

Communicating well

Defining Communication

Communication is the sharing of information between two beings. It is an integral part of everyday activities and affects all aspects of our life. Human beings communicate within themselves, with others, in small groups and in public. Effective communication is to ensure that the message received is the message intended.

A blessing from the Almighty

The ability to communicate with others is one of the greatest assets of the human being. It is a great favor of the Almighty that a human being can express and convey to others what goes on in his heart and mind. This ability has allowed him to develop relationships and foster progress through the transferring of ideas and knowledge. Almighty Allah mentions this ability to communicate as one of the foremost bounties in Sura ar-Rahman. He says: *The Beneficent God. He taught the Qur'an. He created man. He taught him the mode of expression.* (55:1-4)

Imam Ali (a) says; *Human beings have two distinctions; Intelligence and communication So with the intelligence he gains benefit and with communication he benefits [others].*
Mizanul Hikmah, H#17525

In Hadithe Mufazzal, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a) says:

O Mufazzal! Consider the blessing of speech with which he [human being] is endowed by Allah the Almighty, which is the medium for the expression of his inner thoughts and his cordial feelings springing from his understanding, and with which he also understands the inner points of others. Without this faculty he would have been like quadrupeds, neither able to convey his own inner thoughts nor to understand the words of the speaker.

Basic Components of Communication

- 1) The Speaker – has a message to give. This is encoding the message.
- 2) The message – words that are conveyed
- 3) The Listener/s – message is received and interpreted. This is decoding the message.

Responsibilities in Communication

The Speaker

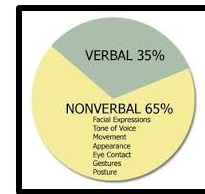
- 1) Intends to convey a message for a reason
- 2) Knows the audience
- 3) Frees the self from emotion that would interfere with the message
- 4) Harmonizes various message transmitters; words, body language, tone, voice . . .

The Listener

- 1) Listens actively
- 2) Frees the mind of assumptions
- 3) Decodes and sends feedback
- 4) Responds accordingly

Non-verbal communication

A substantial part of communication is non-verbal. The human body uses a natural, unconscious way of communicating. It is often more important than the words used. Non-verbal communication is subtle and can be culture specific. The message sent is received in the context in which it is sent. When the non-verbal transmitters differ from the verbal transmitters the listener receives the message more from the former.



Non-verbal transmitters can only conform to the verbal transmitters when there is sincerity and purity in the heart. Imam Ali (a) says; Whenever a person conceals a thing in his heart it manifests itself through unintentional words from his tongue and the expressions of his face (Nahjul Balagha, Hadith no.26)

Effective Communication skills

- 1) Real Listening. Effective listening is not to focus on one's internal responses to the speaker but to what the speaker is trying to communicate. The goal is to understand the other person, the feelings behind the words and the reality being expressed. Most people are very poor at effective listening. They just wait for their turn to speak.
- 2) Refining the Message. For effective communication the speaker should help the listener by making the message more 'listenable'. This comes from knowing the listener, having a clear objective, making the message positive and keeping it simple and focused.
- 3) Choosing the right words. Words are powerful and can convey a lot of meanings. They stir emotion and stimulate a way of thinking. Pick words carefully.
- 4) Understanding. Have compassion and empathy for the other. This makes the other person more receptive to the message being conveyed.

Barriers to communicating well

Signs that a barrier exists could be a mismatch of verbal and non-verbal cue, awkward conversations, resistance to talking more, misunderstandings and lack of interest or engagement on the part of speaker or listener. Barriers include:

- 1) Having a personal agenda. The goal is not to receive a message, just give one.
- 2) Judging the other person. Sometimes we criticize people as we are listening to them and analyze them rather than trying to understand them.
- 3) Not paying attention. These could include mental or physical distractions which convey that what the person is saying is not important.
- 4) Connecting to the past. Rather than actively listening to what is being said in the present there is constant bringing up of past communications and their effects.