



# Communication and Listening

## Objectives

To present a deeper understanding of communication.

To allow participants the opportunity to exercise involvement in good communication.

## Key Concept

Communication is the basic for all human relationships. It is through communication or the lack of it, that many relationships break down. All communication involves sending one another messages to which certain meanings are attached.

**Effective communication** involves more than just speaking. It also requires:

- Looking at the person (eye contact)
- The way we sit and face a person or pay attention to them (posture – body language)

We communicate as much through our feelings as we do with words. Being able to communicate feelings effectively is vital to good communication.

## Game/ice-breaker | Pass the whisper



The group sits in a circle.

The leader whispers a message to one person.

The message is passed around the circle (each person whispering to their neighbour).

When the message reaches the last person, he/she speaks the message aloud to the whole group.

The original message is then spoken.

Have the group comment on how the message got changed in the telling.

(We don't always hear what is really being said).

## Activity | Experiences of Listening

This activity focuses on the experiences of listening. Participants spend about 15 minutes reflecting on these questions (taken from 'Portrait of Youth Ministry by Maria Harris) in small groups:

1. What are three times that you can recall having the experience of being listened to?
2. What are three times that you can recall having the experience of genuinely listening to another?
3. Reflecting on the above what conditions do you think need to be present for listening to go on? If possible place these conditions in priority order (number 1 being the most important).
4. Reflecting on the above, what things stop or hinder listening? If possible please these in priority order.

Small group sharing:

- Share responses for all questions.
- Arrive at a consensus for questions 3 and 4
- Present your group's response to questions 3 and 4 to the whole group for discussion and comments.

**Activity | This is Me**

In pairs discuss the "This is Me" page:

**Rules:**            You may ask any question that you like.  
                          You may pass any question.  
                          You may not ask why another person passes.

Change with someone else after about 7 minutes.

**Activity | Large group activity**

Place a candle in the centre of the room. Have participants gather around the candle.

Leader:

So often we can put people in boxes  
Label them as stupid or unthinking etc  
We can wear binoculars – only focusing on what  
we really want to hear and can force people to wear masks.

Read

## Please Hear What I'm Not Saying

Don't be fooled by me.  
Don't be fooled by the face I wear  
for I wear a mask, a thousand masks,  
masks that I'm afraid to take off,  
and none of them is me.

Pretending is an art that's second nature with me,  
but don't be fooled,  
for God's sake don't be fooled.  
I give you the impression that I'm secure,  
that all is sunny and unruffled with me, within as well  
as without,  
that confidence is my name and coolness my game,  
that the water's calm and I'm in command  
and that I need no one,  
but don't believe me.  
My surface may seem smooth but my surface is my mask,  
ever-varying and ever-concealing.  
Beneath lies no complacency.  
Beneath lies confusion, and fear, and aloneness.  
But I hide this. I don't want anybody to know it.  
I panic at the thought of my weakness exposed.  
That's why I frantically create a mask to hide behind,  
a nonchalant sophisticated facade,  
to help me pretend,  
to shield me from the glance that knows.

But such a glance is precisely my salvation, my only hope,  
and I know it.  
That is, if it's followed by acceptance,  
if it's followed by love.  
It's the only thing that can liberate me from myself,  
from my own self-built prison walls,  
from the barriers I so painstakingly erect.  
It's the only thing that will assure me  
of what I can't assure myself,  
that I'm really worth something.  
But I don't tell you this. I don't dare to, I'm afraid to.  
I'm afraid your glance will not be followed by acceptance,  
will not be followed by love.  
I'm afraid you'll think less of me,  
that you'll laugh, and your laugh would kill me.  
I'm afraid that deep-down I'm nothing  
and that you will see this and reject me.

So I play my game, my desperate pretending game,  
with a facade of assurance without  
and a trembling child within.  
So begins the glittering but empty parade of masks,  
and my life becomes a front.

I idly chatter to you in the suave tones of surface talk.  
I tell you everything that's really nothing,  
and nothing of what's everything,  
of what's crying within me.  
So when I'm going through my routine  
do not be fooled by what I'm saying.  
Please listen carefully and try to hear what I'm not saying,  
what I'd like to be able to say,  
what for survival I need to say,  
but what I can't say.

I don't like hiding.  
I don't like playing superficial phony games.

I want to stop playing them.  
I want to be genuine and spontaneous and me  
but you've got to help me.  
You've got to hold out your hand  
even when that's the last thing I seem to want.  
Only you can wipe away from my eyes  
the blank stare of the breathing dead.  
Only you can call me into aliveness.  
Each time you're kind, and gentle, and encouraging,  
each time you try to understand because you really care,  
my heart begins to grow wings--  
very small wings,  
very feeble wings,  
but wings!

With your power to touch me into feeling  
you can breathe life into me.  
I want you to know that.  
I want you to know how important you are to me,  
how you can be a creator--an honest-to-God creator--  
of the person that is me  
if you choose to.  
You alone can break down the wall behind which I tremble,  
you alone can remove my mask,  
you alone can release me from my shadow-world of panic,  
from my lonely prison,  
if you choose to.  
Please choose to.

Do not pass me by.  
It will not be easy for you.  
A long conviction of worthlessness builds strong walls.  
The nearer you approach to me  
the blinder I may strike back.  
It's irrational, but despite what the books say about man  
often I am irrational.  
I fight against the very thing I cry out for.  
But I am told that love is stronger than strong walls  
and in this lies my hope.  
Please try to beat down those walls  
with firm hands but with gentle hands  
for a child is very sensitive.

Who am I, you may wonder?  
I am someone you know very well.  
For I am every man you meet  
and I am every woman you meet.

Charles C. Finn

September 1966

Note: There are several videos YouTube  
for this if you have access.