

Activity 8.1: Nonverbal Communication

Use to build awareness of important aspects of non-verbal communication.

No matter what, you will be judged by how you look and your visible and audible reactions. Enhancing awareness of your own and others' nonverbal communication is a key to successful communication.

Suggestion. *If possible, do this activity in person (face-to-face) with another person or two. If not in person, do it in writing (via text or e-mail) with a person who truly knows how you interact (even if it's your parent, spouse or a sibling).*

Part 1: Different Interpretations Discuss 3 possible interpretations for the following forms of nonverbal communications. Writing responses down is optional.

- ★ A fifty-year-old athletic-looking man always dresses in only very expensive black clothing.
- ★ Two twenty-year-old women show up at a bar in heels and very short, sexy outfits; the one in red is a curvy 2XL gal; the other, in white, appears to be size 0 and has tattoos all over her arms and legs.
- ★ Someone is constantly late—never on time.
- ★ Someone is constantly posting or texting communications that are often emotional.
- ★ Someone doesn't look you in the eye while communicating.

Part 2: Self-Assessment of My Communication Challenges in Three Scenarios

This activity is much more effective if you do it with a partner whom you know well and who knows you well. It requires you to be open-minded and to really listen to what he or she is saying. Expect to be surprised, and try not to get defensive! Focus on the key things triggering their response (e.g., your eyes, your movement, and your appearance).

***Suggestion.** First, choose one of the settings below (or agree to observe each other at a future time and then discuss what occurred). Next, spend time creating a very typical and important scenario that involves something emotional (fear or anger) or confrontational, such as a discussion involving differences of opinion. Think through all aspects of the scenario: your location or position in the space, surrounding issues, your dress, and the time of day, so you will each have the same vision of the scenario. Start by discussing what positive aspects of what you've observed of each other's verbal, written (if it applies), and nonverbal communication before you address the one or two most important areas for improvement.*

Professional setting

In public (e.g., with friends, while shopping, or at a community event)

With your significant other or a close friend

Going Deeper: Journal or share what you learned.