

COMMUNICATION: PART I

Communication—everyone is doing it! No matter who you are or what you are doing, something is being said by behavior, language, or appearance. The big concern is HOW YOU EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE, learning WHAT you want/need to share, and HOW you reach the goal of personally increasing your self-awareness so that you are in control of YOUR communication. The novice (usually new to a situation or a less experienced person) TALKS AND BEHAVES. A true leader knows what they are SAYING THROUGH TALKING, BEHAVING, AND WHY! This ability to communicate needs to be nurtured and controlled with theoretical knowledge, gaining communication skills, and ultimately performing selective communication skills. This information will give you the skills to confidently transition from a communicating novice to a professional communicator.

One of the most important skills you can learn is the skill of listening. Listening places your body in an attention mode. In general, body language changes with a slight leaning forward, eyes on the person object, and non-verbal responses confirming that what is said is heard. Posturing and nodding your head as an attentive listener presents a correct listening stance. These behaviors are considered congruent with the process of active listening.

Listening also means that the person doing the listening watches for the congruency of the person talking. Note the differences (if any) between what is verbally said and what the body movement and posturing are saying. A person heard correctly is harmonious in the message. That is, verbal and nonverbal are considered in agreement, according to the culture of the individual.

Example: Suppose a person laughs while reprimanding someone verbally and perhaps raising a fist to hit that person simultaneously. In that case, there is an incongruence in the combined message and behavior. Such a lack of unity between verbal communication (laughing) and an accompanying action (hitting) brings the listener's attention to two confusing forces—happiness and anger. Such incongruence that sends overt mixed messages presents a potential mental disturbance or instability. Missed messages confuse the listener; therefore, if possible, the listener must scrutinize the behavior and the spoken word to understand the intended communication/message.

Two simple verbal communications (Reflection and Paraphrasing):

Verbal communication is a form of sound, and the sound can be a sigh, a moan, a scream, or simple, soft, loud, mean, gently spoken words. A person who utters a sound orally can be considered a form of verbal communication.

Some specific and therapeutic verbal communication skills that lend themselves to practical use are Reflection and Paraphrasing. Reflection mirrors what you have heard by repeating one or more words with no additional comments. Paraphrasing is to restate what you think you have verbally heard about what is said. Then, watch and listen to the response. Is there validation that you truly understood what was said, or does clarification need to occur?

Example of Paraphrasing: When someone says, "I am cold." Your paraphrasing response might be, "You don't have enough heat in your room because it is a freezing day outside." Remember, this is not a question—it is a statement. Your comment does not require a "yes" or "no" from the person making a

statement. A restatement in your own words allows the other person to respond to the accuracy of your understanding.

Part II will present the ability to watch behavior, comment on witnessed behavior, and watch and listen to the response. This skill is one of the most exciting and useful communication skills in leadership behavior.

See you next week!

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