

Relational Communication Among Small Group Members



Chapter 10



Relational Communication



Definition

Relational communication is the use of verbal communication, nonverbal communication, and listening to develop and maintain relationships between and among group members

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication



Verbal and Nonverbal Communication



Definition

Verbal communication comprises the words and phrases used by group members through which meaning is created

Nonverbal communication comprises all communication other than words through which meaning is created

Characteristics of Verbal Communication



1. Can have both a denotative and a connotative meaning

Denotative meaning is the dictionary or literal meaning

Connotative meaning is the personal response to a word

Characteristics of Verbal Communication



2. Can be either concrete or abstract

Concrete is when the word or phrase has an identifiable referent and its meaning is clear

Abstract is when the word or phrase has no identifiable referent and the meaning is less clear

Characteristics of Verbal Communication



3. Can emerge in the form of either a restricted or an elaborated code

A restricted code uses short, simple, and conventional language

An elaborated code uses more complex, extensive, and precise language.

Codes of Nonverbal Communication



There are seven primary nonverbal codes

These codes are personal appearance, kinesics, oculosics, facial expression, proxemics, haptics, and vocalics

Codes of Nonverbal Communication



1. Personal appearance

Refers to how a group member looks and can encompass many dimensions, including height, weight, skin color, hair and eye color, body shape, choice of clothing and jewelry, and hairstyle

Codes of Nonverbal Communication



2. Kinesics

Refers to a group member's use of body movement, which includes a person's posture, use of gestures, and behaviors such as walking and sitting

3. Oculesics

Refers to a group member's eye behavior, which takes the forms of staring, gazing, winking, scanning, blinking, and glancing

Codes of Nonverbal Communication



4. Facial expression

Refers to how a group member conveys meaning through the face

Codes of Nonverbal Communication



5. Proxemics

Refers to a group member's use of space and can be broken into two types: distance and territory

Distance refers to the amount of physical space that exists between two or more group members as they communicate

Territory refers to the ownership of space

Codes of Nonverbal Communication



6. Haptics

Refers to a group member's use of touch

7. Proxemics

Sometimes referred to as paralanguage

Refers to qualities of a group member's voice
(e.g., rate, pitch, volume)

Codes of Nonverbal Communication



Two secondary nonverbal codes

1. Olfactics

Refers to scent and smell

2. Chronemics

Refers to the use and structure of time

Verbal vs. Nonverbal Communication



Although a message usually has both a verbal component and a nonverbal component, most adults rely on the nonverbal component to determine its meaning

Listening



Five types of listening

1. Discriminative listening is the ability to differentiate among various stimuli
2. Appreciative listening is the desire to listen for reasons of enjoyment
3. Empathic listening is the willingness to listen to understand how someone feels

Listening



Five types of listening

4. Comprehensive listening is the need to comprehend information in order to learn
5. Evaluative listening is the need to evaluate information in light of some criteria

Listening



Four listening styles

1. People-oriented listeners listen primarily out of concern for other people's feelings and emotions
2. Action-oriented listeners prefer concise, efficient, and error-free messages

Listening



Four listening styles

3. Content-oriented listeners enjoy receiving complex or challenging information

4. Time-oriented listeners measure interactions by time by informing their relational partners how much time they have available to listen

Listening



Research on the four listening styles

People-oriented and content-oriented listeners are low in interpersonal, small group, and meeting communication apprehension; people-oriented listeners also are low in receiver apprehension

Listening



Research on the four listening styles

People-oriented and content-oriented listeners are low in verbal aggressiveness.

People-oriented listeners are higher in extroversion than action-oriented and content-oriented listeners.

Listening



Research on the four listening styles

People-oriented and content-oriented listeners engage in conversational sensitivity, which refers to a person's ability to pay attention to and make inferences about the meaning generated in a conversation

Listening



Research on the four listening styles

Content-oriented and action-oriented listeners are more likely to engage in second-guessing, which is when a listener questions the literal meaning of a message to determine the truthfulness of the message

A Final Note



Groups sometimes fail due specifically to the group members' use of relational communication

The best way to maximize relational communication in the small group is by monitoring the use of relational communication during group meetings: think before communicating and reflect on the barriers that might impede listening
