

COMMUNICATION

PURPOSE

THE PURPOSE OF THIS COMMUNICATION MODULE IS TO PROVIDE THE READER WITH STRATEGIES THAT WILL HELP IMPROVE LISTENING SKILLS, VERBAL EXPRESSION, AND OTHER COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATION, INCLUDING BODY LANGUAGE, ASSERTIVENESS, SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS (E.G. PROXIMICS), AND THE RULES FOR EFFECTIVE EXPRESSION OF THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS. ALL OF THESE BIG WORDS WILL BE EXPLAINED MORE FULLY DURING THE NEXT FIVE SESSIONS BY MEANS OF ROLE-PLAYING, WORKSHEETS, AND HOMEWORK.

DEFINITION

COMMUNICATION IS GENERALLY THOUGHT OF AS TELLING SOMETHING TO SOMEONE AND THEN HAVING THAT PERSON RESPOND BY DOING SOMETHING, SAYING SOMETHING, AND/OR NODDING, AMONG OTHER THINGS.

WEBSTER DICTIONARY DEFINES COMMUNICATION AS THE ACT OF EXPRESSING ONESELF EFFECTIVELY. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION REQUIRES THAT THE PERSON:

- A. MAINTAINS GOOD EYE CONTACT
- B. LEANS SLIGHTLY FORWARD
- C. LISTENS ACTIVELY
- D. BE COMMITTED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS BEING SAID REGARDLESS OF THEIR EMOTIONAL STATE, AND
- E. BE OPEN, FLEXIBLE, AND EMPATHIC TO WHAT IS BEING SAID.

MOST ATTEMPTS AT COMMUNICATING INCLUDE ONE OR MORE OF THE ABOVE MENTIONED COMPONENTS. HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF THE FAILURE TO INCLUDE ALL OF THE COMPONENTS IN EVERY COMMUNICATION EFFORT, MOST PEOPLE TEND TO NOT EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE THEIR FEELINGS, THOUGHTS, OPINIONS, ETC.

I. ACTIVE LISTENING

MOST OF YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED SITUATIONS IN WHICH ONE OF YOUR PARENTS TELL YOU TO DO SOMETHING, TO LATER ON FIND OUT THAT YOU FORGOT WHAT THEY TOLD YOU. MANY OF THESE SITUATIONS OCCUR WHEN EITHER YOU OR YOUR PARENT IS DOING SOMETHING ELSE (E.G., RUNNING OUT THE DOOR, WATCHING T.V., TALKING ON THE PHONE, ETC.). IN SUCH A SITUATION, ALTHOUGH PEOPLE HEARD EACH OTHER'S WORDS (PASSIVE LISTENING), NOBODY WAS ACTIVELY LISTENING TO WHAT THE MESSAGE WAS.

ACTIVE LISTENING IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT IN ANY ATTEMPT AT COMMUNICATING.

THE NEXT SECTION WILL ADDRESS WAYS OF AVOIDING PASSIVE LISTENING AND HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS.

EFFECTIVE LISTENING IS MUCH MORE THAN SITTING STILL WITH YOUR MOUTH SHUT. IN ORDER TO FULLY UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF A COMMUNICATION, YOU MUST ASK QUESTIONS AND GIVE FEEDBACK. YOU MUST GO BEYOND PASSIVELY ABSORBING; YOU MUST COLLABORATE IN THE PROCESS IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

A. PARAPHRASING - TO STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS WHAT YOU THINK SOMEONE JUST SAID. THIS KEEPS YOU BUSY TRYING TO UNDERSTAND INSTEAD OF LETTING YOUR MIND DO OTHER THINGS. YOU CAN BEGIN A PARAPHRASE WITH LEAD-INS SUCH AS "WHAT I HEAR YOU SAYING IS..." OR "IN OTHER WORDS..." THE ADVANTAGES TO PARAPHRASING ARE:

1. PEOPLE DEEPLY APPRECIATE FEELING HEARD.
2. IT STOPS ESCALATING ANGER AND COOLS DOWN CRISIS.
3. IT STOPS MISCOMMUNICATION BECAUSE FALSE ASSUMPTIONS, ERRORS, AND MISINTERPRETATIONS ARE CORRECTED ON THE SPOT.
4. IT HELPS YOU REMEMBER WHAT WAS SAID.
5. IT PREVENTS THE USE OF MOST LISTENING BLOCKS.

