

Hello. I'd like to welcome everyone to our session today on "Interpersonal Communication: Social Skills for Success." We're glad you're joining us whenever it is that you are listening and watching this session.

My name is Katie Muhlhammer. I will be your behind-the-scenes technical moderator. And I do want to mention just three quick housekeeping items to help you make the most of your time, and then I'm going to introduce our presenter, who we're very glad to have presenting today's topic.

First, if you take a look on the left-hand side of your screen, you're going to see a couple options. One of those is Event Resources. We've got a copy of the presenter's slide deck uploaded, so you can feel free to download that pdf file of the slides if you'd like. We encourage you to do that at any point during this session.

We also have an Ask a Question box. I'll tell you a little more about that at the end, but if you have further questions on this topic, you can feel free to type that in there and send. And I do receive that via email, and typically within a couple days we're able to connect with the presenter and get some—some replies for you. So, I'll share a little more detail about that when we get to the end of today's presentation.

And finally, there's an FAQ, or Frequently Asked Questions, section. If you're having any issues, technical issues, if perhaps you're wondering if you'll receive any kind of certificate for attendance, you can scroll through that FAQ section to get some of those answers.

So, without further ado, we're very pleased to have Stephen Sandridge presenting today's topic. This is certainly a—a topic that's right up his alley, so to speak, so we're—we're glad he's available and able to present for us.

Stephen holds a bachelor of science degree in communications with a concentration in broadcasting from Toccoa Falls College in Georgia. He currently holds the position of team lead of the United States Intakes Team at Workplace Options. And he's been with Workplace Options for over six years. In his current position he oversees the production and quality of inbound phone staff and also provides for—for any intake-related issues or complaints that come in as well.

On a personal note, Stephen has four adopted children from Uganda, and he also probably knows the name of that guy in the movie that you're having a hard time remembering.

So, Stephen, we're glad you're here for today's topic on communication. So I'm going to go ahead and pass it to you now to get us started.

Thank you, Katie, and good morning, good day, good evening to anyone who is taking the time to view this presentation.

So today we're going to be looking to explore verbal and nonverbal communication to better understand how interpersonal communication may be interpreted by others. We are going to achieve that today in the following ways.

We'll understand the importance of effective communication.

We'll learn how to prevent sender–receiver disconnect.

We will identify the traits associated with active listening.

We'll discover what we call the SOLER model.

We'll establish important tips for verbal communication.

Consider how to manage your nonverbal cues.

And discover how to effectively communicate during conflict.

So, what is communication? What does it mean? Why is it important?

Communication is a complex activity involving many different elements. Between a quarter and half of your work week is spent in interpersonal communication of varying degrees and complexity. Given the amount of time you spend in those situations, even a slight improvement in one area of interpersonal communication skills, such as listening, could have a dramatic effect on your ability to effectively transmit and decode messages.

So, in today's society, many people engage in ineffective communication. They're either unable to effectively communicate their thoughts and opinions to others, or are unable to effectively listen to the message the speaker is giving. So, one of the three, I would say, types of communication that we're going to be exploring further here in a minute are verbal communication, which is what relates to what's being said. Paralinguistics. That relates to how something is said and includes the tone of voice, the volume or the speed of their speech. And then lastly, nonverbal communication, as that—and that relates to gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, body language, and clothes.

Next, we always want to be mindful of the form of the communication style. We're pretty much looking at one-way or two-way communication here. You know, one-way communication being where the speaker and/or the listener don't engage in communication, versus two-way communication where the speaker and listener—and the listener engage in communication together.

So, let's consider the verbal side of things from the perspective of a person actually speaking. How can we organize our thoughts about these verbal communication skills? It can help to break them down to their basic elements.

Voice tone is so basic that it can come into play even when you're not uttering words per se. Even when you simply make a sigh or a laugh, your voice tone modifies how it is likely to be interpreted. When you do use words, the tone in which you say them can make all the difference.

Speaking fast can convey an excited or an agitated feel. Speaking slower can convey a steady, reliable feel. Speaking very slow can let someone know that you're either bored or tired. If you've ever experienced someone speaking at a speed that is incongruent with the content of what they're saying, you know how this can stand out.

Volume can range from a whisper to a scream and everything in between. A very quiet voice can represent that you are sharing something you don't want overhead, that you're being mischievous, or that you are depressed. A very loud voice can express great joy or terror. And, on a personal note, as a father of four children, I can attest to that last sentence.

Depending on your position in the world and what you use communication for, you might want to put in the effort to learn a new language or two. But, it can also be helpful just to know some of the key phrases in some of the most commonly spoken languages around the world.

