

FLOW CHART

Content Flow at A Glance Module 2: Communication

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Module 2

Communication

“The eyes of men converse as much as their tongues, with the advantage that the ocular dialect needs no dictionary, but is understood the world over.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

I Introduction

The word communication originates from the word "communis", which means common. Communication, therefore, is an act by which a person shares knowledge, feelings, ideas and information, in ways such that each gains a common understanding of the meaning, intent and use of the message.

Sociologists, educationists and psychologists have defined communication according to the disciplines to which they belong. Some definitions are given below:

“It is a process by which two or more people exchange ideas, facts, feelings or impressions in ways that each gains a common understanding of the message. In essence, it is the act of getting a sender and a receiver tuned together for a particular message or series of message”.

Leagans

“It is a process by which information, decisions and directions pass through a social system, and the ways in which knowledge, opinions and attitudes are formed or modified”.

Loomis and Beegle

“Communication is the force by which an individual communicator transmits stimuli to modify the behaviour of other individuals”.

Howland

II How Communication Takes Place

Communication can occur without words. Our four senses, audio, visual, touch and smell, communicate. The ring of the alarm tells us its time to wake up, the eyes gaze at the window and check for the time of day or weather, the touch of the wind on our skin tells us if it is hot or cold and the smell from the kitchen tells us what is cooking. When a message is sent from a source to a receiver, a specific mental or physical response (communication) occurs.

Communication is a two-way process. It has a transmitter and a receiver. Therefore, it is essential for facts to be transmitted in such a manner that the meaning intended

is conveyed and the receiver understands the use of the message. It becomes a two-way process.

There are many different types and methods of communication. For example, in India, people fold their hands in greeting. In Japan, people bow from the waist. In Pakistan, people touch their forehead with the right hand. Simple gestures are an effective means of communication. An effective and culturally sensitive communicator is able to read feelings and reactions through these gestures.

Communication is a process. It is the process of transmitting meaning between individuals. Early human beings communicated through symbols and gestures. Later, the spoken word, in the form of language, was used for communication. As technology developed, written words and media were used, in addition to symbols, gestures and the spoken word.

Research shows that, on average, a person spends about 70 per cent of his/her active time communicating – speaking, reading, gesturing, writing, listening and watching.

Communication can be defined as a process of meaningful interaction whereby a person not only sends but also receives and understands a message. Communication always has a purpose.

III Types of Communication

Communication can be categorized into four different types, depending on the nature of the interaction.

Intrapersonal communication	is a type of communication whereby a person interacts with himself/herself. This type of communication is intrinsic or reflective.
Interpersonal communication	is a type of communication where there is one-to-one interaction or interaction among a small group. This is the most commonly used/practiced form of communication.
Intergroup communication	is a type of communication where interaction between different groups takes place.
Mass communication	is a type of communication where a large body (millions of people) of people is addressed.

IV Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

Communication can be verbal and non-verbal. In verbal communication, we use words/language in the written or spoken form. Non-verbal communication is often given secondary importance, but it is much more important than verbal communication. It includes a series of gestures, such as facial expressions, signs, body movements, eye contact, tone of voice, and sounds. In

normal interpersonal communication 5-10 per cent of total communication is verbal while 90-95 per cent is non-verbal. People can receive valuable information through non-verbal cues such as:

- Body language
- Eye contact
- Facial expression
- Head nodding or shaking
- Playing with objects
- Making sounds
- Signs
- Touch
- Taste
- Silence

V Barriers to Communication

There are many barriers to communication. These barriers can stall or distort communication, therefore, attention must be paid to overcome these barriers. Communication barriers can be classified into three main groups:

Judgmental attitude may be reflected through excessive analysis, bossiness, name-calling, ridiculing, making value-based comments and judgments, moralizing or ignoring. This is often the single most powerful barrier in communicating with young people on the subject of HIV/AIDS and related subjects, such as sexual health, reproductive health, STIs and drug use

“Know it all” attitude may be reflected through advising, moralizing, ordering, patronizing, threatening or lecturing. This form of behaviour often inhibits people from sharing their concerns and experiences. When communicating with youth, this kind of behaviour/communication should be avoided.

