

# Communication

**Purpose:** To teach effective communication skills by learning good listening skills

**Objectives:** This workshop will:

- identify the obstacles of communication
- provide skills to improve communication

**Benefits:** Participation in this workshop will help you to:

- learn how to communicate effectively with others

**Supplies:** Some supplies are optional or can be substituted for other materials

- Overhead projector with transparencies or overhead markers
- “Communication Activities” handout
- “Listening Skills” handout
- A ball (something soft that can be thrown without hurting)

## **Part 1 (2 min): Introduction to Workshop**

1. Introduce yourself
2. Review the “Purpose, Objectives and Benefits” (POB).

## **Part 2 (25 min): What is communication?**

1. Hold a discussion with the participants Ask participants: What does communication mean to you? What is the purpose of communication? Have participants brainstorm some answers and write them on a whiteboard or overhead. Overall, participants should reach the conclusion that the purpose of communication is to be understood.
2. Ask the participants to brainstorm different modes of communication? (i.e. Verbal, Non-Verbal)
3. For the next 15-20 minutes, ask participants to participate in a series of games/activities (refer to “Communication Activities” handout). Depending on time and space, you might want to only choose 2 or 3 of the following activities:
  - Word Ball
  - Yet Game
  - Spelling Talk
  - Verbal Mirror
  - Simultaneous Dialogue
4. Have a discussion/reflection about how successful the participants were at the activities. If they weren’t successful, why not?

## **Part 3 (25 min): Good Listening Skills**

1. Distribute “Listening Skills” handout and begin with the poor listening skills and review them. If possible, provide an example after each poor listening skill:
  - Spacing Out
  - Pretend Listening
  - Selective Listening
  - Word Listening
  - Self-Centered Listening
2. Discuss some obstacles for listening:
  - Judging

- Advising
  - Probing
3. Ask participants what some good listening skills are now that they know what the poor skills are. Answers may include:
    - Maintain eye contact
    - Head nods
    - Smiles and Grins
    - Lean forward toward the speaker
    - Ask appropriate questions once the speaker is finished
    - Paraphrase back to check for understanding (when there's a pause or break)

**Part 4 (5 min): Role-Playing**

1. Have participants pair up in groups of 3. They should decide their roles: one child, one parent, one observer.
2. Provide the following scenario: *The child wants a later curfew and the parent does not want to extend the curfew.*
3. Explain that child and parent should try to use good listening skills to effectively communicate with each other. The observer will take notes on what each person did good or not so good and provide feedback.
4. Have the observer from each group report back to the entire group about what was effective in their group by referring to the skills listed on the "Listening Skills" handout.
5. If time allows, ask a group that feels they did an extremely good job if they would like to re-enact their role play in front of the entire group.

**Part 5 (3 min): Conclusion**

1. Relevant Questions
  - On a scale of 1-5, rate your listening skills and explain why.
  - Do you feel that these tips will help improve your communication? Why or why not?
  - What do you feel was the most important thing you learned from today's presentation?
2. The purpose of this workshop was to teach you better communication and listening skills. You learned what skills are needed to improve communication and you were able to identify some of the obstacles that get in the way of communication. You should be walking away feeling that you can communicate better with others
  - Were the objectives met?
  - Remind participants that becoming a good listener is the key to effective communication but it doesn't happen overnight. It takes practice!!!
3. Questions and Answers
4. Thank the participants for their participation!

# Communication Activities

*\*\*Time for each activity can vary to fit your workshop situation*

## WORD BALL

- Form a circle with the entire group (if group is large, the activity can be played in smaller groups)
- Someone in the group starts by throwing a ball to someone else while saying a word, any word
- Person receiving the ball must catch the ball while responding with another word, something associated with word “thrown” at them. Example: Cat—Mouse
- Ball must continue being thrown from person to person creating a chain of word associations. Example: Cat—Mouse—Cheese—Sandwich—etc.



## YET GAME

- Form a circle with the entire group (if group is large, the activity can be played in smaller groups)
- Have one person put their thumb on their nose. That person goes in the middle of the circle. Person in the middle will stay in the middle of the circle for the entire game.
- Someone will begin by throwing a ball to the person in the middle while saying a word, any word.
- Person in the middle catches the ball and says, “YET”.
- Person in the middle throws the ball to someone else in the circle. That person must catch the ball while responding with the first word that comes to mind.
- Words don’t have to be a perfect match. Just say the first thing that comes to mind. Examples: “Happy” YET “Dark” or “Monkey” YET “Smooth”

## SPELLING TALK

- Have participants break up into pairs.
- Partners should have a conversation by spelling out every word, including punctuation marks.
- How many times were you unable to understand and had to ask **w-h-a-t?**
- Asking “what” means that you are not focusing on each other.
- Try again, if you don’t succeed the first time.

## VERBAL MIRROR

- Have participants break up into pairs and decide who is person A and who is person B.
- Person A talks about any topic for 30-60 seconds.
- Person B must act out what Person A is saying but Person B cannot speak while doing so.
- Don’t speak faster than people can think.



## SIMULTANEOUS DIALOGUE

- Have participants break up into pairs and decide who is person A and who is person B.
- Then choose a topic A and a topic B.
- Each partner must talk about the topic that corresponds to their letter.
- Both participants begin talking about their topic at the SAME time until asked to stop.
- When stopped, participants should take turns to repeat what the other person said.
- This is a great example of why you are told not to speak while others are speaking because you cannot listen if you are talking.

# Listening Skills

**Seek First to Understand,  
Then to be understood**

Listen first, and then talk second. To see things from another's perspective will offer you a whole new level of understanding. Everyone has a need to feel understood and represented.

## Effective Listening Skills:

- Maintain eye contact
- Nod head
- Smile and Grin
- Lean forward toward the speaker
- Ask appropriate questions once the speaker is finished
- Paraphrase back to check for understanding (when there's a pause or break)



## Poor Listening Skills:

- **SPACING OUT**—Someone is talking but we are off in our own little world.
- **PRETEND LISTENING**—We are not paying much attention, but we are pretending by making timely gestures
- **SELECTIVE LISTENING**—This happens when we pay close attention only to the details of the conversation that interest us.
- **WORD LISTENING**—Occurs when we listen only to the words that a person is saying, not the meaning behind the words or the body language
- **SELF-CENTERED LISTENING**—This happens when we filter everything through our own past experiences. We are quick to say comments, like: "Oh, I know exactly what you are saying..."

## Obstacles for Listening:

- **JUDGING**—If we are busy making judgments about what a person is saying while they are talking, we get distracted from what is trying to be communicated.
- **ADVISING**—This happens when we listen to what others are saying and, instead of listening, we begin to give advice based on our past experiences.
- **PROBING**—Probing occurs when we try to dig up emotions or information before people are ready to share. This is when people want to help—too much!