

Communication Exercises

Responsible Listening: Irritating Habits

People speak at the rate of 150-200 words per minute. When we listen, we can hear at a rate of 750-800 words per minute. That's why we can figure out answers before a person finishes speaking. Unfortunately the answers come from our autobiography. We fill in the "600-word gap" with our thoughts, not the speaker's information.

Exercise

1. Listed below are things people do to us when we are speaking. Think about a specific person with whom you communicate. Check off in *Column A* each of the items that describe things this person has recently done to you when you were speaking.

A	B	
___	___	Speaks at the same time.
___	___	Responds about themselves, not about what I said.
___	___	Responds about entirely different subject, not about what I said.
___	___	Defend their point of view without considering what I said
___	___	Split focus between listening to me and talking to someone else
___	___	Allows distractions to interfere
___	___	Fakes attention
___	___	Analyzes facts/details and misses context, concept
___	___	Projects hostility, prejudices
___	___	Makes hasty judgments, draws premature conclusions
___	___	Expression on face and body movements indicate impatience
___	___	Tune out difficult information
___	___	Show lack of interest in subject matter
___	___	Other: _____

2. Now check in *Column B* the things you typically do to others when they are speaking.

Responsible Listening: Clarifying Questions

Exercise

Listed below are statements people might make to us. We respond with two types of questions, ones that allow them to talk more about their subject matter, or ones that change the direction of their conversations. Check the best question you could use to allow them to continue talking about their subject.

1. I think radio production would be a good career choice.

A. Why do you think radio production would be a good career choice?

B. Why would anyone want to go into radio production as a career?

C. Why do you think you would be good in radio production?

2. It's hard to say whether in five years I'll be in the home office or working as a field representative.

A. Why will it take you so long to make up your mind?

B. Why is it hard to say which you will be in five years?

C. Why would anyone want to stay in the home office?

3. One thing I disliked about my last job was they did not give me much freedom to make decisions on my own.

A. What other things did you dislike about your last job?

B. What did you dislike about not being able to make your own decisions?

C. Why would anyone dislike their job because of one aspect?

4. I like to look at things pretty carefully and weigh the long-term consequences of each possibility.

A. What do you gain from looking at things carefully and weighing the long-term consequences?

B. Why can't you make quick decisions?

C. Don't you think people who are too careful waste a lot of time?

Now go back and under each incorrect question, describe how/why it changes the conversation away from the speaker's content.

Responsible Listening: Clarifying Statements

Exercise

A *clarifying statement* indicates our need to understand better what the speaker is saying. Under each speaker's content are samples of clarifying statements. Each clarifying response is slightly different because it wishes to clarify different aspects of the speaker's content. Write a third clarifying statement that you could use.

1. I think fund-raising is a good career because it is one of the primary ways that Christian organizations survive.
 - a. So when you say "primary ways", I guess you mean a functional discipline like finance or administration.
 - b. I'm not sure what you mean by "survive."
 - c. _____.

2. It's hard to say where I'd like to be five years from now. I certainly want to advance in the organization, but I don't know whether it should be in the home office or as a field representative.
 - a. I guess you mean five years from now you want to be either in the home office or working as a field representative.
 - b. So that I can be sure I understand your statement, five years from now you plan to be in this organization?
 - c. _____.

3. One thing I disliked about my last job was they didn't give you much freedom to make decisions on your own.
 - a. I'm not sure what kinds of decisions you mean.
 - b. You like a job in which you have more freedom – you're not so closely supervised?
 - c. _____.

4. I like to look at things very carefully and weigh the long-term consequences of each decision.
 - a. You're very cautious at decision-making.
 - b. I'm not sure what you mean by long-term consequences.
 - c. _____.

Responsible Listening: Clarifying Statements

Exercise

Below are listed a number of ways to begin clarifying statements. *Clarifying statements are your understanding of what was said.* Partners will alternate roles. The speaker will send a brief message about something of particular interest to the listener. The listener will respond with a clarifying statement from below.

1. I guess you mean _____.
2. I'm not sure what you mean by _____.
3. So when you say _____, I guess you mean _____.
4. It would be more helpful for me to know what you mean by _____
_____.

