

Managing Communication Conflict



Cheryl Harvey

MANAGING COMMUNICATION CONFLICT

DEFINITION OF MANAGING COMMUNICATION CONFLICT:

Simply put, “communication is the management of messages for the purpose of creating meaning” (Frey, Botan, Friedman, & Kreps, 1991, p. 28). However, add to that a minimum of two interacting people who perceive incompatible differences or threats to something they value—the result is communication conflict. For every relationship, conflict is a likely ingredient. However, the ability to effectively manage communication challenges does not necessarily come naturally. The goal of this curriculum is to provide the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable the learner to handle communication responses in a more satisfying manner, thus improving their interpersonal relationships.

RATIONALE FOR MANAGING COMMUNICATION CONFLICT:

According to Ward (1990), 70 to 80% of our waking life is spent communicating. Yet, communication discourse is fraught with misunderstandings, and many individuals often find the effort unsuccessful and futile (Chaffee, 2000, p. 338). Communication misunderstandings contribute to more relational conflicts than any other cause. According to the National Center for Health Statistics (2002), within the first 15 years of marriage, 43% of all first marriages end. As well, over the past 15 years, employers recognized a need for additional emphasis and training on workplace conflict resolution (Landau, Landau, & Landau, 2001, p. 6). Finally, even the legal system feels the burden of communication conflict with full-to-overflowing calendars, and judges order disputing people to seek out community dispute resolution centers to work out their differences and find healing (Sound, 1999, p. 24). Indeed, a critical need exists in our society to teach individuals skills that help them to avoid long-term communication conflict.

Rarely do people possess all the interpersonal skills needed to conduct successful communication interaction. Furthermore, people are seldom taught in school or at home how to effectively communicate what they need others to know, or what the communication process entails. To complicate matters further, many individuals fail to recognize that other people interpret and convey word meanings differently than them. As a result, they tend to assume that other people usually think and behave like them (Alder, 1999, p. 112). An individual’s attitudes and behavior regarding communication values develop from social influences, personal philosophies, and learned responses. While the learners might be willing to consider new ways of communicating, the content of the units must contain information of practical value in order for them to be motivated to utilize the principles in life. Consequently, the characterization of this program should provide an integrated study that encourages a general knowledge of the communication process and the social and emotional influences on communication. Including strategies to improve communication development and the attitudes toward it completes the program. Most importantly, providing an opportunity for practical application of knowledge and skills gives learners optimum opportunity to reinforce the information.

Changing communication habits is hard work, even when strongly desired. However, given the proper knowledge, tools, and practice, more people can realize an increased effectiveness in managing their communication affairs. The Managing Communication Conflict Program facilitates effective communication by integrating knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and practice in a learning environment. Each unit builds upon the first (the basic communication process) by explaining communication filters that cause misunderstandings and then addressing the methods and strategies to handle the miscommunication. The content of the units is intended to ultimately guide the learner to a greater attitude of appreciation and respect for others close to them.

CONTENT SOURCE FOR MANAGING COMMUNICATION CONFLICT:

The communication experience involves the whole person and is a subject studied, researched, and reflected upon at every level of life. To meet the ultimate aim of guiding the learner to a greater appreciation and respect for those they communicate with, it is necessary to use a source that approaches communication from a social, philosophical, psychological and academic perspective. The most comprehensive content source available for managing communication conflict is interpersonal communication.

Interpersonal communication is characterized by specific features that include:

1. Face to face interaction between two people,
2. People treat one another as unique individuals,
3. Interdependence, and
4. An amount of disclosure of personal information (Adler, 21).

Interpersonal communication studies provide rich sources of information that address the total requirements of the learner. It speaks to the nature of communication thus providing the academic knowledge needed to understand the process. As well, it provides skills and strategies to improve an individual's communication process, and it addresses attitudes that minimize the quality of good communication.

CONTENT STRUCTURE FOR MANAGING COMMUNICATION CONFLICT:

The content structure in Figure 1 outlines the content for this program.

AIM FOR MANAGING COMMUNICATION CONFLICT:

The aim of the Managing Communication Conflict is to ultimately guide the learner to a greater appreciation and respect for those they care about most. Through a carefully designed series of units, the learner can achieve this goal. To accomplish this, the units must identify the basic concepts of communication and problems in the process as well as providing solutions to difficult communication situations. These concepts will become reinforced by the use of

demonstrations and role play. Consequently, the learner achieves a greater level of empathy for others when they realize how much affects the process of communication.