Next, with vocabulary, as a verbal communicator, your words are your toolbox. Your palette. Your set of ingredients. The more broad and diverse your vocabulary, the more effective you can be in expressing yourself to others. At the very least—very least, as you go about your day, if you hear a word that you don't quite know, take a few seconds to look it up. Over time, your vocabulary will gradually improve.

And last but not least, grammar. It is the set of rules for how words connect into phrases and phrases into sentences and so on. You could employ the

most impressive vocabulary on earth, but, if you put the words into an order incompatible with the rules of grammar, you will not sound very credible or convincing. And grammar varies from one language to another.

So, tips for verbal communication.

Expand your vocabulary. Invest time in reading more to help advance the spectrum of your vocabulary. Simply increasing what you read, whether that be business texts, novels, newspapers—they can help you express your ideas clearly and eliminate weaknesses in your language skills.

Be concise. Too many words will bore your listener, take up too much time, and result in you losing credibility. There's no need to waffle. Remember not to use words that people don't understand, and they may not even tell you they don't understand what you're saying, as you may appear intimidating and make them feel inferior.

Plan and prepare. You would spend time planning what you would say if you were writing. You would also think about how to make it accessible to as many readers as possible. If you know of an approaching situation, take time out to think about the questions you may be asked and what answers you may need to give. If you're delivering a presentation, you should be prepared for awkward questions and situations where you may need to explain something in a different way.

Choose to listen. Listening more and talking less means you will understand and bring your listener into the conversation. This helps them to trust you and make them feel that you really understand their needs.

And when they talk, be interested and show your interest. This will improve the rapport you are trying to build.

Use note—using note-taking skills like mind mapping can help you to take more effective and memorable notes.

Honesty. Honesty is the best policy. Promising something that is not possible will break down any trust that you have developed. Telling someone that you don't know but can find out is more positive than just trying to give an answer that you hope is effective.

Show and seek some understanding. Look for understanding from your audience. It's easier to backtrack at certain points in your conversation than revisit the whole conversation again. Or you risk getting the wrong results

because your audience did not understand. You can use this when delivering or receiving messages. Occasional summaries and confirmational questions can be extremely useful.

And lastly, consider others' perspectives. Think about what you're saying from the other person's perspective. Just because you understand what you mean doesn't mean that they will.

So, Katie, I believe we have a poll.

Thanks so much, Stephen. I'm going to go ahead and send this out. This is just a quick opportunity whenever everyone is—is listening is, you can simply just see the survey, that—that poll, pop up on your screen. You can do a quick "you agree or disagree" with the following statement: "It's not what you say but how you say it that has the greatest impact." So take a moment. This is all anonymous. Simply put "agree" or "disagree." And then once you submit that survey, you'll be able to see the results of where others who have listened in to today's session, where they fall along those lines.

So thank you for participating if you've chosen to do that. And I'm going to go ahead and pass it back to you, Stephen.

Thank you, Katie.

So, let's move on to nonverbal communication. Communication that, you know, makes meaning without words, that permeates every part of our lives. As we stated before, communication can, you know, nonverbal communication can account for many things. You have facial expressions, gestures, even your pauses even, when you're not speaking. But if you're having a difficult time communicating, sometimes just a genuine smile can alleviate the pressure of miscommunication. But, yes, what you don't say can—can make all the difference despite what you are saying.

Words can mislead, but the body does not lie. How others sense or perceive you significantly impacts your success in the workplace. Otherwise brilliant people with great ideas and exceptional talent are often misjudged, mislabeled, and overlooked because of their ineffective nonverbal communication. Because nonverbal cues are primarily from the emotional brain rather than the neocortex, they create more honest and revealing messages. Nonverbal cues can help business people determine others' motivations and analyze business interactions with much more

richness and depth and insight than can come from simply relying on spoken or printed words.

So, dealing with the basics of nonverbal communication. We're going to look at these four tips here, starting with congruence, which—congruence occurs when a person's words, tone, and body language match. When there is incongruence, use body language, not words, as your default interpretation.

The big picture. Look at the bigger picture and perceive behavior holistically. Gestures or individual movements should not be viewed in a vacuum. Two or three movements will likely illuminate what the person is really feeling.

Context plays a big part in nonverbal communication. For example, most people are going to be more relaxed and open at an informal meeting than they will be at a negotiating table.

Track changes in body language and what precedes them. For example, if a person's body language turns closed when you ask them to take action, it may signal they're uncomfortable with your request.