9. _____ a. I am a failure; I'll never amount to anything.
 _____ b. That teach is awful; I wasn't taught anything.
 _____ c. Your decision is short-sighted; can't you delay the decision for a day?
10. _____ a. I feel lonely and isolated by my work group.
 _____ b. For all the attention anyone pays to me, I might as well not show up.
 _____ c. I feel that nobody in my group cares whether I'm here or not.

Responsible Listening: Responding to Stated Emotions

Exercise

This exercise is to practice responding to expressed emotional words. Read each sentence below. They all actually state emotional words. After each one, reflect back to the speaker an appropriate response that includes the feeling word.

Speaker's Statement

Your Response

Ex: "I'm really *ticked* that I have to write up another request!"

"I'd be *ticked* too if I had to waste time and energy."

1. "I don't believe it! This is disgusting. Are they calling to complain again? They are the ones who keep fouling up."

2. "I admire her as a manager. She's tough but fair and helpful."

3. "I'm embarrassed by the way you spoke to me in front of everyone in the meeting."

4. "I'm really bored with this job. There's just no opportunity to be creative."

5. "Now that's when I get excited about Human Resources. When they turn someone around like that, they've done something." _____

6. "It just makes no sense. You want me to establish in-depth relationships with the staff, and yet you still want me to travel and recruit." I'm frustrated." _____

7. "I am so excited. We just got a letter from the president congratulating us on a good job." _____

Responsible Listening: Identifying Unstated Emotions

Exercise

Below are some typical statements made on the job. Read each statement carefully, concentrating only on the *feeling*, not on the *content* or on the *situation* in which the statement might occur. In the right-hand column, write the feelings you think are being expressed.

<u>Statement</u>	<u>Feeling Expressed</u>
Ex: "I can't believe I have to write another report. When am I supposed to get my work done?"	<u>Annoyed</u>
1. "Nobody seems to care what we have to say."	_____
2. "I understand the new policy, but why do we need another new policy?"	_____
3. "I just run into one problem after another."	_____
4. "I work so hard and then you just criticize what I do."	_____

5. "I think your idea is a good one, but some of our clients won't like it." _____
6. "I joined this firm four years ago because I thought there would be opportunities for growth. Now it's four years later and nothing has happened." _____
7. "I was depending on you for support, and you let them tear me to pieces." _____

Responsible Listening: Responding to Unstated Emotions

Exercise

This exercise helps you to respond to unstated emotions. The individual makes an emotional statement without identifying the feeling. Your job is to risk selecting the feeling you heard. Select the response that best identifies the feeling expressed and responds appropriately.

1. "There's just one problem after another around here. What's the use!"
 - a. "Look, that's just the way it is. No point letting it upset you."
 - b. "I'm surprised you feel that way."
 - c. "Tell me specifically what you're referring to."
 - d. "It's frustrating to keep running into problems."
2. "I worked so hard, and she messes it all up."
 - a. "I think you should go tell her off."
 - b. "When you put so much effort into doing well, it's pretty discouraging to see it jeopardized."
 - c. "Are you sure you had the right groundwork established?"
 - d. "We can't afford to have this happen. I'll straighten her out myself."
3. "Hey, I just got a letter congratulating us for doing good work."
 - a. "It feels great to be recognized."
 - b. "I know, but let's not get complacent around here."
 - c. "Really? I'd better go read it."
 - d. "What did it say?"

4. "I was depending on you to support my position. Instead, you let them tear me apart."
 - a. "I had good reasons for not speaking up."
 - b. "You're upset with the way I handled myself."
 - c. "I thought I did give you support several times."
 - d. "I was waiting for the signal from you."

5. "I joined this company because I thought there would be lots of opportunity for advancement. Well, here it is four years later and nothing has changed."
 - a. "Moving into management is important to you. You're disappointed with your progress."
 - b. "If you're patient and wait your turn, you'll advance eventually."
 - c. "Let's discuss what you can do to get yourself promoted."

Responsible Listening: Responding to Unstated Emotions

Practice

This exercise is to practice responding to unstated feelings. Read each sentence to yourself, identify the emotion expressed, and write out an appropriate response to the speaker.

Remember: Your job is to "risk" deciding which emotion is being expressed and give it back in your response.

1. I run into one problem after another.

2. Do you know that you constantly interrupt me?

3. You're a wonderful person to be with.

4. Our rate of production is way too slow.

5. I guess you're going to watch football all afternoon.

6. The way you respond to my children is special.

7. I don't see any opportunity to be creative in this job.