GOALS FOR MANAGING COMMUNICATION CONFLICT:

The Managing Communication Conflict Program will:

1. Guide the learner toward understanding the academic theory of communication to use as a future building block to other communication concepts.
2. Help the learner to understand reasons that shape individual perspectives and misunderstandings in communication.
3. Assist the learner in developing strategies aimed at helping them to understand another person's point of view.
4. Guide the learner in valuing other people as unique individuals with different values, expectations, emotions, and conflict styles.
5. Develop the learner's understanding of non-verbal communication cues to improve success in conveying meaning in the messages they send.
6. Guide the learner in developing a greater level of curiosity based on respect and appreciation toward others.
7. Allow the learner the opportunity to gain confidence in reflective listening and questioning skills through active participation in class.
8. Develop in the learner self-assurance in their ability to resolve communication conflict.

Content Structure for Managing Communication Conflict

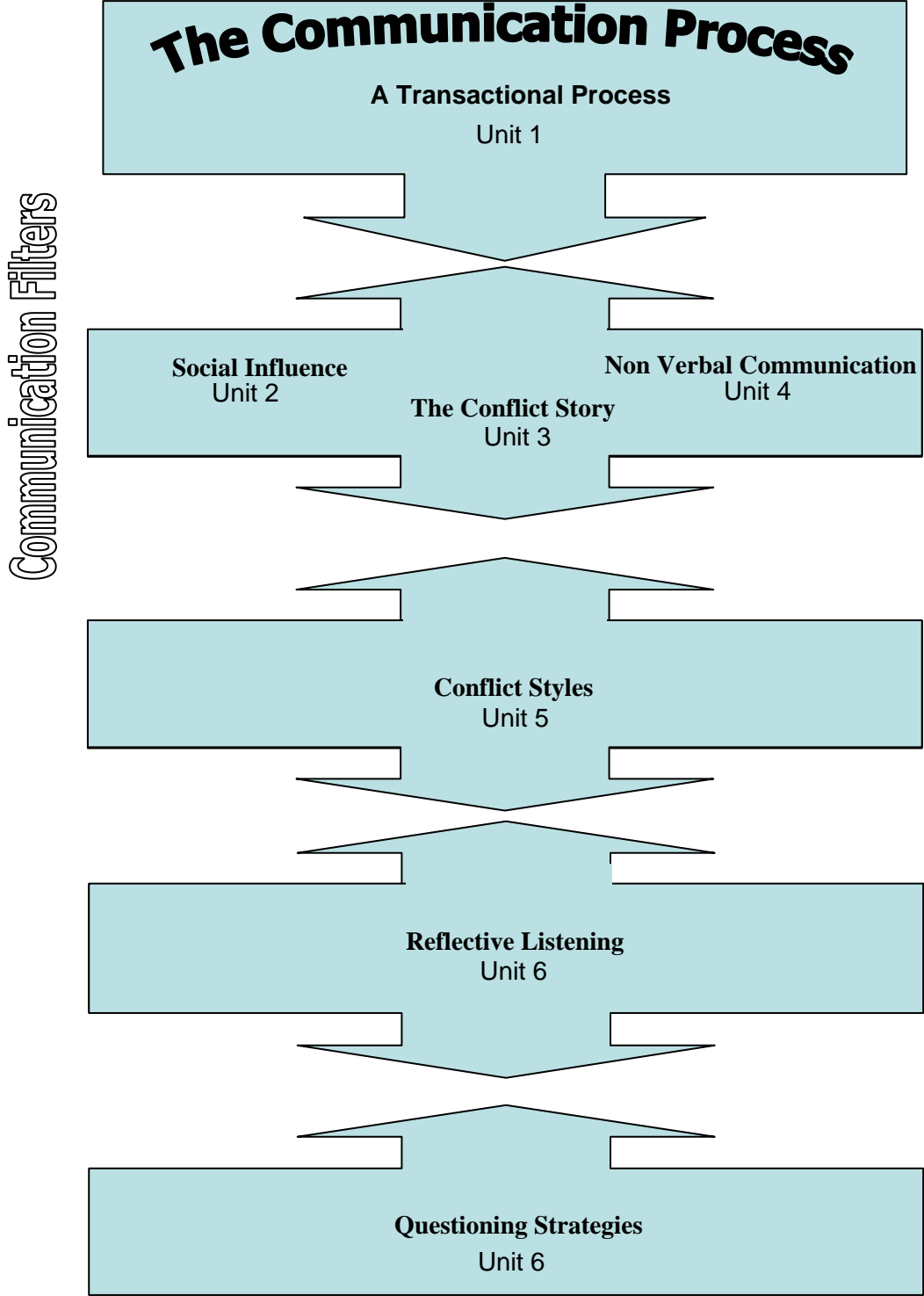


Figure 1

REFERENCES

- Adler, R. B., & Towne, N. (1999). *Looking Out/Looking In: Interpersonal Communication* (9th ed.). New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- Chafee, J. Ph.D. (2000). *Thinking Critically*. (6th ed.). Boston, NY: Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Frey, L.R., Botan, C.H., Friedman, P.G., & Kreps, G.L. (1991). *Investigating Communication: An Introduction to Research Methods*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Landau, S., Landau, B., & Landau, D. (2001). *From Conflict to Creativity: How to Resolving Workplace Disagreements Can Inspire Innovation and Productivity*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Co.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2002). *National Center for Health Statistics: 2001 News Releases*. Retrieved October 4, 2002, from <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/releases/01news/01news.htm>.
- Sound Options Group, L.L.C.(1999). *Mediation: Collaborative Decision Making, Part II*. (Available from Sound Options Group, L.L.C., P.O. Box 11457, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110)
- Ward. J.R.(1990). Now Hear This: Without Listening, There is no Communication. *Communication World*, v7, n7, 20-23.

MANAGING COMMUNICATION
CONFLICT SCOPE AND SEQUENCE
(A Four-Day Seminar)

Unit One: (3 - hour session) The Communication Process

- Communication Transactional Model
- Terminology
- Filters
- Conflict

Unit Two: (3- hour session) Social Influences as Filters in Communication

- Values
- Perceptions
- Expectations

Unit Three: (3 - hour session): The Conflict Story as a Filter

- Assumptions
- Emotions
- Accusations

Unit Four: (3 - hour session): The Filter of Non-Verbal Communication

- Non-verbal cues
- Cultural influence
- Managing cues to improve meaning

Unit Five: (3 - hour session): Conflict Styles

- Conflict Styles
- Methods of Conflict Resolution
- Applications of Styles and Methods

Unit Six: (3 - hour session): Reflective Listening

- Attending: Non-verbal cues
- Understanding: Reframe
- Responding: Reflection

Unit Seven: (3-hour session): Questioning Strategies

- Curiosity
- Questioning Strategies
- Clarifying

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS
UNIT 1
Three-Hour Class

GOALS:

1. Summarize the components of the transactional communication model to lay a foundation for understanding basic communication functions.
