

COMMUNICATION SERIES

The following five one-hour lessons illustrate how material can be simplified and sequenced so that each lesson is a building block working towards the objective of developing basic communication skills. The lessons are designed for a low functioning group that has a good level of literacy skills. Basic communication is a major emphasis in the program.

The lessons in this series are:

- **Verbal Skills:**
 1. Initiating a conversation
 2. Giving and receiving compliments
- **Listening Skills:**
 3. Learning to listen
 4. Non-verbal cues
- **Continuity Skills:**
 5. Maintaining a conversation

RATIONALE:

Communication is an important part of daily living. By improving our conversational skills we feel more comfortable conversing with others; we increase opportunities to meet new people and make friends. We express ourselves more easily.

INITIATING A CONVERSATION

Communication Series - Lesson #1

GOAL:

- To learn how to initiate appropriate conversation with others.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Flipchart, markers, for each participant copies of *Initiating a Conversation Summary Sheet*.

METHOD:

Warm up: Getting to Know You

Divide the group into pairs. Instruct participants to find out three things about their partner that they did not know before. Ask each person to introduce their partner to the group.

Exercise 1: Initiating a Conversation

Illustrate how to initiate a conversation by using a role-play with two staff. Discuss the role-play and flipchart observations.

Exercise 2: Conversation Openers

Invite group to brainstorm topics for conversation openers. The list may include such things as:

- comments on the weather
- introducing yourself
- asking "May I sit here?"
- asking "What do you think of?"

Direct participants not to ask personal questions, especially if they do not know the person well. Include general topics.

Ask participants to discuss what to do if someone does not respond to their invitation to talk.

Exercise 3: Conversation Practise

Ask participants to form dyads. Tell each person to practise initiating a conversation and continue to dialogue for two minutes.

Encourage participants to share their experience in the large group.

Exercise 4 : Action Plan

Hand out copies of *Initiating a Conversation Summary Sheet*. Tell each person to initiate one conversation with someone they already know within their setting and report to the group next week.

EVALUATION:

CREDIT:

Heather Campbell, The Salvation Army Bathurst Industries.

INITIATING A CONVERSATION SUMMARY SHEET

Benefits of improving our conversational skills:

- we feel more comfortable in talking with others
- we increase our opportunities to meet new people
- we make friends
- we are able to express ourselves more easily.

Some good conversation openers are:

- Hi! I'm ... I'm sorry I don't know your name.
- May I sit here?
- Boy! It's ... outside. (Make appropriate to weather conditions)
- Hi! How are you today?
- How was your day?
- What are you working on today?
- What do you think of ... (sports, weather, T.V. etc.)

Do not ask personal questions especially if you do not know the person well.
Keep topics general.

When someone does not answer you when you speak to them it could mean:

- they feel self-conscious
- they don't want to talk right now
- they would like to be left alone
- they didn't realize you were speaking to them specifically

Close the conversation tactfully and try speaking to someone else.

GIVING AND RECEIVING COMPLIMENTS

Communication Series - Lesson # 2

GOAL:

- To learn how to give and receive compliments.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

A series of pictures so that each participant can choose one; box of chocolates wrapped with forty layers of paper; for each participant a copy of ***Giving and Receiving Compliments Summary Sheet***.

METHOD:

Note: Review lesson on initiating a conversation by asking each group member to report to the group on their assignments from last week.

Questions to consider:

- Who did you talk to?
- How did you begin a conversation?

Warm up: Pictures

Lay pictures out and instruct group members to choose a picture and explain to the group why they chose it.

Exercise 1: Compliments

Begin by giving the present to someone in the group and tell that person why you are giving it to them (e.g. "I am giving you this present because you look nice today.") The exercise continues in this fashion with each person removing a layer of wrapping. Ensure that everyone is included in receiving the present.

At midpoint, stop the exercise to check in with the group.

Questions to consider:

- How do you feel about receiving compliments?
- Does the giver of the gift know how the receiver feels?

Ask the group to continue with the exercise but this time tell the receiver to acknowledge the compliment either verbally or non-verbally. Once the gift is unwrapped, share the chocolates with participants.

Lead a discussion with the group and summarize the ideas.

Exercise 2: Action Plan

Distribute copies of ***Giving and Receiving Compliments Summary Sheet***. Ask each group member to pay a compliment to someone in their setting and report to the group next week.

