

# The Communication Process

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# Principles and Practice of Youth in Development Work

## Unit 6 : The Communication Process

### Introduction

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Let us take a simple definition of communication. It is the process by which individuals *share information*, ideas and attitudes. Sharing means that you give or receive something. Sometimes the word 'send' is used instead of share. 'Sending' implies transmitting a message and does not reflect the input by the receiver who works together with the sender for common understanding. Communication is a process. This means that communication is ongoing and dynamic. It also means that components in this process will interact and lead to changes in behaviour or attitudes.

Communication plays an important role in personality development. We have discussed about interaction and feedback which gives us know-how to expand our open self. We have discussed about personality traits such as friendliness, sociability etc. All these are outcomes of our communication with others.

In this unit we shall look at the communication process in general, the types of communication, the components in the communication process and ways of communication. Their study would probably help you to become a better communicator.

### Learning objectives for this unit

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- As you work through this session, you will learn to
- Explain the communication process
  - List important ways of communication
  - Discuss ways of improving one's own communication

### Types of Communication

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When you study communication, it concerns what information, ideas or attitudes are shared, how much is shared, when it is shared, who shares

it and what tools are used to share it. We can categorise the types of communication as follows:

- Intrapersonal communication
- Interpersonal communication
- Group communication
- Mass communication

**Intrapersonal communication** means a dialogue within a person. A good example would be a conflict situation that we learnt in an earlier session. The debate inside oneself whether to accept the opinion of one's mother on a particular issue or to accept a contrasting view point of his peers.

**Interpersonal communication** involves two or three people talking with one another in close physical proximity.

**Group communication** describes a process whereby groups of people communicate with one another in a face to face encounter. The number of people involved may vary.

**In mass communication**, professional communicators use mass media such as newspaper, radio, TV or satellite communication to reach a large audience. The communicator and the audience are physically separated.

## Components in Communication

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There are several basic components in the communication process. The interrelationships between the components can be represented in a diagram. It can be called a model of communication. We have selected a very simple model whose components are listed below.

The source  
The message  
The channel  
The receiver

For communication process to occur, all these components must be present.

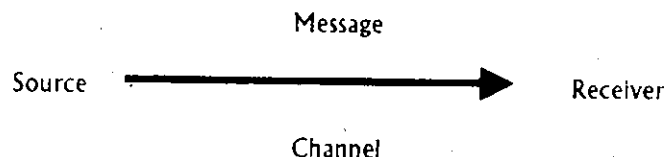


Figure 6.1 Communication model

### The source

The source is sometimes called the sender, communicator or encoder. He/she is the person who shares information with another. The author of this book is in fact a source as she is sharing her ideas with you. The message or the contents of this book is being disseminated using a tool for mass communication i.e. book publishing.

A good sender is specific, considerate and discriminating. Being specific relates to the accuracy of the message. We shall look at this aspect when we discuss the message component of communication. The sender is considerate when he/she is sensitive to the receiver's needs. We must not become busy trying to impress others. This will make one forget the objective of the message. We must also try to gauge what the receiver understands. For example you must get to know his/her knowledge level, and the vocabulary. We discriminate when we are careful about words or stop using bad grammar.

Do you clutter sentences with unnecessary phrases such as '*like*', '*I mean*', '*You know*', and '*O.K.*'. Do you overuse emphatic adjectives such as '*fantastic*' or '*wonderful*' until they have lost all meaning? Try to stop it.

## The message

The message is whatever the source wants to share with another. It starts as an idea which must be expressed using *symbols* that the other understands. These symbols can be signs, words, pictures or both pictures and sound (audio-visual) together. To convey the meaning of the message clearly, the symbol must be common to both the source and the receiver. Otherwise it may confuse the receiver leading to misunderstanding. Let's take one example. Amongst peers, the expression '*get off my back*' would mean a friendly response to teasing. But the same expression, if used with a stranger, will create antagonism.

In selecting symbols for a message, communicator must clearly understand the **audience** to whom the message is targeted. This understanding is called the *profile* of the target audience. Each person (or groups of people similar in background) has a different **frame of reference**. This means the set of individual experience one has. We use our accumulated experiences to give meaning and interpretation to symbols. Let us take another example. If you have been provided with police protection in the past, the expression '*Police are coming*' would mean safety to you. To a criminal who is a fugitive from law, it would sound threatening.