2. Introduce filters that lead to miscommunication thus providing a conceptual framework for conflict and resolution within the communication effort.

RATIONALE FOR UNIT:

Communication is considered one of the most basic functions of human need and relational development and health. Yet, problematic communication interactions permeate even the healthiest of relationships, causing misunderstanding between the sender of the message and the receiver of the message. Few individuals understand communication as a package and the effect it has on relational interaction. This unit provides a foundation for the learners to begin to understand where and why their intended message is misinterpreted. Communication is something we do with other, not something we do to them. The transactional communication model demonstrates this by explaining that communication is ongoing and is a back and forth type of activity. As one person speaks, the other is considering a response. Communication is intentional, whereby the sender intends the receiver to hear the message with the same meaning they have in their mind. It also explains the complications, called filters, which arise when two different people living in two individual environments misconstrue the meanings of messages. The presentation of this unit allows the learners to recognize that communication misunderstandings occur frequently and easily given the characteristics of the transactional model.

OBJECTIVES FOR UNIT:

1. Explain the parts of the communication process using a visual model.
2. Define terminology used in the transactional communication model.
3. Explain components of the communication model using examples from everyday experiences.
4. Explore the relationship of miscommunication with the idea of conflict.
5. Recognize miscommunication as a natural outcome of individuals attempting to communicate with other individuals.

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES:

1. Use handout of the transactional communication model to discuss characteristics of communication.
2. Demonstrate distortion by passing a whispered message person to person through the participants. Last person repeats vocally the message she received. The original message is then compared with the final message.
3. Ask the learners to recall a recent communication challenge and analyze the dialog using the diagram of the transactional model by answering these two questions:
 - a. Which elements described in the model help explain the problem?
 - b. What steps might you or the other person have taken to overcome these difficulties?
4. Assign homework for the learners. Ask them to:
 - a. Choose a person with which you have a close relationship.
 - b. Note areas of communication, i.e., children, money, schedules, and choose one to analyze.
 - c. Note your companion's responses and answer:
 - Do they always respond in the same way in this context?
 - Or, do they have several types of responses?
 - Do you think they respond the best way each time?
 - Are you happy with the way they respond?
 - d. Compare answers, and discuss the times that are most satisfactory when communicating.
 - e. Consider the transactional model to consider where the communication might have gone awry. Would it be in sending the message, or receiving it? Was there appropriate feedback? Did anything that distorted the message?
5. Provide in-class learning opportunities that demonstrate intent of the sender and the understanding of the receiver using personal, relevant stories, movies and cartoons.