THIS SOUNDS SO SIMPLE, YET MOST PEOPLE DO NOT LEARN HOW TO LISTEN EFFECTIVELY BECAUSE IT IS NOT TAUGHT IN SCHOOLS. MOST OF US LEARN TO LISTEN BY WATCHING OTHERS (AND THERE ARE LOTS OF BAD EXAMPLES).

B. CLARIFICATION - TO ASK QUESTIONS UNTIL YOU GET MORE OF THE PICTURE. ASKING FOR MORE INFORMATION OR BACKGROUND HELPS US TO UNDERSTAND MORE FULLY WHAT IS BEING SAID. IT ALSO SENDS THE MESSAGE TO THE OTHER PERSON THAT YOU ARE INTERESTED.

C. SUMMARIZING - AT THE END OF THE COMMUNICATION, YOU STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS THE MAIN THING BEING SAID. ONCE AGAIN, THIS SERVES TO PREVENT MISUNDERSTANDINGS BECAUSE ANY WRONG IDEAS CAN BE CORRECTED ON THE SPOT.

D. FEEDBACK - NOW THAT YOU HAVE PARAPHRASED, CLARIFIED, AND SUMMARIZED, YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS SAID. THIS IS WHEN YOU CAN TALK ABOUT YOUR REACTIONS. IN A NON-JUDGMENTAL WAY, YOU CAN SHARE WHAT YOUR THOUGHT, FELT, OR SENSED INSIDE YOU. THIS IS ALSO A GOOD TIME TO ASSIST THE OTHER PERSON IN UNDERSTANDING

THE EFFECT OF HIS OR HER COMMUNICATION. THERE ARE THREE IMPORTANT RULES FOR GIVING FEEDBACK:

1. IT HAS TO BE IMMEDIATE (AS SOON AS YOU FULLY UNDERSTAND THE COMMUNICATION).
2. IT HAS TO BE HONEST (YOUR REAL REACTION).
3. IT HAS TO BE SUPPORTIVE (GENTLE AND WITHOUT CAUSING DAMAGE OR DEFENSIVENESS).

MOST PEOPLE HAVE DIFFICULTY LISTENING EFFECTIVELY EVEN WHEN THEY ARE TRULY INTERESTED BECAUSE OF OLD HABITS THAT ARE HARD TO BREAK. SOME OF THE TWELVE COMMON BLOCKS TO LISTENING ARE USED BY US OVER AND OVER WHILE OTHERS ARE RESERVED FOR CERTAIN TYPES OF PEOPLE OR SITUATIONS. HERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME MORE AWARE OF YOUR BLOCKS AT THE TIME YOU ACTUALLY USE THEM.

1. **COMPARING** - TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHO IS SMARTER, MORE COMPETENT, MORE EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY, WHO HAS SUFFERED MORE -- YOU OR THE OTHER PERSON. WHILE THE PERSON IS TALKING, YOU THINK TO YOURSELF: "COULD I DO IT THAT WELL?" "I'VE HAD IT HARDER, HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT HARD IS" "HE'S NOT AS BRIGHT AS I AM". YOU END UP NOT LETTING IN MUCH INFORMATION BECAUSE YOU'RE TOO BUSY SEEING IF YOU MEASURE UP.

2. **MIND READING** - WHEN YOU ARE MIND READING, YOU DON'T PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO WHAT IS BEING SAID. IN FACT, YOU OFTEN DISTRUST IT. YOU TRY TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THE PERSON IS *REALLY* THINKING AND FEELING. "SHE SAYS SHE WANTS TO GO TO THE MOVIE, BUT I'LL BET SHE'S TIRED AND WANTS TO RELAX. SHE MIGHT BE RESENTFUL IF I PUSHED HER WHEN SHE DOESN'T WANT TO GO." IF YOU ARE A MIND READER, YOU MAY BE MAKING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT HOW PEOPLE REACT TO YOU. "I BET HE'S LOOKING AT MY LOUSY SKIN"... "SHE THINKS I'M STUPID"... "SHE'S TURNED OFF BY MY SHYNESS." THESE NOTIONS COME FROM YOUR HUNCHES AND VAGUE MISGIVINGS, BUT HAVE LITTLE TO DO WITH WHAT THE PERSON ACTUALLY SAYS TO YOU.