### Activity

Group work recommended with a facilitator.

Discuss and select about 25 messages.

Each participant then thinks of symbols that can encode the message.

Take message by message and discuss the encoding done by each participant.

Discuss whether symbols used are effective.

## The channel

The channel is the way we send our message. It has a different connotation to what we use when we talk about TV channels. In interpersonal communication, we use the sense of sight, sound and touch to communicate messages. These are our channels. In mass communication, newspapers, books, radio and TV are our main channels of communication.

## The receiver

The receiver, sometimes called the destination, audience or the decoder in the communication process denotes the person who shares the message sent from the source. Receivers can be of two types, *passive* and *active*. Passive listeners absorb only part of the message directed at them. Active listeners develop good habits of concentration, evaluation and mental participation. They therefore tend to absorb most of the intended message.

A listener can comprehend more words per minute than a speaker can physically deliver. With this ability, it is easy for the mind to begin wandering to other things. Concentration on listening must be developed as a habit. Successful people are usually good listeners.

Learn to be critical about what you listen. Learn to differentiate between fact, inference and opinion. Teach yourself to listen not only to the words but also for the meanings and the motives behind them. Participate mentally as you listen by analyzing the main idea(s), points, logic and coherence of a message.

The important question a communicator must ask would be '*Has he/she understood me clearly? Have we shared?*'. This question leads us onto another component of the communication process called '**feedback**'.

## Feedback

This is not an essential component of the communication process, but a very desirable one. If the receiver or audience transmits back to the source, a response to the message, that response is called a feedback. This allows the source to verify whether the message has been understood clearly. If the message has not been understood clearly, then the source can modify the message for better understanding.

Feedback can take many forms. It can be words written or spoken, gestures, facial expressions or body language. Feedback can also be transmitted through the medium of deliberate silence. Let us take what may be a common experience to all of us as our example.

Suppose you want to make a pass at an attractive member of the opposite sex. More often than not, the response might be '*get lost*'. This might be conveyed to you without any words being spoken. It may be body language, facial expression or silence that tells you to '*get lost*'.

Feedback is the sender's responsibility as well as the receiver's. It is difficult to determine what has gone wrong when a communication problem occurs. One must not always blame the receiver for such breakdown. As an example, when an employer complains that employees

do not follow the rules (which is the feedback), the problem may not be in the feedback or receiver. The rules may not have been stated clearly or sufficiently emphasised or brought to the notice of all employees. One must then look at the message or the channel to rectify the error. With feedback, the communication process becomes a cycle. We can now redraw our communication model to include the component of feedback.

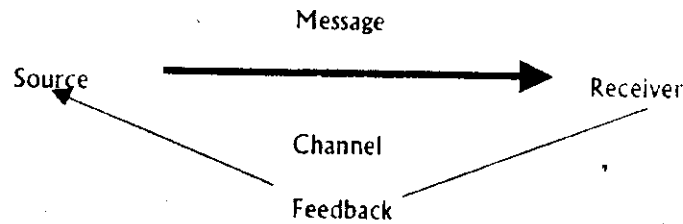


Figure 6.2 Communication process with feedback

Feedback is mostly absent or delayed in mass communication. In fact, this, makes successful mass communication more difficult than face to face communication. Messages in mass communication must therefore use symbols that can penetrate with meaning to varying audiences. One may identify two reasons for the confusion of a message by a receiver. One is the frame of reference that we discussed earlier. The second reason is related to the frame of reference but may be dealt with separately as Static or Noise.

## Static or Noise

Static is any interference with the exchange between sender and receiver that distorts the intended message or feedback. This results in misinterpretation.

You must be familiar with physical static as electrical interference on radio or television.

It is better that we deal with noise in the communication process under three different categories.

- Channel noise
- Semantic noise
- Psychological noise

**Channel noise** refers to external interference in the communication process. The message received is not the message sent. The best example is the message in a telegram. In the process of telephone transmission a message which reads 'Coming today' might be distorted to 'coming two days'. Can you imagine the confusion that may be caused at the receiving end?