SUGGESTED REFERENCES:

- Adler, R. B., & Towne, N. (1999). *Looking Out/Looking In: Interpersonal Communication* (9th ed.). New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- Bate, B., Bowker, J. (1997). *Communication And The Sexes* (2nd ed.). Prospect Heights, Il: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Cameron, D. (2002). Good to Talk? Living and Working in a Communication Culture. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 65, 105-108.

Frey, L.R., Botan, C.H., Friedman, P.G., & Kreps, G.L. (1991). *Investigating Communication: An Introduction to Research Methods*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Hanna, M.S., & Wilson, G.L. (1998). *Communicating in Business and Professional Settings* (4th ed.). New York: The McGraw-Hill Co. Inc.

Garrison, M. & Bly, M.A. (1997). *Human Relation: Productive Approaches for the Workplace*. Boston, NY: Allyn and Bacon.

Gudykunst, W.B. (1991). *Bridging Differences: Effective Intergroup Communication*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Mortensen, C.D. (1997). *Miscommunication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sound Options Group, L.L.C.(1999). *Mediation: Collaborative Decision Making, Part II*.
(Available from Sound Options Group, L.L.C., P.O. Box 11457, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110)

SOCIAL INFLUENCES AS FILTERS IN COMMUNICATION
UNIT 2
Three-Hour Class

GOALS:

1. Explore ways in which individual core beliefs, or values, influence formulating and interpreting communication messages.
2. Examine perception's influence and effects in message meanings.
3. Evaluate the relationship of expectations and unmet needs within the context of communication conflict

RATIONALE FOR UNIT:

A person's values, perceptions, and even expectations of others strongly resemble the social influence (i.e., family, neighborhood, schools, religious experience, etc) in which one grows up. Unfortunately, no two people have the same basic set of values, perceptual instincts, or expectations, and conflict begins, strongly influenced by these three controlling factors. Individuals seldom reflect on their core beliefs or where they come from. Hence, they assume that most other people believe just as they do about behavior and values. It often is a surprise to them when disagreements occur. People pay attention to different specifics in their environment and interpret those events in various way according to social influences. Perception of experiences sets different expectations for each individual. Often, however, those expectations are not expressed in a way that others can understand. Therefore, this unit allows the learner to understand they sometimes speak a somewhat different language from others. In other words, their understanding of the message is filtered by values, perception, and expectations shaped by their social influences, and the receiver of the message is unaware of underlying meanings not explained to them. It is important for the learner to appreciate their communication partner's point of view and realize that differences exist.

OBJECTIVES FOR UNIT:

1. Evaluate basic values about interpersonal communication.
2. Explain where core values originate.
3. Describe the selection, organization and interpretive process of perception.
4. Recognize that no two individuals see life from the exact same point of view.
5. Describe the significance of unmet needs and how that can appear as expectations.
6. Identify unspoken needs appearing as expectations.

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES:

1. During the next week, ask learners to identify moral issues they encounter with other people—choices related to right versus wrong and good versus evil. Have them select several issues and answer these questions related to the choice they made:
 - a. What was the issue?
 - b. What choices could you have made?
 - c. Why did you make the choice that you did?
 - d. If you had to do it over, would you make the same choice? Why?
2. Discuss Bleiker's Hierarchy of Needs and compare with Dr. Marshall Rosenberg's list of Universal Needs.
3. What might your perspective be by changing physiological experiences?
 1. Choose one of the following situations:
 - An evening in a single's bar
 - Attending an event at a large sports arena.
 - Attending a party alone
 2. How would the event you choose seem different if:
 - Your eyesight were much worse (or better)?
 - You had a hearing loss?
 - You were 8 inches taller (or shorter)?
 - You were coming down with a serious cold?
 - You were a member of the opposite sex?
 - You were 10 years older (or younger)?
4. Discuss handout on poem considering 'perspective' written by John G. Sax
5. Conduct an informal discussion using current conflict messages learners recently participated in and compare expressed expectations and possible unmet needs.

SUGGESTED REFERENCES:

- Adler, R. B., & Towne, N. (1999). *Looking Out/Looking In: Interpersonal Communication* (9thed.). New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- Bate, B., Bowker, J. (1997). *Communication And The Sexes* (2nd ed.). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Bartley, S.H. (1972). *Perception in Everyday Life*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Chaffee, J. (2000). *Thinking Critically* (6th ed.). Boston, N.Y.: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Mortensen, C.D. (1997). *Miscommunication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Schneider, D.J., Hastorf, A.H., Ellsworth, P.C. (1979). *Person Perception* (2nd ed.). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Sound Options Group, L.L.C.(1999). *Mediation: Collaborative Decision Making, Part II*. (Available from Sound Options Group, L.L.C., P.O. Box 11457, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110)

Stone, D., Patton, B & Heen, S. (1999). *Difficult Conversations: How To Discuss What Matters Most*. New York: Penguin Books.