Nonverbal messages are split into two categories, positive and negative. Positive signals are those which suggest openness, acceptance, and comfort. Negative signals send a message of discomfort, distrust, or indifference.

Now, dealing with sender–receiver disconnect. We're going to look at some information about the causes of that and how to help prevent it.

We'll be starting with barriers. So, there are these barriers that inhabit—inhibit, excuse me—effective communication. Some examples of communication barriers are listed here.

Language differences. There are so many different languages in this world. The barrier occurs when one person is not familiar with the other person's language and therefore is unable to communicate with them.

Cultural differences. Each culture has its own practices and traditions. In some areas, like the United States and Germany, it's common for people to be aggressive and assertive when speaking, whereas in places like Japan, people are more passive and soft-spoken when speaking. These differences can interfere with communicating effectively. One way to break

this barrier is to learn more about the culture of the person you are having interaction with and adapt your communication style accordingly.

Physical structures. Now, these are usually due to the environment. It may be that your staff are located in two separate buildings, or that there's a shortage of staff members in an organization, for example.

And communications. With the constant advancement of technology, communication can become inhibited in some ways. For example, a person who is not able to keep up with the latest gadgets and cell phones and computers may have trouble communicating with others. A key component of communicating effectively is to realize that there are barriers that exist in communication and to do what you can to overcome them.

Next we have a quote here from Stephen Covey. "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." This is from *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. This is habit number 5, for those of you keeping count.

Communication is the most important skill in life. You spend years learning how to read and write, and years learning how to speak. But what about listening? What training have you had that enables you to listen so you really deeply understand another human being? Probably none, right?

You filter everything you hear through your life experiences and your frame of reference. You check what you hear against your autobiography and see how it measures up. And consequently you decide prematurely what the other person means before he or she finishes communicating.

Do any of the following sound familiar?

"Oh, I just—I know just how you feel. I felt the same way."

Or, "I had that same thing happen to me."

Or, "Let me tell you what I did in a similar situation."

Because you so often listen autobiographically, you tend to respond in one of four ways:

Evaluating. You judge and then either agree or disagree. But things aren't this black and white, though.

There's also probing. You ask questions from your own frame of reference. Questions from biases depending on your experience.

Then there is advising. You give counsel, advice, and solutions to problems. But sometimes we must just listen and not impose solutions, particularly if we don't take the time to understand the problem in full. That one hit a little close to home if I'm just being honest with you guys.

And then lastly, interpreting. You analyze others' motives and behaviors based on your own experiences. This doesn't take into account our own individual uniqueness.

OK. So let's take a reflection activity here. People may not remember what you say, but they will always remember how you made them feel. So, what I'd like for you to do right now is think of a time you were made to feel uncomfortable by another person's actions or behavior. And without using the word *uncomfortable* to describe it, think about how did that make you feel? Really channel that, and think into that, and see how—how that made you feel in that moment.

OK.

And I just want to remind everybody that you can certainly, if you want, at any point you can pause the—the recording here, and—and take a moment to kind of sit with that as Stephen mentioned, before you continue on.

Thank you, Katie.

So, think about this as well, this quote from Ralph Nichols. "The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them."

Also take time to consider that as well. And we can move on to our listening essentials.

So, Chinese symbols often combine a number of symbols to create a single word. The symbol for *listen* is actually made up of six other words: *you*, *eyes*, *undivided attention*, *heart*, *king*, and *ear*. So, we can learn a lot about how to listen effectively from breaking down the different parts of the symbol.

*You*. When others are talking, you as the listener play an equal role for the communication to be effective. If you are not playing your part, the message may be confused or lost.

*Eyes*. Listen with your eyes. Maintain eye contact as you listen and observe the physiology and body language of the speaker. You will pick up

on so much more that is being communicated as you become more observant and interested in the speaker.

*Undivided attention.* Give the speaker your undivided attention. Don't become distracted by other people or by technology.

*Heart.* Listen with your heart. Be open to their opinion and their logic even if it differs from yours. Take time to understand their viewpoint before responding.

*King.* Treat the speaker like royalty. Imagine they are the most important person in the world, and give them the respect and attention they deserve.

*And ear.* Finally, listen with your ear. Take time to listen to the exact words, phrases, and tone of the communication.

So, as mentioned earlier, we're going to take time to look at the SOLER model here from Gerard Egan. It's a helpful model for active listening.

So, *S* stands for *Square*. What you should do is face squarely, and by doing this it shows that you're involved. This doesn't mean that your body has to be square, but this is—should be positioned at an angle to avoid appearing intimidating.

So, *O* stands for *Open*, to keep an open posture. This means not crossing your arms and legs. It makes people feel engaged and welcome.