**Semantic noise** is when the message gets through but the receiver cannot understand it. An example is when your radio news bulletin announces that **Phytophthora infestans** has been detected in a potato growing area. It would mean nothing to you unless you are a Botanist. If you are, you would link the news with a potato disease. Thus the message suffers from semantic noise. It can be understood only by some receivers. Here, noise is caused by knowledge.

Noise may also be caused by emotions. For example, when we are angry, sad or anxious about something, we may not be in a state to listen and comprehend a message fully.

Noise can also be due to cultural differences or even variation in family backgrounds between sender and receiver. It can also be due to differences in values, accepted practices, nuances of expression and habits.

Noise occurs because of the use of symbols that reflects different meaning to different people. This would be critical in mass communication messages.

**Psychological noise** are internal factors within an individual that lead to misunderstanding of messages. People usually prefer to seek information that are consistent with their beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. This leads to selective exposure, selective perception and selective retention. We talk, read, hear, see, understand and remember only what we want to. "Everyone has his/her own set of goggles". We think everybody else sees the colour of our own goggle.

For example, try to remember some good things about someone you dislike. Chances are that you remember good things about people you like and bad things only about people you dislike.

We can now include all these additional components into our model of communication. It will now look something like what has been drawn below.

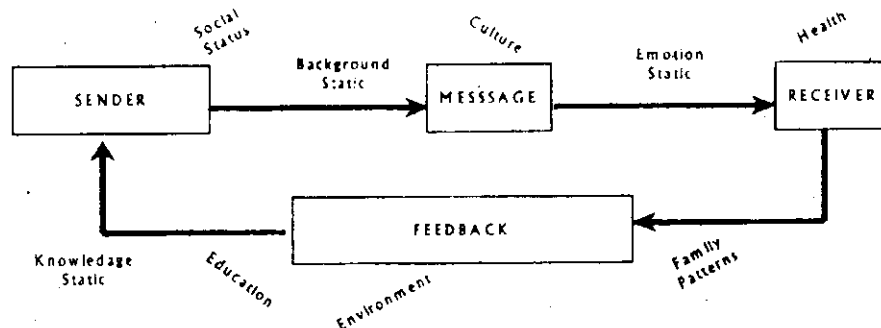


Figure 6.3 A communication model showing static

We can also change our definition of communication to read something like what follows

It is a process involving the sorting, selection and sharing of symbols in such a way as to help a receiver elicit from his or her own mind a meaning similar to that contained in the mind of the communicator.

## Ways of Communication

One may distinguish several ways in which we communicate with one another. They are listed below.

Non-verbal communication  
Written communication  
Verbal communication  
Audio-visual communication

## **Non verbal communication**

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We communicate with our gestures, tone of voice and facial expressions. Dress too becomes important in special encounters. Man uses many types of non verbal cues to communicate.

### **Body Language**

These are messages conveyed by body movements and facial expressions.

We tend to greet someone we like with a smile, a frown when puzzled or scowl if angry. Human face can produce a large range of expressions. Some expressions may be cultural in origin, used by people in a particular society but not elsewhere. Some are distinctive to each person. The way of smiling for example is unique to each person. But some expressions find universal use. The 'eyebrow flash' is one such. When we greet somebody we recognize, we raise our eyebrows and drop quickly. Also expressions used to show surprise, fear, happiness, sadness, anger, interest and contempt are very similar around different social groups.

Body language can refer to the whole body or one significant part. Eye contact is an important way of non verbal communication.

### **Eye Contact**

Eye contact can signal affection as well as hostility. Prolonged contact with someone you love conveys affection. With a stranger, long contact may convey hostility. A direct gaze can also be a signal of interest. Some believe that prolonged eye contact while speaking, and looking away while listening is a strategy people use to control interactions. It is a signal of power in social interactions. 'Shifty eyes' is associated with dishonesty. A reluctance to look in the eye of the listener when you speak indicates untruthfulness. You must have heard the expression '*Look me in the eye and tell me that*'. It challenges the sincerity of the statement.

### **Posture and Gesture**

Gestures are made with hands and arms. Some of these are culture specific. Others are universal. Think of the gesture that is used to indicate that somebody may be crazy. You do so by pointing the finger at the head or by tapping the head with it.

