

Does Anybody Hear Me?

Communicating with Friends and Family

By Deborah McDonald

Purpose

This session encourages young people to explore healthy and effective communication, obstacles to effective communication, and the emotional elements which can hinder and foster communication. This session is designed for senior high youth and can accommodate any size group.

Session at a Glance

- 7:00 p.m. Gathering and Welcome
- 7:05 p.m. What Did You Say?
- 7:30 p.m. Does Anybody Hear Me?
- 8:05 p.m. Closing Prayer
- 8:20 p.m. Snacks and Social
- 8:30 p.m. Good Night!

Materials Needed

- Nametags
- Newsprint and easel stand
- Markers, one box for every six participants
- “Does Anybody Hear Her” by Casting Crowns (see #2 in Prepare in Advance)
- Index cards, one per participant
- Bibles, one for every six participants
- **Resource 4, Scripture Passages**, cut into slips, at least one for each small group
- Laptop computer and LCD projector
- Screen (can use a blank white wall)

Prepare in Advance

1. Set up meeting room with chairs in a circle. In the center of the circle set up a prayer table. Cover the table with a cloth, and place a Bible (on a bookstand) and a pillar candle on the table. Open the Bible to Matthew 25:31-46.

2. Download “Does Anybody Hear Her” from YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfAxQxoEBvA> or from GodTube: http://www.godtube.com/view_video.php?viewkey=5a2e075a1a4a6e1b9770

Note to Leader: There are many versions available – the one recommended is by the band Casting Crowns.

3. Invite a youth to prepare in advance to read at the closing prayer.

4. Invite a young person or adult to prepare a brief reflection on the Scripture passage using **Resource 2, Reflection Outline**.

5. Think of a time in your life where you experienced a situation where you felt not listened to, not heard, and be prepared to share it with the group. Be careful not to share anything that breaks a confidence or that involves other members of the group without their consent.

6. Use **Resource 3, The Communication Process**, to come to a better understanding of the communication process. You might use this information as a reference while helping the young people understand the communication process more fully.

6. Set up tables for refreshments and sign-in. Have one or two people at the sign-in table with a check-in sheet and nametags. **Hospitality is important:** As the leader, do not use the gathering time before the session begins to take care of last minute preparations. Spend the time moving among the participants, greeting and speaking with them.

Gathering and Welcome (5 minutes)

Create a welcoming environment for youth as they enter. Invite youth and team members to make and wear a nametag. After youth arrive welcome participants, and introduce yourself and any other team members. Provide a brief overview of tonight's session:

Have you ever opened your heart to someone, or tried talking to someone when you were feeling blue, or upset and felt that you were not being heard? Every day we spend over 80% of our time talking, text messaging, emailing to and with others. A significant percentage of our communication can be deeply personal. You would think that with all that communicating, we as a people would know and feel the support of our friends, yet many don't feel listened to and heard. Why? In this session we will explore communication and its importance to our own personal, emotional, and spiritual health and our relationships with family and friends and our God.

Opening Experience: What Did You Say?

Game and Process (25 minutes)

Step 1: (5 minutes) Invite the youth to form two lines of equal length standing back to back. Share with them that we are going to play a new version of "telephone tag." A message will be whispered into the ear of the first person at the end of the line. He/She will then turn and whisper the message into the ear of the next person and then so on down the line.

Step 2: (5 minutes) Whisper into the ear of the youth at the opposite end of each line the following statement:

Have you heard that this year they have invented a new type of corn and it is green?

When both sides are done – invite the last youth to shout out the message, each side taking turns. Typically, the message will not be the same as the original. Following the youth calling out their interpretation of the message, ask the following questions:

What happened?

Why is the message different?

Invite a member of the team to take notes posting their responses on newsprint.

Step 3: (5 minutes) Invite the participants to try again. Starting at opposite ends, whisper the following message into the first person's ear:

Aliens from Mars have landed at McDonald's in the mall. They say they have been traveling in space for years and are looking for ET.

When both sides are done – invite the last youth to shout out the message, each side taking turns. Share with the group the original and say again ask:

What happened? Are we not listening?

What can we do to do a better job?

Post their responses on newsprint.

Step 4: (10 minutes) Invite the youth to try for a final time. Whisper the following at the end of the line:

I'm concerned about a friend of mine, who is sick and in the hospital. She really needs my help, and I have so many commitments with my family, school, and job. I'm worried sick and just need a friend.

When both sides are done, invite the last youth to shout out the message, each side taking turns. Share with the group the original and say:

The first two times, it was funny when the message did not match, but what makes this message different?

Does Anyone Hear Me? (40 minutes)

Step 1: (5 minutes) Gather the participants back in the chairs and begin by saying:

It is no longer a fun telephone tag game when the messages become about people—living, breathing, human beings, our friends, our family, ourselves. All of us at times feel and experience the sense of not being heard. It would be simple if it was a game, but the emotion and the feelings are real with real consequences.

Share a story about a time in your life where you experienced a situation where you didn't feel listened to and share it with the group. Be careful not to share anything that breaks a confidence or that involves other members of the group without their consent.

Step 2: (10 minutes) Invite the participants to form small groups of six. Give each group a marker and a piece of newsprint. Ask the groups to list the "Top Ten" consequences of people not listening and not hearing. Ask the groups to focus on how they feel when they are not heard and the consequences to their relationships with friends and family. Ask each group to select one person to serve as group reporter.

Step 3: (10 minutes) Invite each group reporter to share their top ten lists. Using masking tape, post them so that all participants can read them. Ask the participants the following:

If the consequences to ineffective communication, listening, and hearing, are pain, anger, frustrations, and broken relationships (fill in the top ten responses of the youth) how can we make a difference? Can we listen more effectively? If yes, how?

