

## SESSION 4

# Communication

### TOPIC 1

Communication as a negotiation skill

### TOPIC 2

Verbal and non-verbal communication

### TOPIC 3

Communicating with someone angry

---

*Duration of this Session: 3.5 hours*

### Session Objectives

The objectives of this Session are:

- To introduce the importance of communication as a foundation for successful conflict negotiation by youth, and to demonstrate the association between poor communication and the start/escalation of conflict.
- To introduce (a) non-verbal, and (b) verbal, communication skills (including active listening and assertive speaking skills).
- To introduce techniques for understanding and communicating with someone who is angry.

## List of Handouts

	PAGE
4-1 Communication and the potential for conflict .....	58
4-2 Non-verbal communication skills .....	60
4-3 Story entitled "The fence" .....	61
4-4 Effective listening skills .....	62
4-5 Understanding someone angry .....	66
4-6 "Feeling Words" .....	67

## List of reading materials

Ekachai, S. "Words for the wise", published in the *Bangkok Post*, 27 April 2003.

## TOPIC 1: Communication as a negotiation skill

*Duration of topic: 40 minutes*



### **Activity for this topic**

Participants are divided into groups to discuss a situation in which they are part of a conflict. Alternatively, a newspaper article on a conflict situation (involving youth) that went wrong could be discussed. (20 minutes)

### **Materials**

*Computer and LCD projector – if available*  
*Newspaper article*



### **Input for this topic**

The facilitator will start the Session by showing “The Mountain Model” of conflict and the phases of conflict model to stress the significance of communication in avoiding and resolving conflicts.

A short presentation will then be given on the significance of communication (Handout 4-1). (20 minutes)



### Facilitator's notes

It is important for the facilitator to point out to participants the need to look at the meaning behind the behaviour and to find solutions that respond to the underlying reasons for conflict. Conflict often occurs when there is a lack of common understanding of an issue.



## HANDOUT 4-1: Communication and the potential for conflict

Referring back to the phases of conflict model introduced in Session 2, communication is highlighted here as a central ingredient in the first stage of potential for conflict (see Handout 2-6).

Communication is the means through which people interact, exchange information and relate to one another. Communication takes place whenever two or more human beings come into contact with each another and express their ideas, thoughts and feelings. The purpose of the communication is to understand.

When we think about communication, we tend to associate it with **verbal** communication (for example, speaking or shouting). However, more than 80 per cent of communication between people is **non-verbal** (body language) (Wesbrock 2000). Human beings communicate through eye movement, facial expression, body posture, gesture and even proximity. Just as with verbal communication, there are many styles of non-verbal communication and they vary between cultures.

Good communication requires speaking clearly and listening attentively. When people from different cultures, organizations, or even different age groups, communicate and interact with each other, misunderstanding can occur. But misunderstanding is often unintentional.

It requires courage for us (as a speaker) to say certain things because it involves the risk of hurting the other person or causing anger. The underlying attitude is very important. If we are respectful, considerate and aware of the other person's/listener's feelings, needs and points of view, then this respect and consideration will automatically be expressed in our tone of voice, choice of words and body language. The more aware we are of these things in ourselves, and the people around us, the more cautious we become when we speak.

## **TOPIC 2: Verbal and non-verbal communication**

*Duration of topic: 60 minutes*



### **Activity for this topic**

“Passing the message” – Participants stand in a line and a message is whispered to the first person in the line. This person then passes on the message to the next person without seeking any clarification – passing on only what is heard. This is continued, from one person to the next, until the last person gets the message then says aloud what s/he hears. (10 minutes)

Participants are then asked to form five groups and discuss what can affect communication. Alternatively, in pairs, they could record a conversation that they are having, review the tape and take notes of communication patterns that are helpful/unhelpful. (20 minutes)

### **Materials**

*Overhead projector, transparencies, paper, video taping facilities*



### **Inputs for this topic**

This is followed by a presentation by the facilitator on what makes a good communicator; including identification of effective listening skills (including verbal interventions, verbal and non-verbal prompting, as well as open- and closed-ended questions) and how these relate to conflict negotiation/mediation. (30 minutes)

For verbal/non-verbal communication, refer to Handout 4-2 and the story in Handout 4-3.

