

Listening To Face, Voice, And Body

OBJECTIVES:

1. Learn to understand and listen to non-verbal messages
2. Describe the process of defensive listening
3. Build communication skills

HANDOUTS:

1. *Non-Verbal Communications: Listening to Face, Voice, and Body*
2. *Listening to Non-Verbal Communication*
3. *Watch Your Start Up*
4. *Take Home Message for This Session*

ITEMS NEEDED FOR THIS EDUCATIONAL SESSION:

- Handout materials for participant workbooks
- Scrapbooking materials
- Flipchart and markers
- Pencils and pens

GETTING STARTED

If homework was assigned from a previous lesson, please review it with participants.

Please re-introduce yourself and tell us your favorite song to sing with your child (one of the best ways to communicate!)

ACTIVITY: Mini-Lecture on Listening and Defensive Listening

Prepare a PowerPoint presentation or flip chart containing the following information for the **Non-Verbal Communications: Listening to Face, Voice & Body** handout. Remind participants of the information learned in the sessions on positive strokes, discounting, and active listening.

In this lesson, we are going to look at ways to build on the communication skills we learned in the last lesson. In communicating with others, it can help to be aware of non-verbal messages that others are sending when you are interacting with them and to effectively counteract defensiveness.

First, let's look more deeply at listening:

- How would you describe someone's face when he or she is listening to you?
- Are these positive or negative signs?
- How do these signs make you feel?

Not Listening:

- How does a face look when someone is not listening to you?
- How does that make you feel?
- How do you think your face looks when you are not listening?
- Do the signals you send change how someone communicates with you?

- Is there anything you might do differently to communicate with others that would improve the communication?

One way to improve communication is to improve listening skills. Some people are surprised to realize that good communication is not only measured by how you speak but by how you listen. As we discussed, one way to listen better is by using your non-verbal messages. Another way to listen better is to get rid of defensive listening.

Another aspect of listening is to receive complaints without becoming defensive. Don't receive complaints as a criticism. It does not mean "giving in"—it means yielding.

Defensive listening may occur among those seeking an intimate relationship. Sometimes we listen defensively to those who we are closest to or our child's co-parent. Over time, defensive listening may cause relationships to become more frustrating. Often one of the partners becomes too frustrated to try to solve the tension due to the defensive listening. These relationships are unable to reach their potential to be satisfying for both people. These relationships usually require extensive efforts to repair emotions and build or restore trust.

It's important to understand both aggressive behavior and defensive listening. We need to understand and empathize with the feelings of each other. Intense negativity in the other person is usually a sign of how strong the feelings are behind the words. This may be our first insight into what is happening with the other person, the meaning behind the words. It does not mean that we have to agree with the person—just understand. Simply saying "uh-huh," or "I'm listening" is not enough. We must be able to identify and understand the other person's feelings. This is "empathy."

Let's now learn about some strategies for dealing with defensive listening.

Strategies for Defusing Defensive Listening:

- **Embrace the Anger**—Anger is a sign that the other person wants you to listen. Important: Don't let the anger increase by responding with the same emotion.
- **Back Channel**—Avoid being ignored with the stonewalling response (using a negative face, cold voice, throwing up hands in disgust or turning away). Give signs to the person to let him or her know you are listening. (Note: Taking a “time-out” can be a good idea if the conflict level is really high. Be sure to re-engage when emotions have been regulated or calmed down.)
- **Read Facial Expressions**—Listen with your eyes. Pay attention to the non-verbal cues the other person is giving about how they feel.
- **Beware of your Body Language**—Review list of possible body negatives from handout **Examples of Non-verbal Communication.**

The facilitators should role-play each of these strategies one at a time in response to a participant's expression of anger about something.

Now that we know the strategies for defusing defensive listening, let's do some role-playing to help you better understand what these strategies involve.

1. **Embrace the anger**—The participant should say a few sentences that express anger. The facilitator should respond calmly, acknowledge the anger, and empathize.
2. **Back Channel**—The participant acts non-responsive, dismissive. The facilitator tries to engage the person in a way that indicates he/she is listening.
3. **Read Facial Expressions**—The participant should tell the other person something he/she

did to upset them. The facilitator points out non-verbal cues the person who is upset is giving.

4. **Beware of your Body Language**—The participant expresses anger. The facilitator points out some things the person did with his/her voice or body when upset.

Ask participants what they noticed the facilitators doing to show each of the four strategies.

A simple recommendation related to this information is to stay engaged. Emotional distancing is a big red flag. Notice it in yourself and/or in your partner.

ACTIVITY: Watch your Start-Up

Take the group through the handout, **Watch your Start-Up**. Allow for time to discuss and process the information.

Now, let's discuss how to engage effectively when you have a complaint.

Start with “I” instead of “You” and Describe the behavior, don't assign a characteristic.

