

MODULE #3: Communications Skills

Objectives

- Participants will improve their communication skills through reinforcement of reading, listening and speaking skills.
- Participants will recognize nonverbal behaviors.
- Participants will learn how to express one's thoughts and feelings through the use of "I-Statements."
- Participants will learn that they can be in control of their lives by engaging in assertive behavior.
- Participants will become comfortable with the Internet and information technology.

Context



Strong communication skills are the most important quality of a leader. If a leader cannot communicate with his/her followers, how can he/she be an effective leader? Communication is the major means used to accomplish a task. Fortunately, we all have been practicing the skill of communication since the day we were born.

We have learned how to talk, how to listen, how to read, and how to write. Leaders have polished these skills through constant practice. Furthermore, today we have a new way of communicating -telecommunicating. This includes everything from phone calls, email, the Internet, faxes, and video conferencing. Being familiar with this type of information technology is essential for a leader of the 21st Century.

Handouts & Resources Needed:

Handout 3.2: Teaching Interdependence

Handout 3.3: Directions for Internet Scavenger Hunt

Handout 3.4A: Definition of I-Statements

Handout 3.4B: Choosing Your Words Carefully

Handout 3.5: Aggressive, Assertive or Passive?

Pens/pencils

Sheet of paper – one for each participant

Journals – one per students

Dictionary

Blindfolds (for the blind people)

String to loosely tie around legs and arms to mark the disability

Earplugs or Headphones (for the deaf people)

Scarves (to put over mouths of people)

Activity #1: Defining Communication (20 min)

Procedure:

- Icebreaker
- Provide Webster's New World Dictionary, "Second College Edition's Definition of communication: The act of transmitting: giving or exchanging of information, signals, or messages by talk, gestures, writing, etc."
- Then, brainstorm with participants on the different forms of communication (ex: writing). Take notes on the flit-chart.
- Debriefing

Activity # 2: Teaching Interdependence (55 min)

Procedure:

- Icebreaker
- The purpose of this activity is to show participants the importance of understanding, respecting and accepting others as they are.
- When assigning disabilities to the students, consider their strengths. For instance, make the most outspoken student mute and deaf, the best athlete should become the quadriplegic, and so on. On the other hand, let the quietest people have the ability to speak. Do not tell students that their specific disabilities were planned. See if they notice it.
- Ask participants to work in groups of 4 or 5, which will include a disability to emphasize that there are other ways of communication besides talking.
- Refer to Handout 3.2 for further instructions on this activity.
- Debriefing

Activity #3: Learning to navigate the Internet (55 min)

Procedure:

- Icebreaker
- This activity needs computer access.
- Take participants to the library or a site with Internet access to conduct the mini project.
- Explain to participants that knowing how to take advantage of the Internet is important. One way to take advantage is communicating via email.
- Have each student acquire their own e-mail address. Personal e-mail accounts can be obtained by visiting the Web site: www.emailaddresses.com. Emphasize avoiding the use of inappropriate words (ex: beautiful, pretty, cute) as user names as this e-mail can be included in resumes and other types of formal documents.

- After setting up their own accounts, ask participants to email the facilitator a brief message regarding anything. Encourage communication via e-mail among the students.
- Provide participants with directions for Scavenger Hunt – Group Mini Project (Handout 3.3), which includes a list of Internet sites they need to hunt for and document.
- Debriefing

Activity #4: Choosing your words correctly (55 min)

Procedure:

- Icebreaker
- Choosing your words correctly before speaking is important in order to avoid conflict. A good way to start working on this is through the use of I-statements.
- Conduct a brief presentation of the concepts of I-Statements. Provide a definition of I-statements (Handout 3.4A).
- Ask the group for examples of You-Statements. Point out how much You-Statements tend to hurt the listener and thus hinder any effective communication.
- Ask the group to rephrase the You-Statements into I-Statements.
- Hand out “choosing your words carefully” worksheet and ask students to complete it (Handout 3.4B). The group then has a discussion on questions on I-statements versus You-statements. Tell participants that learning how to use I-Statements is not an easy task; however, it is wise to engage in its use.
- Debriefing

Activity #5: Assertiveness or Passiveness (30 min)

Procedure:

- Icebreaker
- Assertiveness is a method of communication that lets others know your ideas and feelings while respecting their feelings as well. For the purpose of our discussion, behavior can be divided into three types: aggressive, assertive and passive. Refer to Handout 3.6 for further information on the concept of assertiveness.
- Then the participants work through scenarios providing their normal response related to either passiveness or assertiveness (Handout 3.5).
- Participants engage in discussion indicating what they have understood from the activity; discuss every situation.
- Debriefing

Teaching Interdependence

1. Divide the class into two or three groups. Provide each group a sheet of paper that includes:

- a destination outside of the classroom (identified by facilitator),
- a 20 minute time limit – 10 for preparing, 10 for getting there
- an assigned disability for each member of the group.

2. The disabilities should include being:

- hearing impaired;
- mute;
- vision impaired;
- without use of arms;
- without use of legs;
- quadriplegic;
- vision impaired and without use of arms;
- hearing impaired and without use of legs;
- unable to speak English fluently.

3. Materials to be provided:

- Blindfolds (for the vision impaired),
- String to loosely tie around legs and arms to mark their lack of use,
- Earplugs or Headphones (for the hearing impaired) and
- Scarves (to cover the mouths of the mute)

*** *The goal is for each group to reach their destination, with everyone participating in working together to complete the task. Each group member must help the rest of the group to arrive at the same time.***

4. After all groups arrive at the designated spot, facilitate a discussion by asking:

- How did the group arrive at the spot?
- How long did it take to figure out a way to transport everyone there?
- Could you have reached the destination by yourself with these handicaps?
- Did it bother anyone to completely rely on the group?
- Did any one individual emerge as the leader of the group? What characteristics did he/she possess?
- Was this a positive group experience?