Unconcerned attitude may be reflected through voicing platitudes, diverting the issue, using excessive logic, offhanded assurances, half-listening, not making eye contact or being flippant. In communicating with people on sensitive topics, such as HIV/AIDS, care must be taken to avoid such behaviour and actions. Concern, empathy and confidentiality are valued components of communication on sensitive subjects.

VI Listening

Listening is the highest form of communication. When they consider communication, people tend to think more of speaking and less of listening. We rarely receive any training on how to listen but reading, writing and speaking are taught in abundance.

Always remember that the responsibility for ensuring that the listener gets the message lies with the sender. To introduce new material to an audience we must tap into known material. The new material should be linked to what they already know or have experienced.

There are 5 main forms of listening

“Ignoring” listening occurs when the listener is not attentive to the message, as s/he is otherwise preoccupied and unwilling to receive a message.

“Pretending” listening occurs when the speaker is in a higher position and the listener cannot ignore him/her. S/he pretends to listen, even when the message is boring or irrelevant.

Selective listening occurs when the listener picks up only those parts of the message that interest him/her and ignores the rest of the message.

Attentive listening occurs when the listener not only listens and is able to answer questions, but also understands the significance of the message.

Empathic listening occurs when the listener does not necessarily agree with the speaker, but deeply understands that person emotionally and intellectually. This is the highest form of listening and is often referred to as being in “someone’s shoes”.

VII Barriers to Receiving Messages

Human beings can receive messages subject to certain limitations. These limitations are called filters. Anything below or above the range of these filters is usually left out:

Physical filters The inherent structure of our senses limits our capacity to perceive. For example, we can only see certain colours from a spectrum of colours. We can only hear between certain frequencies – 20Hz to 20,000 Hz. All frequencies higher or lower are filtered out.

Psychological filters enable people to look/view the same things differently. Our attributes, expectations, past experiences, and knowledge influence what we perceive and how we perceive it. These perceptions change during the course of life and greatly influence the way we communicate.

VIII Seven Steps to Effective Messages

- **Know your target audience** – who are they, what do they need, how can you reach them?
- **Set clear objectives** – what do you expect from the message, how will you measure it, when will it happen?
- **Work for approval** – your audience should choose your message over the others that are also coming its way
- **Be strategic** – use words, images and sounds that are acceptable to your audience, because your main purpose is to make them listen.
- **Work for acceptance** – is your message credible, do people believe your message and the communicator, who and what will people believe?
- **Work for recall** – the message should remain with the audience, make it catchy, make it funny, repeat if necessary, use different types of media

- **Review and re-plan** – are you reaching the intended audience, are you achieving the objectives, do you need to change, do you need a new message?

IX Distortions in Effective Communication

Communication can be blocked or result in undesired impacts. This may happen because of many reasons that are known as distortions. Distortions can occur because of the following:

- A very long transmission chain (message is passed from one person to another and goes through a long chain of receivers and senders).
- A very long message.
- A complicated and poorly organized message.
- Non-availability of feedback at appropriate time.
- The sender and the receiver have different mindsets.
- Inappropriate use of media and medium (i.e., method and language).
- Lack of common perceptions between the sender and the receiver.
- Hurried and uninsured transmission (you send the message without checking if it has actually reached the intended person).

X Reducing Distortions

Distortions can ruin a communication, especially if you are communicating with people on an issue as sensitive as HIV/AIDS. Communication on HIV/AIDS usually involves dealing with young people or groups that are marginalized. It also involves serious issues of trust and confidentiality, as it relates to people's personal and intimate behaviours. You could reduce these distortions and increase the effectiveness of your communication by:

- Communicating with small groups and being direct.
- Using language easily understood and spoken by the target group.
- Increasing the similarities between the sender and the receiver.
- Keeping the message short and clear.
- Putting yourself in the receiver's shoes.
- Using multiple ways of communicating – verbal, written, audio or visual.
- Keeping confidences and listening.

Session 2.1

Hearing and Listening

Expected Outcomes

Participants will know the difference between hearing and listening.

Participants will become more aware of themselves, while listening to others.

Listening

Objective To know the difference between hearing and listening.

Materials 10-15 lines of written script on any topic.

Time 30 minutes.