*L* stands for *Lean*. And by leaning forward when a person is talking to you, it shows you're involved and listening to what they have to say.

*E* stands for *Eye contact*. Use good eye contact. Your gaze shows that you're listening and not distracted.

And then *R* for *Relax*. It's important to stay calm and avoid fidgeting when a person is talking to you to show that you're focused.

An advancement of the SOLER model is a new acronym that can also be considered. This is called *SURETY*. It stands for—*S* stands for *Sit at an angle*—angle. *U* stands for *Uncross therapeutic space*—legs and arms. *R* stands for *Relax*. *E* for *Eye contact*. *T* for *Touch*. And *Y* for *Your intuition*.

Now, on this listening continuum, we're going to look at these five levels of listening, or lack thereof, and explore them a little further.

For level 1 we have ignoring. If you have ever been ignored, there's no doubt about it. You're talking, but the other person is not giving any attention to what you're saying. Now, it is possible that the person did not hear you, and if that is the case, that's not ignoring.

Level 2 is pretend listening. To truly hear someone takes time and attention. Pretend listeners give you the impression that they hear what you say, and they may hear some of your words, but they're not present. They may nod their head or offer another gesture to indicate they're listening, but they are not giving you their full attention.

Level 3, selective listening. The person who listens selectively only wants part of the message but not all. They're probably the person who says, "So what's your point?" They're quick to interrupt the person who is speaking, and they have a tendency to finish the other person's sentences.

Level 4 is attentive listening. Attentive listeners offer their time and attention, but they are one step short of being empathic listeners, because attentive listeners hear from their frame of reference. They don't try to put themselves in the other person's shoes.

And level 5 is empathic listening, which is intentional. The person who develops this skill listens not only to the other person's words, but they listen for what the other person means. They are willing to give their time and full attention to truly hear the other person. Stephen Covey was quoted as saying, "To truly listen means to transcend your autobiography, to get out of your own frame of reference, out of your own value system, out of your own history and judging tendencies, and to get deeply into the frame of reference or viewpoint of another person. This is called empathic listening. It is a very, very rare skill, but it is more than a skill. Much more."

OK. Time for conflict, everybody. Are you excited? OK, good.

So, it's inevitable that there will be times when we disagree with a colleague or become involved in a debate because of conflicting views. I know that sounds hard to believe these days, but, believe it or not, it happens.

These conversations can range in intensity, and sometimes we have an impact on the way we respond and communicate.

Having strong interpersonal skills means an ability to understand your natural communication style under conflict and manage it accordingly.

So, there are five basic ways that people behave when they respond to conflict. They are as follows: forcing, accommodating, avoiding, compromising, and cooperating.

We tend to have one dominant style that we particularly adopt when communicating under conflict. Knowing yours and whether it is appropriate is an excellent way to understand how you may need to adjust your style of communication to improve your social relations depending on the context of the situation.

So, forcing. That is represented by our shark here. If you have a forcing style, you see conflict as a competition, complete with winners and losers. And because of your competitive nature, you definitely want to be on the winning side. You concentrate on your own needs and are less concerned with the needs of others. In this style you go for the "I win, you lose" option. Your communication style will come across as aggressive and intimidating. People see you as someone with little or no respect for others.

The advantage of this conflict style is that you get what you want in a quick and easy way, and it's clear for everyone who is in charge. However, the price you pay is a damaged or destroyed relationship.

Accommodating, which is represented by our teddy bear up there. If you have an accommodating style when confronted with conflict, you perceive conflict as an uncomfortable situation that needs to be resolved in as peaceful of a way as quickly as possible. Because conflict distresses you, you will do anything in your power to make it disappear. You have little desire to win the conflict; in fact, you'd rather give in than make a big fuss, so that everyone can move on and go back to business as usual.

In this style, you opt for the "you win, I lose" option. Your communication style will come across as diplomatic and friendly. You won't ruffle any feathers. People see you as a people pleaser who goes along with the suggestions and needs of others.

Avoiding, which is our turtle friend right there. If you have an avoiding style when confronted with conflict, you actually don't want to know about the conflict at all. In fact, you hope that by ignoring the conflict, it may just go away. So you pretend that there is no conflict by withdrawing, walking away, or delaying any discussion and saying to yourself, "What conflict?" You think that by being silent you can save the relationship.

By using this style, you opt for an "I lose, you lose" situation. Your communication is virtually nonexistent. You don't talk, and you refrain from expressing your needs or discussing the other person's needs. The advantage of this style is that you fool yourself for a while into the belief that there is no conflict.