Anybody anywhere can catch its meaning. Posture involves the whole orientation of the body. One can immediately recognise a casual posture. Relaxed, leaning back with hands clasped behind the head indicates a



vary casual mood. If the body is rigid, erect with hands folded across the chest, it suggests aggression. We are also familiar with body posture which suggests dejection. Bowed down body as if something is weighing one down with head in hands shows dejection. Leaning forward can suggest interest. You can think of or observe body postures of people and analyse whether what we have just discussed, is applicable to your observations.

## **Tone of voice**

Vocal intonations and inflections communicate even when words are not spoken. The tone of the voice can indicate anger, frustration or impatience. 'M-m-m' can convey doubt or enthusiasm depending on the tone. It therefore important to be able to understand the tone of voice of a person you are talking with.

## **Proxemics**

This means the distance we maintain between ourselves and other people when we talk with them. As part of the growing up or training, we learn clear ideas about acceptable distances to maintain for different types of interactions. They reflect the closeness between people who interact. Study some suggestions given below and analyse whether they are valid in your own experience.

- Intimate - upto eighteen inches
- Personal - upto about four feet
- Social - upto about twelve feet
- Public - upto about eighteen feet

These guidelines may change from culture to culture and may cause problems if somebody is in a new cultural environment. These distances also matter in office or work environments where respect and regard down a hierarchy are expressed by the distance you keep with people. Mostly, they are unspoken of. It is better to observe others and learn. The idea is to prevent yourself making a mistake with proxemics in such a situation.



### **Activity**

Group work recommended with a facilitator. Divide the group into teams of two members each.

Ask each team member to list non verbal communication of the other member. Display the lists for the group to see and discuss.

## Written communication

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Learning to write well is hard work. Anything significant in any interaction is written down. The entry of the computer and the expanding nature of information technology makes writing skills even more important.

In order to write effectively, you need to plan what you want to say. Making a list of major points you want to say can help. Then, you can put them in an appropriate order and decide which need emphasising.

If you are responding to correspondence, check the points that need answering. Write for your intended audience, not at a higher or a lower level. Use familiar words.

Avoid technical jargon unless your receiver is sure to understand them. Try to use active verbs and nouns. Avoid unnecessary descriptions or superlatives. Be clear, stick to the point and be as brief as possible.

Use paragraphing to make your communication easier to read. Break your writing into distinct but logical parts. Distinguish fact from opinion.

Make your writing as attractive as possible. Use clean paper, good typing and avoid clumsy erasure.

These are only a few basic guidelines. You need to work hard to improve your writing skills.

## Verbal and audio-visual communication

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A verbal communication is all words. Remember that words don't mean the same things to all the people. Do not assume that merely because you as the sender attach a certain meaning to words, the receiver will attach the same meaning to them. Words used must be put into a pattern that shows good organisation and sound reasoning. Remember that your tone of voice, speed of delivery, pauses and emphasis on certain words all add to effective delivery of the message. If you are face to face with the receiver, use of eye contact, facial expression, gestures, etc. will add to heighten the meaning of what you speak.

You must have heard of the Chinese proverb that 'a picture is worth a thousand words'. Visuals can be very effective in communication if used properly. One must here make a distinction between visual aids and audio-visual. Visual aids are things like flip charts, overhead transparencies(OHP), slides, pictures, maps, etc. which do not have sound synchronized with their use. They can be very effective tools to enrich verbal communication, specially in group communication. Audio-visual is when both sound and visuals are synchronized as in video or film. These are useful tools in group and mass communication.

This session does not allow us to discuss these different media components in detail. However figures 6.4 and 6.5 give a list of visual aids and audio visual media. Figures 6.6 and 6.7 give guidelines for choosing appropriate media for individual and group communication respectively.

## **VISUAL AIDS**

Display material, including product display

Flipchart

Overhead projector (OHP)

Writing board

Magnetic and other display boards

Slides, Filmstrip

Video display of single images

Video display, of computer output  
(graphics and text)

## **AUDIO - VISUAL MEDIA**

Super 8 movie

16 mm movie

35 mm movie

70 mm movie

Filmstrip with sound

Single slide with sound

Dissolve slide with sound

Multi-image slides with sound

Videotape / videodisk display by monitors

Videotape / videodisk displayed by projection

Multi-screen video

Computer output display linked to sound

Multi-media (Computer based graphics /  
pictures and sound)

