

“Do You Hear Me?”: Introduction to Effective Communication

Overview: There are many aspects of communication and this session touches only briefly on a few. In this session, students will learn about basic communication techniques. They will learn how to use I-messages and to listen actively, as well as to think about communicating without words.

Category: Communication

Level: Explore

Learning Goals:

- To understand how to be assertive, yet non-offensive using I-Messages
- To learn the importance of listening and practice active listening
- To practice communicating in other forms

Materials:

- Listening Skills Poster
- I-Messages Poster
- Charades cards
- 2 sets of Tinker Toys
- Bandanas
- Scenario cards
- Dry Erase Board/Newsprint
- Markers

How to Prepare:

- Be familiar with the types of I-Messages and be prepared to offer examples to the students

How to Do/ Brief Outline:

The outline has the following parts:

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|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Charades | suggested time 5 minutes |
| 2. I-Statements and Listening | suggested time 35 minutes |
| 3. Tinker Toy Creation | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 4. Birthday Line-Up | suggested time 10 minutes |

Part 1) Charades

Suggested time: 5 minutes

1. Instruct students to come up one at a time
2. Give each student a card and instruct them to silently act out what is on the card
3. The rest of the group should try to guess what it is that the student is acting out
4. The student who successfully guesses what is on the card, based on the acting, wins a piece of candy
5. Continue until all students have been actors
6. Ask students, "what was required of the group to make the game of charades work?"
 - a. Try to guide answers to focus on communication, shared language, etc.

Part 2) I-Statements and Listening

Suggested time: 35 minutes

1. Gather students in semi-circle around board
2. Explain, "One method to exhibit assertiveness in conversation with others is "I-Messages""
3. Reveal I-Message poster to students
4. There are four types of I-Messages
 - a. **Declarative** – tells others about you by stating your thoughts, feelings, and ideas
 - b. **Responsive** – used to say "yes" or "no" to requests of you by others
 - c. **Preventative** – helps to prevent potential future conflicts
 - d. **Confrontive** – tells others that their behavior is keeping you from meeting your needs
5. Give examples of each one and allow students to ask questions
6. Explain, "Just as important as it is for you to understand how to assert yourself and your needs in conversation, is it also important that you understand how to be a good listener."
7. Reveal Active Listening poster to students
8. There are two major types of listening
 - a. **Passive** – includes being there, being quiet, and being attentive
 - b. **Active** – is used mostly for problem solving and requires possible paraphrasing and questioning
 - c. Active listening can and should be used in conjunction with passive listening techniques
9. Instruct students to get into pairs
10. Give each pair scenario cards
11. Instruct students to read their cards and act out the scenarios using I-Messages and Active Listening
12. After each scenario, have the rest of the group describe the major message being communicated, which type of I-Message was used, and how each participant may have improved on their communication in the situation

Part 3) Tinker Toy Creation

Suggested time: 10 minutes

1. Explain, "It is also important when communicating, to be clear and concise. You need to be detailed enough to get your point across. But, as they say, if someone asks what time it is, you don't need to tell them how the watch was made."
2. Ask for two volunteers from the group
3. Instruct the two volunteers to sit back to back on the floor in front of the group
4. Ask the pair to decide who will be the requestor and who will be the responder
5. The requestor will have 3 minutes to build a creation out of tinker toys
6. The responder may not look at the creation; he/she must keep her back to the requestor
7. After the 3 minute limit, the responder will have 5 minutes to build the exact creation out of tinker toys, without looking at the creation
8. The responder may ask questions of the requestor and the requestor may answer them, but may not turn around and help the responder
9. The group may not help the responder
10. After the 5 minute limit, the responder and requestor may look at each other's work
11. Lead the group in discussion:
 - a. What was difficult for each individual during that exercise?
 - b. What was easy?
 - c. How could this scenario been improved upon by each person?

Part 4) Birthday Line-Up

Suggested time: 10 minutes

1. Explain, "For our closing exercise, we will briefly explore non-verbal communication"
2. Instruct students that they are not allowed to talk during the exercise; students caught talking (even making noises) will be blindfolded in addition to being mute
3. Explain that the students are to line up in a shoulder-to-shoulder line in the order of their birthdays WITHOUT TALKING OR MAKING NOISE
4. After the exercise, debrief:
 - a. What was hard?
 - b. What ways did you find to communicate besides talking?
 - c. How might you do this differently if I had let you plan ahead?

Credits:

1. Adams, Linda. Be Your Best: Participant Workbook. Effectiveness Training International, 1995.