EVALUATION:

CREDIT:

Heather Campbell, The Salvation Army Bathurst Industries.

GIVING AND RECEIVING COMPLIMENTS SUMMARY SHEET

When paying a compliment, remember the following:

- Decide what it is about the other person you want to compliment.
- Decide whether the other person would like to hear the compliment.
- Choose the right time and place to express the compliment.
- Express the compliment in a sincere and friendly manner.
- Maintain good eye contact with the person to whom you are paying the compliment.
- When someone pays you a compliment, be sure to acknowledge them and thank them graciously.
- How you say things (tone of voice) is just as important as what you say.

Remember, a compliment should be POSITIVE and SINCERE.

LEARNING TO LISTEN

Communication Series - Lesson # 3

GOAL:

- To practise the skill of listening.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Flipchart, markers, sheets of plain paper, pencils, rulers, copies of *Dyad Listening Summary Sheet* for each participant.

METHOD:

Review the purpose and goal of the session explaining how good communication skills involve listening skills. Ask group members to report on their assignment from last session to the group. (See *Giving and Receiving Compliments - Lesson #2*).

Warm up: Testing Our Listening Skills

Distribute paper, rulers and pencils. Give the following instructions for drawing a picture.

- Starting 2" from the left hand side of the paper, draw a 4" horizontal line near the bottom of your paper.
- From the left end of the line, draw a 3" vertical line up towards the top of the paper.
- From the right end of the line, draw a 3" vertical line up towards the top of the paper.
- Join the tops of the vertical lines.
- From the left corner, draw a 3" diagonal line upwards.
- At the top of that 3" line, draw another 3" diagonal line down to meet the top right hand corner.

Repeat this exercise twice. The first time through, give the instructions quickly, using **no** eye contact and allowing **no** questions.

Questions to consider:

- What were some of the problems you encountered with this exercise?
- What factors made it easy/difficult?

Repeat the exercise a second time. Go slower and allow time for questions. Contrast to first time.

Show what the picture is supposed to be.

Questions to consider:

- What factors made this exercise different from the first time?
- What skills did you use when the exercise was repeated?

Flipchart responses.

Exercise 1: Dyad Listening

Divide group into dyads. Ask one dyad to demonstrate in front of the group. Ask one person in the dyad to be the listener, the other the talker.

Instruct the talker to talk about herself/himself for three minutes. Tell the listener to practise using listening skills discussed in the previous exercise.

Following the demonstration, instruct dyads to do the same skill practise. Emphasize that they are to reverse roles so that each person has a chance to be the talker and the listener.

Exercise 2: Action Plan

Distribute copies of ***Dyad Listening Summary Sheet***. Ask participants to practise their listening skills and report to the group next session.

EVALUATION:

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DYAD LISTENING SUMMARY SHEET

- Good communication skills involve **listening**.
- Be a good listener. Let other people finish sentences. Avoid interruptions that say,
"Get on with it, I haven't got all day!"
- Be courteous. If you do not have the time to talk, make a statement like
"I would like to stay and talk, but I have an appointment."
- Demonstrate good listening skills that show the other person you are interested in what they have to say. Some examples of good listening skills include:
 - Using **eye contact** (where culturally appropriate)
 - Using appropriate **facial expressions** (e.g. smiling, looking attentive)
 - Showing proper **body posture** (e.g. facing the person, leaning towards the person).

NON-VERBAL CUES

Communication Series - Lesson #4

GOAL:

- To learn non-verbal cues as a listener.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Flipchart, markers, pencils, for each participant copies of *Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication Inventory* and *Non-Verbal Cues Summary Sheet*, pictures of people displaying a variety of emotions.

METHOD:

Ask each participant to report to the group on their action plan from last session.

Explain how we communicate non-verbally (without words), as well as verbally (with words).

Warm up: People Pictures

Post pictures around the room. Divide the group into two teams. Give each team a list of emotions to find. The first team to complete the task gets to present their results to the group.

The list of emotions may include the following:

comfort, embarrassment, happiness, determination, concentration, love, anger, interest, boredom, confusion, sadness.

Exercise 1: Non-Verbal Cues to Listening

Use two staff members to role-play a situation depicting poor listening skills.

Flipchart the poor listening behaviours (non-verbal cues).

Questions to consider:

- How did we know that the person was not listening?
- What role does body language play in giving a message?

