

Communication & Relationship Competencies

Greater Hayward House of Hope Courses

Attitude: Maintains a friendly, positive, and enthusiastic outlook.

1. Project Enthusiasm (when you engage, fully engage)
Discuss what it looks like to not fully and enthusiastically engage with others
Discuss an example of fully engaging with others
Discuss the benefit of fully engaging with others
2. Engage listeners with your posture and vocal inflections
Discuss examples of engaging posture and vocal inflections
Discuss the benefits of attentive posture and vocal inflections
3. Project a positive attitude with your words (count blessings, wins, strengths, etc)
Discuss examples of speaking positive words
Discuss the effect positive words have in relationship building
4. Be realistic and honest, but finish with hope (Psalms)
Exercise: Read Psalm 42, then discuss the following questions:
 - a) Quoting the text, what are some ways the Psalmist expresses honest pain and grief?
 - b) Quoting the text, what are ways the Psalmist expresses statements of hope?
 - c) How might you be able to use this pattern to prevent a negative attitude from overwhelming your soul?

Communication: Practices active listening as a part of their relevant oral and written information.

1. Use active listening (when appropriate) before speaking
Note: Exercises for this lesson appear after #4 in this section

Question: How would you define active listening or mirroring in the nutshell?
2. Determine what kind of message or action others are wanting (Communication Triage)
Note: Exercises for this lesson appear after #4 withing the Listening/Mirroring lesson
3. Check your emotions (definition = blurting out unfiltered statements loaded with emotion that does not fit the situation or help communication and relationship building)

Discuss: What are ways that unchecked emotional reactions could hinder relationship building?

Discuss: How might 'checking our emotions' lead to clear and helpful communication and relationship strengthening?

Discuss: What is your experience with 'checking your emotions'? How do you do that?

4. Engage with the current flow of thought.

Insight: Interrupting the flow of conversation occurs when new and unconnected thoughts are presented before the subject discussed is concluded. If one abruptly introduces thoughts not relevant to the current topic, it may send an unhelpful signal.

Question: What signal might you (unintentionally) send to others when you interrupt the current flow of conversation with unrelated subject matter?

Helpful Insight: If you have a pressing thought that is not related to what is being discussed, write it down so you do not forget it, then bring it up at a more appropriate time.

5. Present ideas clearly and concisely

Exercise (for #1 &2): As a group work through the listening skills (AKA Mirroring) located in Appendix in the back of this packet. This exercise may take one or two lessons. Mirroring is a valuable skill applicable to many areas of life, so don't rush through this lesson. Communication Triage is included in this lesson located in the Appendix.

Exercise (for #5): Read the following statements and discuss ways in which the message be made shorter (more concise), without losing the core message.

Specifics: Underline the main message (hint = its only 13 words) and cross out extra thoughts

Question from new acquaintance:

"What are you thinking of doing for a career when you complete the program?"

Answer:

First, I must see if my relationship with my girlfriend is going to work out. That will tell me where I will live. Then I need to see about getting auto insurance and a car. I think I will check with my former employers and see if any of them are open to hiring me short term. Long term, I think I would like to get into welding, which I really enjoy. But I have an opportunity to drive a bus for a few months until I figure things out. I also really like my temp work of lawn care. That is cool. But I guess we will see what happens.

Professionalism: Projects an image of honesty, confidence, and integrity that fosters credibility.

1. Write directives and appointments on a calendar (or list) and follow through
Discuss: What is a method of tracking appointments that might work for you? What are some methods you have not tried, but may work better than your current method?

2. Be honest with yourself and others
 - a. Be cautious and thoughtful before making agreements or promises

Discuss: Can you think of examples in which you were not thoughtful before making a commitment. What message does it send when we do not follow through with our agreements?

Discuss: What are reasons people make commitments too quickly? (example = a need to please those who ask for help)

- b. Prioritize your commitments

Discuss: What does it look like in everyday life to prioritize a commitment/agreement? Give examples.

Discuss: Many high achievers pause and think through their current obligations before they give an answer to the person asking for a commitment.

3. Consider the goals of your employer, see from the owners/manager's perspective
Question: How might seeing things through your employers' eyes help you succeed

Question: Why do many treat their employers as an adversary? How might that affect your success, promotion opportunities, or references/reputation?

4. Adhere to professional standards and norms (speech, dress, language norms etc)
Discuss: Why does this matter? How does this affect the way people view you?

Initiative: Proactively makes things happen. Evaluates and takes corrective action with self and others.

1. Commit to continuous improvement
Discuss: What are the habits of lifelong learners?

Discuss: What benefits might result from intentional, ongoing growth?

Discuss: What prevents us from ongoing learning, and what is the result?

