
- males & females more likely to share personal information with females than with males
- men disclose more than women if the person is a stranger or are in the beginning of another sex relationship

**What:**
- quicker to give biographical info.
- socially desirable info.

**When:**
- *Social Penetration Theory:* focuses on how relationships develop and sometimes dissolve. Gradual changes in breath and depth of self-disclosures take place as relationships develop. Two exceptions:
  - "stranger on the train phenomenon"
  - "boom-and-bust encounters"

**To Whom:**
We tend to disclose more to people we like and to people we know relatively well. Also most common when people are of similar status.

**Under What Conditions:**
We disclose more when people reciprocate by making disclosures to us. Once relationship develops, the need for reciprocity seems to taper off.
MALADAPTIVE COMMUNICATION & INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT

Barriers to Effective Communication:

1. **Defensiveness** - an excessive concern with protecting oneself from being hurt or when we feel threatened.
2. **Aggressive Communication** - includes dominating, threatening, ridiculing, and blaming others.
3. **Submissive Communication** - habitually giving in to others or being unable to say no.
4. **Motivational Distortion** - we hear what we want to hear instead of what is actually being said (selective attention).
5. **Self-Preoccupation** - someone who is self-focused, who seems to talk just to hear themselves talk, & rarely listens attentively.
6. **Game Playing** - manipulative interactions that progress towards a predictable outcome, in which people conceal their real motivations.
7. **Collusion** - requires that two people be involved. There is an unspoken agreement to mutually deny some problematic aspect of reality in order to sustain their relationship.

Miscommunication & Date Rape:

Poor communication usually the key factor in date rape.

**Types of Rape:**

- **Acquaintance rape:** when a woman is forced to have unwanted intercourse with someone she knows.
- **Date rape:** forced and unwanted intercourse with someone in the context of dating.
  - **Seduction:** when a woman is persuaded and agrees to have sex.
- **Date rape:** often follows an attempt at seduction that has failed.

**Consequences of rape:**

- Trauma
- Denial
- Resolution

**Factors that contribute to date rape:**

- **Double standard:** men are encouraged to have sexual feelings and to act on them, while women are made to feel that sexual activity is never justified.
- **Changing sexual values:** more people engaging in sexual relations in the context of dating.
- Alcohol and drugs
- Sexual violence in the media

**Reducing Incidences of Date Rape:**

- Need to communicate more openly and honestly about what the sexual expectations of dating partners are without feeling embarrassed.
- Know the warning signs associated with pre-date activity.
- Be prepared to defend yourself if need be.
TOWARD MORE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Creating a Positive Interpersonal Climate:
- Learn to feel and communicate empathy
- Practice withholding judgment
- Strive for honesty
- Approach others as equals
- Express your opinions tentatively

Guidelines for Effective Speaking:
- Consider the frame of reference of your listener or listeners
- Use an assertive communication style
- Be specific and concrete
- Avoid loaded words (those that trigger negative responses)
- Make your verbal and nonverbal messages congruent

Guidelines for Effective Listening:
- Attend physically to the speaker
- Actively attend to and process the verbal message
- Pay attention to nonverbal signals
- Check your understanding of the message

Dealing Constructively with Conflict:
Advantages of openly dealing with conflict:
- brings problems out into the open where they can be solved
- put an end to chronic sources of discontent in a relationship
- lead to new insights through the clashing of divergent views

Personal styles of dealing with conflict:
1. Avoidance
2. Accommodation
3. Domination
4. Compromise
5. Integration - involves a sincere effort to find a solution that will maximize the satisfaction of both parties

Guidelines for Constructive Conflict Resolution:
1. acknowledge the existence of a conflict and the legitimacy of the other person’s needs and goals
2. define conflict as a mutual problem to be solved cooperatively
3. choose a mutually acceptable time to sit down and work on resolving the conflict
4. show respect for (try to empathize with) the other person’s position
5. make communication honest and open
6. keep your statements to specific incidences or behaviors instead of using “always” or “never” statements
7. approach the conflict as equals
8. strive to consistently clarify your position(s)
9. communicate your flexibility and willingness to modify your position
10. emphasize the similarities in your position(s) rather than the differences
Four Principles of Interpersonal Communication

These principles underlie the workings in real life of interpersonal communication. They are basic to communication. We can't ignore them.

**Interpersonal communication is inescapable**

We can't not communicate. The very attempt not to communicate communicates something. Through not only words, but through tone of voice and through gesture, posture, facial expression, etc., we constantly communicate to those around us. Through these channels, we constantly receive communication from others. Even when you sleep, you communicate. Remember a basic principle of communication in general: people are not mind readers. Another way to put this is: people judge you by your behavior, not your intent.

