

## ***Body Language (Non-verbal Communication)***

Observing yourself and others is non-verbal communication - the way we express ourselves, not by what we say, but by what we do.

Stop for a moment and examine yourself as you read this. If someone were observing you now, what non-verbal clues would they get about how you are feeling? Are you sitting forward or reclining back? Is your posture tense or relaxed? Are your eyes wide open, or do they keep closing? What does your facial expression communicate? Can you make your face expressionless? Don't people with expressionless faces communicate something to you?

Of course, we do not always intend to send non-verbal messages. Consider, for instance, behaviors like blushing, frowning, sweating, or stammering. We rarely try to act in these ways, and often we are not aware when we are doing so. Nonetheless, others recognize signs like these and make interpretations about us based on their observations.

Understanding that you, and everyone around you, are constantly, sending off non-verbal cues is important because it means that you have a constant source of information available about yourself and others. If you can tune into these signals, you will be more aware of how those around you are feeling and thinking, and you will be better able to respond to their behavior

### **Non-verbal Communication Transmits Feelings**

Although feelings are communicated quite well non-verbally, thoughts do not lend themselves to non-verbal channels. Without being able to use words, peoples' bodies generally express how they feel - nervous, embarrassed, playful, friendly, etc. What they think has to be gathered through some verbal medium.

Here is a list that contains both thoughts and feelings. Try to express each item non-verbally, and see which ones come most easily:

You are tired.

You are in favor of capital punishment.

You are attracted to another person in the group. You think marijuana should be legalized.

You are angry with someone in the group.

### **Non-verbal Communication Serves Many Functions**

Verbal and non-verbal communications are interconnected elements in every act of communication. Non-verbal behaviors can operate in several relationships to verbal messages.

a. First, non-verbal behaviors can repeat what is said verbally. If someone asked you for directions to the nearest drugstore, you could say, "North of here about two blocks," and then repeat your instructions non-verbally by pointing north.

b. Non-verbal messages may also substitute for verbal ones. When you see a familiar friend wearing a certain facial expression, you do not need to ask, "How's it going?" In the same way, experience has probably shown you that other kinds of looks, gestures, and other cues say, "I'm angry at you" or "I feel great" far better than words.

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### **Perceptions of the Two-Way Communicator**

The "two way communicator" is someone who:

- Seeks, encourages feedback from receivers on how a message was understood;
- Asks many questions to assure understanding of another's message;
- Establishes a climate for routine give and take;
- Does not punish honesty or negative messages;
- Shows nonverbal comfort with dialogue;

#### **Common Perceptions**

The two way communicator:

1. Likes people
2. Is receptive to new information
3. Is fair
4. Wants full information before making important decisions
5. Is well liked by others
6. Dislikes extreme formality and control
7. Enjoys helping people feel comfortable
8. Feels good when communication is successful
9. Is a good listener
10. Believes that "perceptions" are very important and legitimate
11. Likes to learn from others
12. Is a good interpersonal communicator

### **Lessons of the One-Way/Two-Way Exercise**

One-Way—little or no verbal feedback from receiver; no chance to check perceptions

Two-Way—relatively free interaction between sender and receiver

1. One-way is usually faster; two-way is usually more accurate.
2. Two-way is expensive (time, money, energy); one-way may be more expensive in the long run if misunderstanding causes errors, problems, conflict.
3. One-way gives control to the sender; two-way gives some control to the receivers.
4. In one-way, receivers may seek out unreliable information sources; in two-way, receivers have access to the reliable source—the sender.
5. Two-way includes risk by both the receiver and sender, one-way is perceived as less risky.
6. The one-way/two-way choice is a function of rewards, senders evaluate the relative payoffs of both options.

#### **To Improve One-Way Communication:**

- Prepare a message carefully, if message is to be spoken, practice
- Use previews, summaries, repetition; supplement with examples, specifics
- Evaluate intended receivers; adapt to specific individuals or groups
- Use visual support

#### **To Improve Two-Way Communication:**

- Seek out feedback.....don't wait for it
- Avoid defensive reactions to questions, challenges
- Reinforce people who ask questions(remember most of us have been punished for this behaviour in the past)
- Use past feedback as a guide to future communication with the same or similar people