Effective Communication

Session Objectives

- Reflect on your personal communication style

- Review techniques that encourage effective communication within a team setting

- Recognize communication barriers

- Understand how your teammates prefer to communicate

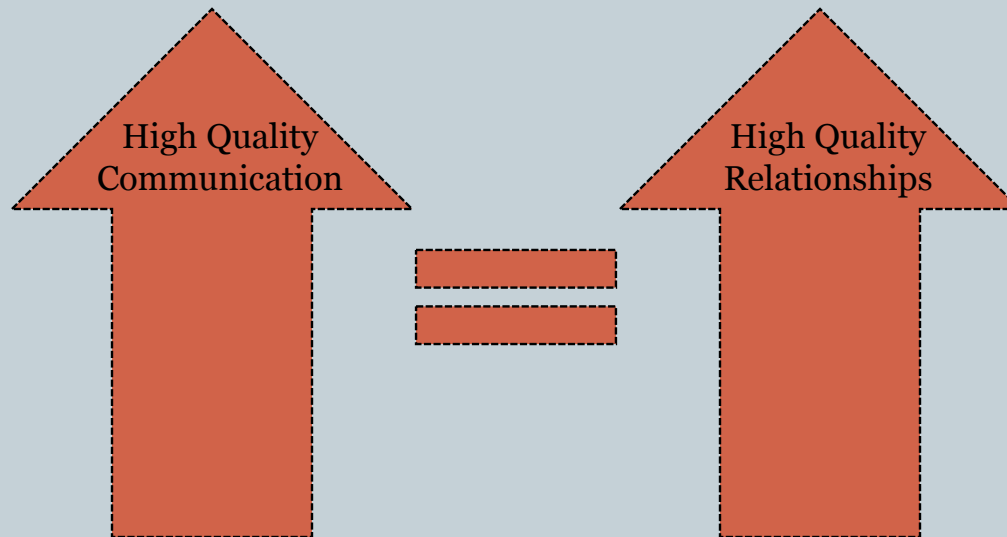# Communicating with Intention

The VIH Program staff believes that effective communication leads to quality relationships. Communicating effectively requires intention. When we communicate with intention we are able to more accurately articulate our ideas, beliefs, and needs to others. As a result, when you communicate with others think about how your words, gestures, postures, and facial expressions could be perceived. Conflict and misunderstandings can often be avoided if we are conscious of the way we are communicating.
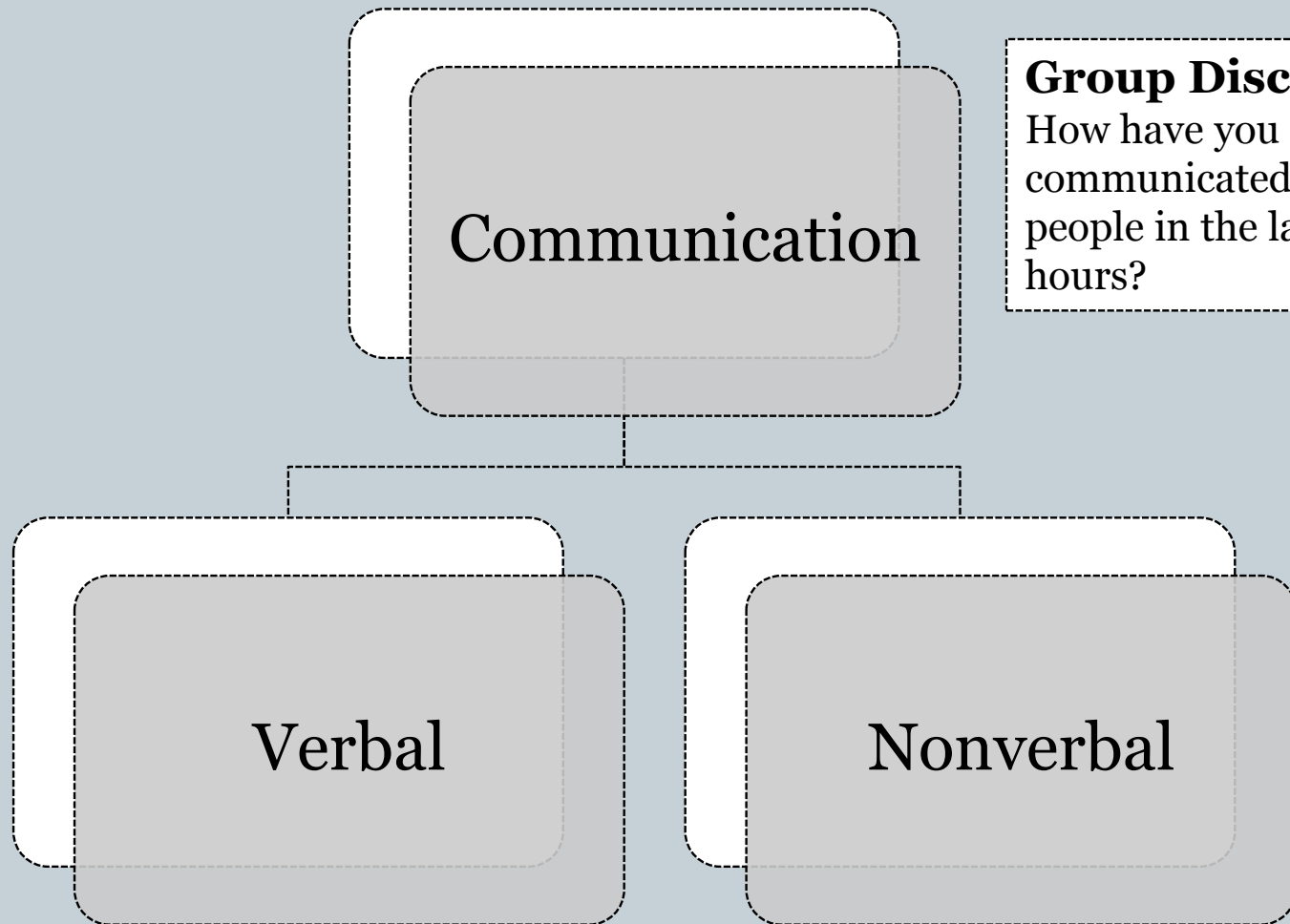
The Importance of Communication

