

# Communication Strategies

## All about body language

The way in which our body speaks to others.

THE WAY THAT WE ARE STANDING OR SITTING

Think for a moment about different types of posture and the message that they relay.

- Sitting hunched over typically indicates stress or discomfort.
- Leaning back when standing or sitting indicates a casual and relaxed demeanor.
- Standing ramrod straight typically indicates stiffness and anxiety.

The position of our arms, legs, feet, and hands

- Crossed arms and legs often indicate a closed mind.
- Fidgeting is usually a sign of boredom or nervousness.

Facial expressions

- Smiles and frowns speak a million words.
- A raised eyebrow can mean inquisitiveness, curiosity, or disbelief.
- Chewing one's lips can indicate thinking, or it can be a sign of boredom, anxiety, or nervousness.

## Speaking like a STAR!

S = Situation

First, state what the situation is. Try to make this no longer than one sentence. If you are having trouble, ask yourself, "Where?," "Who?" and, "When?"

Example: "On Tuesday, I was in a director's meeting at the main plant."

T = Task

Next, briefly state what your task was. Again, this should be no longer than one sentence. Use the question, "What?" to frame your sentence, and add the "Why?" if appropriate.

Example: "I was asked to present last year's sales figures to the group."

A = Action

Now, state what you did to resolve the problem in one sentence. Use the question, "How?" to frame this part of the statement.

Example: "I pulled out my laptop, fired up PowerPoint, and presented my slide show."

R = Result

Last, state what the result was. This will often use a combination of the six roots.

Example: "Everyone was wowed by my prep work, and by our great figures!"

## The Truth about Tone

Here are some tips on creating a positive, authoritative tone.

- Try lowering the pitch of your voice a bit.
- Smile! This will warm up anyone's voice.
- Sit up straight and listen.

Monitor your inner monologue. Negative thinking will seep into the tone of your voice.

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## Seven Ways to Listen Better Today

Listening is the process of looking at the words and the other factors around the words (such as our non-verbal communication), and then interpreting the entire message.

Here are seven things that you can do to start becoming a better listener right now.

1. When you're listening, listen. Don't talk on the phone, text message, clean off your desk, or do anything else.
2. Avoid interruptions. If you think of something that needs to be done, make a mental or written note of it and forget about it until the conversation is over.
3. Aim to spend at least 90% of your time listening and less than 10% of your time talking.
4. When you do talk, make sure it's related to what the other person is saying. Questions to clarify, expand, and probe for more information will be key tools. (We'll look at questioning skills later on in the workshop.)
5. Do not offer advice unless the other person asks you for it. If you are not sure what they want, ask!
6. Make sure the physical environment is conducive to listening. Try to reduce noise and distractions. ("Would you mind stepping into my office where I can hear you better?" is a great line to use.) If possible, be seated comfortably. Be close enough to the person so that you can hear them, but not too close to make them uncomfortable.
7. If it is a conversation where you are required to take notes, try not to let the note-taking disturb the flow of the conversation. If you need a moment to catch up, choose an appropriate moment to ask for a break.

## Sending Good Signals to Others

When we are listening to others speak, there are three kinds of cues that we can give the other person.

Using the right kind of cue at the right time is crucial for keeping good communication going.

- **NON-VERBAL:** body language plays an important part in our communications with others. Head nods and an interested facial expression will show the speaker that you are listening.
- **QUASI-VERBAL:** Fillers words like, "uh-huh," and "mm-hmmm," show the speaker that you are awake and interested in the conversation.
- **VERBAL:** Asking open questions using the six roots discussed (who, what, where, when, why, how), paraphrasing, and asking summary questions, are all key tools for active listening.