

CSETC 1 – Introduction to Communication

Whether we realise it or not, we are continually communicating with people around us. Sometimes it feels like we can't understand them or they don't understand us!

So in this mini lecture we will ask the big questions about communication and discover some answers.

What is communication?

The imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium ...The successful conveying or sharing of ideas and feelings. – Oxford English Dictionary.

Sending or receiving information between a place, person or groups.

Communication requires: Sender – message – recipient

Sounds simple but actually is more complex and affected by many different things eg emotions, culture, context, medium used to communicate.

Often a two-way process. (For example, if I'm lecturing you in a lecture hall, I can see if you are engaged and understanding or falling asleep! I can ask questions and you can respond, it is a two-way process. But if I record and upload a lecture for students to access then the I communicate information to you, but there is no receiving of information from you, the students, back to me as the lecturer).

What are the barriers to communication?

- Language – using difficult words, using another language
- Psychological – anger, stress, avoiding topics that are taboo
- Physiological – someone with reduced hearing
- Physical – distance between people, face masks, distractions, background noise
- Systemic – barriers in an organisation structure so that people don't understand their role in the communication process
- Attitudinal – behaviours or perceptions that stop people from communicating effectively eg personality conflicts, lack of motivation
- Cultural – expressing emotions and social interactions vary greatly between cultures

What is the aim of communication?

Mutual understanding

How do we communicate?

Verbal – by speaking

Non-verbal – by our appearance, body language, gestures

Written – by written words, text

Visual – by images, pictures, paintings, charts, maps

Using different mediums – face-to-face, computers & tablets (writing, presentations, video-conferencing), mobile phones, the internet, television, radio, books, pictures, magazines

Can you guess what percentage of information is communicated by our words, our tone of voice and our body language (non-verbal)?

7% Verbal

38% Tone

55% Body Language

Professor Mehrabian's research.

However, this is an oversimplification from 2 studies listening to specific words. The main conclusion from these studies are that when communication messages are unclear / inconsistent, then the tone of the voice and the body language are more likely to accurately portray the meaning or emotions than the words used.

Who do you communicate with?

Family members, friends, university tutors, university administration staff, cleaners, shop keepers, neighbours

Who do doctors communicate with in the hospital?

Patients, relatives, friends of patients, other doctors, medical students, nurses, pharmacists, radiologists, physiotherapists, cleaning staff, administration staff, etc.

Why is good communication important for medical consultations?

- Effective – actually communicate the message that you want and it is understood correctly
- Efficient – takes less time to gather more information
- Patient satisfaction – patients are happier with the consultation and change doctor less frequently
- Doctor satisfaction – doctors are happier and more satisfied
- Health outcomes – improved health outcomes for patients

Conclusion

Maybe when you're communicating you can't understand others or they don't understand you BUT learning and using communication skills can help you to convey your message in a two-way process. This will be especially helpful now for communicating well with other students and tutors and for the future for consultations with patients and communicating with other health professionals.