3. **REHEARSING** - IF YOU ARE REHEARSING WHAT TO SAY, YOU DON'T HAVE TIME TO LISTEN. YOU'RE WHOLE ATTENTION IS ON THE PREPARATION AND CRAFTING OF YOUR NEXT COMMENT. YOU MAY *LOOK* INTERESTED, BUT YOUR MIND IS GOING A MILE A MINUTE BECAUSE YOU HAVE A POINT TO MAKE. SOME PEOPLE REHEARSE WHOLE CHAINS OF RESPONSES: "I'LL SAY, THEN HE'LL SAY, THEN I'LL SAY" AND SO ON.

4. **FILTERING** - WHEN YOU FILTER, YOU LISTEN TO SOME THINGS AND NOT TO OTHERS. YOU PAY ONLY ENOUGH ATTENTION TO SEE IF SOMEBODY'S ANGRY, OR UNHAPPY, OR IF YOU'RE IN EMOTIONAL DANGER. ONCE ASSURED THAT THE COMMUNICATION CONTAINS NONE OF THOSE THINGS, YOU LET YOUR MIND WANDER. FOR EXAMPLE, A MOTHER MAY LISTEN JUST ENOUGH TO HER SON TO LEARN WHETHER HE IS FIGHTING AGAIN AT SCHOOL. RELIEVED TO HEAR HE ISN'T, SHE BEGINS THINKING ABOUT HER SHOPPING LIST. ANOTHER WAY PEOPLE FILTER IS SIMPLY TO AVOID HEARING CERTAIN THINGS - PARTICULARLY ANYTHING THREATENING, NEGATIVE, CRITICAL, OR UNPLEASANT. IT'S AS IF THE WORDS WERE NEVER SAID, YOU SIMPLY HAVE NO MEMORY OF THEM.

5. **JUDGING** - IF YOU PREJUDGE SOMEONE AS STUPID OR CRAZY OR UNQUALIFIED, YOU DON'T PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO WHAT THEY SAY. YOU'VE ALREADY WRITTEN THEM OFF. HASTILY JUDGING A STATEMENT MEANS YOU'VE CEASED TO LISTEN AND HAVE BEGUN A "KNEE-JERK" REACTION. A BASIC RULE OF LISTENING IS THAT JUDGMENTS SHOULD ONLY BE MADE *AFTER* YOU HAVE HEARD AND EVALUATED THE MESSAGE.

6. **DREAMING** - YOU'RE HALF-LISTENING, AND SOMETHING THE PERSON SAYS SUDDENLY TRIGGERS A CHAIN OF PRIVATE THOUGHTS. YOUR FRIEND SAYS SHE JUST BROKE UP WITH HER BOYFRIEND, AND IN A FLASH YOU'RE BACK TO THE SCENE LAST YEAR WHEN YOU DUMPED THE GUY WHO LIED TO YOU. BOY, WHAT A JERK HE WAS! HE WAS ALSO THE GUY WHO LIED TO THE PRINCIPAL ABOUT YOU BEING INVOLVED IN THE VANDALISM IN THE CLASSROOM, WHICH IS HOW YOU ENDED UP SUSPENDED IN THE FIRST PLACE. AND YOU'RE GONE, ONLY TO RETURN A FEW MINUTES LATER AS YOUR FRIEND SAYS, "I KNEW YOU'D UNDERSTAND, BUT PLEASE DON'T TELL MY MOTHER!" PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO DREAM WHEN THEY FEEL BORED OR ANXIOUS. IF YOU DREAM A LOT WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE, IT MAY INDICATE A LACK OF COMMITMENT TO THEM OR THAT YOU DON'T VALUE WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY VERY MUCH.

7. **IDENTIFYING** - THIS IS WHEN YOU TAKE EVERYTHING A PERSON TELLS YOU AND RELATE IT TO YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE. THEY WANT TO TELL YOU ABOUT A TOOTHACHE, BUT THAT REMINDS YOU OF THE TIME YOU HAD ORAL SURGERY. YOU LAUNCH INTO YOUR STORY BEFORE THEY CAN FINISH THEIRS. EVERYTHING YOU HEAR REMINDS YOU OF SOMETHING IN YOUR LIFE. YOU'RE SO BUSY WITH YOUR OWN EXCITING TALES THAT THERE'S NO TIME TO REALLY HEAR OR GET TO KNOW THE OTHER PERSON.