“I” statements have less of a chance of putting the other person on the defensive. It's difficult to make a statement that starts with “you” not come across as accusing and blaming. See how these are different:

- “You are such a slob,” versus “I would like it if you'd remember to put the wet towels in the hamper.”
- “You are thoughtless,” versus “I feel really sad that you forgot our anniversary.”
- “You never help with the children,” versus “I would feel much less stressed if you helped with the children's bedtime routine.”



Do not expect your partner to read your mind.

Tell your partner what you are thinking; how you are feeling. “If he really loved me, he would know how I feel” is not fair to your partner. Share your expectations, don’t test your partner. No one wins with the mind-reading game.

Be kind. Isn’t it amazing how kind and polite we are to friends, acquaintances—even strangers. Do we speak to our partners with kindness? Consciously work on adding polite phrases to your dialogue with your partner: “please,” “thank you,” and “I so appreciate when you ...”

Be appreciative. There’s a management style that recommends five positive strokes for every one complaint/critique given—then it is more likely that the criticism will be received. Take the time to verbalize your appreciation for things your partner does and has done. Recalling past positives can often motivate your partner to make those acts or words part of the present.

Don’t “gunny-sack.” If you carry around your complaints and hard feelings in a sack and then dump them all at once on your partner it is more likely that it is too much for your partner to handle—and he/she will be automatically defensive and not hear what you have to say. Say what you are thinking and feeling as soon as it is appropriate. Don’t wait for things to pile up.

ACTIVITY:
Scrapbooking Page on Aspects of Positive Communication

Have participants prepare a scrapbook page that depicts the kind of positive relationship that can be achieved with the co-parent if the participants use these techniques.

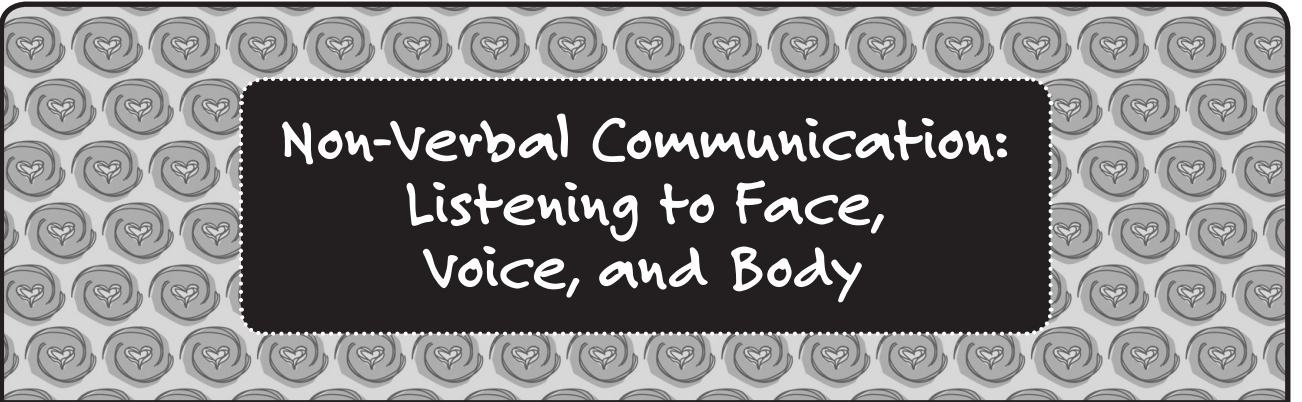
HOMEWORK:

Have participants take a minute to complete the **Take-Home Message** for their magnet. The action step should focus on defensive listening with someone they know.

CLOSING:

In this lesson we learned to understand and listen to non-verbal messages, described the process of defensive listening, and built additional communication skills. Effective listening skills are the foundation of good communication skills. Continue to practice this skill in all your conversations and interactions.





Non-Verbal Communication: Listening to Face, Voice, and Body

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FACE		VOICE AND BODY	
Positive 😊	Negative ☹️	Positive 😊	Negative ☹️

Adapted from *Caring for My Family*

Examples of Non-Verbal Communication

POSITIVE FACE

Smile, laughter, empathetic face, head nod, eye contact

NEGATIVE FACE

Frown, sneer, fear face, cry, mocking laughter, smirk, angry face, disgust, glare

POSITIVE VOICE

Caring, warm, soft, tender, relieved, empathic, concerned, affectionate, loving, satisfied, buoyant, bubbly, cheerful, chuckling, happy, joyful, laughing

NEGATIVE VOICE

Cold, tense, scared, impatient, hard, clipped, staccato, whining, blaming, sarcastic, angry, furious, blaring, hurt, depressed, accusing

POSITIVE BODY

Touching, distance reduction, open arms, attention, relaxation, forward lean

NEGATIVE BODY

Arms akimbo, neck or hand tension, rude gestures, throw up hands in disgust, point or jab, inattention



Watch your Start-Up

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Take Home Message for This Session

Directions: Think of one step you will take before the next session and write it down in the space provided. In addition, write down the time, date, and location of the next session.

**Before responding in anger,
take a deep breath and
gather your thoughts.**

My Action Steps:

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The Next Session:

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DATE
.....
TIME
.....
LOCATION