**Interpersonal communication is irreversible**

You can't really take back something once it has been said. The effect must inevitably remain. Despite the instructions from a judge to a jury to "disregard that last statement the witness made," the lawyer knows that it can't help but make an impression on the jury. A Russian proverb says, "Once a word goes out of your mouth, you can never swallow it again."

**Interpersonal communication is complicated**

No form of communication is simple. Because of the number of variables involved, even simple requests are extremely complex. Theorists note that whenever we communicate there are really at least six "people" involved: 1) who you think you are; 2) who you think the other person is; 3) who you think the other person thinks you are; 4) who the other person thinks you are; 5) who the other person thinks you think s/he is.

We don't actually swap ideas, we swap symbols that stand for ideas. This also complicates communication. Words (symbols) do not have inherent meaning; we simply use them in certain ways, and no two people use the same word exactly alike.

Osmo Wiio gives us some communication maxims similar to Murphy's law (Osmo Wiio, *Wiio's Laws--and Some Others* (Espoo, Finland: Welin-Goos, 1978):

- If communication can fail, it will.
- If a message can be understood in different ways, it will be understood in just that way which does the most harm.
- There is always somebody who knows better than you what you meant by your message.
- The more communication there is, the more difficult it is for communication to succeed.

These tongue-in-cheek maxims are not real principles; they simply humorously remind us of the difficulty of accurate communication.

**Interpersonal communication is contextual**

In other words, communication does not happen in isolation. There is:

- *Psychological context*, which is who you are and what you bring to the interaction. Your needs, desires, values, personality, etc., all form the psychological context. ("You" here refers to both participants in the interaction.)
- *Relational context*, which concerns your reactions to the other person--the "mix."
- *Situational context* deals with the psycho-social "where" you are communicating. An interaction that takes place in a classroom will be very different from one that takes place in a bar.
- *Environmental context* deals with the physical "where" you are communicating. Furniture,
location, noise level, temperature, season, time of day, all are examples of factors in the
environmental context.

- Cultural context includes all the learned behaviors and rules that affect the interaction. If you
come from a culture (foreign or within your own country) where it is considered rude to make
long, direct eye contact, you will out of politeness avoid eye contact. If the other person comes
from a culture where long, direct eye contact signals trustworthiness, then we have in the cultural
context a basis for misunderstanding.
Skills Related to Effective Interpersonal Communication

By Rick Van Acker

To the fullest extent possible, the task of the teacher is to provide the student with a level of support and guidance that will allow the student to solve the social problem (crisis) with a minimum of loss of control and/or dignity. This is not an easy task and, clearly, it is one for which few teachers have been provided direction or support. A number of interpersonal communication skills are needed to assist teachers as they attempt to interact with students in a crisis.

Non-verbal communication

The literature suggests that the majority (as much as 76%) of the message we give to another person during conversations is carried by non-verbal or para-verbal communication. Thus, we must be very careful and strategic in our use of non-verbal communication. The tone, volume, rhythm or cadence of our voice is critical. Blending and pacing are also important aspects of this skill.

Verbal messages

Teachers' messages must convey empathy (the ability to communicate care and concern along with an understanding of the child's problem; that is, the ability to place oneself in a position to view the problem from the student's perspective) and genuineness (being honest, yet caring in discussions with the child). One of the most important skills a teacher can display when attempting to verbally de-escalate a potential crisis situation is the ability to listen actively. This requires the teacher to listen to what the child is saying, as well as what the child is not saying. Attention to the child's non-verbal behavior also is important.

The feedback loop

This strategy allows the teacher to provide important information related to the student's behavior and the honest impact this behavior has had on you. Often students are unaware of their behavior and they seldom realize the full impact of their behavior on others. In this intervention you describe the nature of the behavior that you observed (specific detail). You then indicate the way that behavior honestly impacted you. Then you ask if that was the intention of the behavior. This intervention calls upon the relationship you have developed with the student. Often students will not respond favorably, but will later reflect on the interaction. You may couple this feedback with the delivery of another consequence. Be sure to deploy this feedback loop to desired behavior as well as undesired behavior.

"I" statements.

A teacher should avoid messages that blame others or put students on the defensive. "I" statements allow the teacher to disclose their own feelings, attitudes, and desires related to the student's observable behavior. The importance is to communicate how you feel. For example, "Juan, I'm feeling very uncomfortable with this discussion."

Acknowledgments

The teacher can acknowledge that you heard and understand the student's point of view without the need to evaluate and/or agree with it—simply indicate that you received the message.

Summary statements or paraphrasing

Often you can help the student understand that you are listening by providing short summaries of what you have heard him/her say. This also allows the student to correct any misunderstandings that may arise.
Silence

The ability to use silence effectively is often helpful. You need not fill every "empty" moment with words. At times, silence is your ally. It allows students to reflect and their discomfort with silence may result in their willingness to share critical information.