Process Invite the participants to sit in a circle.

Ask for volunteers. Take the volunteers out of the room, and instruct them to make noise while the script is being read out. These noises, for example, tapping a pen on the floor a few times or knocking on the wall, (should be loud enough for everyone to hear but not overwhelming enough to attract the complete attention of the participants) should be made once or twice.

Explain to the participants that you will read out a small text. and they should try to remember as much as they can of the text.

After the reading, ask the participants to tell you all that they heard.

Allow 7-8 minutes for this activity. Then, invite the participants to listen to the same text being read out for a second time.

This time they should have an objective when listening to the text. Complete the reading, and ask the participants to report on the stated objective.

During the first round of reading, most participants will probably be able to tell you bits and pieces of the text you read.

Listening to the second round of reading with an objective will result in accurate responses from a large number of participants.

Ask the participants:

- *Why do they think this happened?*

Some participants will tell you that this was because, the second time, they had an objective. Commend the answers. Emphasize that the difference between hearing and listening is that listening has an objective while hearing is general.

Close the exercise by pointing out that in effective communication listening is an important element.

Notes for the Facilitator

This exercise points out the difference between hearing and listening. It allows the participants to learn from their own experience, and therefore, they tend to remember it. As a peer educator, you may want to use section VI on listening (beginning of this module).

Session 2.2

Seeing and Looking

Expected Outcomes

Participants will become aware of the difference between seeing and looking.
Participants will be more observant and aware and this will improve their ability to communicate.

Objective To know the difference between seeing and looking.

Materials None.

Time 20 minutes.

Process Invite the participants to take a break. Ask them to take a walk outside and come back in 5 minutes.

When they return, ask them what they saw during their walk outside.

After about 5 minutes, ask them to, once again, go out for a walk. This time, they should bring back information on something specific (flowers trees a structure) that they find in the surrounding environment.

Ask the participants to share their information on the specific item, then, ask what they think was the difference between their first and second walk.

Somebody might point out that they had an objective on the second walk. It is also possible that this point will not be raised. In either case, the message is that the difference between seeing and looking is that looking has an objective, while seeing is general. Eyes have an important role in communication. When we wish to communicate effectively, we must remember that visuals should require an objective for them to make sense to the receiver.

Notes to the facilitator

Research shows that visual communication is very effective in transmitting a message and is often retained by the receiver. Therefore, if you want to be an effective communicator, remember that in order to have maximum effect, every visual message should have an objective. This exercise effectively transmits this message to the participants.

Session 2.3

Pitfalls of Communication

Expected Outcomes

Participants will learn the importance of feedback in communication.

Participants will know that both verbal and non-verbal means of communication are important.

Participants will become better communicators.

How should I Communicate?

Objective To demonstrate the pitfalls of communicating without verbal or visual feedback.

Materials A shirt with the front undone.

Time 15 to 20 minutes.

Process Invite the participants to sit in a circle.

Place the shirt in the centre of the circle.

Ask for two volunteers.

Request that they stand in the centre of the circle. They should stand with their backs to each other.

The observers should maintain silence during the course of the exercise.

One of the volunteers should take the shirt and the other should give him/her the instructions how to put it on.

The two volunteers must not look at each other or ask questions. The instructor should give instructions and the receiver should follow the instructions.

Allow 5 to 6 minutes for this activity

Ask the volunteers for their reactions by asking the following questions:

- *Did you manage to put the shirt on properly by following the instructions? Why?*
- *Why were you not able to give instructions effectively?*

Now ask the volunteers to stand facing each other.

Ask one volunteer to give instructions while the other volunteer follows the instructions. The volunteers are allowed to ask questions and make suggestions.

Allow 5 minutes to finish, but it is likely that they will finish sooner. Ask about their second experience.

- *Did you manage to follow the instructions and complete the task? Why?*
- *Why were you able to follow the instructions this time?*
- *Were you able to give your instructions in a more effective manner? Why?*

You can involve the observers in the discussion by asking for their opinions and observations. They can also give their responses to the questions asked.

Notes to the Facilitator

This exercise demonstrates the importance of verbal and visual feedback in any communication.

Session 2.4

What Influences Our Perception?

Expected Outcomes

Participants will understand the reasons people perceive things different.

