

# SECTION 9

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## Effective Communication



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# Communicating Workplace Concerns

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Evaluate your information.

1. Opinions verses facts. Opinions are what people think; facts are what people see or hear. You need to weigh opinions differently than you weigh facts.
2. Facts verses hearsay. Hearsay evidence (Wing said “he overheard Loretta tell Wei...”) is not factual. Try to talk to the original source of the information. Try to get facts to support what people say about the concern.
3. Facts must be relevant. Does the information you want to present relate directly to the problem at hand?

The following checklist will help you communicate your concerns.

- Decide which facts are the most convincing.
- Make a list so you can refer to it.
- Show why the information is important to everyone involved.
- What facts will the supervisor refer to?
- What possible proposals will the supervisor make to you?
- What are you willing to accept?

## Sending an Effective Message

Worker communication with a supervisor often needs to focus on a problem that needs attention. A skill that can help workers communicate is using “I-Messages.” “I-Messages” help the worker express his wants and needs in an assertive, non-threatening manner.

### Steps for creating an “I-Message.”

1. I feel (state the feeling),
2. When you (state the behavior),
3. Because (state the consequence).

Example: I feel frustrated when you don't listen because I don't want to repeat these instructions.

A “You-Message” blames or criticizes the listener. It suggests that he is at fault. On the other hand, an “I-Message” states what the sender is feeling. It is specific and requires a nonjudgmental attitude towards the situation. It is more likely to lead to a positive change in the listener's behavior.



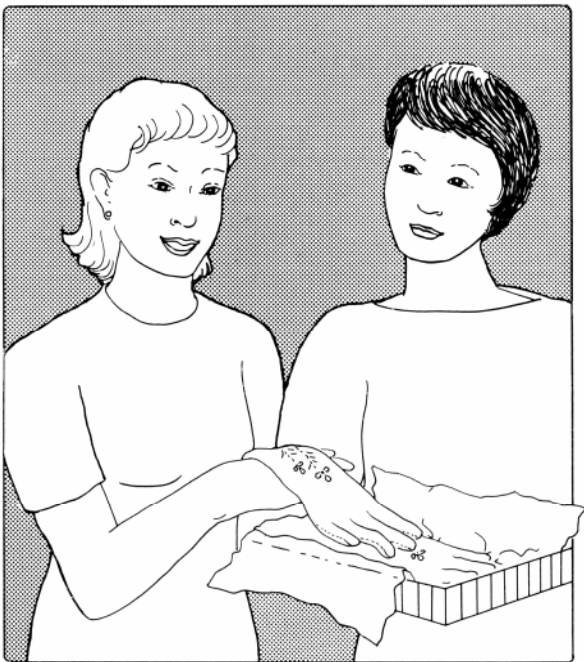
**“You-Messages”:**

When you send a You-Message, the listener feels judged or blamed.

He feels like you think he is a bad person.

When a “You-Message” is sent, the listener does not think about making a decision to change, but instead thinks about defending himself.

This serves no useful purpose for the speaker or listener.



**“I-Messages”:**

With an “I-Message”, the speaker expresses his own wants, needs or concerns to the listener.

When the listener hears an “I-Message,” he knows that he has not done what the speaker wanted or expected and may feel badly about it, but that is quite different than feeling like the speaker thinks he is a terrible or incapable person.

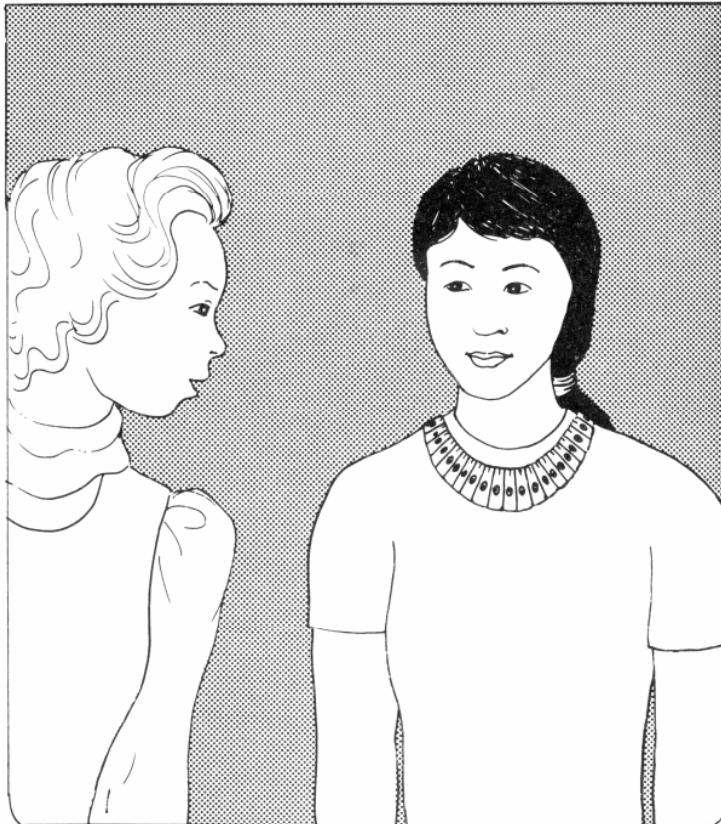
“I-Messages” are a clear and non-threatening way of telling people what you want and how you feel.

