

## MODULE II: Homework Communication

Often the most powerful tools are those that are taken most for granted. If you were to consider every situation that can and often has gone wrong between people, ineffective communication of one kind or another was responsible. Conversely, anything that goes right between people is a direct or indirect result of effective, positive, and helping communication.

Why is it, then, when we begin to talk about “communication skills,” heavy sighs and audible “ho-hums” are evident? Probably because we have been communicating since the moment of birth, believing that we are doing a pretty fair job. When problems do arise because of how we communicate, we generally hold others responsible: they didn’t listen, they don’t understand, they always have to have their own way, etc. Since this is the way in which we have always done it, it must be the right way.

Communication can be complicated by many factors. Speech, language and sensory deficits are fairly obvious but frequently overlooked. Cultural differences may be less obvious but no less important. The emotional valence can also complicate communication. We may have to deal with such difficult questions as “Why should I go on?” “Am I going to die?” “I’m so lonely. Why doesn’t anyone come to see me?” “I’m not good for anything anymore; they want to put me in the nursing home.”

Sometimes we feel inadequate to deal with those kinds of feelings. Sometimes we are trying to adjust to our own feelings about growing old, and sometimes our best efforts are ignored. Sometimes we see only minimal progress, and sometimes we see none.

The first step toward enhancing communication may be taken with very little fanfare. It can begin with an understanding of the concept of EMPATHY, a concept at the core of effective communication. Empathy is the quality of thinking and feeling about a situation from another’s point of view. In the communication process, empathy means that the sender of message should first consider who will receive it even before it is formulated. What is the level of understanding of the receiver? What is the sender’s attitude toward the receiver and the message? What other things might the receiver have on his mind?

A second element in the communicating more effectively is to become more familiar with your own response to certain stress-provoking situations. Each of us, as individuals, can tolerate different situations and different amounts of stress. Further, we all define our DIS-stressors differently. It takes a fair amount of honesty and self-study to recognize and acknowledge those situations. We must then take steps to either change the way in which we react, change the situation, or know when to react.

Listening is the third area in which skill building will yield great and swift reward. We at least start out with some degree of listening ability. The challenge is to move from a passive to a more active role so that our listening becomes more effective. It is probably the single most useful skill to have. It is also an easy skill to learn. The difficulty comes in applying what you have learned.

## **10 COMMON ERRORS IN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION**

1. Asking a question instead of making a statement: “Don’t you think that...”
2. Making a statement instead of asking for what you want or need, e.g., “I wish you ...
3. Using “I Can’t” to mean “I won’t” or “I don’t want to.”
4. Using words like “I guess,” “I think,” or “maybe” when you are sure.
5. Blaming your feelings on someone else.
6. Interrupting someone when he is speaking, which usually means you aren’t listening.
7. Using statements like “always” or “never” to support your point of view.
8. Making judgment about a person instead of offering feedback about behavior.
9. Discounting some aspect of a situation.
10. Operating from a win or lose framework s instead of cooperating as equals.

### DID YOU KNOW ...

10% of what we communicate is through words or speech

40% is through our tone of voice

50% is through body language.