Discuss non-verbal cues in context (e.g. Just because I look away briefly, does not mean I'm not interested in what you are saying to me).

Discuss tone of voice (saying the same thing in different ways can give new meaning).

Have staff members role-play the situation again, this time using good listening skills (eye contact, nodding head appropriately, etc.). Flipchart the good listening skills.

Exercise 2: Expression of Feelings

Distribute a copy of the ***Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication Inventory*** to each participant. Divide the group into two. Give each group one or more situations (depending on time), and ask them to discuss amongst themselves how they would respond verbally and non-verbally.

In the total group, ask participants to discuss the exercise.

Exercise 3: Action Plan

Distribute copies of the ***Non-Verbal Cues Summary Sheet***. Instruct participants to have a conversation with someone about their interests or a current event and report to the group next session.

EVALUATION:

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VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION INVENTORY

Situation	Using Words	Without Using Words
<p>1. When you feel bored with what is going on in a discussion, how do you usually express your feelings?</p> <p>2. When you feel very annoyed with another person with whom you want to build a better relationship, how do you express your feelings?</p> <p>3. When another person says or does something to you that hurts your feelings deeply, how do you express your feelings?</p> <p>4. Someone repeatedly asks you to give them money. You don't want to give them any money. How would you express yourself?</p> <p>5. You feel affection and fondness for someone but at the same time you can't be sure the other person feels the same way about you. How do you express your feelings?</p> <p>6. Your close friend is leaving town for a long time and you feel alone and lonely. How would you express your feelings?</p>		

NON-VERBAL CUES SUMMARY SHEET

We communicate non-verbally (without words), as well as verbally (with words). Some of the ways we communicate to others non-verbally are through:

Body Language

Facial Expression

Eye Contact

Often we give very definite messages to others without saying anything. These messages can be either positive or negative. Try where possible to give **positive** messages.

- Look at the other person
- Smile (when appropriate)
- Look interested in what they have to say

An important point to remember.

An individual's personal space is important to them. Respect this, and don't get too close when speaking to someone.

MAINTAINING A CONVERSATION

Communication Series - Lesson # 5

GOAL:

- To be able to sustain a conversation for a period of time.

MATERIAL NEEDED:

For each participant a copy of the ***Checklist of Behaviours*** and *Role-Play Situations*, pencils.

METHOD:

Ask participants to report to the group about their assignment from the last session (a conversation with someone about their interests or a current event). Explain that participants will have the opportunity to further practise conversation through role-play. This will include initiating, responding and maintaining conversations.

Warm up: **A Good Conversation**

Enlist two staff members to role-play a good conversation. Invite participants to write out the behaviours (verbal and non-verbal) that they observed. This will act as a review of the first four lessons. The list might include such things as:

- the invitation to have a conversation
- eye contact
- facial expression
- compliments
- body language
- tone of voice
- the use of questions

Remind the group that conversation is not a monologue. You may demonstrate how to keep a conversation going using the 5 WH questions where appropriate - WHAT? WHERE? WHEN? WHY? WHO? and HOW?

Exercise: Conversation Skills Feedback

Distribute copies of the ***Checklist of Behaviours***. Divide group into triads. Explain that each person in the triad will have a turn as the initiator, respondent and observer. Give a role-play situation to each group.

Give observers the ***Checklist of Behaviours*** and tell them to make notes of what behaviours they observe during the course of the conversation between the initiator and the respondent. Encourage participants to give each other feedback in the triads.

EVALUATION:

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ROLE-PLAY SITUATIONS

1. You notice that there is someone new at work. You want to introduce yourself to them and find out who they are.
2. You are at home having dinner. You are interested in finding out how your friend's day went.
3. It is coffee break time at work and you are sitting at a table with someone who was very helpful to you today and you want to let them know how much you appreciate their help.
4. You saw an interesting movie last night and you want to tell your friend about it.
5. It is Monday and you have arrived at work early. You see someone you have not met before, sitting alone. You want to talk to them.
6. You have met someone with whom you would like to become better friends. You want to find out if they would like to get together with you socially some time.

CHECKLIST OF BEHAVIOURS

Conversation between _____ and _____ .

Place a check mark besides any of the following behaviours which are observed during the conversation.

- Eye contact
- Good body language (posture)
- Use of compliments
- Facial expression
- Nodded head appropriately
- Distance to person was appropriate
- Tone of voice was appropriate to conversation
- Voice loudness was appropriate