THE CONFLICT STORY AS A FILTER

UNIT 3 Three-Hour Class

GOALS:

1. Study the elements that cultivate a conflict story, which serves to organize and make sense of the human experience of conflict.
2. Connect the influence of unattended emotions with a developing conflict story.

RATIONALE FOR UNIT:

People make sense of their lives and relationships with stories. Narrative theory suggests that culture influences an individual's story, and that people expect others to behave and think just like them. When beliefs, values or behavior are different than expected, confusion as well as conflict arises, and people develop a conflict story to organize the experience. Conflict stories and the cultural influences of it filter truth to best suit the self-concept of the storyteller. For this reason this unit discussing the conflict story element of the communication process is necessary. The previous units of the communication process and social effects on an individual's worldview provide a broad view of attitudes toward communication. Understanding the conflict story helps to narrow the focus to how individuals use this knowledge for formulating their own judgment of the truth of a conflict experience.

OBJECTIVES FOR UNIT:

1. Summarize the development of a conflict story.
2. Analyze Narrative Theory.
3. Relate the significance of the assumptions in developing and maintaining a conflict story.
4. Explore the importance of accusation in maintaining the self-image of the storyteller.
5. Discover an enhanced "feelings" vocabulary to improve communication of emotional needs.
6. Recognize how to appropriately express feelings in terms that accept responsibility rather than blame others.

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES:

1. Discuss handout of the outline of a conflict story.
2. Discuss handout of Narrative Theory.

3. Discuss handout of “The Ladder of Inference” to understand assumptions.
4. Evaluate a chart with a list of feelings and complete this exercise:
 - A. Choose a situation from Column A and a receiver from Column B.
 - B. Develop an approach for communicating your feelings for this combination.
 - C. Now create approaches for the same situation with other receivers from Column B. How are the statements different?
 - D. Repeat the process with various combinations, using other situations from Column A.

Column A

- a. Someone doesn’t show up for an appointment.
- b. Another person makes fun of you.
- c. Another person criticizes you.
- d. The other person gives you a hug and says, “It’s good to see you.”

Column B

- a. An instructor
- b. A family member
- c. A classmate you don’t know well
- d. Your best friend

5. Read and discuss handout of “Aristotle’s Golden Mean.”
6. Assign “Identity Homework” for recording the learner’s view of their behavior and how they tend to build their self-image in the conflict stories they construct:

Ask learners to keep a journal of difficult situations in which they communicate over a week or two. For each situation, ask them to identify adjectives they use to describe their behavior in the situation, for example “wise,” “friendly,” “amiable” or “supportive.” And likewise, instruct them to record adjectives assigned to the other person, i.e, “unfair,” “selfish,” or maybe even complementary (hopefully!).

SUGGESTED REFERENCES:

Adler, R. B., & Towne, N. (1999). *Looking Out/Looking In: Interpersonal Communication* (9th ed.). New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Gallois, C. (1993). The Language and Communication of Emotion: Universal, Interpersonal, or Intergroup? *American Behavioral Science*, 36, 309-339.

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. New York: Bantam.

Knapp, M.L. & Miller, G.R.(1994). *Handbook of Interpersonal Communication* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Winslade, J. & Monk, G. (2001). *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

THE FILTER OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION
UNIT 4
Three-Hour Class

GOALS:

1. Discuss types of nonverbal cues, or filters, and the effect each has on the communication message.
2. Contrast the cultural norms of nonverbal communication in the United State with people of other cultures.

RATIONALE FOR UNIT:

Verbal and nonverbal communication occurs either independently or in coordination with each other. Nonverbal communication, also know as cues, convey messages just as verbal communication does. As well, one person's interpretation filters messages sent to him by his understanding of the cues sent with the message. Culture also strongly influences beliefs in most of the nonverbal expressions. Therefore, learners benefit from understanding the impact of nonverbal communication on messages. By better understanding the effects, learners can manage their facial expressions, posture, gestures, voice tone, and proximity to enhance and coordinate the two to better convey their intended meaning. From this unit, learners understand cultural comparisons of message interpretations of nonverbal cues. Then, from that understanding, the learner develops empathy toward others, and they can respond more charitably towards others who misinterpret their communication messages.

