

Module B:

Communication: Verbal and Nonverbal

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OVERVIEW

Introduction

This module is about effective communication. Good communication is an important part of teamwork and good customer service.

Learning Objectives

After completing this module the Trainee will be able to do the following:

- Explain why good communication is important
 - Identify behaviors which help or compromise communication and team building
 - Identify statements which compromise communication and provide some positive alternatives
 - Assess personal strengths and areas needing improvement in communication skills
 - Use techniques to improve communication in challenging situations
 - Identify ways to provide difficult or negative information to participants in a positive way
 - Identify two important elements to resolving conflicts with upset people
 - Explain how to answer the phone appropriately
-

GOOD COMMUNICATION

Definition

Communication is the giving and receiving of messages between people.

Importance

Good communication is making sure each person understands the message and the message gets to the person in a positive way.

Good communication helps the following:

- Participants get good customer service
 - WIC staff work as a team
-

Good Communication Helps WIC Participants

Good communication helps provide participants with the following:

- Access to nutritious foods
 - Accurate and up-to-date information about nutrition
 - Breastfeeding information and support
 - Referrals to other important services
-

Good Communication Helps WIC Staff

Good communication helps WIC staff:

- Be more efficient, effective, and satisfied
 - Feel less stress
-

HOW WE COMMUNICATE

Elements of Communication

There are six elements to how we communicate with others:

- Attitude
 - Actions
 - Talking
 - Listening
 - Appearance
 - Setting
-

Chart of Communication Elements

The chart on the next page describes the elements of communication and how to use these elements effectively. Use the chart to guide you in your communications with staff and participants.

Learning Activity 1

To learn more about good communication you may want to try **Learning Activity 1** found at the end of this module.

continued on next page

HOW WE COMMUNICATE *(continued)*

Elements of Communication

ELEMENT & DESCRIPTION	SUGGESTIONS
<p>Attitude How our mood comes across to people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be polite, friendly, optimistic & respectful • Show compassion & confidence
<p>Actions What we do while we communicate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the person feels welcome & comfortable • Be on time & use time efficiently • Focus your full attention on the person
<p>Talking What words we use, what questions we ask, how we ask them, & when we talk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be courteous • Establish trust • Ask appropriate questions** • Use first or last name of customer, if known when greeting • Thank customer for coming • Do not interrupt • Choose your words carefully (For example, carefully choose when you will use formal or familiar words in Spanish)
<p>Listening How we listen & how we respond</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a good listener** • Avoid judgmental responses • Help the person identify her/his feelings • Reassure the person their feelings are okay
<p>Appearance How we look (<u>non-verbal cues</u>)*</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posture: Lean toward the speaker / Avoid crossing arms & legs • Gestures: Use open-palm gestures (limit pointing, clenched fists or shaking fingers) • Facial expressions: Nod or smile / Do not look bored or disgusted • Eye contact: Maintain eye contact only if it is culturally appropriate • Body Language: Do not fidget or act restless (See Nonverbal – Next page) • Voice: Use a respectful, not too loud tone
<p>Setting How the area looks & feels</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the area is clean, attractive and orderly • Make sure the area feels private • Creating participant friendly processes

**You will learn more in Task IV - Module A: Individual Education (Counseling) on asking questions, good listening skills and non-verbal cues.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Nonverbal Communication

People tell much of what they are thinking and/or feeling through nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication is believed more easily than what we say.