8. **ADVISING** - YOU ARE THE GREAT PROBLEM-SOLVER, READY WITH HELP AND SUGGESTIONS. YOU DON'T HAVE TO HEAR MORE THAN A FEW SENTENCES BEFORE YOU BEING SEARCHING FOR THE RIGHT ADVICE. HOWEVER, WHILE YOU

ARE COOKING UP SUGGESTIONS AND CONVINCING SOMEONE TO "JUST TRY IT", YOU MAY MISS WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT: THE FEELINGS. YOU DIDN'T ACKNOWLEDGE THE PERSON'S PAIN AND HE FEELS BASICALLY ALONE BECAUSE YOU COULDN'T LISTEN AND JUST *BE THERE*.

9. SPARRING - THIS BLOCK HAS YOU ARGUING AND DEBATING WITH PEOPLE. THE OTHER PERSON NEVER FEELS HEARD BECAUSE YOU'RE SO QUICK TO DISAGREE. IN FACT, A LOT OF YOUR FOCUS IS ON FINDING THINGS TO DISAGREE WITH. YOU TAKE STRONG STANDS AND ARE VERY CLEAR ABOUT YOUR BELIEFS. THE WAY TO AVOID SPARRING IS TO REPEAT BACK WHAT YOU'VE HEARD. LOOK FOR SOMETHING TO AGREE WITH.

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12. PLACATING - "RIGHT... RIGHT... ABSOLUTELY... I KNOW... OF COURSE YOU ARE... YES... REALLY?" YOU WANT TO BE NICE, PLEASANT, SUPPORTIVE. YOU WANT PEOPLE TO LIKE YOU, SO YOU AGREE WITH EVERYTHING. YOU MAY HALF-LISTEN, JUST ENOUGH TO GET THE DRIFT, BUT YOU'RE NOT REALLY INVOLVED. YOU ARE NOT TUNING IN AND EXAMINING WHAT'S BEING SAID.

personality types play a role in your life?

I AM IN TOTAL CONTROL!
DO EXACTLY AS I SAY
AND NO ONE WILL GET HURT!



THE DICTATOR

The Dictators ... who are driven to control everything and everyone in sight. They must have the last word in every decision and be the final authority on all matters.

YOU HAVE GOT TO
BE KIDDING!!!



THE NEGATIVIST

The Know-It-Alls ... who are condescending to the less intelligent mortals around them. Often overbearing and pompous, they want others to acknowledge that they know more about everything worth knowing.



THE KNOW-IT-ALL

The Negativists ... who truly believe "It won't work." "We already tried that." "It can't be done." They're especially difficult because their wet-blanket attitude is contagious.

The Cry Babies ... who constantly complain about everything from how hard they have to work to how cold it is outside. Usually the implied message behind their griping is that "someone" (you, for example) should *do* something about their problems.



THE CRY BABY

The Con Artists ... who are picking your pocket while pretending to pat you on the back. These two-faced connivers are the slicksters of the workplace who are loyal to no one and will do whatever it takes to get ahead.

NOT!
SUPER JOB!



THE CON ARTIST

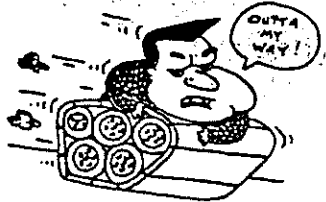
The Always Agreeables ... who can be counted on to tell you exactly what you want to hear. They become difficult when you need a straight answer instead of sweet talk or when their super-agreeableness has led them to make a commitment to you that they can't keep.

OH, YES!
YES!
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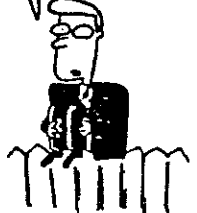
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The Fence Straddlers ... who just can't seem to make up their minds. They don't simply prolong the decision-making process, they avoid it so long that the need to make a decision finally goes away.

YES. NO. MAYBE. GET BACK
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The Silent Sams ... who answer the most articulate, well-thought-out and meaningful questions with yup, nope, a grunt or nothing at all. They are often silent and unresponsive at the times when you need information from them the most.

UMMM...
YUP...
NOPE



THE SILENT SAM

US FROM FEELINGS OF INADEQUACY OR POOR SELF-WORTH. WE SOMETIMES NEED TO PROTECT OURSELVES BY CREATING A CERTAIN IMAGE.