Questions

Often students entering a crisis situation are unable to think and/or communicate clearly. Questions allow you to help clarify a given situation for both the child and yourself. Use questions to help the student focus and structure the conversation. Open-ended questions are more useful than those that can be answered with a "yes" or "no." Questions should be aimed at gaining additional information and upon the feelings generated.

"How do you feel when . . .?"
"You sound angry. Did . . . embarrass you?"

Mild confrontation

Responding to discrepancies in what has been said or to discrepancies between the messages provided verbally and those provided non-verbally.

"Marion, you say that you’re not angry, yet your yelling and your fists are clenched. Can you help me understand this?"

Differences of opinion

Often more ground can be covered during a confrontation if you offer a statement acknowledging a difference of opinion, without attempting to resolve it. Attempt to stay with issues that are resolvable and/or which you both agree. Indicate acceptance of those portions of the "argument" that are agreeable and indicate that you may have to "agree to disagree" on other issues.

"It’s okay if you don’t agree. . . . but I’m glad we agree upon . . . ."

"I have a problem . . . ." technique.

An effective approach in some conflictual situations is to approach the student with the opportunity to help you with a problem. This is especially effective if you have a meaningful therapeutic relationship developed with the student.

"I need your help, see we don’t seem to be hearing each other . . . . Could you help me with this?"

Self-disclosure

Often sharing a relevant story of your own experiences in similar situations can prove helpful in opening meaningful dialog. This needs to be employed carefully and sparingly.

Additive empathy

Statements that allow the student to connect what they say with what you think they mean or what they say with how they seem to feel can help students recognize their own feelings and emotions and to explore possible options.

"You say you are mad, but as I listen to your voice and watch how you look down, I wonder if maybe you’re not also a little sad?"
INTERPERSONAL SKILLS
Heres why...  

Interpersonal Skills is a talent that requires get along with others. The ability to...
Effective communication can prevent misunderstanding. Here are some tips for getting along with others:

1. **Listening**
   - Pay attention to what is being said.
   - Avoid distractions.

2. **Paraphrasing**
   - Repeat what you heard to show you understand.
   - Ask for clarification if needed.

3. **Summarizing**
   - Repeat in your own words.
   - Check if the speaker agrees.

4. **Questions**
   - Ask questions to clarify.
   - Encourage feedback.

5. **Active Listening**
   - Stay engaged.
   - Show you are listening.

6. **Non-Verbal Communication**
   - Use appropriate facial expressions.
   - Maintain eye contact.

7. **Feedback**
   - Provide constructive feedback.
   - Be open to feedback.

Remember, clear and concise communication helps prevent misunderstandings.
Be tactful by saying "I disagree."

Positive feedback:
- Expressing what you feel
- Expressing your own feelings
- Acknowledging the other person
- Honesty and directness while still expressing your feelings
- This means expressing your feelings

Negative feedback:
- Showing respect for the other person
- Acknowledging the other person's role
- Acknowledging the other person's feelings
- Acknowledging the other person's feedback

This is often called providing "feedback."
Learn to read emotions and body language.

Know your strengths and weaknesses.

Practice positive ways of dealing with stress.

Avoid eye contact. Look away or down, quiet voice.

Learn to read the emotional messages your partner gives you: slow down, take deep breaths to calm yourself. Then think about what you're going to say.

After you've recognized your emotions, try to express them. Are they right for you? After all, it's the right to feel whatever you feel.

Be aware of your nonverbal communication and how it reflects your mood. Is your body language speaking more loudly than your words? Are you sending mixed signals?

Here are some other ways to...
Learn how to handle problems and conflicts

Some disagreements are bound to arise whenever people work together. Conflict may make you feel bad, but it has some benefits:

- People get to understand themselves and others better.
- Better decisions are more likely to be made.
- Working to resolve disagreements can be interesting and stimulating.

Here are some positive approaches to handling conflict:

1. **Address the Issue**
   - Be specific - don't bring up other conflicts or past hostilities. Confront the issue - not the person.
   - Describe your feelings and your views objectively, while defining the problem and analyzing how it developed.

2. **Generate Possible Solutions**
   - Sit down together and try to list as many possible solutions as you can.
   - Don't be afraid to include some silly ones, they break the tension. The more ideas you come up with, the more you'll have to choose from and the better the choice you'll be able to make.

3. **Discuss the Options**
   - Try to find one that meets each person's needs, goals and views given the time and resources available.

4. **Discuss the Compromise**
   - It will involve some compromise for all parties. But notice that compromise doesn't mean you lose.

5. **Make a Plan**
   - Make a plan for using your solution, and follow up to see how it's working.
   - Establish short-range goals to help check your progress.
Your goal goal

is to get the

idea across

group.

You need to be

effective

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Your speech.

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Share your ideas.

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