### **Materials**

*Overhead projector – if available*



## HANDOUT 4-2: Non-verbal communication skills

Non-verbal communication includes a whole series of physical gestures such as facial expressions, signal and general gestures, body movements, use of colours, eye contact and the use of tone and sounds.

It is important to recognize the significance of non-verbal communication in normal interpersonal communication. Some common non-verbal clues are:

- **Physical appearance:** tells us something about the speaker's attitude towards herself/himself.
- **Gesture and facial expression:** are direct clues to the speakers' immediate thoughts. Facial expressions are difficult to control and express the speakers' thoughts. The way a person uses her/his hands also shows feelings. Gestures are important clues in cases when the speaker is unfamiliar with the language of the listener.
- **Eye contact and gaze:** are also direct clues to the speaker's immediate thoughts.
- **Movement/walk/posture:** the way a person moves, walks, sits and stands indicates the speaker's inner state of mind and how relaxed/not relaxed s/he is during the interaction.
- **Accent:** gives a clue to where the speaker comes from geographically and to the speaker's education and socio-economic background.
- **Tone and pitch of voice:** are clues to her/his inner state of mind, for example, whether the speaker is nervous, excited, contemptuous, subservient, angry or sad.
- **Errors in speech/hesitation in speech:** is a sign of nervousness or indecisiveness.
- **Silence:** a pause in speech can be for effect or to give an opportunity to the listener to respond or to ease tension. Silence can also be a sign of nervousness/shyness/reserved nature ignorance.

These clues differ between places and cultures. No matter what they are, clues can be "decoded" in order to understand the speaker and to respond.

### ***Effective non-verbal communication skills***

Be conscious of your facial expressions and body posture in terms of local and culturally appropriate customs.

Learn what kind of physical contact is appropriate or inappropriate in various settings.

Pay particular attention to the proximity or physical distance between you and the person you are communicating with. This may vary widely.

Be very sensitive about the kind of gestures you use. A gesture, which conveys warmth and acceptance in one culture, may be extremely offensive in another. Using your index finger to emphasize a point could offend people of some cultures. Sitting with your foot or feet pointed in the direction of someone is viewed as extremely rude in certain cultures of the region.

Be aware of "squaring off" (facing a person eye to eye) with a person. This may be interpreted as aggressive. Find out what kind of eye contact is acceptable in different cultures. (Wesbrock 2000)



## HANDOUT 4-3: Story entitled "The fence"

### The Fence

There was a little boy with a bad temper.

His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he should hammer a nail in the back fence.

The first day the boy drove 37 nails into the fence.

Then the number of nails gradually dwindled. He discovered that it was easier to hold his temper than to drive nails into the fence.

Finally, the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper.

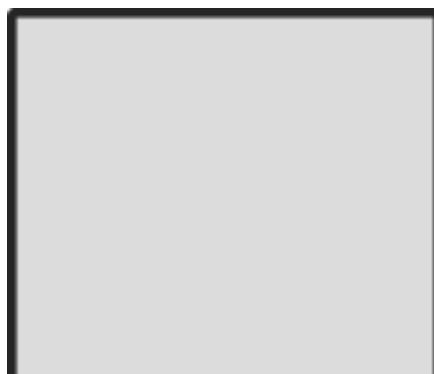
The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone.

The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence.

He said, "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same".

When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. It won't matter how many times you say "I'm sorry", the wound is still there.

\* \* \*



**A verbal wound is just as bad as a physical one**





## **HANDOUT 4-4: Effective listening skills**

It is important to listen attentively to resolve conflicts. Even if we think we are “good listeners”, we can improve further. Through listening, the ability of a person to reach inwards for creative solutions is enhanced. This is a more effective tool for resolving conflicts than giving advice. We may not be able to solve each other’s problem, but at least we can listen and help each other.

Through attentive listening, the conflicting persons/groups can learn what the other person/group has to say so that an agreement can be reached. Another important outcome is the psychological effect on the listener. We seldom experience the pleasure of being listened to or heard. When a person experiences this, psychologically the “pleasure” of being listened to can have a soothing effect, and can reduce the feeling of anger. This can lead to increased cooperation and understanding between the conflicting persons in reaching solutions to a problem.

