

PARTICIPANT'S HANDBOOK

**MODULE: COMMUNICATION AND
CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

**TOPIC 2: ASSERTIVE
COMMUNICATION AND ACTIVE LISTENING**

DURATION OF THE SESSION: 120 MINUTES

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I. Theoretical concept

In this module we will talk about the different ways of communicating: "**Verbal Communication**", "**Nonverbal Communication**", "**Written Communication**", "**Assertive Communication**" and "**Active Listening**".

We'll start by defining, what communication is? and the elements that form it.

Communication is the process by which we exchange information and establish social relationships with those around us. Through communication we can share both information and feelings, ideas, knowledge and experiences.

In this sense, the elements involved in the communication are as follows:

- Sender: Is the person who initiates communication by issuing a message through communication signs and encoding the message for the receiver.
- Receiver: Is the person who receives and interprets the message by decoding the signs of the received message. Once the information has been interpreted the receiver can respond by acquiring the place of the issuer by developing the communicative action.
- Code: It consists of signs used to transmit the message this can be both verbal and non-verbal.
- Message: Refers to the content being transmitted can be either informational, idea, opinion or feeling. It is composed of symbols, linguistic Codes, images that are recognized by both the sender and receiver.
- Communication channel: The means through which the message is sent between the sender and receiver, examples: Air, telephone call, email, WhatsApp.
- Context: Circumstances in which the communicative action develops that may or may not affect both the sending and receiving of the message.
- Feedback: This is the action to send and receive messages continuously between the parties.

Types of communication:

- Verbal communication: it is that communication in which we use both the written and oral words between two or more interlocutors in order to transmit information, feelings, ideas or opinions. Within verbal communication we can define **oral communication** and **written communication**.

- Nonverbal communication: Does not use linguistic signs, uses body language, however, it can complement verbal communication.
- Assertive communication: convey a message in a clear and simple way about what we feel, think or want.
- Active listening: to listen of full form what issuer tries to communicate, not only to attend to the words that he says also to the feelings, ideas or thoughts that supplies to what it is trying to be transmitted.

II. Assertive communication

Assertive communication refers to the ability to convey and receive both thoughts, feelings, desires, opinions and needs of one's own or others in an honest, timely and respectful manner.

From a young age, skills are acquired with the environment around us. These are the basis for future relationships, although they can be modified in adolescence or adulthood.

Social relationships, whether with a group of friends, family, co-workers or acquaintances, are an important part of life. Having good relationships with others is therefore one of the main factors in being happy.

Sometimes, not everyone has the skills necessary to have healthy social relationships, but in some situations, it acts more or less correctly. This results in different behaviour styles.

There are three styles of behaviour, the style inhibited, aggressive and assertive, the latter is at the midpoint between the first two.

a. Assertive communication style

Inhibited style

This style of behaviour is characterized by not respecting one's rights or expressing ideas, opinions or needs. Accepting what others think in a subordinate way.

The reasons that can lead to such action can be the fear of the consequences that our behaviour may have, lack of self-confidence, not knowing how to express our rights, prioritize the rights of others before their own.

The behaviours related to this style are: To speak in a low tone of voice, not to look in the eyes of the other person, but down, to shut ourselves to injustices, to allow the other person to take advantage of us, gestural clumsiness...

Advantages and disadvantages of inhibited style:

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
1. Short-term conflicts are avoided 2. No rejection received by others	1. You never get what you want 2. Our opinion will not be taken into account 3. No satisfaction

Aggressive style

Aggressive style is characterized by expressing opinions, needs or ideas without respecting others' views. Achieving a goal at all costs, even if that means going above colleagues.

The behaviours that are commonly used are fights, accusations, threats, physical or verbal aggression, loud tone of voice, insults, fixed gaze, threatening posture.

Advantages and disadvantages of aggressive style:

ADVANTAGE	DISADVANTAGES
1. You get what you want	1. Others are going to be afraid 2. Social isolation 3. Problems constantly

Assertive style

In this style of behaviour feelings, ideas and opinions are expressed taking into account the rights of others themselves.