BEING STRAIGHT ALSO MEANS TELLING THE TRUTH. YOU STATE YOUR REAL NEEDS AND FEELINGS. YOU DON'T SAY YOU ARE TIRED AND WANT TO GO HOME IF YOU'RE REALLY ANGRY AND WANT MORE ATTENTION. LIES CUT YOU OFF FROM OTHERS AND KEEP THEM FROM KNOWING WHAT YOU NEED AND FEEL. YOU MAY LIE TO PROTECT YOURSELF OR TO BE NICE, BUT YOU END UP FEELING ALONE WITH YOUR CLOSEST FRIENDS.

E. MESSAGES SHOULD BE SUPPORTIVE

BEING SUPPORTIVE MEANS YOU WANT THE OTHER PERSON TO BE ABLE TO HEAR YOU WITHOUT GETTING BLOWN AWAY. ASK YOURSELF, "DO I WANT MY MESSAGE TO BE HEARD DEFENSIVELY OR ACCURATELY? IS MY PURPOSE TO HURT SOMEONE, TO MAKE MYSELF SEEM GREATER, OR TO COMMUNICATE?" THE FOLLOWING TACTICS HURT YOUR LISTENER AND SHOULD BE AVOIDED IF YOU WANT TO MAINTAIN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION:

1. GLOBAL LABELS: USING HURTFUL WORDS SUCH AS STUPID, UGLY, OR LAZY IS A DAMAGING WAY TO MAKE YOUR POINT. IT IS BETTER TO STICK TO A DESCRIPTION OF A PERSON'S BEHAVIOR RATHER THAN LABELING THE PERSON.

2. SARCASM: THIS INDICATES CONTEMPT AND IS USUALLY A COVER FOR ANGER AND HURT. IT PUSHES AWAY THE LISTENER.

3. DRAGGING UP THE PAST: THIS DESTROYS CLEAR COMMUNICATION ABOUT THE PRESENT BECAUSE IT BRINGS UP OLD WOUNDS.

4. NEGATIVE COMPARISONS: "WHY AREN'T YOU GENEROUS LIKE YOUR BROTHER?" "SHE'S GETTING A'S AND YOU CAN'T EVEN GET B'S IN EASY CLASSES" THESE ARE DEADLY COMPARISONS THAT SAY "YOU'RE BAD" AND MAKE PEOPLE FEEL INFERIOR.

5. JUDGMENTAL "YOU MESSAGES": THESE ARE ATTACKS THAT USE AN ACCUSING FORM. "YOU DON'T LOVE ME ANYMORE" AND "YOU NEVER HELP AROUND THE HOUSE" AREN'T LIKELY TO TRIGGER POSITIVE RESPONSES FROM THE LISTENER.

6. THREATS: BRINGING OUT THE BIG GUNS REALLY PUTS A STOP TO MEANINGFUL COMMUNICATION. THREATEN TO MOVE OUT, THREATEN TO QUIT, OR THREATEN VIOLENCE, AND YOU'LL CERTAINLY CHANGE THE SUBJECT AWAY FROM UNCOMFORTABLE ISSUES.

COMMUNICATING SUPPORTIVELY MEANS THAT YOU AVOID "WIN/LOSE" AND "RIGHT/WRONG" GAMES. THESE ARE INTERACTIONS WHERE THE INTENTION OF ONE OR BOTH PEOPLE IS "WINNING" OR PROVING THE OTHER PERSON "WRONG" RATHER THAN SHARING AND UNDERSTANDING. THESE GAMES PRODUCE WARFARE AND DISTANCE, WHEREAS MEANINGFUL COMMUNICATION CREATES UNDERSTANDING AND CLOSENESS.

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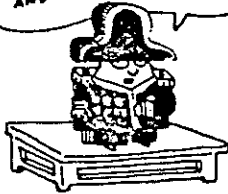
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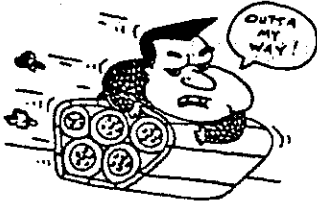
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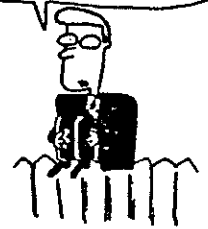


