

COMMUNICATION DEMOS

Cut the definitions found below on the dotted lines. Distribute them to students, at random. Divide the class into teams. Two members of one team should demonstrate the type of communication technique given to them. The opposing team tries to identify the type of communication technique they are demonstrating. It then becomes the other team's turn to demonstrate a communication technique. When one team demonstrates a destructive technique, the opposite team may earn extra points by giving an example of how to make the technique constructive.

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1. "I" MESSAGES: State the feelings and thoughts you are having at the time of communication.
"I feel frustrated when you tell me to call you and then you are not home or the line is busy."

"I would like you to call me when you are going to be late."

This type of statement clearly indicates who is sending the message. It is also good because it lets you be responsible for your own thoughts and feelings without blaming the other person.

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2. CLARITY: This involves meaning what you say and then saying what you mean. Many people only hint at what they want to say. This can cause problems in interpretation. Sarcasm is an example of ways people use to say one thing but mean something different. This only confuses the person with whom you are communicating. For example, "I hope you had a great time at the movie last night with all your other friends!" is not the best way to state your feelings. A better way to communicate your true meaning would be to say, "I felt badly last night when I heard you invited everyone but me to go to the movie." This way there is no second guessing what the message means.

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3. TIMING: Select a good time to do your important communicating. An example of bad timing is the daughter who begins telling her father what a lousy day she had at school before her father has even had time to take off his coat after work. Another example is the son who wants to have a heart-to-heart talk with his mother about his new girlfriend at dinner time. A good way to tell if the timing is appropriate is to look for nonverbal messages as well as verbal messages. It is also important to let the person who wants to communicate with you know if the time is bad for you. You might say, "This is a bad time for me right now. Can we sit down right after dinner when things are more settled?"

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4. ASKING QUESTIONS: People seldom say what they really mean the first time. Collecting more information helps the speaker feel like you are listening and trying to understand.

"Why do you think that Mr. Jones doesn't like you?"

"What did Mr. Jones say to you?"

"Where were you when your friends left you?"

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5. REFLECTIVE LISTENING: Reflecting is when the listener mirrors back the thoughts and/or feelings the speaker is experiencing. When the listener accurately reflects the speaker's thoughts or feelings, the speaker then knows he/she is being understood.

"Are you saying that you want to quit your job?"

"You seem to be feeling angry about that."

If the listener is wrong in his/her interpretation of the statement the speaker can restate or explain his/her feelings in a different way.

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6. **RESPECT AND CONSIDERATION:** One sure way of ending good communication is by being critical or judgmental. Everyone wants to be shown respect. No one wants to be made to feel foolish or put down. It is important to respect the other person's point of view even if it is different from yours. Sometimes we do not understand why the person feels the emotion they feel. In these cases it is important to allow the person to express his/her emotions even when you do not agree or understand.

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7. **AVOIDING INTENSE ANGER:** Sometimes we become too emotional to communicate effectively. Shouting, name calling, and physical expressions of anger build roadblocks, destroy self esteem (of both people), and create fear. If you find yourself in this type of situation it is best to be honest and tell the other person you are too upset to talk at that time.

"I am too angry to talk about this right now. I'm going for a walk and we can talk when I get back."

"If I say anything right now, I'll be sorry. I'm not in control of my emotions. Can we talk about this later?"

Be sure to keep your word and communicate as soon as you can do so in a constructive way.

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8. **BLAMING:** Family members frequently blame each other while trying to find out who is at fault, who started the fight, and so forth. Blaming hurts feelings, results in arguments, and reduces self-esteem.

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9. **INTERRUPTING:** When someone interrupts another person, it is a sign that one idea is more important than another. Frequent interruptions stop clear communication and show disregard for other people's ideas.

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10. **ENDLESS FIGHTING:** There are arguments that never end. This is when you bring up things that are old and have nothing to do with what is happening now. For example you have an argument with your father about the car and who should pay for the gas. For weeks after that your father brings up the fact that you brought the car home with the gas gauge on empty.

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11. **CHARACTER ASSASSINATION:** Character assassination involves name calling, belittling comments about sensitive subjects, and insulting remarks. These destroy self-esteem, trust and communication. Words once said cannot be taken back! Sarcasm can be a form of character assassination. Be very careful when using this form of communication.

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12. **CALLING REINFORCEMENTS:** This is when you involve outsiders in your personal relationships and quarrels. Positions instantly harden because you now feel the need to save face. It also breaks the bond of trust that you need to build in all good relationships. This is one of the most damaging things that can be done in communication.
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13. WITHDRAWAL: Withdrawing from communication and avoiding conversation in families communicates hurt, rejection, neglect, indifference, and/or anger. It is basically saying, "I don't care enough about you to work this out." Of course if you are so upset that you cannot communicate in a kind and loving way, you should take a cooling off period and then resume the conversation.

14. NEED TO BE RIGHT: Some people refuse to admit any wrong doing because they have a need to always be right! This is a sign of poor self-esteem. Compromise is always the best way to communicate. Both people then feel like winners and feel respected and understood.
