

New York Theological Seminary
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Communications

I. Introduction

During this session we will discuss the Art of Communications. Communications between two or more people. Parents and children, students and teachers, friends, and couples.

The Art of Communications deals with our ability to express our feelings and thoughts to another person in such a manner that the others person understands what you are saying.

Communications requires two parts:

1. Speaking
2. Listening

II. Demonstration

- a. Play the game telephone.
- b. Discuss why some people heard one thing, while others heard something else.

Possible ideas to explore with the group:

1. **We don't really listen to what is being said.**

Because we are bombarded by so much verbiage in our lives, many of us erect barriers to screen out much of the talk otherwise we would become overloaded .

This screens we erect can take the form of:

- Daydreaming or Faking Attention
- Listening to only the Facts
- Tuning out the speaker because of who they are, or what they represent to you.

2. **Words have different meanings for the speaker and the listener.**

When the listener has a different understanding of the meaning of a word than that of the speaker, the listener receives the message differently than intended by the speaker.

- Words take on new meanings for different generations.
- Words common to one culture may not be common to another culture, or even another neighborhood or school.

3. **We don't pay enough attention to Tone, Gesture and other Nonverbal forms of communication.**

- Nonverbal communication often speaks louder than words.
- The smothered yawn of boredom.
- The swallow of anxiety.
- The jutting chin of defensiveness.
- The hair-patting hand of nervousness.
- The widened eyes f fear.
- The small smile of disbelief.

Body movements reveal a great deal about the speaker as well as the listener.

4. **We say what we think we should say instead of what we feel.**

The "How-are-you? - I'm fine." routine is probably the most common illustration of this phenomenon.

-Meaningful communication requires that you take the trouble to create original dialogue that expresses your own unique feelings and thoughts, rather than following a script that has been developed by society.

III. Expressing Your Feelings and Thoughts

It is important to learn how to get your real feelings and thoughts across to other people.

A. Acknowledge Your Feelings:

- The lines of communication often get crossed by our desire to say things that will gain approval, even though they conflict with our true feelings.
- When we are angry, self-pity or self-righteousness creates a barrier between you and other people.
- Be open to others.

B. Stop, Look and Listen:

- Sometimes we get into the habit of turning out certain types of conversations.
- If you don't listen, you may miss some important information.
- Listen to what is being said to you, rather than thinking about what you are going to say next.
- Pick up on nonverbal communication-
 - looking at a watch indicates restlessness
 - the tapping of a foot may indicate annoyance
 - the clenched fist may indicate suppressed rage

C. Avoid Detours:

- Some people find it difficult to give a straight answer.
- Make the point you want to make and stop. Don't beat a dead horse.
- Don't bring up everything that has ever happened in the past when having a discussion. Deal with the issues being discussed.
- Answer the question being asked of you.
- It is always wiser to tell the truth. Communicate an unpleasant message as kindly as possible.
- Attacks and accusations on other people don't solve any problems.
- Name calling has no place in a mature, responsible conversation.

D. Offer Feedback:

- Offering feedback sends a message to the speaker that you are really interested in what is being said. If the person talking gets the feeling that you are truly interested and accepting, the person is encouraged to continue the conversation.
- Forms of Feedback:
 - Maintaining good eye-to-eye contact
 - Nodding your head indicates that you understand what is being said, and that you are listening

- Never be afraid to say "I don't understand."
- Don't sit or stand speaking to someone in such a way that the person thinks you can't wait to get away.

E. Don't Label:

- Prejudgement can prevent understanding, and limit the possibilities of a relationship.
- Calling a person a "Drunkard" will likely reinforce the person's negative self-concept and do nothing to help the person stop drinking.
- Telling someone that you are concerned for them will be a more sympathetic approach, and will improve the person's self-image by knowing someone is worried about them.
- Saying to someone; "you're stupid", "you're stingy", "you're a tyrant", "you're a bore" is never an effective way of dealing with a problem. Such labels serve as a barrier to any reasonable discussion of the problem.

F. Take Off Your Blinders:

- Most people resist change.
- Protecting ourselves from unpleasant communications that are clearly sent is what psychologists call "the ostrich phenomenon."
- To avoid the dangers of the "ostrich phenomenon", you must train yourself to hear all messages.

G. Summary:

- If you truly want to be close to other people, you can learn to be more expressive and more responsive.
- The key is wanting to communicate-rather than to win points, make an impression, assert power or reinforce your own attitude.
- If you can't hear another person's story without interrupting to show how much you know or where you have been or how bright you are, then you're probably more interested in impressing the person than you are in relating to the that person.
- If you can't listen to an opposing viewpoint without trying to change it, self-assertion may be more important to you than understanding.
- If you clam up in the presence of opposition or ideas of which you disapprove, it is likely that you're afraid of the challenge of the new and different.
- Only when you really listen to another person and try to see things from the other person's view are you practicing the art of communication.

Adopted from: How To Express Your Feelings, by Daniel A. Sugarman, Ph.D. and Rolaine Hochstein