The usual behaviours are a level of medium voice, fluid communication, positive messages, look to the eyes, without being intimidated, firm gestures, straight posture and loose hands...

Advantages and disadvantages of the assertive style:

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
1. Make your own point of view 2. Avoid fighting or guilt 3. Respect and be respected	Does not have

	ASSERTIVE STYLE	AGGRESSIVE STYLE
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INHIBITED STYLE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Nonverbal Behaviour:</u> <p>Look down, volume of lower voice tone, uncertainties, denial of the importance of the situation; past-due attitude; may evade the situation, undetermined tone</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Nonverbal Behaviour:</u> <p>Direct visual contact, appropriate voice tone, smooth communication, fixed gestures, upright posture; first person messages; honesty, direct responses to the situation you are in, hands not interlaced</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Nonverbal Behaviour:</u> <p>Stare, high tone of voice, fluent conversation, confrontation, provocative gestures, intimidating attitude, dishonesty, vulgar messages.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Verbal Behaviour:</u> <p>Dubitative and insecure verbal communication, such as “I suppose” “perhaps”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Verbal Behaviour:</u> <p>Verbal communication in which ideas, feelings and opinions can be expressed, listening in the same way as the other person, without giving up his rights. For example: “I think” “we could”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Verbal Behaviour:</u> <p>Egocentric, aggressive, impersonal verbal communication. for example: “You should behave properly”, “You should do what I want”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Effects</u> <p>This type of communication causes various effects on the person who performs this type of communication, such as interpersonal conflicts, as a result of this causes a low self-esteem and this in turn causes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Effects</u> <p>The person who has an assertive communication solves problems through dialog exposing his ideas, feelings and opinions, listening to those that the other person also has, this causes him to feel at ease with himself and with others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Effects</u> <p>The person who has aggressive communication seeks to achieve his or her objective above all, to do so does not take into account the feelings, ideas or opinions of others, this causes him or her personal conflicts, frustration, end up doing harm to others.</p>

<p>him to feel angry, being able to get to have depression.</p>	<p>finding yourself relaxed before situations, which causes you to stay in control and feel satisfied with yourself.</p>	<p>This leads to a situation of loneliness and this results in a state of anger with itself.</p>
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b. Consequences

Positive consequences of the assertive conflict.

- Better control of the environment, your behavior can have an impact on others and likely to achieve goals.
- Better self-control without feelings of anxiety or guilt.
- Greater satisfaction with oneself and with others
- Disappearance of psychosomatic symptoms for example: (headaches, gastric disorders, general fatigue).
- Maximization of the favorable consequences and minimization of unfavorable long-term consents.
- Whether or not the obeys are achieved, the person who has acted assertively feels better at being able to express his or her opinions.
- The manifestation of one's own position is likely to increase the likelihood that that person will respect that position
- Also the person or object of assertive conduct is likely to have favorable consequences, as it receives clear and non-manipulative communication against implicit and unexpressed communication.
- Greater satisfaction with social life.
- More intimate and meaningful relationships.

Consequences of inhibited (non-assertive) behaviour.

Positive short-term consequences

- Don't have to deal with the problem (the other does it for me). Avoidance or escape of conflict.
- Momentary relief from anxiety in a situation.

Long-term consequences

- None

Negative consequences

- Devaluing of feelings themselves.
- Lack of self-confidence.
- They ignore you (the others). They do not take you into account.
- Reduced ability to meet needs or feedback due to lack of communication.
- Feelings of being misunderstood, manipulated.
- Feelings of guilt, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.
- Development of psychosomatic disorders (such as headaches, ulcers, etc.) by expressing feelings.
- Bursts of discomfort or uncontrolled anger by stamina of unresolved situations.
- No warm social relations
- Feelings of anger

Consequences of aggressive behaviour

Positive short-term consequences

- Emotional expression.
- Feelings of momentary power.
- Achieve goals and needs without experiencing direct feedback from others.

Negative consequences

- Feelings of resentment and avoidance by the victims of aggression.

- Poor or unsatisfactory relationships.
- Feelings of guilt (short term).
- A direct anti-aggression in the form of a sarcastic replica or a defiant look.