They give the listener the option of deciding whether or not to do what you want him to do.



## Listening Facts

- 70% of our time is spent in communication. The majority of our communication time is spent listening.
  - Listening 45%
  - Talking 30%
  - Reading 16%
  - Writing 9%
- We receive little or no education or training in effective listening.
- 75% of what we hear is ignored, misunderstood, or forgotten.



# Listening Skills

The follow is a list of listening skills:

1. Attending. Attending involves giving your physical attention to another person.
  - a. Posture
    - Face the other individual.
    - Lean slightly forward.
    - Observe appropriate physical distance.
  - b. Eye Contact.
    - Ensure eye contact is appropriate.
    - Don't stare.
  - c. Non-distracting Environment.
    - Ensure things like noise, telephones, and people coming in and out are not a distraction.
2. Following. Following means letting the speaker's message guide the conversation, rather than leading the conversation yourself.
  - a. Silence
    - Allow the speakers to finish their message.
    - After asking a question, allow time for an answer.
    - Learn how to be comfortable with silence.
  - b. Encourage the speaker to continue and tell you more.
    - Nodding your head, leaning forward, smiling.
    - Verbal examples include: "Oh," "I see," and "Mm-Hm."
3. Paraphrasing. Paraphrasing helps the listeners clarify and understand what they have heard. The listener restates what she or he has heard in their own words. This is useful in situations such as:
  - Receiving directions.
  - Summarizing a meeting.
  - Conflict situations. Paraphrasing allows individuals to know they have been heard and understood.

## What is “Active Listening”?

Active listening is feeding back or acknowledging the other person’s feelings to show that you are attuned to his situation.

### How to use Active Listening

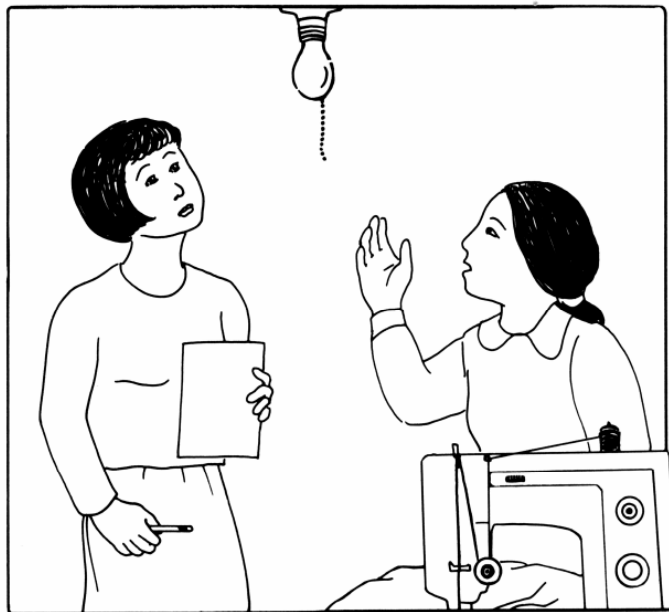
- Take an outburst as a positive contribution (smile, encourage, nod.)
- Reflect back to the team members (in the form of questions) what feelings you heard being expressed: “You’re upset with ...?” “You’re unhappy about ...?” “You feel that we should ...?”