Participants will design their future methods of communication more effectively.

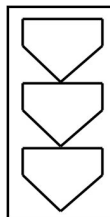
Whose Perception Counts?

Objective To demonstrate that recent events influence the way we see things.

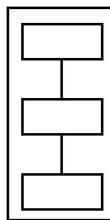
Materials Flip charts, markers, white board or black board, chalk.

Time 15 minutes.

Process Invite the participants to sit so that everyone is able to see the board. Exhibit the following diagram:



Ask them, “What do you see”? They will probably say three arrows, houses on the side, sign showing go left or you may get the correct response, which is two Ks. Commend the answers, and quickly move to the following exhibit:



Ask them “What do you see now”? It is likely that you will get the correct response immediately (2 Hs). Now, ask the group if they would have seen this as quickly, had they not had the benefit of the first round?

Notes to the Facilitator

It is best to prepare the two diagrams in advance, as the process of drawing them can reveal the answer. Use this exercise to point out the importance of conditioning. Ask them why they saw the H's faster than the Ks, could they give any examples of a similar experience in their life when they have analyzed something or perceived something in light of what had happened immediately before. Point out that while communicating, it is important to keep a link with what has preceded, as it enables faster learning and analysis.

Session 2.5

Blocks in Receiving Messages

Expected Outcomes

Participants will understand that even simple messages can be misunderstood.

Participants will be more careful in designing messages and communicating with others.

State It Clearly!

Objective To demonstrate that it is easy for messages (even simple ones) to be misinterpreted, if the words used are not familiar and clear, and that things become worse, if the recipient is not able to ask for clarification.

Materials 4 square sheets of paper.

Time 15 minutes.

Process Ask for 4 volunteers.

Ask the volunteers to stand facing the rest of the participants.

Explain that you will give them some instructions, and they should follow the instructions without talking and with their eyes closed.

The observers should watch and be silent.

Explain that the exercise is intended to demonstrate some important issues in communication. If the volunteers are hesitant, ask for another.

Invite the 4 volunteers to take one piece of the square paper each. Ask them to close their eyes and follow the instructions. The instructions to be given are as follows:

Fold your paper in half and tear of the bottom right corner of the paper.

Fold the paper in half again and tear off the upper left hand corner.

Fold the paper diagonally and make a hole in the centre.

Ask the volunteers to open their eyes and unfold the papers. Invite them to share the outcome with each other and the participants.

Ask the volunteers:

- *How were the instructions?*
- *Did all of you understand my instructions in the same manner?*
- *What was difficult or easy to understand?*
- *How could I have framed my instructions to reduce the probability of multiple interpretations?*

You can involve the observers by opening up the conversation once the volunteers have answered.

Notes for the Facilitator

Usually the volunteers end with different results from the same set of instructions. It is usually because of the way they hear the instructions. Sometimes the words used are not understood properly. You can use this exercise to point out the importance of words in communication – words must be commonly understood, i.e., they should be understood by the receiver in the same way as intended by the sender. The ability to visualize something is important. Volunteers would have corrected their mistakes, if they had been allowed to keep their eyes open. They would have looked at others' work or people's expressions. Listening is also important. The person who paid attention to the instructions would have produced the best results. Since the volunteers were not allowed to ask questions or get clarification, communication was unsuccessful.

Session 2.6

Messages on Prevention of HIV/AIDS

Expected Outcomes

Participants will design messages using the principles of communication learnt in earlier sessions.

Modes of Transmission

Objective To prepare and deliver a message on ways in which HIV can be transmitted.

Materials Left to the discretion of the users.

Time 2 hours.

Process Ask the participants to divide into 4 groups.

Explain that each group will use one particular method to deliver their message on ways in which HIV/AIDS can be transmitted.

While one group presents, the other three will observe the content, method of delivery and use of language in the message delivered. The observers will provide the presenters with feedback on the three criteria.

The four groups can choose from the following methods, or the facilitator can assign one method to each group:

Posters

Presentation using transparencies or flip charts

Role Play

Jingle or song

Give the groups 30 minutes to prepare their presentation.

Each presentation should not be longer than 10 minutes.