Stress in the interpersonal relationship with the person who is the victim of aggression, or avoidance of future contact with the person.

c. Why assertiveness is important?

Assertive behaviour is important for establishing good social relationships with the environment. Just as the opinions of others must be respected, one must respect one's opinions and achieve the objectives without trampling on others.

Assertive action in the face of conflict means that anger or guilt is avoided or reduced. For example, if a colleague shows an aggressive style, we will be able to reduce his aggressiveness if we remain in an assertive style, which favours the resolution of the conflict.

Assertiveness favours the correct uncovering of the social and work environment, increases, networks of friends and acquaintances by making those relationships safer and healthier.

At work, from assertive behaviour it favours being heard by superiors and colleagues and helps to make a request favourably attended.

For example, it is easier for us to come to decision making or when our colleagues need help because they will be treated with respect, we will be able to detect possible mistakes that have been made and communicate possible solutions to others or to their superiors.

d. How can assertiveness be used?

Assertive people characteristics:

- Do not fear expressing thoughts, desires or opinions. It is made free by feeling well in doing so.
- They are people who feel confident about themselves and their goals, making them easier to achieve.

- To know to communicate what is thought in an understandable, direct and educated way, always maintaining respect for the opinions of others.
- To hold conversations with any person of the company, without fear of speaking with the boss or positioning himself above any partner.
- They are good at solving conflicts, as they assume the failures and know how to listen to others, provide solutions and make decisions together, taking into account all opinion.

Assertiveness can be used by performing the following strategies:

- Defending one's rights against others, whether they are bosses or colleagues.
- When someone asks for something we don't want to do, we must say “NO” without discrediting that person, or making him feel bad.
- Asking for help when you are going to perform a task for which you are not trained, instead of doing it no matter that it goes wrong.
- Emotions also help make relationships with others firmer, safer, and better. That is why it is important to know how to express them and receive those of others.
- When it comes to receiving or expressing a criticism, it must be done correctly, with arguments and respect.
- Learning to negotiate, since there will be occasions when interests are opposed to those of another person, and we must know how to give in on both sides.
- Facing reactions of anger correctly, to promote a good working climate, avoiding reacting aggressively to possible conflicts.

III. Active listening

We often use the verb hear and listen as Synonyms. However, they are not. There is a big difference between hearing and listening.

Hearing refers to the sensory facet that allows us to perceive a sound. The ability to hear establishes the sense of hearing originated by different physiological processes, as well as psychological ones that allow the capture of sounds. Hearing is an involuntary action; we capture the sound that comes to us through the vibrations that are interpreted by the brain...

Listening is different, it is an intentional act, it is also a psychological process which part of hearing but involves other variables such as attention, reasoning, empathy, motivation.

Knowing listening is really a skill that is acquired over time and practice. Empathetic people often have this capability developed in a correct way. It is a fundamental capacity in both the social and the labour fields.

Active listening is communicating in a way that makes us understand to the speaker that what is being transmitted to us is important.

Actively listening to someone means consciously doing it, i.e., making an effort to focus our attention on what the speaker is transmitted to us and knowing, just as he really feels.

Actually, listening to the other person is very important in communication, however, on numerous occasions we tend to be more on our own thinking and what we say than actively listening to the other person.

Active listening involves not only listening to the other person passively, it is the ability to listen to the thoughts, ideas or feelings that underlie what is being communicated.

a. Items that make active listening

There are 8 elements that facilitate a correct active listening:

1. Preparation

Active listening requires mindfulness, it is to be and stay in the present moment.

We will have to be prepared both mentally and physically to pay the necessary attention during communication, in order to do so we will have to take into account both the choice of time and the place of communication, as well as what we know about our interlocutor and show a positive attitude toward listening.

2. Position and look

Through our nonverbal signals we can show our interest in communication.

Visual contact shows the caller that attention is being paid to both what they say and what they feel. Outlining a light smile conveys to you that the information that it expresses is well received what motivated you to continue speaking, because this gesture acts as a booster as well as being conveyed to you a message of empathy.