DIRECTIONS FOR INTERNET SCAVENGER HUNT

1. With your groups, go to the library or your school's computer lab (wherever there is a computer with Internet access).
2. You are responsible for finding certain sites on the Internet. Every time you find one of the sites, mark down the web address and other contact information (street address, phone number, email, fax, etc). Also, write a short summary of all of the information available on the site, or, if possible, print out the information. You will keep this in your portfolio.

3. SITES/ INFORMATION YOU NEED TO HUNT FOR:

- ❖ Map of your town
- ❖ Members of your City Council
- ❖ State Legislature
- ❖ Biography of your U.S. House Representative
- ❖ Weather of your city- a three day forecast
- ❖ ASPIRA home page
- ❖ Latino Neighborhoods Profiles Online
- ❖ A newspaper article about a Latin American leader from a Latin American newspaper or magazine
- ❖ CHAT rooms - Engage in an online conversation about a current event.
- ❖ Check out the chat rooms at an informative newspaper:
 - The Washington Post
 - The New York Times
 - The Miami Herald
 - The Philadelphia Inquirer
 - The Chicago Tribune
 - El Nuevo Día

**REMEMBER TO DOCUMENT ALL YOUR FINDINGS!!!
GOOD LUCK AND HAVE FUN!!!!!!!**

Handout 3.4A: Definition of I-Statements

In communication there are I-statements and you-statements. The use of you-statements can be detrimental to ourselves and others. For example, another group member may irritate or criticize you. In response, you may remain silent and irritated, or send a "you-statement".

Types of "You-Statements":	Examples of "You-Statements":
Ordering	"Don't do that."
Threatening	"You stop that, or else!"
Preaching	"You should know better."
Blaming	"This is all your fault."
Judging	"Your so dumb 'cause you're younger."
Criticizing	"You don't know how it's done."
Ridiculing	"You're acting like a baby, get over it!"
Name-Calling	"You're an idiot!"

You-statements are counterproductive because people generally do not like to be ordered or criticized. You-messages frequently result in unproductive arguments.

In comparison, I-statements, are non-blaming statements that simply communicate how one person is affecting another. I-statements do not criticize. As well, it is possible to send an I-statement without using the word "I". The essence of I-statements involves sending non-blaming messages about how the sender feels another group member is affecting them. How would your partner react to hearing you say, "I'm insecure," versus, "You're making me insecure?"

"You-Statements"	"I-Statements"
"Don't do that."	"I'd feel better if we focused on our work."
"You stop that, or else!"	"I'm frustrated."
"You should know better."	"I thought it was done differently."
"This is all your fault."	"I think mistakes were made, let's fix them."
"Your so dumb 'cause you're younger."	"I've got experience that might help."
"You don't know how it's done."	"I've got an idea how to do it!"
"You're acting like a baby, get over it!"	"I feel like we should move on."
"You're an idiot!"	"I'm unhappy the way things are going."

I-statements communicate much more honestly and successfully how one person's behavior affects another. I-statements tend to be more effective because they discourage defensiveness and encourage the other group member assume responsibility for his/her behavior. I-statements tell the group member that you trust him/her to respect your needs and to handle the situation constructively. I-statements are much less likely to produce an argument. They tend to facilitate honesty, openness and more cordial relationships within the group.

Handout 3.4B:

Choosing Your Words Carefully

Directions: Change the negative blaming statements below to positive non-blaming statements without changing what is intended to be said.

YOU-STATEMENT

I-STATEMENT

You don't love me anymore.

Why are you always late?

Shut up!

You don't care about me. If you did, you'd have done it the way I asked.

You're wrong, you shouldn't do it that way.

You know what you are?
You're an idiot.

You're so stupid! Why can't you understand how to do it?

I wouldn't go out with you even if you were the last person on earth.

Aggressive, Assertive or Passive?

AGGRESSIVE: A person behaving aggressively states his feelings without considering he/she may be violating the rights and feelings of others. **Example:** “No, I can’t help you now—what are you, nuts?! Can’t you see I’m busy?”

ASSERTIVE: An assertive reply would be honest and direct, but not disrespectful to your neighbor. **Example:** “No, I can’t help you now, but if you’d like me to help you in the future, please just give me a little notice.”

PASSIVE: When you respond passively, you avoid immediate conflict, but you may be upset because you haven’t expressed your feelings. A passive response to the situation would be to work, even though you didn’t want to, or to decline, by making up some excuse. **Example:** “Ok, I guess I can help you out.”

Identify each response as: *aggressive, assertive or passive.*

Situation 1: You have tons of homework and Mom asks you to do the dishes.

→ *Response:*

- _____ Why don’t you do the dishes? Can’t you see I have tons of homework?
- _____ All right, Mom.
- _____ I have a ton of homework tonight, and I’d rather not have to do the dishes so I can get my work finished.

SITUATION 2: Friends at a party ask you to try drugs, but you don’t want to.

→ *Response:*

- _____ Well, just this once won’t hurt.
- _____ You’re all crazy! What do you want to do that for?
- _____ No thanks, I really don’t want to try drugs.

SITUATION 3: Your teacher insults you for speaking Spanish in class.

→ *Response:*

- _____ That is my individual right.
- _____ But that is my home language and I like speaking it.
- _____ Don’t say anything.

SITUATION 4: Your friend wants to copy your homework, but you believe copying is wrong.

→ *Response*

- _____ I worked hard on this and I want the full credit for the assignment. I don’t want to take the chance of getting caught.
- _____ Well, okay. Be sure to change some of the words.
- _____ That’s cheating.