Compromising, which is our fox right in the middle. If you have a compromising style, you do acknowledge conflict, and you are keen to solve it sooner rather than later. You believe that in every conflict people have to give and take a bit. If the parties can meet halfway, you can all agree and move on while the relationship remains intact.

Because of your eagerness to find a quick solution, you look for different options and trade-offs that can be used to satisfy all. This style's slogan is, "I win some, I lose some, and you win some, you lose some." Your communication style is fairly shallow, because you don't truly connect with the other person as you're so focused on finding solutions. So, there's no clarification about your needs or the needs of others.

And then lastly we have cooperating, which is our owl right over in the other corner. If you have a cooperating style, you see conflict as an opportunity to clarify issues, to learn from each other, and to grow as an individual. It is important for you to not only explain where you're coming from, and what your issues are, but also to fully understand what is vital for the other person. You prefer an open and honest conversation so everyone's needs are integrated. The relationship is important, and you wish for a win-win outcome for everyone. You would opt for an "I win, you win" approach.

As a cooperator, your communication style is assertive and open. You're not afraid to stand up for yourself and your needs in a respectful way, and at the same time, you're willing to respectfully listen to the other person and their needs.

And with that being said, I think it's time for another poll.

Thanks so much, Stephen. So I'm going to go ahead and send out this survey. So as Stephen was running through those different conflict styles and the animals that helped represent those—those five styles there, take a moment—again, this is anonymous—and—and reflect on that. You know, which one as he was sharing that information seemed to resonate with you? And you can go ahead and select that on your screen, and then when you end that—that survey there, once you've submitted your response,

you'll be able to kind of see where others who have listened in, where they fall along that spectrum of conflict styles as well.

So we'll close that survey, and then I will pass it back to you for a couple more items, Stephen.

Thank you, Katie.

So, you know, we all have—just to recap—we all have different natural styles; therefore it's inevitable that sometimes we need to adjust our style to ensure positive working relationships. So, just for tips for communicating under conflict, you need to learn your natural style. Just go ahead and rip that Band-Aid off and just see—see who you really are, and don't be ashamed of that. We—we all have our own styles, and there are pros and cons to each one.

Avoid "you" phrases or phrases that—replace with "I" statements.

Pause if you need to go.

Pay attention to the speed and loudness of your speech.

Gather your thoughts before responding.

Keep your posture upright and relaxed.

Use a firm yet respectful tone of voice.

And then declare your limits, intent, and boundaries.

Be assertive.

That being said, moving forward today, what have you learned about your interpersonal skills? And consider this as you go today: What three things will you change to make you a more effective communicator?

Thank you, guys, for joining today. If you—I just want to give a plug, you know, if you need any additional assistance, to contact your employee assistance program, particularly for work-life assistance. I know many programs that we use, you know, utilize the improvement of communication skills and finding resources in everyone's area that can kind of help them boost that even more, or coaching programs, or things of that nature. So, make sure to contact your EAP if you need anything additional after this today.

Thank you so much, Stephen. And as Stephen mentioned, you know, a lot of different things that—that your EAP can assist you with, whether it's communication skills—maybe you've got conflict that you'd like some advice or some direction on. It may even be a personal situation where you're dealing with a loss and looking for some grief support. Or an elderly relative and some advice and resources there. So, lots of things, 24/7 availability at no cost to you. So, contact your EAP. If you don't have that contact information, do reach out to your human resources department, and they will have email, website, phone number, etc.

So I do want to, again, thank you, Stephen, so much for your time and expertise. A lot of great information, walking us through this today.

I do want to remind everybody that we do have the event in the Event Resources section, a copy of the slide deck, Stephen's slide deck here, that you can download. Perhaps you want to refer back to that or share with someone.

As I mentioned earlier, that Ask a Question section there, I do want to let everyone know, if you have maybe a further question, you can certainly type that in and send it to us. Click the Send button. We do receive it via email, and we'll typically get back to you within a couple days, depending on the nature of your question. So we did want to mention that as an option.

But, again, just know your EAP is there 24/7 so you could get some immediate assistance for whatever you may be dealing with, whether it's related to this topic or something else.

So thank you again, everyone. Thank you so much, Stephen. Let me just check, Stephen, was there a final word you wanted to recap with today, or shall I go ahead and close us out?

I'll just say from a personal standpoint, remember to listen when you talk. You'll find you're much more successful in that regard.

Well said.

Thank you again, Stephen. Thank you, everyone. We trust you've been able to pick up some helpful information. When you close out there will be a brief survey. We'd appreciate you taking a moment to do that.

And, again, take care.