

6

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

What is Nonverbal Communications

- » Nonverbal communication includes those behaviors and characteristics that convey meaning without the use of words. We can tell a great deal about people by watching their facial expressions and listening to their tone of voice.
- Some nonverbal communication behaviors *accompany* words. If someone asks you directions, you might say “that way.” But unless you point in that direction, your words mean very little.
- Other nonverbal communication behaviors convey meaning on their own. For example, talking to your boss while they are on their computer or phone.

Characteristics of Nonverbal Communications

- » Present in most interpersonal conversations:
 - When you talk to someone in person you can watch their facial expressions and are exposed to several different dimensions – the way people dress, the tone of voice, laughter, crying, etc....
 - When talking on the telephone, or sending an email, or text, we do what we can as there is little available in the form of nonverbal cues. Emoticons serve as a way in cyberspace, but not everyone uses the symbols, or understands what the symbols mean.

Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication

- » Often conveys more than verbal communications:
 - Studies suggest that 65 – 70% of meaning comes from nonverbal cues.
 - Nonverbal channels, the various forms that nonverbal communications take, such as facial expression, gestures, appearance, vocal characteristics, touch, smell, and association are often used.
 - We also rely on these cues to help us out to get a sense of a situation.

Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication

- » Is usually believed over verbal communication:
 - It is common to get conflicting messages between what a person says and does. In most cases, we tend to believe the nonverbal clues. For example, your friend comes over and slumps onto your couch. He sighs and rolls his eyes and drops his keys on the table. You ask how his day is and he says, “I had a great day.” His words do not match his behavior.
 - We put more stock in the action, than with the words.

Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication

- » The primary means of expressing emotion:
 - Emotion is a powerful influence on our behavior, and our primary way of communicating how we feel is through nonverbal communications. How many times have you been able to tell how someone is feeling just by looking at their faces?
 - In many cases, producers and camera personnel for many shows, get close-ups of people during critical moments to capture the emotions in their facial expressions.

Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication

» Metacommunicates:

- This is communications about communications such as, “let me tell you what I think,” or “don’t take this the wrong way.”
- Another example is when your friend leans over and begins to whisper in your ear. The combination of nonverbal behavior sends you the message that what she’s about to say is for only you to hear. In other words, her nonverbal behavior metacommunicates her intentions to you.

Functions of Nonverbal Communication

» Managing Conversations:

- We use several nonverbal behaviors to help our conversations with others go smoothly.
 - » Inviting Conversations
 - » Maintaining Conversations
 - » Ending Conversations

Functions of Nonverbal Communication

» Expressing Emotions:

- Interpreting another person's emotions can give us important clues about how to best interact with that person.
 - » Facial Expressions
 - » Vocal Expressions

Functions of Nonverbal Communication

» Maintaining Relationships:

- Communication plays a central role in how most of us maintain our close relationships, and nonverbal behaviors are especially important for several key features of these relationships.
 - » Attraction and Affiliation
 - » Power and Dominance
 - » Arousal and Relaxation

Functions of Nonverbal Communication

» Forming Impressions:

- Many of us enjoy people watching. We pay attention to what individuals look and sound like and how they behave and we use that information to form impressions about them.
 - » Demographic Impressions
 - » Sociocultural and Socioeconomical Impressions

Functions of Nonverbal Communication

» Influencing others:

- Nonverbal communications can be persuasive when it is applied as part of several strategies, including creating credibility.
 - » Creating Credibility
 - » Promoting Affiliation

Functions of Nonverbal Communication

» Concealing information:

- Despite the cultural adage that “honesty is the best policy”, people frequently decide not to be entirely truthful in their conversations with others.
- Facial expression can often indicate when deception is in action.

Facial Displays

- » Facial displays are particularly important in three arenas
 - Identity – Your face is your most important visual clue
 - Attractiveness
 - » Symmetry – the similarity between the left and right sides of the face, or body.
 - » Proportionality – the size of facial features
 - Emotion – what we use to convey a host of feelings from happiness, surprise, fear, anger, sadness, etc...

Eye Behaviors

- » Eye behaviors comprise a second nonverbal channel as the eye says more than any other part of the face in relational interaction.
 - Eye contact
 - Pupil size



Movement and Gestures

- » The study of movement is known as kinesics; the study of gestures is known as gesticulation. When you're feeling confident, you hold your head high and walk with smooth, consistent strides. Forms of gestures:
 - Emblems – Hello, goodbye, stop hand gestures.
 - Illustrators – Clarification of size with hands
 - Affect displays – Wringing your hands when nervous.
 - Regulators – raising your hand in a classroom.
 - Adaptors – picking lint off of someone's shirt.

Touch Behaviors

» Touch is the first of our five senses that we develop. Touch is the only sense without which we cannot survive. Without it, we would be susceptible to burn, frostbite, and other injuries.

- Affectionate touch
- Caregiving touch
- Power and control touch
- Aggressive touch
- Ritualistic touch

Vocal Behaviors

» Vocalics are aspects of the voice that convey meaning

- Pitch
- Inflection
- Volume
- Rate
- Filler words
- Articulation
- Accent
- Silence

The Use of Smell

- » Your sense of smell has a powerful influence on your reactions to others.
 - Memories
 - Sexual attraction

The Use of Space

- » We constantly negotiate our use of space.
- » How much personal space each of us have depends on our temperament, the type of situation we're in, and how well we know the people around us.

Physical Appearance

- » Physical appearance sends messages, whether intentionally or unintentionally
 - Halo effect says we attribute positive qualities to attractive people.
 - We are nicer and more cooperative toward attractive people and more lenient toward attractive criminals.
 - Pressure to be attractive can lead to, or worsen, eating disorders and low self-esteem.

The Use of Time

- » Because most of us spend our time on the people and activities that matter to us, the way we use our time communicates messages about what we value. When we give our time to others, we imply that we value those people.

The Use of Artifacts

- » Artifacts are the objects and visual features in an environment that reflect who we are
- » Artifacts can also reflect how we wish to be seen by others

Improving Your Nonverbal Communication Skills

- Be sensitive to nonverbal messages
- Be aware of your situations
- Keep culture in mind
- Ask for clarification
- Learn from others
- Practice