1. Responsive and Cooperative:
 - a. Open hands
 - b. Relaxed facial expression
 - c. Head tilted
 - d. Index finger along cheek
 - e. Leaning forward with sincere interest
 2. Defensive and Suspicion:
 - a. Arms or legs crossed tightly in protective gestures
 - b. Minimal eye contact with sideways or darting glances
 - c. Squinting or peering
 - d. Touching or slightly rubbing the nose
 - f. Rubbing behind the ear with index finger
 - g. Rubbing the eye
 3. Frustrated, Lack of Confidence, Nervousness:
 - a. Wringing of hands
 - b. Rubbing back of neck
 - c. Twitching face
 - d. Shaky voice
 - e. Fidgeting
 - f. Plucking at collar
 4. Anger, Aggressiveness, Dominance:
 - a. Rigid body
 - b. Glaring eyes and tight closed lips
 - c. Fist-like gestures
 - d. Pointed index finger
 - e. Territorial dominance
 - f. Inappropriate touching
 5. Tired or Boredom:
 - a. Drumming on the table
 - b. Tapping of feet
 - c. Looking at a clock or watch
 - d. Staring out into space
 - e. Drooping eyelids
 - f. Head in palm of hands
 - g. Blank stare
-

BEHAVIORS AFFECTING COMMUNICATION

Positive or Negative Effects

Your behavior can have a positive or a negative effect on how well the WIC program works. Participants get better service when you use good communication skills with co-workers and participants.

Put Positive Behaviors into Practice

The following behaviors can help communication and teamwork. Use these with co-workers and participants:

- Show respect
 - Be polite
 - Be on time
 - Have a positive attitude
 - Listen carefully
 - Show empathy
 - Be flexible
 - Be helpful
 - Compliments
 - Show appreciation
-

Avoid Negative Behaviors

The following behaviors can hurt communication. Avoid these at all costs:

- Hold in contempt
 - Blame others
 - Gossip
 - Complain
 - Interrupt
 - Correct others
 - Criticize
-

Learning Activity 2

To learn more about good communication, you may want to try **Learning Activity 2** at the end of this module.

CHALLENGING PEOPLE

Working with Angry People

Most of the people you will work with at WIC will be friendly. Sometimes you will have to communicate with someone who is upset or angry. Learning to communicate well with an angry person can take extra skill.

Challenges - Practice Makes You Shine

How can you handle a situation when a WIC participant becomes upset, frustrated, unhappy or angry? Read through this strategy called VERA and consider how this would work for you.

V - Vent: Let the customer vent. Listen to them. Let them get it all out. Make it your goal to really understand what happened. Be a partner, not an adversary. Suspend judgment. Just listen and be calm. You cannot calm a customer if you are not calm. Take a deep breath or have a drink of water to calm yourself. Also, do not take the situation personally.

E - Empathy: Acknowledge the vent. Separate the people from the problem. Do this by letting them talk and putting yourself in their place. Listen to their whole story without interruption. Show you are listening with eye contact and other acknowledgements, verbal or nonverbal. Do not respond with “but our policy is . . .” or “WIC Rules say.” Do not make excuses for yourself or anyone else. Show a desire to help the participant resolve the issue. After they are done, you can say you are sorry this happened to them and try to help.

R - Real Problem: Identify the real concern. Figure out the real issue needing to be solved. Ask tactful questions to get the bottom of it and to find out the facts. Make sure you understood what they told you. “You were angry about being told you were too late for the class.”: Or “You felt the clerk treated you rudely.” Ask questions to draw out their feelings. “How did it feel to you?” Restate what you think the problem is. “Sounds like you need another appointment.”

A - Agreement: Find an answer together. Respect their point of view. If they know you are on their side, this will have a calming effect. They will feel someone understands them. Agree with what you can. Act with sincerity. Say, “We both agree this should never have happened to you”. Show respect if you do not agree. Take responsibility if you can.

Agreement on a solution – Ask what would work or suggest something. Explore mutually acceptable options. Say “What appointment times will work for you?” Try to phrase things positively – use “We have a Tuesday appointment.” Instead of “I cannot make an appointment for you until next week. Offer to do something. “I can schedule an appointment right away.” Be careful not to promise something you cannot do. When you agree on a solution, recap it for the participant. Summarize what you will do and follow through on your agreement.