2. Persuade others to take positive action, begin with modeling

Note: Negativity may spread like a virus among groups of people. However, injecting positive thoughts into that group will sometimes break the negative downward spiral making room for good and helpful interactions.

3. Never act helpless, don't give up

Quitting and **self-pity** are two negative reactions that can hinder a person's life. They also negatively impact the others.

Note: One way to combat these two unhelpful reactions to difficult situations is to plan for how you will react when faced with future difficulties.

Discuss: What are ways to prepare ourselves for future difficulties? (hint = self-talk & learning to see the bigger picture)

4. When you feel stuck, take one small action step, and ask for help or clarification when necessary

Question: What is one example of taking a small action step when facing difficult circumstances?

Interpersonal Skills: Consistently builds strong, long-term relationships both inside and outside the organization.

1. Remember names

Question: What signal is sent by remembering names?

Question: What are some methods that can be used to remembering names?

2. Put yourself in the place of others and celebrate their successes

Discuss: What are some hindrances to putting ourselves in the place of others? (hint) this often has to do with our mindset and emotional health.

3. Be a safe person (no gossip or breaking confidences)

Read: 2 Cor 12:20 and Eph 4:29

Discuss: What do we learn about gossip and slander from these passages? What does (Eph 4:29) mean by "building others up?"

4. Use your governor - Be thoughtful rather than blurting out your first impulses, and present communication content appropriate to the relationship and context (note, this was discussed above)

5. Don't force your hobby horse issue or personal agenda into conversations
Discuss: What are examples of forcing hobby horse issues into conversation?

Discuss: What might lead a person to regularly force their hobby horse issue into conversation?

Discuss: What might be some solutions to avoid doing this?

(Hint = breaking this habit could require learning to see both sides of issues and gaining depth of understanding. For others, it may mean learning that God has control of the universe, and the sky won't fall if you don't convince everyone of your viewpoint)

6. Respect boundaries and respectfully hold boundaries
7. Creating Equal Exchanges

An equal relationship exchange means that in conversations you share things with others, but you also learn about them.

Challenge / Question: Think about the last few conversations you had with others. Did you learn anything about them? Were you interested in their life or were you simply looking for an opportunity to talk about your life and concerns.

Note: If you come away from a conversation in which you shared many things but did not take the time to ask questions about the other person's life, that conversation was probably taxing to the other person. That is a one-sided interaction and is not a true relationship. True, healthy relationships give and as much as they take. Concern and interest are demonstrated by both parties.

Action Step: In every conversation you have today, set the goal for yourself to ask at least one question and discover something about that person, showing concern and support when appropriate.

Stress Management: Differentiates between dynamic tension and negative stress and maintains productive behaviors in difficult situations.

1. Increase your emotional health

Discuss: What is the connection between regulating our emotions and stress management?

Discuss: What are some of the factors involved in regulating our emotions?

(hint = it may have something to do with addressing unresolved issues that have stacked up on us) (Note: these issues are addressed in the course Emotional Healthy Spirituality)

2. Do not get “hooked” easily (but hurt is not helpful)

Discuss: What are some helpful ways to prevent getting easily triggered/ hooked

(hint = some find it helpful to notice when our emotions get hooked in a conversation, and then asking God to show us where this strong emotion is really coming from. Sometime unresolved issues related to the topic being discussed are the real source of inner conflict)

3. Manage stress and minimize worry

Discuss: What are some useful ways people can manage stress?

4. Handle conflict diplomatically

Discuss: What does this look like?

(hint = stick with the issue, peaceably present your best argument, and let the best argument win)

- a. Stay away from win/lose arguments.
- b. Stay away from labeling others and guessing motives on others. Give room for people to disagree without you getting personally insulted.
- c. Do you need others to agree with you to be okay? (If so, stop it!)

5. Learn how to handle setbacks

Discuss: What are ways that you have been able to overcome setbacks?

Discuss: How might counting our blessings help overcome setbacks?

Discuss: How might taking one positive step help overcome setbacks?

Appendix One

Listening Skills & Mirroring

INTRODUCTION

In this lesson we will be exploring listening skills. I prefer the term *active listening*. Rather than just sitting there, 'active' listening indicates there are proactive steps you can take while engaging in conversations. The benefit is that active listening strengthens relationships and helps your performance in the workplace and while ministering to others.

GOOD INTENTIONS

Good intentions don't always translate into effective ministry. A person came to me for pastoral care in my first year of vocational ministry. I listened to about two sentences before interrupting her. I felt in those two sentences I had a good understanding of her problem. I spent several minutes giving her unsolicited advice. Soon I realized by her negative reaction she was not seeking advice. She wanted someone to understand her, show compassion, and pray for her. I had good intentions, but I did not have the right approach or skills.

The skills we will review today can help turn good intentions into helpful interactions. Let's begin by looking at some things that get in the way of relationships. Let's call them verbal villains.