Allow the youth to respond, writing their concrete responses on newsprint, forming them into a concrete model of effective communication. As the youth share, say:

The business and mental health communities have studied effective communications for years. They have shown that all effective communications have four parts: the speaker, the listener, the message, and the response. Using this model we see that good communication is a two-way street. We send out the message, the other person hears and responds, and then we respond back with healthy and effective feedback. In effective communication the listener demonstrates through clarifying questions, statements of affirmation/support, and feedback that they are listening and attempting to adequately hear the speaker. This process is often referred to as active listening.

Ask the group to give examples of unhealthy and ineffective feedback.

Step 4: (15 minutes) At the end of the brainstorming, invite the small groups to review the posted plan. Pose the question:

Reviewing our plan for effective communication, can you think of a story in Scripture where Jesus models effective communication?

Using **Resource 4**, assign a Scripture passage to each small group, invite small groups to read the passage and answer the following questions:

- To whom is Jesus talking?
- What are they discussing?
- How does Jesus demonstrating through active listening that he hears and understands?
- Is he asking clarifying questions? If yes, how and what?
- Is he affirming the speaker through supportive statements? If yes, how and what?
- What is Jesus' final response to the person?

Closing Prayer Experience (15 minutes)

Gather

Prayer Leader: (*light the prayer candle, and begin with the Sign of the Cross*)

Light and peace in our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Watch the video "Does Anybody Hear Her?"

Listen

Scripture

Invite the reader to proclaim Matthew 25:31-46. Allow a few moments of quiet after the reading.

Reflection

Invite the youth or adult leader to give the reflection.

Respond

Prayer Leader:

Our response is **Lord hear our prayer.**

For our church, for our leaders, and for all young men and women of faith that we may effectively hear the message of the Gospel and share it with our brothers and sisters in Christ, we pray ...

For our world, for our nation, and for our community that we may effectively hear and respond to our brother and sisters in need, we pray...

For those who feel unheard and alone, that they may find support and comfort in their faith, family, and friends, we pray...

For what else shall we pray this evening? We pray...

Go Forth

Prayer Leader:

Let us pray together the prayer that our Lord taught us to pray. Our Father...
Let us share with each other a sign of Christ peace.

Snack and Social Time (10 minutes)

Thank the young people for their participation, make any needed announcements, and invite them to enjoy some snacks and social time.

Websites mentioned in this session were accessed successfully on June 2, 2008.

This session was written by Deborah A. McDonald, Executive Director, Office of Youth Ministry/Catholic Youth Organization, Archdiocese of Washington, Washington DC.

Resource 1

Resources and Websites for Youth and Parents

WEBSITES

Grunts, Snarls and Verbal Abuse: How to Break the Silence and Poor Communication Patterns. Laura Paul.

<http://www.teenagerstoday.com/articles/discipline-and-communication/grunts-snarls-and-verbal-abuse-942/>

Communication Skills. Pala Alto Medical Foundation. <http://www.pamf.org/teen/abc/buildingblocks/skills.html>

How Can Parents Model Good Listening Skills? Carl Smith
<http://www.focusas.com/ListeningSkills.html>

BOOK

Messages: The Communication Skill Book. Matthew McKay, Martha Davis, and Patrick Fanning. New Harbinger Publications, 2005.

Available from Amazon: http://www.amazon.com/Messages-Communication-Skills-Matthew-McKay/dp/1572240229/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1212425385&sr=1-1

Resource 2

Reflection Outline

Please prepare a five-minute reflection using the notes below.

- a. Communication is listening, hearing, and responding
- b. Responding to our friends and our family with support and love
- c. Using the song, *Does Anybody Hear Her*, give examples of missed opportunities to respond to someone communicating need.
- d. Jesus calls us to put that communication into action
 1. To recognize others in need
 2. To serve the hungry, thirsty, stranger, prisoners
 3. To listen and to hear the cries of friends, family, and strangers in need.

Resource 3

The Communication Process

In this example, Joe is the speaker, and Maria is the listener.

Joe's message begins as a thought in his head – "These fries need salt."
This thought then is put into words to become a message – "Please pass the salt."

Maria, as the listener, hears the words that Joe says, and then translates those words into what she thinks Joe is trying to say. Sometimes we are right, and sometimes we are wrong. In this case, Maria is right, but to be sure, she can send a response that tells Joe what she heard him say. She could say, "Do you want the salt?" or, in this case, she may just pass the salt down the table towards him. In this way, Joe knows that his message was heard.

Here is another example:

Joe, as the speaker, says to Maria, the listener: "I have been having a really hard day today, and I don't want to go out tonight like we planned."

If Maria wants to be a good listener, she will respond to Joe in a way that helps him know that she heard what he was saying, before she adds her own opinion/reaction.

A good response would be: "I am sorry you are having such a bad day. Do you want to talk about it?"

This acknowledges that she heard his major concern and invites him to continue talking. After listening to Joe, it might be appropriate at the end of the conversation for Maria to acknowledge that she is disappointed that they won't be going out tonight.

A bad response would be: "I can't believe you are cancelling at the last minute! I was really excited to be going out tonight. You have ruined everything."

This just adds to the bad day that Joe already told Maria he was having and puts all the attention on Maria.

Resource 4

Scripture Passages

Directions: Cut along the dotted lines. Give one slip of paper to each small group.

Mark 10:17-21 The Story of the Rich Man

Luke 23: 13-35 The Walk to Emmaus

Luke 24: 36-48 Jesus Appears to His Disciples

John 4:7-26 Women at the Well

John 21:1-14 Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples

John 8:1-11 Woman Caught in Adultery
