

Session 5

Communication

(30 minutes)

Objectives

Describe a model for effective communication
List possible barriers to communication and ways to overcome them
State the importance of listening skills
Identify refinements to the Communication model required for mentoring and coaching roles

Resources

- Active Listening video



Task

Trainer, without prompting, asks the learners to listen to a synthesized message embedded in the PowerPoint presentation, which the learners attempt to identify.

Repeat if required.

(3 minutes)



Report back

Participants, as a whole group, say what it felt like to be unable to understand the message.

(5 minutes)



Trainer input

Trainer explains that communication is a key element in a successful mentoring or coaching relationship. One of the key areas in effective communication is ensuring that your message is understood.

Trainer explains that there are many and varied communication models and they are all based upon similar principles. Whichever model is used, it is essential to ensure that any potential barriers are removed and the mentee or coachee is able to understand. The mentor or coach are equally a receiver, and barriers need to be acknowledged.

Trainer provides an overview of the dance of communication - the mix of verbal, non-verbal and written communication.

Trainer explains that, when considering their approach to communication as mentor or coach, Active Listening Skills are particularly important.

(3 minutes)



Task

Learners watch the Active Listening Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkSwXL3cGUg>

Learners, working in groups, identify those Active Listening Skills they consider the most important as a Mentor / Coach

(10 minutes)



Report back

Trainer to facilitate a whole group discussion, encouraging learners to share their views on the most important Active Listening Skills.

Trainer records the answers on a Flipchart and link to the 7 Key Active Listening Skills, pointing out how all of the skills are important within the Mentor and Coach role. Trainer to fill the gaps and provide any answers/reasons if any are missed from the list provided by the participants.

(5 minutes)

Trainer Notes (7 Key Active Listening Skills):

- 1. Be attentive.** Convey a positive attitude to the Mentee/Coachee and a willingness to talk through the situation. If timing is a problem, let the other person know you are interested and commit to a time for the two of you to have a focused conversation.
During the conversation, remind yourself that your role is not to interrogate the Mentee/Coachee, jump to advice-giving or solve the problem yourself. Listen. Near the end of the conversation, you need to be able to accurately summarise the Mentee/Coachee's main ideas, concerns and feelings.
Allow "wait time" before responding. Don't cut the Mentee/Coachee off, finish his or her sentences or start formulating your answer before he/she has finished. Be conscious of your body language.
- 2. Ask open-ended questions.** These encourage the Mentee/Coachee to do the work of self-reflection and problem-solving, rather than justifying or defending a position, or trying to guess the "right answer."
Examples include: What do you think about ...? Tell me about ...? Please further explain/describe ...?
- 3. Ask probing questions.** Again, the emphasis is on asking, rather than telling. It invites a thoughtful response by the coachee and maintains the spirit of collaboration. You might say: "What are some of the specific things you've tried?" "Are there any issues in your own leadership style that might be contributing to the situation?" "How certain are you that you have the full picture of what's going on?"
- 4. Request clarification.** Double check any issues that are ambiguous or unclear to you. Say something like, "Let me see if I'm clear. Are you talking about ...?" or "Wait a minute. Try that again. I didn't follow you." if you have any doubt or confusion about what the Mentee/Coachee has said.
- 5. Paraphrase.** Recap the Mentee/Coachee's key points periodically. Don't assume that you understand correctly, or that the Mentee/Coachee knows you've heard.
For example, your Mentee/Coachee might tell you, "the DC is so loyal and supportive of her GSLs — they'd walk through fire for her/him. But, no matter how much I push, they keep missing census deadlines" To paraphrase, you could say, "So the DC's people skills are great, but accountability is a problem."
- 6. Be attuned to and reflect feelings.** Identify the feeling message that accompanies the content. This is an effective way to get to the core of the issue. When you hear, "I don't know what else to do!" or "I'm tired of bailing the team out at the last minute," try to help the Mentee/Coachee label his or her feelings: "Sounds like you're feeling pretty frustrated and stuck."
- 7. Summarise.** Give a brief restatement of core themes raised by the coachee: "Let me summarise to check my understanding. Did I get that right?"
Once the situation has been talked through in this way, both you and the Mentee/Coachee have a good picture of where things stand. From this point, the conversation can shift into problem-solving. What hasn't been tried? What don't we know? What new approaches could be taken? As the Mentee/Coachee, continue to query, guide, and offer, but don't dictate a solution. Your Mentee/Coachee will feel more confident and eager if he or she thinks through the options and owns the solution.



Trainer input

Review of Session

Trainer to ask questions of learners and fill in any gaps, ensuring the following are covered:

- Recognising the importance of two-way communication.
- Mentors/ Coaches need to be well practiced receivers (Active Listeners).
- Ensuring that the barriers to effective communication are minimised, linking to the thoughts of the learners described in their first task (when failing to understand the message)
- Ensuring that their communication approach is appropriate
- Linking to the participants' thoughts regarding the most important Active Listening skills

(4 minutes)