



ACTIVE LISTENING: THE TELEPHONE GAME*

▶ ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

 **Time:** 35 minutes

 **Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Demonstrate the importance of communicating clearly with others.
- Demonstrate how easy it is to miss exactly what others are saying and discuss what that means for communication.

 **Training Methods:** Large Group Activity, Brainstorm, Discussion

 **In This Activity You Will...**

- Explain and conduct the telephone game (10 minutes)
- Facilitate a discussion on communication skills (20 minutes)
- Distribute Helpful Communication Techniques and Roadblocks to Communication Skills handouts (5 minutes)

 **Materials:**

- Flip chart
- Markers
- Handout - Roadblocks to Communication Skills
- Handout - Helpful Communication Techniques
- A written statement that can be easily misinterpreted. The trainer does not distribute the statement in writing; s/he whispers it in the ear of participant.

 **Preparation:**

- Print handouts

Instructions

1. Explain activity. Participants are to whisper a statement to the next person. An example of a statement is “Yolanda’s aunt shared her secret sweet potato pie recipe with me.” Choose first the person (10 minutes).

Next, we are going to do an activity called the Telephone Game. Some of you may have heard about or played this game before.

I have a statement that I am going to whisper into (name of first person)’s ear. S/he is going to whisper the statement into (name of second person)’s ear... **[Note to trainer: Designate either a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction.]**

The trick is that a person can only say the statement once, no repeating is allowed! Whatever you hear, pass along the statement the best you can to the next person.

2. The last person will be (name of last person). When the statement comes around to that person, s/he will say aloud what s/he heard.
3. Begin the game. Trainer whispers statement (“Yolanda’s aunt shared her secret sweet potato pie recipe with me.”) in the first person’s ear. The first person whispers what she heard in the second person’s ear. This continues around the circle until the last person has heard the statement.
4. Have the last person say aloud what s/he heard. Then state the original phrase. Compare what the last person heard to the original statement.
5. Discuss activity.
 - *How is it that (last person) heard “...” when the original statement was “...”?*
 - *How often do messages change like this in everyday life?*

* This module comes from Duke University, Partners in Caring; Center for Creative Education, 2006.

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What rules of the game were responsible for the changes in the statement? (Possible answers: whispering, no repeating)

When people are really paying attention to you, how do you know? What are some ways they sit? What are some ways they talk? What are some ways they look at you? What does it feel like?

6. Facilitate a discussion on communication skills. (20 minutes)

In order for effective communication to take place, both the speaker AND the listener must actively participate. What are some reasons you might not always give your full attention to a speaker? [Note to trainer: Record participants ideas on a flipchart.]

Possible responses include:

- No time to listen to everything a person says
- Multitasking—doing more than one thing at a time
- Other tasks seem more important
- Judgments interfere—you don't agree with what the person has done or is talking about
- Personal agenda—you want to push your solution

Now, what risks do these “communication stoppers” pose to the peers you are trying to educate?

Possible responses include:

- Listeners feel alienated
- They don't feel supported
- Trust could be compromise.

Let's take a few minutes and talk about what makes an effective communicator. Think of someone who you think is a “good” communicator.

[Give participants 30-60 seconds to think of an example, and 30-60 seconds in between the following questions.]

What are some things this person did well? How did this person make you feel when s/he listened to you? How willing were you share things about yourself or your problems with this person?

What are some communication skills you valued in this person? [Write responses on flipchart.]

Possible responses include:

- Attentive to feelings
- Non-judgmental
- Available
- Fair
- Empathetic
- Interested

We have discussed the importance of good communication skills. We will spend more time practicing listening and attending, and paying attention to what helps and what blocks communication with others.

7. Distribute Helpful Communication Techniques and Roadblocks to Communication Skills handouts.

Summary

- It is important for peer educators to develop good listening skills.
- Mistakes in clear communication are easy to make.

* This module is part of the online toolkit *Building Blocks to Peer Success*. For more information, visit http://www.hdwg.org/peer_center/training_toolkit. This module comes from Duke University, Partners in Caring; Center for Creative Education, 2006.

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SESSION HANDOUT #1 of 2

HELPFUL COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Using silence | |
| 2. Accepting | Yes.
Um Humm.
I follow what you said. |
| 3. Giving recognition | It is difficult to talk with someone you don't know.
Hello Jane, we've talked before. |
| 4. Offering self | I'll be here till 3:00.
I'm interested in what you have to say. |
| 5. Giving broad openings | Is there something you'd like to talk about?
Where would you like to begin? |
| 6. Offering general leads | Go on.
And then?
Tell me about it. |
| 7. Placing the event in time or in sequence | What seemed to lead up to.....?
Was this before or after.....?
When did this happen? |
| 8. Making observations about.... | Your voice sounds shaky when you talk
It makes me feel uncomfortable when you |

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SESSION HANDOUT #1 of 2 (cont.)

HELPFUL COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES (CONT.)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 9. Encouraging descriptions of perceptions | Tell me when you feel anxious.
What is happening?
What does he do when he “gets ugly”? |
| 10. Encouraging comparison | Was this something like.....?
Have you had similar experiences? |
| 11. Restating
(especially useful when you can't identify the feeling) | My lawyer doesn't believe me when I say he hit me when I was pregnant.
Your lawyer doesn't believe your story. |
| 12. Focusing | This point seems worth looking into. |
| 13. Exploring | Tell me more about
Will you describe that more fully? |
| 14. Giving information | This line is answered 24 hours a day.
My purpose in being here is |
| 15. Seeking clarification | I'm not sure I follow.
What would you say is the main point of what you've said? |

(Adapted from T.H.E. Course (Tools for Health Empowerment),
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SESSION HANDOUT #2 of 2

ROADBLOCKS TO COMMUNICATION: COMMUNICATION STOPPERS

1. **Directing, ordering:** To tell someone to do something in a manner that gives the other person little or no choice.
2. **Warning, threatening:** To tell the other person that if the behavior continues, then certain consequences will happen.
3. **Moralizing, preaching:** To tell someone things they ought to do.
4. **Persuading, arguing:** To try to influence another person with facts, information, and logic.
5. **Advising, recommending:** To provide answers to a problem.
6. **Evaluating, criticizing:** To make a negative interpretation of someone's behavior.
7. **Praising:** To make a positive evaluation of someone's behavior.
8. **Supporting, sympathizing:** To try to talk the other person out of his or her feelings, or to deny someone's feelings.
9. **Diagnosing:** To analyze the other person's behavior and communicate that you have their behavior figured out.
10. **Diverting, bypassing:** To change the subject or not talk about the problem presented by the other person.

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SESSION HANDOUT #2 of 2 (cont.)

ROADBLOCKS TO COMMUNICATION: COMMUNICATION STOPPERS (CONT.)

11. **Kidding, teasing:** To try to avoid talking about the problem by laughing or by distracting the other person.
12. **One Upmanship:** To try to “top” the persons problems by telling a worse one.
13. **Killer Phrases:** For example, “Don’t worry, things could be worse.” “Cheer up.” “What do you have to feel sorry about?”