OBJECTIVES FOR UNIT:

1. Describe ways in which thoughtful nonverbal cues can improve transference of intended meaning.
2. Identify ways in which nonverbal cues filter transference of intended meaning.
3. Differentiate norms of nonverbal communication between cultures.
4. Select successful types of nonverbal cues within the context of a communication demonstration.

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES:

1. Classroom activity: Learners choose a partner to participate in this exercise. Have them sit back to back, unable to see each other and without touching any body parts. Choose a topic for them to converse upon for a set amount of time that encourages emotion and expression of interests or opinion, for example politics, community concerns or social issues. Have the

learners note their impression of not being able to see one another during this discussion. Share responses with the class.

2. To demonstrate proximity, have learners start a conversation room's distance from each other. Have them walk towards each other while conversing, moving to within an inch of each other. Ask them to reflect on their feelings at various distances, and determine what a comfortable distance for conversation was for them. Share the results with the class.

3. Provide classroom demonstrations to identify successful nonverbal cues versus unsuccessful nonverbal cues.

4. Ask the learners identify rules that govern touching from different cultures in each of these different situations:

- ☆ An adult to a 5-year old child
- ☆ Male friend to female friend
- ☆ Two good friends
- ☆ Boss and employee

5. Request that learners keep a journal of nonverbal cues they observe during conversations throughout the week. Ask them to note the type of cue it was, the context of the conversation, and their response to it.

SUGGESTED REFERENCES:

Adler, R. B., & Towne, N. (1999). *Looking Out/Looking In: Interpersonal Communication* (9th ed.). New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Bate, B., Bowker, J. (1997). *Communication And The Sexes* (2nd ed.). Prospect Heights, Il: Waveland Press, Inc.

Garrison, M., Bly, M.A. (1997). *Human Relations: Productive Approaches For The Workplace*. Boston, N.Y.: Allyn and Bacon.

Hall, E.T. (1969). *The Hidden Dimension*. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, Doubleday.

Knapp, M.L. (1992). *Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction* (3rd ed.). Fort Worth, Tx: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Montagu, A. (1986). *Touching: The Human Significance of the Skin* (3rd ed.). New York: Harper & Row.

CONFLICT STYLES
UNIT 5
Three-Hour Class

GOALS:

1. Recognize people manage conflict in different ways in order to meet individual goals and expectations.
2. Analyze methods of conflict resolution.

RATIONALE FOR UNIT:

Conflict is an unpleasant fact of life. It is impossible to avoid conflicts, and the challenge is to learn how to handle them effectively. Furthermore, conflict, when handled well, can develop stronger and more satisfying relationships. The purpose of this unit is to identify individual styles in which people manage conflict in order to meet their expectations and goals. Rather than viewing conflict as negative, the content of this unit can encourage learners that conflict, at times, is constructive. With a little work, people embroiled in conflict can adjust their style as well as applying the conflict resolution methods presented to bring satisfying solutions to the conflict. There is no one correct solution to conflict that applies to every person and in every situation. The idea of the unit is to suggest to the learner that working with methods of solution in conflict can lead to mutual gain for both parties. The key to the unit is to familiarize learners with the concepts so they may choose the appropriate style and method for their particular conflict.

OBJECTIVES FOR UNIT:

1. Define basic conflict management styles of nonassertive, directly aggressive, passive/aggressive, indirect and assertive.
2. Identify a personal preference for handling conflict.
3. Explore ways of more effective conflict resolution by incorporating all styles in conflict management.
4. Define problem-solving methods of conflict resolution of: win/win, lose/lose, and win/lose.
5. Explain the advantages of flexibility in choosing conflict methods appropriate for the situation.

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES:

1. Discuss handout summarizing conflict styles.

2. Identifying personal conflict styles:
 - A. List five conflicts recently experienced.
 - B. For each conflict, answer each question:
 1. Describe whom it was with and what it was about.
 2. What did you say.
 3. How did it turn out, how did you feel, and are you happy with the results?
 - C. Answer these questions from the results:
 - a. Are you happy with the way you handled your conflicts?
 - b. Do you see a pattern in the way you responded?
 - c. Are your relationships stronger? Weaker?
 - d. What or how would you change?
3. Discuss handout for “Which style is best?” which advises a possible conflict style by considering the situation, the receiver, and goals a person intends on meeting with the style she chooses.
4. Discuss handout summarizing the problem-solving method of conflict resolution.
5. Conduct role plays of conflicts using samples of the styles and methods discussed.
6. Analyze the Thomas-Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument handout.
7. View the movie “On Golden Pond” (1981).