Invite the observers to give feedback after each presentation. Explain that the feedback should be on the presentation, not on the presenters.

Allow 10 minutes for feedback after each presentation.

Conclude the session with your observations on the presentations and highlight the positive points of each presentation.

Notes for the Facilitator

This exercise builds skill for effective communication. You could make the exercise more interesting by asking the observers to rate the four presentations on a scale from 1 to 5. They could also set their own criteria for rating. You could invite an expert on communication to come and give his/her feedback on the presentations.

HELPLINE for the peer educator**Material for reading, preparation of handouts and facilitation of session**

Feedback is the most important element affecting the communication process. Feedback is a mechanism by which the initiator can understand the impact of his/her communication on the receiver. It is most effective when it has the following characteristics:

- Is non-judgmental – gives descriptive feedback on the content, process and method rather than on the communicator.
- Is specific.
- Is useful and useable – the receiver should be able to use the feedback to make corrections or changes. The feedback should contain proactive suggestions.
- Is accurate.
- Uses “I” statements.

Some basic principles of communication while dealing with sensitive topics, such as HIV/AIDS, reproductive health and drug use are:**Respect**

The receiver should feel respected and trusted if s/he is to communicate. If not s/he may want to end the conversation and leave as soon as possible.

Safety

Safety is important, as one is discussing personal and intimate matters. The person needs to know that s/he will not suffer negative consequences for the information being shared, for example, s/he will not be sent to jail because s/he is using illegal drugs, or s/he will not be stigmatized because s/he is HIV positive.

Non judgmental attitude

Do not moralize or lecture people about their life choices. Give factual information without personalizing it, and do not be shocked, disgusted or alarmed at the information shared.

Confidentiality

This is an important issue. People infected with HIV/AIDS, using drugs or discussing any other private matter need to feel assured that their information will not be shared with anyone else. The choice of sharing or not sharing the information must be left with the individual.

Sensitivity

Be aware of the comfort and discomfort of the person speaking with you or to whom you may be speaking. Learn to read body language and take cues that inform you about another's feelings and emotions.

Privacy

In cases where the issues being discussed are private and personal, make sure these are discussed in private. If you are in a group meeting and personal issues emerge, establish that these will only be discussed after the group meeting and in private. Do not refer to personal information in public forums. Do not give examples using names and places.

Cultural and Religious sensitivity

HIV/AIDS, sexual health, and reproductive health are all sensitive subjects. They are often mired in religious and socio-cultural taboos and beliefs. Therefore, it is very important that you become aware of these dimensions. Religious beliefs are an important part of the cultural identity of many people. Freedom of thought and religion is a basic human right recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Most religions and cultures of the world promote tolerance and love. These should be used to help overcome the discrimination and stigmatization associated with HIV/AIDS and other sexual and reproductive choices, such as, homosexuality and use of family planning methods.

General reading material for the peer educator that may also be used to make posters

Some pointers for an effective question and answer session

- Listen to the questions.
- Observe the tone and the manner in which the question is asked.
- Repeat the question as you understand it, and ask if you got it right.
- Answer if you can and cannot involve others in finding an answer.
- Speak clearly and confidently.
- Do not fidget or read from a paper, if you need to consult your notes, say so.
- Establish eye contact with as many people as possible.
- Be aware of your body language. Do not point or lean threateningly.
- Involve the participants in seeking answers. Ask for their opinion and knowledge.
- Allow time for questions and answers.

Some practical points for working in different socio-cultural and religious settings

- Do not address religious or sensitive socio-cultural issues without setting the stage first. Try to form alliances with people already working at the location, especially youth groups.
- First, find out what is possible, and what is already happening on the issue of HIV/AIDS, sexual health and reproductive health.
- Contact existing open-minded religious leaders and groups because they might lend you their support.

- Gather knowledge and information about the social, cultural and religious practices and beliefs of people; research their scriptures and holy books.
- Confrontation can be counter-productive.
- Remember that all religions are in favour of tolerance, respect for all God's children and caring for the weak and the sick.
- Present facts and avoid getting into arguments.
- Start with simple, non-threatening activities, such as group discussions on what is culturally acceptable concerning sexuality or reproductive health. Some people feel that anonymous telephone helplines are a useful initial step.