<b>Choice of AV medium for individual communication</b>	
<b>What is best if...</b>	<b>Favourite answer</b>
A lot of copies are needed ?	Video
Only a few copies are needed ?	Slides
Easy program making and editing are required ?	Slides
Movement is required ?	Video / Super 8
Good image quality is required ?	Slides
Portability is required ?	Video / Slides
Low production costs are essential ?	Slides
Interactive programs are required ?	Videodisk

Figure 6.6 A guideline to choose media for individual communication

<b>Choice of visual aids for groups</b>	
<i>What is best if.....</i>	<i>Favourite answer</i>
'Once only' material is needed for an informal audience ?	Flipchart / overhead projector (OHP)
A 'teaching' session is needed ?	Writing board / OHP
A mixture of frequently used and specially prepared material is needed	OHP
The visual must be altered while being displayed	OHP/magnetic board
The visual must match or exceed AV material in impact and quality ?	Slides
It must be easy to prepare material 'in house' ?	OHP
Daylight is present ?	Writing board / OHP / flipchart
On-line computer data must be displayed ?	Video data projector
A prestige presentation is to be given ?	Slides/computer based projection
Movement is required	Video

Figure 6.7 A guideline to choose media for group communication

Whether it is verbal or audio-visual, try to follow the FIVE Cs of communications.

**CONCISE**

Are you wasting the time of your listener by talking unnecessary things ?

**COMPLETE**

Have you said everything that your listener needs to hear ?

**COHESIVE**

Have you achieved logical transition from one point to the next ?

**CLEAR**

Have you got the message across as intended? Has the listener understood ?

**COURTEOUS**

Have you irritated your listener?



**Activity**

Group approach suggested.

Use recorded material from radio or TV. You may even use newspaper articles or posters.

Select commercials, documentaries or public speeches from radio and TV. Read them collectively or play them back (as relevant) and try to relate the Five Cs to each selected message.

## How to Avoid Breakdown in Communication

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Learning to get across an idea to another person and supporting that idea with relevant arguments or evidence needs a lot of practice. Two simple rules can help you to become a better communicator.

1. Allow for different viewpoints on the same issue
2. Avoid hasty conclusions

'Know thyself' is good advice to somebody who aspires to be a good communicator. A better understanding of self and others will mean better communication. Our discussion on 'personality' and 'self' would allow you to understand yourself and others better. The Johari-Window would be a good tool for you to achieve this. Communication flows more freely among confident, open people who are not afraid of making a mistake or facing rejection. The communication process would be smoother if every person tries to expand the Open Self in the Johari-Window.

## Unit Summary

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In this final unit we discussed one of the vital aspects of personality development, namely communication. To begin with, different types of communication processes are listed with explanation for each type of communication. A simple model of communication involves a source, a receiver, a message, a channel for communication as well as a feedback. There are several ways by which one may communicate. It could be non-verbal, involving body language, eye contact and postures and gestures. Contrarily communication could be verbal, written or through audio-visual media. Whatever be the mode, it is essential one should communicate and what is to be avoided is the breakdown in communication.

# Personality Development and Communication

## Module Summary

This regional module is focussed on personality development and the role communication process in it. We hope that after studying through this module you have developed insights into :

- ❖ the concept and theories of personality development.
- ❖ that there is no single definition of personality and several human traits may shape the personality of the individual
- ❖ that personality development is associated with childhood experiences and is further influenced by family background and socio-cultural environment in which one is brought up
- ❖ that the definition of 'self' varies with different thinkers and that 'self' is a measurable entity
- ❖ that 'self' is a kind of a window with at least four panes to it and each pane characterises the relationship between the self and others
- ❖ that the ideal window is the one in which open or public self is a much enlarged pane as compared to other panes
- ❖ that techniques such as 'feedback' and 'self-disclosure' could help to enlarge the open pane of the window
- ❖ that personal liabilities and conflict within self have to be minimised to develop into a better personality
- ❖ the concept of self-actualisation and self-actualising characteristics
- ❖ the importance of communication process in personality development

### Assignment

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1. Visit a youth organisation, study critically its structure, functions and programmes. Meet its members. Find out whether and how the organisation fulfils the self-actualisation needs of its members. Suggest improvements. Prepare a report including your suggestions, views and comments.