

GLE3OR Unit 2: Personal Knowledge & Management Skills

Activity 1: Effective Communication Skills

Overview

Human beings communicate with each other in a variety of ways. The most obvious method is communicating through speech, but we also communicate through body language and emotions. It is important for us to practice our communication skills so that we can communicate more effectively at school, home and work.

Lesson

Effective Communication Skills



Human beings communicate with each other in a variety of ways. The most obvious method is communicating through **speech**, but we also communicate through **body language** and **emotions**. We are able to send many different messages using both verbal and nonverbal means of communication.

Verbal communication can be the most direct route for us to get our message to another person. However, it is interesting to note that verbal communication actually is only 7% of the communication that we do in a day. We are far more likely to communicate messages with our tone of voice (23%) and with our bodies (70%).

Communication Styles

Passive	Aggressive	Assertive
Do you put other people's feelings before your own to avoid conflict?	Do you put your needs first and ignore other people's feelings in the process?	Do you express your own rights but take into consideration other people's feelings?
Do you hesitate before addressing an issue?	Do you yell at people to get your point across?	Do you express your feelings and your rights clearly?
Are you shy?	Do you blame others for your own mistakes?	Do you act in your own best interest but consider the needs and rights of others?
Do you have difficulty making a decision?	Are you sarcastic?	Do you develop trust and equality in your relationships?
Do you say nothing instead of letting the person know what is bothering you?	Do you interrupt people?	Do you ask for help when you need it?

Good Communication vs. Good Listening

Good Communication Skills	Good Listening Skills
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Start all of your statements with the word "I."2. Tell what happened and how you feel.3. Try not to use the word "you."4. Tell the other person how your concern involves him/her.5. Tell what you would like to have happen.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Give your full attention to the person speaking.2. Focus on the speaker's message by looking for the central concept.3. Indicate your interest.4. Remember what the speaker has said and, to be sure you heard it correctly, repeat the point so the person can correct you, if necessary.

Overcoming Barriers to Communication

Below are some useful tips on how to overcome some common barriers to effective communication:

- **Inattentive listening** - If you have difficulty paying attention to other people, try to make a connection between your own life and the topic.
- **Interrupting other speakers** - You need to make a conscious effort to listen to the other person before you begin to speak, add to, or interpret what others are saying.
- **Defensiveness** - You need to ask yourself whether it's a big deal to admit you're wrong. Consider the fact that others have the right to voice their opinion, just as you do. You need to ensure that you do not take differences personally.
- **Not hearing the speaker out** - Make the effort just to slow down and get the full story before you reach any conclusions.
- **Offensive criticism** - Effective criticism should involve commenting on the behavior, not the person. Try using "I" statements that define how you feel instead of going after the individual. For example, "When you don't call when you say you will, I feel frustrated."
- **Lack of emotional control** - You need to stop yourself from venting your negative emotions. You can even ask the other person if you could talk about the issue later, so that you can collect your thoughts first.
- **Lack of awareness of your own emotions** - Pay attention to your voice, gestures, the way you feel. You need to stand up for yourself and practice discussing touchy subjects.



Active Listening



Active listening is an important skill. It encourages others to talk to you in a way that ensures that you understand completely what they are trying to say. Occasionally when we are speaking, we may not be aware that the person to whom we are talking is not completely attentive to what we are saying. He or she may be simply hearing our words but not really listening for full understanding.

There is a difference between hearing and listening. Hearing is the physical ability to receive sound; listening is a learned skill to be developed through practice. And it does take time to practice and learn. If you're like most people, you probably like talking better than you like listening. This can be a hard habit to break. But by practicing the six steps of active listening, you can become a better listener:

- **Make time to stop and listen.** Set aside other activities and give the speaker your full attention. Make eye contact; don't look at your watch. Allow the speaker to finish. If you ask questions, allow time for an adequate response.
- **Focus on what the speaker is saying without interrupting or judging.** It's hard to take in someone's full message when your mind is wandering e.g., "She's wrong; I never said that," "I can't believe he really feels this way," "That's total nonsense," "That's just like what once happened to me ..."
- **Use body language that reflects attentiveness, sincerity, and warmth.** Relax your facial muscles; smile. Incline your body slightly towards the speaker to indicate your interest. Nodding occasionally assures the speaker that you are following the story and wish to hear more.
- **Prompt the speaker to continue.** Verbally signify your interest, e.g., "Really? ... Mmhmm ... I see ... Tell me more." Ask questions that require more than just a yes or no, and listen to the answers.
- **Restate the speaker's message in your own words.** Say, "If I understand you correctly ..." and give the speaker back your understanding of what has been said. Paraphrasing shows that you have listened and have grasped the speaker's message.
- **Do a "listening check."** After restating, give the speaker the opportunity to confirm that your understanding is correct, e.g., "Is that right? Did I miss anything?" This provides an opportunity for further clarification, if necessary.

Assignment

1. Through which methods do you communicate with your friends, family, teachers and strangers?
2. Which communication style do you think you have (passive, aggressive, assertive) and why?
3. Explain which 3 barriers to effective communication do you think affect you the most? Provide examples. What are some suggestions to overcoming these barriers?
4. What is the difference between hearing and listening?
5. Would you consider yourself an active listener? Why or why not? What could you do to improve your listening?