Active Listening has 3 advantages:

1. You show the team members you’re interested and not defensive.
2. You allow the team members to confirm that what you heard was what she/he meant OR to correct your interpretation.
3. You quickly lead the team members to specify the EXACT problem and to suggest a solution.

## Skills for listening to emotional speakers.

- Relax - take three deep breaths.
- Focus on their message, not the emotion. Listen to understand.
- Ask questions to help clarify the situation.
- Try to calm the situation by paraphrasing what you think you heard. This helps the other person know that you understand how they feel about the situation.
- Call time out from the discussion.

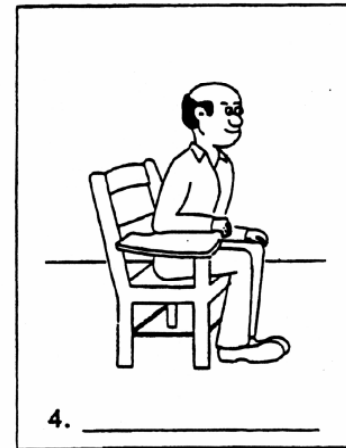
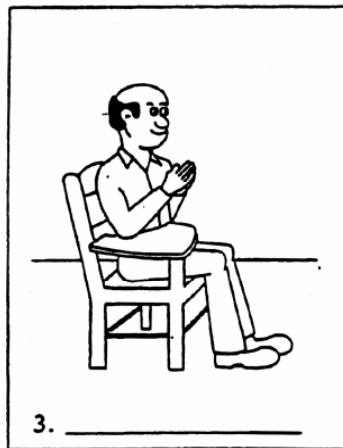
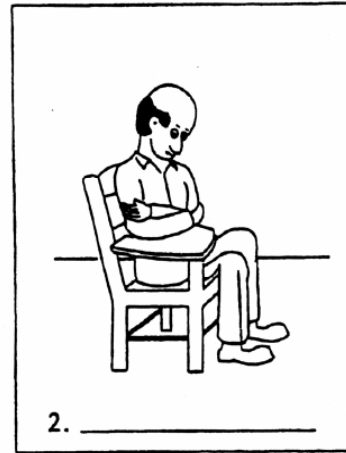
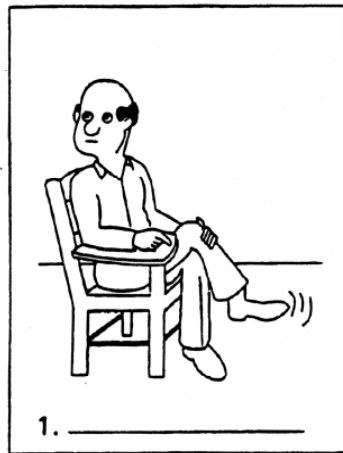


# Interpreting Body Language

## Exercise

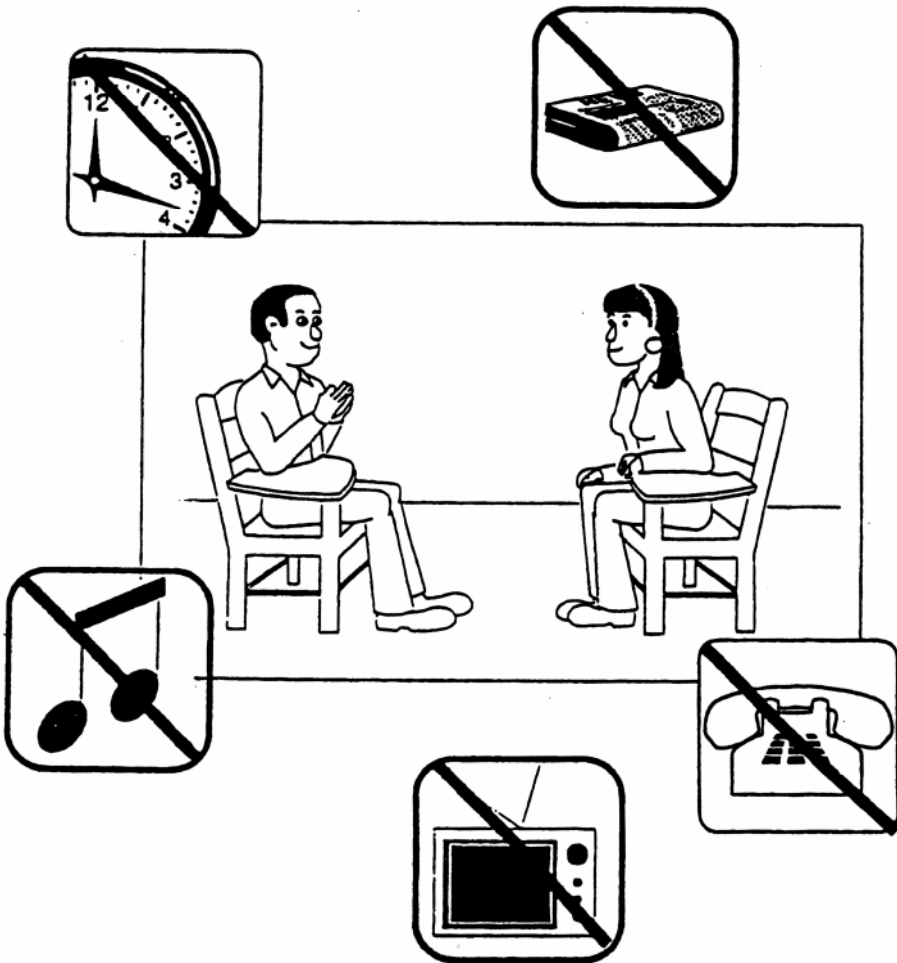
Match the pictures to the following feelings:

- a. aggression
- b. confidence
- c. cooperation
- d. defensiveness
- e. impatience
- f. other

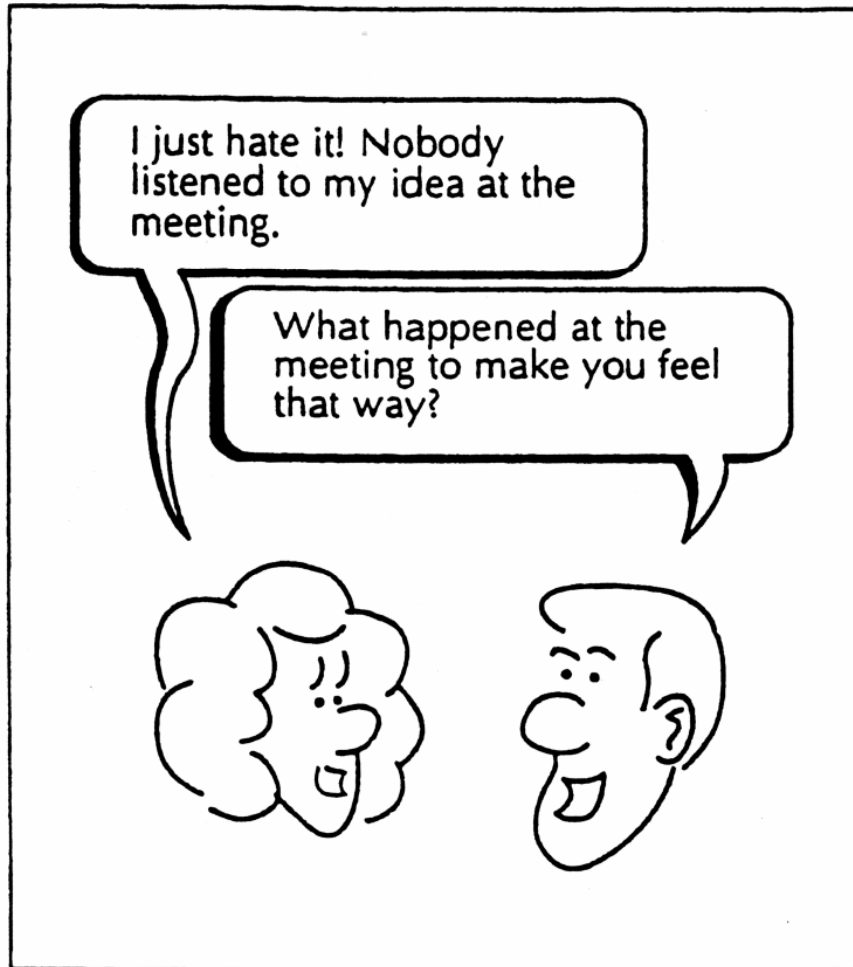


A large percentage of communication is non-verbal. How effective are we at interpreting body language?