CHALLENGING PEOPLE *(continued)*

Behaviors to Avoid

When in a challenging situation the following are behaviors to avoid:

- Scowling, rolling your eyes, or smiling inappropriately
 - Touching an angry person
 - Slouching
 - Sitting or standing with arms crossed
 - Chewing gum or eating
 - Sighing (*This may look like you are annoyed or impatient.*)
 - Moving slowly when responding or taking action (*This may further upset the person.*)
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Learning Activity 3, 4, 5

To learn more about effective communication skills, you may want to try **Learning Activity 3, 4, 5** found at the end of this module.

PROGRESS CHECK

1. Mark the following as “TRUE” or “FALSE”.

- Communication is the giving and receiving of information.
- Good communication can help WIC staff work as a team.
- Good communication is not necessary for good customer service.
- Our attitude and our appearance are not part of how we communicate.
- Avoiding judgmental responses is important to good communication.
- Maintaining privacy is not important to good communication.

2. Put a check (✓) mark next to any of the items which would help to **improve communication**.

- Leaning forward in chair, nodding, and smiling
- Listening carefully
- Identifying the speaker’s feelings
- Sitting with folded arms
- Chewing gum while talking
- Starting the session on time

PROGRESS CHECK *(continued)*

3. Mark the following behaviors as “**P**” for having a **positive** effect on communication or “**N**” for having a **negative** effect on communication.

- _____ Correcting others
- _____ Interrupting
- _____ Being flexible
- _____ Showing respect
- _____ Being polite
- _____ Listening carefully
- _____ Avoiding challenging people

4. Match the statement you should avoid with its alternative, more positive statement.

- | | |
|--|---|
| _____ “You didn’t do this right!” | A. “I’m confused. Please clarify for me.” |
| _____ “You aren’t making any sense!” | B. “We want you to be healthy. Exercise helps people stay healthy.” |
| _____ “Sit here!” | C. “Are there any challenges for you when keeping your appointments?” |
| _____ “You should exercise more.” | D. “Please feel free to have a seat while you are waiting.” |
| _____ “You always show up late.” | E. “There are a few items here needing to be changed.” |
| _____ “You have to bring your son’s blood test results.” | F. “We need your son’s blood test results next time.” |

PROGRESS CHECK *(continued)*

5. VERA is a method of dealing with challenging situations. Complete what the letters represent and summarize the concept:

LETTER STANDS FOR:		SUMMARIZE:
V		
E		
R		
A		

6. Put a check (✓) mark next to any of the items which help and not hurt your communication with someone who is upset.

- _____ Using “I” statements instead of “you” statements
- _____ Sighing
- _____ Respecting the person and taking what s/he says seriously
- _____ Acting annoyed
- _____ Listening carefully to what s/he says
- _____ Staying calm
- _____ Speaking in a caring yet firm tone
- _____ Dealing with the participant’s feelings first and then the problem

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The following activities are included and are recommended for interactive learning:

- **Learning Activity 1:** Body Language: Percentage Words, Tone & Body Language
- **Learning Activity 2:** Looking at Communication
- **Learning Activity 3:** Challenging Situations – Case Studies
- **Learning Activity 4:** Role Plays
- **Learning Activity 5:** Providing Information in a Positive Way

ACTIVITY 1: PERCENT OF CONVERSATION; WORDS, TONE AND BODY LANGUAGE

Based on what we have covered in Verbal and Non Verbal communication, estimate the impact of Words, Tone, and Body Language in conversation.

Guess:

_____ % Words – The actual words spoken.

_____ % Tone – Tone of voice, the way the words were spoken.

_____ % Body Language – The total presentation: body movements, facial expressions and hand gestures.

(Answer: Words – 8%; Tone – 37%; Body Language – 55%)

ACTIVITY 2: LOOKING AT COMMUNICATION

Learning Objectives

After completing this activity, the Trainee will be able to identify what is needed for good communication.