We can take a receptive body posture by tilting our body slightly forward without forgetting to respect the distance with our partner.

3. Reinforce the partner

In the course of the conversation, we can carry out different active listening techniques that favour communication and in turn show the speaker that we are paying attention to it. Some of these techniques are:

- **Reformulation:** It helps us clearly to convey to the speaker that the message is being understood. A small summary of the information transmitted to us by the other person can be carried out. This summary can be initiated with expressions such as: << I understand what you mean >>.
- **Paraphrase:** This strategy is based on expressing with our words, what the issuer has just said. It is very important in the active listening process, as it allows us to understand what the other person is telling us, allowing us to verify whether what is said has actually been understood and not misunderstood. An example could be: << If I understood you well >>.
- **Ask questions:** It is useful because it allows us to verify if the message has been understood and also demonstrates our interest in a climate of confidence, an example could be: << as you felt when>>. Asking questions allows us to obtain more information and at the same time clarify some aspects. However, care must be taken with the questions we ask on the one hand can be beneficial as it allows the questioner to be honest with us, but on the other hand we must take special care with the use of **why?** The caller may be questioned what can cause them to become defensive and therefore do not want to continue the conversation.
- **Empathize:** Actively listening to the emotions that the interlocutor transmits to us without this means accepting or agreeing with the other's position some of the examples that could be used to show empathy could be: << I understand what you feel >>, << I feel that >>.

- **Positive reinforcement:** It is an easy way to show the interlocutor that you are paying attention to this we can use words such as: *Yes, I understand, ok*. Using these words, we reinforce the interlocutor's speech by conveying to him that the message is being understood and interesting.
- **Silence:** The technique is to remain silent when it would be up to us to speak after the speaker's intervention. The purpose we seek is for the issuer to continue to narrate his experiences, giving him time to think and choose the most precise words. In performing this technique, it is important that we show our interest through the eyes or gestures.
- **Settle with your head:** In the course of the conversation, it is advisable to settle with your head to communicate to the speaker that your message is interesting and that we share your point of view. This technique facilitates communication effectively as we are telling the speaker that we are paying attention to it and actively listening to it.

4. Observe nonverbal language

Communication is not only done by words, but also by our body and voice. That's why it's so important to observe nonverbal language; body gestures, facial expressions, and voice characteristics such as tone, intensity, and rhythm. Through non-verbal language we express both our emotions and feelings, attitudes and inner state.

By properly developing the ability to interpret the non-verbal language of our interlocutor, we will obtain relevant information and we can assess the message appropriately.

5. Get the main ideas

To get the main ideas of the message we will have to find the key words of the speech. Thus, being able to perform a mental representation of the main ideas that includes *what, why, how and for what*.

6. Feedback

Through feedback we will communicate to our speaker the summary of the message we have heard showing you that we have understood the purpose of your words, and we will give you our attention and have valued your statement.

Feedback is very important in effective communication there are two types of feedback.

- **Verbal feedback:** Consists of statements, comments and questions which include the summary of the message that our interlocutor has transmitted to us. Through the verbal feedback we can prevent the error of the sender's message interpretation.
- **Non-verbal Feedback:** It consists of the set of gestures and facial expressions that we will carry out to convey to our interlocutor that we have properly interpreted his message. Through our expressions and gestures, we will pass you on to the speaker who understood your message.

7. Psychological disposition

It is based on internal preparation, that is to say the importance of being present, paying constant attention and observing the other, identifying both the content of what it says to us as the objectives and feelings.

8. Expression

That the interlocutor is being heard both through verbal communication through the fable function of language (*I see, um, uh*) and through non-verbal language (*visual contact, gestures, body tilt, etc.*).

b. Benefits of active listening

Benefits of active listening:

- We promote a better climate for communication, making it more effective
- We get the exact message from the sender by reducing misunderstandings
- We learn from the experiences that the interlocutors convey to us, which allows us to acquire enriching knowledge
- Expressing interest in who we are talking to, we may ask you to extend the information we are receiving or clarifications about it.
- Paying attention to the speaker and showing our interest will make us gain confidence and, in addition, strengthens our relationship with him.