SUGGESTED REFERENCES:

- Adler, R. B., & Towne, N. (1999). *Looking Out/Looking In: Interpersonal Communication* (9th ed.). New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- Canary, D.J., Cupach, W.R. Messman, S.J. (1995). *Relationship Conflict*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Chaffee, J. (2000). *Thinking Critically* (6th ed.). Boston, N.Y.: Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Cupach, W.R. Canary, D.J. (1997). *Competence in Interpersonal Conflict*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Fisher, R., Brown, S. (1988). *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Kohn, A. (1986). *No Contest: The Case Against Competition*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Landau, S., Landau, B., & Landau, D. (2001). *From Conflict To Creativity: How Resolving Workplace Disagreements Can Inspire Innovation and Productivity*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Sound Options Group, L.L.C.(1999). *Mediation: Collaborative Decision Making, Part II*.
(Available from Sound Options Group, L.L.C., P.O. Box 11457, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110)

REFLECTED LISTENING
UNIT 6
Three-Hour Class

GOALS:

1. Discuss attributes that contribute to effective listening to provide understanding of the importance of listening to the communication process.
2. Examine attending, restating, and reflective listening skills to reinforce the significance of listening while providing a practical means of improving it.

RATIONALE FOR UNIT:

Effective listening is more than just hearing (the physiological dimension) what another person has to say. People do more listening than any other communication activity, which works out to be 53% of our communication time. Arguably, it then contributes considerably to interpersonal communication. Listening is not a passive activity, but is an active part of the transactional model of communication, as the listener stays involved. This unit presents the listening elements of attending, understanding, and responding, which cause a listener to actively participate in the process. In this unit, learners analyze and practice listening skills that reflect they indeed are listening and correctly comprehending what the speaker says. Attending with one's body and stance shows active involvement, and background noise is filtered. Furthermore, restating by the listener shows understanding, and reflection acknowledges the content and emotion of the message. The learners benefit from this unit by improving the interpersonal relationships in both their personal and professional life.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Recognize that acknowledging and understanding is not the same as agreeing.
2. Summarize good listening elements of attending, understanding, and responding.
3. Explain how elements of good listening are achieved through non-verbal cues, reflective listening, and restating.
4. Demonstrate reflective and restating skills in role play.
5. Illustrate attending skills by utilizing non-verbal cues that demonstrate active listening.

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES:

1. Discuss handout of the Listening Activities Wheel that reflects percentage of time spend in communication activities.

2. Practice and observe others active listening skills, using a handout with listed suggestions of non-verbal cues that contribute to positive active listening.
3. Discuss and practice reflective listening skills using a handout with suggestions of responses, including identifying feelings involved in the dialog.
4. Explain restating listening as just replaying the message, no edits or deletions of the message with the use of role play.
5. Homework suggestion:
 - Ask learners to keep a journal this week of times when:
 - A. they heard another person's message but did not attend to it.
 - B. they listened but forgot the message immediately.
 - C. they listened and did not understand, but didn't clarify the message.
 - D. How could they have changed the response of one incident to make it more satisfactory?
6. Use cartoons and personal stories to show problems with listening.

SUGGESTED REFERENCES:

- Adler, R. B., & Towne, N. (1999). *Looking Out/Looking In: Interpersonal Communication* (9th ed.). New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- Brownell, J. (1996). *Listening: Attitudes, Principles, and Skills*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Glatthorn, A.A. (1983). *Listen Your Way to Management Success*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman.
- Nichols, M. (1995). *The Lost Art of Listening*. New York: Guilford.
- Purdy, M., & Borisoff, D. (1997). *Listening in Everyday Life: A Personal and Professional Approach* (2nd ed.). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Sound Options Group, L.L.C.(1999). *Mediation: Collaborative Decision Making, Part II*. (Available from Sound Options Group, L.L.C., P.O. Box 11457, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110)
- Ward, J.R. (1990). Now Hear This: Without Listening, There is no Communication. *Communication World*, 7, 20-27.

QUESTIONING STRATEGIES
UNIT 7
Three-Hour Class

GOALS:

1. Discuss the importance of questioning strategies in creating curiosity in the listener.
2. Analyze questioning strategies and their usefulness in clarifying message meanings.

RATIONALE FOR UNIT:

Questions are a powerful tool to use in shaping (or confining) the meaning of messages. The kinds of questions used to understand and explore what the other person is trying to say either invites a response or discourages one. Thoughtful, intentional types of questions come about from deep-seeded curiosity of the listener, which encourages the talker to continue until all parties have the same interpretation. Therefore, the learner benefits from understanding how and when to use the various styles of questions in order to invite a broader range of responses. The learner gains tools to clarify what they understand the speaker to be saying, and they are able to confirm that understanding in a non-threatening manner. Studying and rehearsing questioning strategies in this unit will provide the learner with a strong knowledge base, which is intended to build confidence in the learner when faced with a conflict conversation.