VERBAL VILLAINS

- Verbal Villain: **Looking past** the person you were supposed to listen to
- Verbal Villain: **Waiting your turn to speak**
- Martin Buber Quote: When we look past the person with whom we are speaking, or think about our response without listening, we are doing what Buber called; *Speaking to an audience of one*.

THE EFFECT OF VERBAL VILLAINS

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- We send a signal that the person is not as important as the other things we are looking past them to see
- We send a signal that their ideas are in competition with, or less significant than our own ideas.

MIRRORING

Verbal villains and poor listening skills get in the way of relationships.

One of the skills that can help build relationships is called mirroring. Mirroring comes from the word mirror. In a relationship context, mirroring is reflecting back to a person what they said.

Mirroring helps the speaker know that he or she has been heard and understood.

Mirroring also helps us get good and accurate information.

In every conversation there are two elements present:

1. CONTENT - what the person is talking about
2. FEELINGS - how the person feels about it

Mirroring is repeating back to the person speaking a **condensed** version of the content and feelings communicated. This is called paraphrasing.

- The most difficult part is leaving out your opinions
- Your opinions will mean more when you have complete information
- The goal is to gain complete and accurate information
- Mirroring demonstrates respect for others rather than applauding our knowledge

ATTENDING SKILLS:

Another relationship building skill is attending. Attending is showing a person with your body language that you are listening.

STORY: Many years ago, I was interviewing for a management position. The district manager interviewing me was yawning, looking at his watch and shuffling papers. I wanted to get up and walk out of the room. His body language told me that I meant nothing to him.

ATTENDING SKILL BASICS:

1. keep **at least** as much eye contact as the speaker
2. Try to **copy** the body language of the speaker
3. look interested. If you are not interested, fake it and pray for help.

SUMMARY OF MIRRORING

Common mistakes in mirroring

- Poor attending skills (or body language)
- You sound good, but you look as if you could not care less
- Rushing in to give cheap advice
- Talk about content only, ignoring feelings
- Shifting attention to yourself
- No energy
- Start sliding into Verbal Villain responses
- Using mirroring when it is not the best method to use

HOW TO USE MIRRORING WELL

- Use good attending skills.
- Listen closely to what is said and how it is said.
- Watch for nonverbal clues to feeling.
- Remember the content (what the other person is talking about) and the feelings (how they feel about what they are talking about).
- Respond. In what you say, summarizing both content and feelings.
- Respond to what you hear, but nothing more (time for that later).

WHEN TO USE MIRRORING

- To begin or develop a relationship.
- When you find it difficult to understand what another person means by what they say.

- When someone comes to you seeking encouragement.
- To clarify instructions from another person (such as a supervisor)

WHEN NOT TO USE MIRRORING

- When the other person is only seeking information or needs immediate action. (Example: What time is it? Can you help pull me out of the ditch?)
- When the other person is inappropriate, or abusive.
- When the other person talks too much.
- When the other person is not in touch with reality, is suicidal, or intoxicated.
- When mirroring no longer produces new information.

RELATIONSHIP TRIAGE

What is triage?

- Relationship Triage (in this context) is quickly diagnosing what the person you are speaking with needs from you.
- Triage will help you decide whether you should encourage, pray, listen or offer some other type of physical assistance to others.

FIVE CATEGORIES OF COACHING TRIAGE

Most communication transactions fit into one of the following five categories.

- Request for physical help. **PH**
- Request for information. **RI**
- Inappropriate interaction. **I.I.**
- Anger. **Ang**
- Request for understanding / Involvement. **UI**

What is the most clearly expressed need in each of these examples?

(__) Will you give me a ride home?

(__) What day is the next meeting?

- () You just don't know what it is like to be in my situation.
- () I guess I wonder if I should be doing something else with my life.
- () Will you help me turn back the mileage on my car?
- () This %@!&# is getting sickening. I'm sick tired of doing all the jobs that other people should be helping with!

There are times I catch myself ready to give information to someone who simply wants to vent anger or have someone understand them. There are times I want to jump in with advice when the best thing I could do is listen and perhaps coach a person so they can solve their own issues with The Holy Spirit's guidance.

EXERCISE: BASIC MIRRORING

(Review: Content, feelings, paraphrasing, and body language)

Exercise One: Model mirroring content and feelings

Exercise Two: participants practice the skill with others

FIVE INSIGHTS FOR LISTENING / MIRRORING

1. Proverbs 18:13 says, *"He who answers before listening — that is his folly and his shame."*
2. Listen more than you talk.
3. Listen for feelings as well as facts.
4. Listen beyond words for tone of voice and body language. *Communication is 7% words, 35% tone, 58% body language.*
5. Don't be afraid of silence. A "pregnant pause" can give birth to great insights!