

expressed message. It is not shocking that a passive communicator may start to build resentment towards others.

2. **Aggressive** communication occurs when a person expresses their needs, desires and feelings without considering and respecting needs of others. As a sender, a person is willing to emotionally bulldoze the person they are talking to, or at, and does not care how they will be received. As a receiver, an aggressive communication will often be judgmental, terminating the conversation before any real communication can take place.
3. **Passive-aggressive** is a communication style that relies heavily on the usage of body language and paralinguistics instead of verbal language. This is often seen in sarcastic communication. Passive-aggression is the combination of the discomfort of being direct (passive) with the bold forwardness (aggressive) that often ceases communication for both the sender and the receiver. The lack of serious expression of self will typically lead to frustration and resentment.
4. **Assertive** communication is the gold standard of communication. It is this style in which expression of needs and desires occurs simultaneously with the considering and respect the receiver. Assertive communication is often characterized as confident and direct, even if it leads to a mutual understanding, not necessarily agreement. As a sender, your message is well thought out and as a receiver, assertive communication occurs without judgment. Assertive communicators are truly listening to each other, not just hearing each other.

It is important to keep in mind that your communication style may vary depending on the individual you are engaging in conversation with. If you do not know which style you gravitate towards, ask a trusted individual. But remember, you may not like what they have to say!

Effective communication is a skill and therefore it can be practiced! Tips to effectively communicate:

- Check your audience—you should not be communicating with your boss the way you would communicate with your friends
- Focus on facts, rather than emotions when you find yourself starting to lose control
- Practice good listening skills
- Learn to use “I” statements to express your thoughts and feelings without accusing the person you are communicating with
- Practice assertive body language, eye contact and speech

Practice may need not lead to perfection but it usually leads to improvement!

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Effective Communication: Understanding Your Impact



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What is communication?

Communication is defined as a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols of behavior. In our society, the majority of our communication is accomplished through *verbal communication* and *nonverbal communication*, which is the process of sending and receiving wordless messages. We often associate body



language, posture, facial expression, gestures and eye contact with non-verbal communication but did you know there are nonverbal part of

speech? The follow are clues into the intention behind the message.

- **Paralanguage:** voice quality, rate, pitch, volume and speaking style
- **Prosodic:** rhythm, intonation and stress

Think how often someone says “It’s not what you say, but it is how you say it!”. This was found to be true in a study conducted in the 1960s’ by Dr. Mehrabian who found that when verbal speech and nonverbal speech are non congruent, the following statistics ring true for how communication is understood: **55%** of communication is body language, **38%** is the tone of voice, and **7%** is the actual words spoken. We can try to hide underlying messages, but clearly the come through loud and clear.

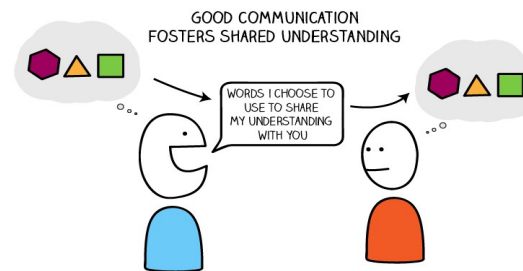
The Communication Cycle

Communication is considered to be a cycle comprised on 5 parts:

1. **The Sender** – the individual wishing to communicate a message
2. **Message** – the information that the sender wants the audience to receive and understand

3. **Transmission and noise** – transmission is the process of sending the message: verbal, text message, phone call, email and video chatting; noise is any distraction that interferes with transmitting this message
4. **Receiver** – The individual receiving and interpreting the message
5. **Feedback** – the receiver sharing their understanding of the message, which can be done verbally or nonverbally

During a conversation in which effective communication is present, we take turns being the sender and the receiver, often checking in to make sure our interpretation of the message is accurate. By actively participating in this cycle, we can ensure that the goal of communication, to be understood, is realistic and within reach.



Barriers to Communication

Studies show that we spend approximately **70-80%** of our waking hours communicating with our friends, our families and our coworkers. Arguably one of the most practiced skills in our lifetime, it is concerning that poor communication skills often plague relationships.. Several studies have identified communication, or a lack there of, as one of the top issues that leads couples to engage in therapy, as well as one of the top cited reasons for break up and divorce. So what causes breakdowns in communication?

When there is an issue in communication, people can be quick to blame the receiver in the cycle— often citing a problem with listening as to why the conversation failed. But maybe the issue originated with the sender? As the

sender, you have a responsibility to make sure your message is clear and concise, but the following can impact how a message is sent:

- Fear of offending others
- Not understanding your own thoughts and feelings and possibly discomfort in expressing them—sending a confused message will only lead to further confusion.
- Choosing the wrong method of transmission—sending an emotionally charged message over text, without the paralanguage and prosodic cues being present, will often lead to misunderstanding and arguments.

Now, this isn’t to say that the receiver’s listening skills do not impact the effectiveness of communication. The most common listening mistakes are:

- Daydreaming or being distracted while another person is talking
- Premature response—worrying about how you will respond before the individual finishes talking leads to tuning them out and potentially missing important information.
- Judging what the other person is sharing.
- Listening with a specific goal in mind and jumping to conclusions

Take responsibility for the role that you play in communication. There is always room for improvement!

Communication Styles

There are four distinct styles of communication, one ideal style and three problematic styles.

1. **Passive** communication occurs when an individual does not express your own needs, desires and feelings. As a sender, a passive communicator may struggle to feel comfortable expressing themselves, often out of fear or being judged. As a receiver, a passive communicator will not engage in feedback, even when feeling hurt by the