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4. **FILTERING** - WHEN YOU FILTER, YOU LISTEN TO SOME THINGS AND NOT TO OTHERS. YOU PAY ONLY ENOUGH ATTENTION TO SEE IF SOMEBODY'S ANGRY, OR UNHAPPY, OR IF YOU'RE IN EMOTIONAL DANGER. ONCE ASSURED THAT THE COMMUNICATION CONTAINS NONE OF THOSE THINGS, YOU LET YOUR MIND WANDER. FOR EXAMPLE, A MOTHER MAY LISTEN JUST ENOUGH TO HER SON TO LEARN WHETHER HE IS FIGHTING AGAIN AT SCHOOL. RELIEVED TO HEAR HE ISN'T, SHE BEGINS THINKING ABOUT HER SHOPPING LIST. ANOTHER WAY PEOPLE FILTER IS SIMPLY TO AVOID HEARING CERTAIN THINGS - PARTICULARLY ANYTHING THREATENING, NEGATIVE, CRITICAL, OR UNPLEASANT. IT'S AS IF THE WORDS WERE NEVER SAID, YOU SIMPLY HAVE NO MEMORY OF THEM.

5. **JUDGING** - IF YOU PREJUDGE SOMEONE AS STUPID OR CRAZY OR UNQUALIFIED, YOU DON'T PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO WHAT THEY SAY. YOU'VE ALREADY WRITTEN THEM OFF. HASTILY JUDGING A STATEMENT MEANS YOU'VE CEASED TO LISTEN AND HAVE BEGUN A "KNEE-JERK" REACTION. A BASIC RULE OF LISTENING IS THAT JUDGMENTS SHOULD ONLY BE MADE *AFTER* YOU HAVE HEARD AND EVALUATED THE MESSAGE.

6. **DREAMING** - YOU'RE HALF-LISTENING, AND SOMETHING THE PERSON SAYS SUDDENLY TRIGGERS A CHAIN OF PRIVATE THOUGHTS. YOUR FRIEND SAYS SHE JUST BROKE UP WITH HER BOYFRIEND, AND IN A FLASH YOU'RE BACK TO THE SCENE LAST YEAR WHEN YOU DUMPED THE GUY WHO LIED TO YOU. BOY, WHAT A JERK HE WAS! HE WAS ALSO THE GUY WHO LIED TO THE PRINCIPAL ABOUT YOU BEING INVOLVED IN THE VANDALISM IN THE CLASSROOM, WHICH IS HOW YOU ENDED UP SUSPENDED IN THE FIRST PLACE. AND YOU'RE GONE, ONLY TO RETURN A FEW MINUTES LATER AS YOUR FRIEND SAYS, "I KNEW YOU'D UNDERSTAND, BUT PLEASE DON'T TELL MY MOTHER!" PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO DREAM WHEN THEY FEEL BORED OR ANXIOUS. IF YOU DREAM A LOT WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE, IT MAY INDICATE A LACK OF COMMITMENT TO THEM OR THAT YOU DON'T VALUE WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY VERY MUCH.

7. **IDENTIFYING** - THIS IS WHEN YOU TAKE EVERYTHING A PERSON TELLS YOU AND RELATE IT TO YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE. THEY WANT TO TELL YOU ABOUT A TOOTHACHE, BUT THAT REMINDS YOU OF THE TIME YOU HAD ORAL SURGERY. YOU LAUNCH INTO YOUR STORY BEFORE THEY CAN FINISH THEIRS. EVERYTHING YOU HEAR REMINDS YOU OF SOMETHING IN YOUR LIFE. YOU'RE SO BUSY WITH YOUR OWN EXCITING TALES THAT THERE'S NO TIME TO REALLY HEAR OR GET TO KNOW THE OTHER PERSON.

8. **ADVISING** - YOU ARE THE GREAT PROBLEM-SOLVER, READY WITH HELP AND SUGGESTIONS. YOU DON'T HAVE TO HEAR MORE THAN A FEW SENTENCES BEFORE YOU BEING SEARCHING FOR THE RIGHT ADVICE. HOWEVER, WHILE YOU

THE EFFECT OF HIS OR HER COMMUNICATION. THERE ARE THREE IMPORTANT RULES FOR GIVING FEEDBACK:

1. IT HAS TO BE IMMEDIATE (AS SOON AS YOU FULLY UNDERSTAND THE COMMUNICATION).
2. IT HAS TO BE HONEST (YOUR REAL REACTION).
3. IT HAS TO BE SUPPORTIVE (GENTLE AND WITHOUT CAUSING DAMAGE OR DEFENSIVENESS).