OBJECTIVES FOR UNIT:

1. Develop a curious nature towards what others are trying to say.
2. Apply the clarifying nature of questioning.
3. Explain the purpose of different questioning strategies and what they accomplish.
4. Demonstrate improved skill in using appropriate questioning strategies.
5. Discuss how effective questioning skills improve understanding message meanings.

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES:

1. Discuss the Intentional Inquiry handout that speaks of the importance of developing curiosity to intensify questioning skills.
2. Demonstrate how to construct intentional questions by asking:
 - a. What do I want this question to do?
 - b. How might she respond to this question?
 - c. Do I have a predetermined answer?
 - d. Will this question encourage them to continue in the discussion?

3. Use role play to practice questioning strategies.
4. Discuss handout summarizing questioning strategies.

SUGGESTED REFERENCES:

Frey, L.R., Botan, C.H., Friedman, P.G. & Kreps, G.L. (1991). *Investigating Communication: An Introduction to Research Methods*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc.

Hanna, M.S., Wilson, G.L. (1998). *Communicating In Business And Professional Settings* (4th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Co. Inc.

Kritek, P.B. (1994). *Negotiating At An Uneven Table: A Practical Approach To Working With Difference And Diversity*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Leeds, D. (1995). Question Your Way To Powerful Communication. *Accounting Today*, 9, 15-20.

Sound Options Group, L.L.C.(1999). *Mediation: Collaborative Decision Making, Part II*.
(Available from Sound Options Group, L.L.C., P.O. Box 11457, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110)

Winslade, J. & Monk, G. (2001). *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

The Communication Process
Unit 1

1. Sketch the transactional communication model.
2. Define the terms feedback and filters, and explain their significance to the communication process.
3. How is conflict facilitated by miscommunication?
4. Can communication conflict be avoided in relationships? What one suggestion do you have to manage conflict so it contributes to the conversation?

The Conflict Story as a Filter
Unit 3

1. What is a conflict story?
2. What benefit does the author of the conflict story receive from constructing one?
3. How do assumptions play a part in the conflict story?
4. Are feelings important in the story? How?

VALIDATION OF THE
MANAGING COMMUNICATION CONFLICT CURRICULUM

I intend to submit my curriculum document to the Kitsap County Dispute Resolution Center for validation. Earlier in the semester I approached Dane Keene, Executive Director, for ideas and resources for developing my curriculum. He expressed enthusiasm for the project for he had a desire to see a similar program at the center that targeted communication problems between teens and their parents. Recently the center has developed curriculum for providing a basic mediator education, and it has established a board to develop, review and execute that curriculum. I would ask that the board review my document. The board is chaired by a local school district's curriculum developer. As well, other communication experts in mediation and communication sit on the board including lawyers, school teachers, psychologists, etc. To my good fortune, this board is truly a board of experts, and quite willing to help others develop professionally. Local Dispute Resolution Centers operate as training facilities for future mediators as well as offering services to community members to resolve disputes.

November 13, 2002

Dr. Dane Keene
Executive Director
Dispute Resolution Center
9004 Washington Ave. NW
Silverdale, WA 98383

RE: Critique the “Managing Communication Conflict” document attached

Dear Dr. Keene:

As you may recall, in August I approached you for advice and resource material for a graduate curriculum development project I was working on. The title of the project is “Managing Communication Conflict,” and the scope covers interpersonal communication knowledge and techniques designed to guide learners to improved relationships with others. This project is complete, and it is ready for validation by professionals in the communication field.

It is my hope that you and your curriculum development board would consider validating the document enclosed by reading it and answering the attached survey. Please feel free to make suggestions and comments beyond the questions provided should you see any areas of concern.

I appreciate your time and effort, and I look forward to meeting with you should you decide to conduct the validation of my curriculum. If you have any questions please call me at 360-876-0523.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Harvey

SURVEY OF MANAGING COMMUNICATION CONFLICT

Please answer the following questions. Feel free to add additional comments beyond the questions should you have helpful information that will strengthen the curriculum.

1. Do the overall aim, goals and rationale of the curriculum address the most current approach to interpersonal communication?

How can it be improved?

2. Does the content source cover the material needed? What else might be appropriate?

3. Do the goals, objectives and learning activities achieve the aim of the curriculum?

How can it be improved?

4. Do the units meet the goals of the curriculum?

Are there areas not covered sufficiently?

Are there units that do not meet the goals and aim of the curriculum?

5. Does the content flow sufficiently to allow learners to build a knowledge base to improve communication interactions?

How can I improve the flow?

Other Comments: