

MODULE #1: RECEIVING INFORMATION

- Perceptual positions → understanding situation from different perspectives
 1. First position: experiencing the situation from my own point of view → it involves seeing, hearing and feeling the situation through your own eyes and emotions
 2. Second position: experiencing the situation as if you are the other person → you imagine stepping into the shoes of the other person and looking at the situation from their perspective
 3. Third position: stepping back and experiences the situation as an observer
- The receiver → 2nd position
- To effectively receive and understand information from another person you need to put yourself in their position
- You are attempting to understand the situation that the other person is trying to communicate to you
- You are looking beyond the behaviour and getting in touch with the thoughts, feelings, experiences and assumptions of the person
- What a person is doing and saying makes sense from their perspective and can be seen as normal
- In receiving information you are attempting to join with the person and communicating your understanding to them → hopefully they will be more likely to feel reassured that you do understand
- Based on your understanding of how the other person is affected → you will be in a position to choose how to deal with the situation

TOPIC #1: MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

DEFINING COMMUNICATION

- “communication is the process of making sense out of the world and sharing that sense with others by creating meaning through the use of verbal and nonverbal messages” (Beebe et al., 2008)
- There are three points to consider about communication
 1. It is impossible not to communicate
 2. Communication can be intentional and unintentional, and it is prone to misinterpretation and misunderstanding
 3. Effective communication requires skill and effort

- Placating:
 - You want people to like you → you agree with everything
 - You may half-listen, just enough to get the drift, but you are not really involved
 - You are placating rather than tuning in and examining what is being said

ATTENDING SKILLS (NON-VERBAL)

- Our nonverbal behaviour plays an important role in conveying that we are listening
- Useful types of nonverbal attending skills (use acronym SOLER + GPA to help remember)
- Posture: A posture of involvement is a very important component of effective listening →
- **Squarely**: the listener should face the other person squarely → allows the listener to be at eye level with speaker and demonstrates involvement
- **Open body language**: maintain an open position → arms and legs uncrossed
- **Lean**: they should lean slightly forward → communicate energy and attention
- **Eye contact and gaze**: maintaining eye contact with the speaker → demonstrated interest and allowing the listener to collect facial information
- **Relaxed facial expression**: the listener should have a friendly and relaxed facial expression → should adjust their facial expression to reflect what the other person is saying
- **Gestures**: the head nod gesture is used to indicate attention and interest → small head nods show continual attention and larger nods indicate agreement
- **Proximity**: the listener should not be positioned too close or too far away from the speaker → degree of physical proximity that is considered appropriate depends on your relationship to the other person
- **Avoid Distractions**: actively move away from distractions → that the other person has your full attention

FOLLOWING SKILLS (VERBAL)

- The primary role of the listener is to take the second position and focus on and encourage the speaker
- A useful set of skills to assist in “following” the speaker include door openers, minimal encouragers, open questions and empathic silences (use acronym DIME to remember)
- **Door openers**: A door opener is an invitation to talk and suggests to the speaker that you are ready and willing to listen → elements of door openers may include a description of the speaker’s body language, a verbal invitation, and/or attending behaviour
- **Infrequent and open questions**: the use of open questions at appropriate points can facilitate a conversation and encourage the speaker to continue

- Intentional inefficiency → compliance but in a sub-standard manner (e.g., agree to unpack the dishwasher, but leave it on the counter – “I didn’t know where they went”)
- Allowing a problem to escalate → using inaction to allow a foreseeable problem to emerge (e.g., returning a borrowed car with no petrol)
- Hidden but conscious revenge → sabotage (i.e., knowing that you have to be gone at a certain time but not saying anything)
- Self-depreciation → self-sabotage to hurt another
- Sarcasm
- Chronic lateness/forgetting
- Sulking/withdrawing
- Making excuses
- Blame → always someone/thing else’s fault
- Peace keeping
- These behaviours occur with more traditionally passive behaviours, including:
 - Being non-confrontational
 - Avoiding hurting others
 - Viewing ‘other’ as more important
 - Feeling powerless
 - Low self esteem
 - Being unable to say no
- Initially Win/Lose, but eventually Lose/Lose as no one gets their needs met

COMMUNICATING ASSERTIVELY WITH I-MESSAGES

- Westra (1996) defined directness as the ability to come straight to the point and suggests that people who speak directly tend to let others know exactly what they have in mind, with a minimum of ‘beating around the bush.’
- Being specific and concrete means that the sender is explicit and definite about what is being said through the use of tangible, observable and measurable terms
- Specific and concrete information is important because it helps increase the clarity of your message
- Concrete and specific terms are also more likely to convey your observations rather than interpretations
- Whilst the use of interpretations is not problematic in itself → when they are stated as facts rather than hypotheses they do become problematic

- Sometimes it is not possible for people to resolve the conflict themselves → third party mediation may be required
- A mediator → neutral, impartial guide who assists conflicting parties to find a mutually acceptable solution
- Mediation → structured, specific, and safe
- Mediators help disputants communicate, co-operate and be more confident
- Mediators do not make decisions for parties, judge who is right or wrong, take sides
- Guidelines for Mediation:
 - Ensure both parties agree to work with you
 - Assist in identifying the real conflict
 - Maintain neutrality
 - Focus discussion on the issue, not personalities
 - Ensure equal talk time
 - Focus discussion on finding solution
 - Use paraphrasing, perception checking to ensure both parties understand & support agreed-upon solution
 - Establish action plan & follow-up procedure

FORGIVENESS

- Another valuable tool in dealing with conflicts is forgiveness
- Forgiveness → letting go of feelings of revenge, desire to retaliate
- It's particularly relevant when the relationship is important to you
- It doesn't mean that you have to forget, condone or approve of the other person's behaviour
- It doesn't mean that trust will be immediately restored
- But it does allow you to deal with a situation from a position of strength → rather than vulnerability
- It's a personal decision that you make as a way of dealing positively with unjust treatment
- It will relieve the burden of some of the anger, anxiety & pain that goes with harbouring bad feelings towards someone
- Forgiveness is a 4-step process
 1. Admit feelings of anger in response to unjust treatment
 2. Decide/choose to forgive
 3. Engage in work of forgiveness (view actions from another perspective, take responsibility for actions)
 4. Experience benefits of forgiveness (happiness, peace, compassion, well-being)