MOST PEOPLE HAVE DIFFICULTY LISTENING EFFECTIVELY EVEN WHEN THEY ARE TRULY INTERESTED BECAUSE OF OLD HABITS THAT ARE HARD TO BREAK. SOME OF THE TWELVE COMMON **BLOCKS TO LISTENING** ARE USED BY US OVER AND OVER WHILE OTHERS ARE RESERVED FOR CERTAIN TYPES OF PEOPLE OR SITUATIONS. HERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME MORE AWARE OF YOUR BLOCKS AT THE TIME YOU ACTUALLY USE THEM.

1. **COMPARING** - TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHO IS SMARTER, MORE COMPETENT, MORE EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY, WHO HAS SUFFERED MORE -- YOU OR THE OTHER PERSON. WHILE THE PERSON IS TALKING, YOU THINK TO YOURSELF: "COULD I DO IT THAT WELL?" "I'VE HAD IT HARDER, HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT HARD IS" "HE'S NOT AS BRIGHT AS I AM". YOU END UP NOT LETTING IN MUCH INFORMATION BECAUSE YOU'RE TOO BUSY SEEING IF YOU MEASURE UP.

2. **MIND READING** - WHEN YOU ARE MIND READING, YOU DON'T PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO WHAT IS BEING SAID. IN FACT, YOU OFTEN DISTRUST IT. YOU TRY TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THE PERSON IS *REALLY* THINKING AND FEELING. "SHE SAYS SHE WANTS TO GO TO THE MOVIE, BUT I'LL BET SHE'S TIRED AND WANTS TO RELAX. SHE MIGHT BE RESENTFUL IF I PUSHED HER WHEN SHE DOESN'T WANT TO GO." IF YOU ARE A MIND READER, YOU MAY BE MAKING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT HOW PEOPLE REACT TO YOU. "I BET HE'S LOOKING AT MY LOUSY SKIN"... "SHE THINKS I'M STUPID"... "SHE'S TURNED OFF BY MY SHYNESS." THESE NOTIONS COME FROM YOUR HUNCHES AND VAGUE MISGIVINGS, BUT HAVE LITTLE TO DO WITH WHAT THE PERSON ACTUALLY SAYS TO YOU.

3. **REHEARSING** - IF YOU ARE REHEARSING WHAT TO SAY, YOU DON'T HAVE TIME TO LISTEN. YOU'RE WHOLE ATTENTION IS ON THE PREPARATION AND CRAFTING OF YOUR NEXT COMMENT. YOU MAY *LOOK* INTERESTED, BUT YOUR MIND IS GOING A MILE A MINUTE BECAUSE YOU HAVE A POINT TO MAKE. SOME PEOPLE REHEARSE WHOLE CHAINS OF RESPONSES: "I'LL SAY, THEN HE'LL SAY, THEN I'LL SAY" AND SO ON.

ACTIVE LISTENING IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT IN ANY ATTEMPT AT COMMUNICATING.

THE NEXT SECTION WILL ADDRESS WAYS OF AVOIDING PASSIVE LISTENING AND HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS.

EFFECTIVE LISTENING IS MUCH MORE THAN SITTING STILL WITH YOUR MOUTH SHUT. IN ORDER TO FULLY UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF A COMMUNICATION, YOU MUST ASK QUESTIONS AND GIVE FEEDBACK. YOU MUST GO BEYOND PASSIVELY ABSORBING; YOU MUST COLLABORATE IN THE PROCESS IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

A. PARAPHRASING - TO STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS WHAT YOU THINK SOMEONE JUST SAID. THIS KEEPS YOU BUSY TRYING TO UNDERSTAND INSTEAD OF LETTING YOUR MIND DO OTHER THINGS. YOU CAN BEGIN A PARAPHRASE WITH LEAD-INS SUCH AS "WHAT I HEAR YOU SAYING IS..." OR "IN OTHER WORDS..." THE ADVANTAGES TO PARAPHRASING ARE:

- 1. PEOPLE DEEPLY APPRECIATE FEELING HEARD.
- 2. IT STOPS ESCALATING ANGER AND COOLS DOWN CRISIS.
- 3. IT STOPS MISCOMMUNICATION BECAUSE FALSE ASSUMPTIONS, ERRORS, AND MISINTERPRETATIONS ARE CORRECTED ON THE SPOT.
- 4. IT HELPS YOU REMEMBER WHAT WAS SAID.
- 5. IT PREVENTS THE USE OF MOST LISTENING BLOCKS.