The quality of communication affects the quality of our relationships.[1]

High Quality
Communication

=

High Quality
Relationships

Types of Communication

Communication

Verbal

Nonverbal

Group Discussion: How have you communicated with other people in the last 48 hours?

Did You Remember…

- E-mail
- Face-to-Face Conversations
- FaceBook
  - Status Updates, Picture Sharing, etc.
- Google Chat
- Google Calendars

- MySpace
- Nonverbal Gestures
  - Facial Expressions, Body Language, Posture, Touch
- Phone Conversations
- Texting
- Twitter

We are always communicating. The very attempt not to communicate communicates something.[2]

Tips: Speaking Effectively

- Manners
  - Always be polite. Listeners will be more receptive to what you have to say when you say it with respect.
- "I Statements"
  - Use the word "I" whenever possible. Using "I" Statements allows the speaker to take responsibility for their personal thoughts and feelings.
  - Example, "*I* get frustrated when we don't communicate regularly." vs. "*You* never respond to group e-mails and as a result you frustrate us!"
- Positive Statements
  - Make sure the group takes time to discuss the positive aspects of your group dynamics.
  - A constant focus on what is not working can set a negative tone for the group.
  - Example, "While we still have a lot of work to do, I think that _____ is coming together really well."
- Be Clear
  - Avoid confusion by speaking clearly and thoughtfully.
- Respond to Others in a Way that Encourages Discussion
  - Encourage feedback, and try not be defensive about your ideas or thoughts.

Tips: Effective Listening

- Focus on the Speaker
  - People have a tendency to focus on sending messages rather than receiving them
  - Actively listen to what the speaker is saying

- Be Thoughtful about Body Language
  - Nonverbal communication is very powerful
  - Be mindful of your postures, gestures, and facial expressions

- Don't Interrupt the speaker
  - If you don't understand a message, ask the speaker for clarification at a convenient stopping point

- Paraphrase
  - One way to demonstrate understanding is to politely paraphrase what the speaker said
  - Paraphrasing demonstrates understanding and ensures that everyone is one the same page

- Reflect on What is Being Said
  - Before you react to a message, reflect on what the speaker said
  - It is healthy to disagree with someone, but try to think about the speakers point of view before you do so

Tips: Writing and Responding Effectively

- ## Be Timely
  - Respond to all e-mails and other electronic communication in a timely manner.
  - If you do not have time to respond to an e-mail right away, <u>take a moment to let the sender know that you received their message and that you will respond as soon as possible.</u>

- ## Proofread
  - Before you send an e-mail, read it over. Make sure that what you wrote accurately reflects your thoughts.
  - Before you send a letter to a community partner or staff member, make sure there are no spelling or grammar errors.

- ## Be Mindful of Tone
  - It is important that the tone of your correspondence matches the message you are sending.
  - Remember you are representing VIH, your university, your community and yourself.

Communication Barriers

- Poor Listening
- Close Mindedness
- Monopolizing Conversation
- Passive Aggressive Statements
- Defensiveness
- Lack of Accountability

Group Discussion:
• Have you ever been in a group that experienced one of the above communication barriers?
• What other communication barriers you have experienced that are not listed above?
• How can you avoid communication barriers with your CEE team, campus coordinator, and/or community partners?

Communication Discussion: CEE Group <superscript>3</superscript>

I can best be reached by…
- Example: E-mail, Text, Facebook Messages…
- The best time to reach me is…
- I am usually not around on…

My organizational style can be described as…
- Think about how you manage your personal life, school schedule, and work
- Example: I need to enter all of my appointments into the calendar on my phone

When I get stressed I tend to…
- I begin to feel stressed when…
- To deal with stress I…
- Sometimes I do _____ when I am stressed.
- I really appreciate _____ when I am stressed.

You should probably know…
- Sometimes I forget to check e-mail on the weekends
- I really like it when people leave voicemails when they call
- I dislike it when people call multiple times in an hour

CEE Communication Tools

- Doodle
  - Online tool that helps groups identify convenient meeting times
  - Found at: www.doodle.com

- Group Texting (suggested by members of the 2010 VIH Cohort)

- Google Docs
  - Share and edit word and excel documents together as a group

- Set Weekly Meetings

- Set Deadlines and Stick to them
  - Before the end of each meeting, set deadlines

- Conference Calls
  - If you are not able to meet in person, think about connecting using a conference call
  - www.freeconferencecall.com

- Take Notes (suggested by members of the 2010 VIH Cohort)
  - Designate one group member to take notes at each group meeting
  - Send the meeting minutes out to the group following group meetings

References

[1] Michalek, M. (2011). *Effective Communication Workshop.* Received from, http://www.denvergov.org/Portals/481/documents/Overview%20of%20Effective%20Commuication.pdf

[2] Murrell, A. (2008*). Interpersonal Communications PowerPoint Presentation.* The University of Pittsburgh.

[3] Concept borrowed from Strong Women, Strong Girls, Inc.