# Attending



# Following



## Improving Meeting Communication

### Building Good Feelings

Create a positive climate through:

#### Fun

Lessen the monotony of meetings with short breaks. Use humor and create an atmosphere of partnership and friendliness to build rapport and reduce formality.

#### Demeanor

It is important for members and facilitators to show a positive demeanor. Facilitators and members who are positive and upbeat, who acknowledge the difficulties and complexities of issues but who also express hopes for successful outcomes, are giving a positive message.

#### Showcasing

This means reporting back on a particularly successful story that was discussed in the group. The purpose of showcasing is to allow groups as a whole and members within groups to appreciate the things they have done well.

#### Empowerment

One of the reasons why people do not speak up is that they do not feel empowered. They feel no one will listen or that it is meaningless to contribute. In the end, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy—they feel no one listens to them, so they do not speak up. Empowerment occurs through inviting people to participate in the meeting process.



## Equality and equity

The guideline is: equality for persons, equity for issues. People should be treated equally. Issues should be treated in accordance with their importance (using times on the agenda as a signal). Everybody should be given a chance to participate. Keeping track of who participates, controlling those who over-participate, enhancing those who under-participate—all these are ways in which a balance of participation is maintained.

## Creativity—encourage creative ideas

Positive group climate creates an opportunity for creative ideas and approaches to be expressed.

## Getting Active Participation in Meetings

### Factors affecting participation

A member may not make a contribution because he or she:

- is ignorant of the subject being discussed
- may be unfamiliar with the meeting's procedures
- may be reserved and lacking self-confidence
- may fear criticism or retaliation because his status is subordinate to other members
- may be distracted by personal concerns

## At the End of the Meeting

1. Reach agreement on the results by summarizing what has been achieved at the end of the meeting, indicating who has to do what and by when.
2. Review the process. Take time to evaluate the meeting.
3. If required, set a time and place for the next meeting.

4. Prepare the agenda for the next meeting, agree to the objective(s) and what has to be done by those present before the next meeting takes place.
5. End the meeting on time.

## Strategies to Encourage Effective Communication

What to Encourage	Description
<b>Accept opposing views.</b>	Be willing to <b>accept</b> and <b>maintain</b> opposing points of view. Remember, the fact that not everyone sees the world as you do is an asset, not a liability!
<b>Communicate clearly.</b>	<b>Clearly communicate your ideas so that others understand. Ask the group, “Am I making myself clear?” or “Do you understand what I am saying?”</b>
<b>Listen completely.</b>	<b>Listen completely</b> to the comments of others. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification to be sure you understand. Paraphrasing (“Is this what you mean ...”) and summarizing (“We have two different ideas to think about, specifically ...”) demonstrates good listening.
<b>Criticize ideas, not people.</b>	<b>Criticize the content</b> of different ideas without criticizing the people behind the ideas. “Your solution could create a safety hazard” is a much different remark than, “Your solution is dumb.”
<b>Accept criticism.</b>	<b>Accept criticism from others on an intellectual rather than personal basis. Remember, they are criticizing your idea, not you.</b>
<b>Share your ideas and opinions.</b>	<b>Share your ideas and opinions. Sometimes this may feel risky, but have confidence in your contributions and your value to the group.</b>

<b>Invite everyone to participate.</b>	<b>Help your group make good decisions by making sure everyone has had a chance to give an opinion and that the group has listened carefully to all points of view.</b>
<b>Stay on the subject.</b>	<b>Keep the group on track</b> by not bringing up unrelated topics. If you have a concern that may get the group off the subject, hold onto it until the present discussion is finished.
<b>Thank people.</b>	<b>Thank</b> people for their efforts and contributions.
<b>Leave disagreements in the room.</b>	<b>Leave disagreements in the meeting room. At the same time, don't bring work disagreements into the meeting unless they are either on the agenda or belong there.</b>

## Question and Answer Techniques

### How to answer questions

1. Prepare for questions
2. Explain the situations early in the meeting
3. Encourage questions from your members
4. Repeat the question
5. Be calm, maintain your style but be flexible
6. Keep your answers short
7. Involve the whole team in your answer

8. Maintain eye contact with the team members
9. Don't prejudge your answer beforehand

#### Handling answers to questions

1. Use positive reinforcement for correct answers
2. Acknowledge the effort of the respondent, regardless of whether the answer was right or wrong
3. Redirect the question to the same person, to another or answer it yourself
4. Avoid embarrassing the respondent