Instructions

1. Arrange with your mentor or supervisor to observe one or more co-workers communicate with some participants. You will watch them perform the following:
 - Greet participants as they arrive at the site
 - Assess eligibility
 - Counsel
 - Facilitate a class
 - Issue food instruments
 2. Make sure the co-worker explains to the participant you are observing the session for training purposes.
 3. Write down your observations on the form on the next page. Note anything which seems to help communication.
 4. Discuss your observations with your mentor or supervisor.
-

ACTIVITY 2: LOOKING AT COMMUNICATION

Situation	Observations <i>(Note attitude, actions, talking, listening, appearance and setting.)</i>
Greet participants	
Assess Eligibility	
Counsel	
Facilitating a Class	
Issue Food Instruments	

ACTIVITY 3: CHALLENGING PEOPLE

1. A participant comes into the WIC site angry. You are the first person she sees. She starts to scream and curse at you. You are unclear as to why she is upset. What do you say to her?

Your Approach:

2. A participant has missed her 3:00 appointment. She comes in at 4:55 and appears very upset. She tells you she needs to be seen. The site closes at 5:00. What do you say to her?

Your Approach:

3. You are counseling a participant about breastfeeding. She does not trust anything you say. She constantly questions you and rolls her eyes at you. You are not sure she is getting anything out of the session. What do you say to her?

Your Approach:

ACTIVITY 3: CHALLENGING PEOPLE

4. A co-worker is having family problems and is spending a lot of work time chatting with co-workers. She often comes to you for moral support. You notice you are getting behind with your work due to the conversations with her. What do you say to her?

Your Approach:

5. A co-worker who is training you suddenly bursts out in anger. She tells you she should not be training you and she is overworked and underpaid. What do you say to her?

Your Approach:

ACTIVITY 4: ROLE PLAYS

Learning Objectives

After completing this activity, the Trainee will be able to show how to use effective communication skills.

Background

A role play is when two or more people act out a scene as though it was “real life”. “Props” such as baby dolls or food models are not needed but may be helpful.

Instructions

1. Ask your mentor, supervisor, or a co-worker to role play any three of the five roles (A-E) described on the following page.
 2. Using the information you have learned about good communication, act out the role of a WIC Trainee for each of the three situations.
 3. Mentor/Supervisor/Co-Worker: Using the role plays as your guide, act out the role of the participant or co-worker. Try to be as realistic as possible.
 4. After each session, ask your co-worker to tell you what s/he noticed. Make sure to ask for your strengths as well as areas for improvement.
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continued on next page

ACTIVITY 4: ROLE PLAYS

Role Play A	Debbie Kendle is a 20-year-old pregnant woman who comes in with her mother. This is her first pregnancy and she is rather shy and does not say much. Her mother, however, is eager to tell you everything.
Role Play B	Maria Gomez has not followed any of the dietary suggestions you gave her at the last visit. She also does not speak much English. She seems to be eager to make some changes in her diet.
Role Play C	Sue Lee comes to the WIC site very upset. This is her first visit. She wipes her tears but does not seem to be able to stop crying. She says something about her boyfriend having a gun.
Role Play D	Tammy Gray, a co-worker, needs your help interpreting for a Spanish-speaking participant. You are in the middle of a session with a participant when she rudely interrupts you. She tells you it is urgent.
Role Play E	At a staff meeting Jasmine White, a co-worker, criticizes the way you handled a participant. She calls you “insensitive” and “racist”.

ACTIVITY 5: PROVIDING INFORMATION IN A POSITIVE WAY

Learning Objectives

After completing this activity, the Trainee will be able to tell participants difficult or negative information in a positive way.

Instructions

1. The next few pages contain five situations in which the WIC staff person has given difficult or negative information.
 2. For each of the statements made, provide a more positive alternative in the box provided.
 3. You may want to discuss your alternatives with your mentor or a supervisor.
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ACTIVITY 5: PROVIDING INFORMATION IN A POSITIVE WAY

1. Nancy Billings, who is pregnant, is not eligible for WIC. Her income is \$1,000 over the annual limit. A WIC staff person tells her:

“You are not eligible! Not much we can do for you here.”