THIS SOUNDS SO SIMPLE, YET MOST PEOPLE DO NOT LEARN HOW TO LISTEN EFFECTIVELY BECAUSE IT IS NOT TAUGHT IN SCHOOLS. MOST OF US LEARN TO LISTEN BY WATCHING OTHERS (AND THERE ARE LOTS OF BAD EXAMPLES).

B. CLARIFICATION - TO ASK QUESTIONS UNTIL YOU GET MORE OF THE PICTURE. ASKING FOR MORE INFORMATION OR BACKGROUND HELPS US TO UNDERSTAND MORE FULLY WHAT IS BEING SAID. IT ALSO SENDS THE MESSAGE TO THE OTHER PERSON THAT YOU ARE INTERESTED.

C. SUMMARIZING - AT THE END OF THE COMMUNICATION, YOU STATE IN YOUR OWN WORDS THE MAIN THING BEING SAID. ONCE AGAIN, THIS SERVES TO PREVENT MISUNDERSTANDINGS BECAUSE ANY WRONG IDEAS CAN BE CORRECTED ON THE SPOT.

D. FEEDBACK - NOW THAT YOU HAVE PARAPHRASED, CLARIFIED, AND SUMMARIZED, YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS SAID. THIS IS WHEN YOU CAN TALK ABOUT YOUR REACTIONS. IN A NON-JUDGMENTAL WAY, YOU CAN SHARE WHAT YOUR THOUGHT, FELT, OR SENSED INSIDE YOU. THIS IS ALSO A GOOD TIME TO ASSIST THE OTHER PERSON IN UNDERSTANDING

COMMUNICATION

PURPOSE

THE PURPOSE OF THIS COMMUNICATION MODULE IS TO PROVIDE THE READER WITH STRATEGIES THAT WILL HELP IMPROVE LISTENING SKILLS, VERBAL EXPRESSION, AND OTHER COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATION, INCLUDING BODY LANGUAGE, ASSERTIVENESS, SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS (E.G. PROXIMICS), AND THE RULES FOR EFFECTIVE EXPRESSION OF THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS. ALL OF THESE BIG WORDS WILL BE EXPLAINED MORE FULLY DURING THE NEXT FIVE SESSIONS BY MEANS OF ROLE-PLAYING, WORKSHEETS, AND HOMEWORK.

DEFINITION

COMMUNICATION IS GENERALLY THOUGHT OF AS TELLING SOMETHING TO SOMEONE AND THEN HAVING THAT PERSON RESPOND BY DOING SOMETHING, SAYING SOMETHING, AND/OR NODDING, AMONG OTHER THINGS.

WEBSTER DICTIONARY DEFINES COMMUNICATION AS THE ACT OF EXPRESSING ONESELF EFFECTIVELY. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION REQUIRES THAT THE PERSON:

- A. MAINTAINS GOOD EYE CONTACT
- B. LEANS SLIGHTLY FORWARD
- C. LISTENS ACTIVELY
- D. BE COMMITTED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS BEING SAID REGARDLESS OF THEIR EMOTIONAL STATE, AND
- E. BE OPEN, FLEXIBLE, AND EMPATHIC TO WHAT IS BEING SAID.

MOST ATTEMPTS AT COMMUNICATING INCLUDE ONE OR MORE OF THE ABOVE MENTIONED COMPONENTS. HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF THE FAILURE TO INCLUDE ALL OF THE COMPONENTS IN EVERY COMMUNICATION EFFORT, MOST PEOPLE TEND TO NOT EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE THEIR FEELINGS, THOUGHTS, OPINIONS, ETC.

I. ACTIVE LISTENING

MOST OF YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED SITUATIONS IN WHICH ONE OF YOUR PARENTS TELL YOU TO DO SOMETHING, TO LATER ON FIND OUT THAT YOU FORGOT WHAT THEY TOLD YOU. MANY OF THESE SITUATIONS OCCUR WHEN EITHER YOU OR YOUR PARENT IS DOING SOMETHING ELSE (E.G., RUNNING OUT THE DOOR, WATCHING T.V., TALKING ON THE PHONE, ETC.). IN SUCH A SITUATION, ALTHOUGH PEOPLE HEARD EACH OTHER'S WORDS (PASSIVE LISTENING), NOBODY WAS ACTIVELY LISTENING TO WHAT THE MESSAGE WAS.