Better words:

2. Mei Li Hong walks into the WIC site and checks in at the front desk. Two staff people are sick and appointments are running about an hour behind schedule. The WIC staff person says:

“Sit down. There’s a long wait. We’re running behind schedule!”

Better words:

ACTIVITY 5: PROVIDING INFORMATION IN A POSITIVE WAY

3. Kim Nguyen who is Vietnamese speaks limited English. The clinic's Vietnamese interpreter is out sick and there is no one else who speaks Vietnamese. A WIC staff person is counseling her and says:

"We cannot help you since our interpreter is not here."

Better words:

4. Patty Coleman shows up at the WIC site but her appointment is not until the following week. She tells the person at the front desk she checked her calendar and believes her appointment is today. The WIC staff person tells her:

"You made a mistake. Come back next week!"

Better words:

ACTIVITY 5: PROVIDING INFORMATION IN A POSITIVE WAY

5. Roberta Jones does not nurse her infant son who is now seven months old. She can no longer be served by WIC and must be disqualified from WIC. The WIC staff person says:

“We have to disqualify you.”

Better words:

PROGRESS CHECK ANSWERS

1. Mark the following as “TRUE” or “FALSE”.

TRUE Communication is the giving and receiving of information.

TRUE Good communication can help WIC staff work as a team.

FALSE Good communication is not necessary for good customer service.

FALSE Our attitude and our appearance are not part of how we communicate.

TRUE Avoiding judgmental responses is important to good communication.

FALSE Maintaining privacy is not important to good communication.

2. Put a check (✓) mark next to any of the items which would help to **improve communication**.

Leaning forward in chair, nodding and smiling

Listening carefully

Identifying feelings

Sitting with folded arms

Chewing gum while talking

Starting the session on time

PROGRESS CHECK ANSWERS *(continued)*

3. Mark the following behaviors as “**P**” for having a **positive** effect on communication or “**N**” for having a **negative** effect on communication.

- N** Correcting others
- N** Interrupting
- P** Being flexible
- P** Showing respect
- P** Being polite
- P** Listening carefully
- N** Avoiding challenging people

4. Match the statement you should avoid with its alternative, more positive statement.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <u>E</u> “You didn’t do this right!” | A. “I’m confused. Please clarify for me.” |
| <u>A</u> “You aren’t making any sense!” | B. “We want you to be healthy. Exercise helps people stay healthy.” |
| <u>D</u> “Sit here!” | C. “Are there any challenges for you when keeping your appointments?” |
| <u>B</u> “You should exercise more.” | D. “Please feel free to have a seat while you are waiting.” |
| <u>C</u> “You always show up late.” | E. “There are a few items here needing to be changed.” |
| <u>F</u> “You have to bring your son’s blood test results.” | F. “We need your son’s blood test results next time.” |

PROGRESS CHECK ANSWERS *(continued)*

5. VERA is a method of dealing with challenging situations. Complete what the letters represent and summarize the concept:

LETTER STANDS FOR:		SUMMARIZE
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E	Empathy	Acknowledge the vent. Separate the people from the problem. Listen to their whole story without interruption. Show you are listening with eye contact and other acknowledgements, verbal or nonverbal. After they are done, you can say you are sorry this happened to them and try to help.
R	Real Problem	Identify the real concern. Ask tactful questions to get the bottom of it and to find out the facts. Make sure you understood what they told you.
A	Agreement	Find an answer together. Respect their point of view. If they know you are on their side, this will have a calming effect. To find agreement on a solution, ask what would work or suggest something. When you agree on a solution, recap it for the participant. Summarize what you will do and follow through with your agreement.

6. Put a check (✓) mark before any of the items which help and not hurt your communication with someone who is upset.

Using “I” statements instead of “you” statements

Sighing

Respecting the person and taking what s/he says seriously

Acting annoyed

Listening carefully to what s/he says

Staying calm

Speaking in a caring yet firm tone

Dealing with the participant’s feelings first and then the problem