Listening skills are crucial in a conflict situation. The ability to listen well will assist you in assessing and analysing the situation as a whole. Most people think “speaking well” is more important, but communication experts say listening skills far exceed the skills of speaking well. Everyone wants “to be heard” and to be understood. People often become angry and/or aggressive only after a lengthy period of being ignored or overlooked, collectively or individually. By listening effectively, one can often effectively diffuse an angry or threatening situation.

### **Verbal interventions and prompting**

Verbal interventions and prompting can be used to better understand the person we are speaking to, and to clarify any points as we hear the other person’s “story”. Verbal intervention by the listener can help the speaker clarify unvoiced feelings and hidden meanings.

Verbal intervention and prompting can be done through words (such as using open or closed questioning) or through body language (such as nodding at certain points). Verbal intervention will again differ according to place and culture, as well as the gender and age of the persons involved.

Verbal interventions should always be respectful and constructive.

### **Closed questions**

Closed questions are specific in the response they seek and require only “yes” or “no” answers. These questions can take the form of multiple-choice questions:

- Do you play a sport?
- Do you get along with your team-mates?

Closed questions are important in the initial part of the communication/conflict process, as they provide a structure to the listener. Closed questions are also helpful in getting the listener back on track, if s/he is losing focus in her/his answers.

### **Open questions**

Open questions allow the listener to express herself/himself without any restrictions. The questions centre on the listener’s concerns and are aimed at clarifying their problems:

- Have you ever had an argument with a close friend?
- How did you feel when you had this argument?

## **Prompting through body language**

Body language is another important prompting tool and can be used by the listener to show interest. It can include nodding occasionally or leaning attentively towards the speaker. Such gestures and facial expressions encourage the speaker to continue talking.

### ***Effective listening skills***

- **Empathize.** Put yourself in the other person's shoes and try to understand how that person feels.
- **Listen for the feelings or emotions** expressed by the speaker and what the speaker is trying to communicate.
- **Validate the other person.** This does not mean you have to agree with the other person, only that you have heard the person and that you understand her/his position.
- **Paraphrase, or restate the speaker's words in your own words** to let it be known that you understand what has been said.
- **Clarify the situation.** Ask questions to get more information about the problem.
- **Gather information** and try to gain a better understanding of why the speaker is acting or feeling a particular way.
- Try to draw out **underlying interests**.
- Be quiet!
- Use the other person's name when responding to that person. **Personalize.**
- Be prepared to **repeat yourself**.
- **Match and lower the intensity** of the conversation and situation.

## TOPIC 3: Communicating with someone angry

*Duration of topic: 100 minutes*



### Activity 1 for this topic (Creighton 1992)

The facilitator will start the session with an activity designed to help participants recall certain emotions stirred during youth. The participants are asked to close their eyes and stand in a circle. They are then asked to listen to a set of comments read aloud by the facilitator that are attacking and negative. This might remind them of comments received from elders when they were young (see Facilitator's notes). After the comments have been read, a discussion is held on how the participants felt. (30 minutes)

#### **Materials**

*List of sentences to read out (see Facilitator's notes)*



### Activity 2 for this topic

- Step 1:** Ask three volunteers to come up to the front. Give each person an apple, and either a spoon, a vegetable peeler or a knife.
- Step 2:** Ask all three to peel their apples with the tool given to them.
- Step 3:** Give the participants some time to do the task. Once you have asked them to stop, ask the participants to describe their feelings about the task. Encourage them to comment if their feelings changed. If so, at what point did their feelings change and how did they handle this fact. Ask the rest of the participants to provide them with feedback. (30 minutes)

#### **Materials**

*Wooden knife (play knife), plastic spoon, vegetable peeler and three apples*



### Inputs for this topic

The facilitator introduces the topic of anger through a presentation. This presentation will also introduce Handouts 4-6 and 4-7, stressing the importance of putting words on feelings - "How do I feel?". (40 minutes)

#### **Materials**

*Overhead projector – if available*



## Facilitator's notes

### Activity 1

The facilitator reads the comments listed below in an angry and abusive voice during this activity. The participants are asked to close their eyes and pay attention to their feelings.

*Not now! I don't have time!*  
*You are too young to understand!*  
*We'll talk about this later!*  
*Go to your room!*  
*Not until you finish your homework!*  
*Clean your plate!*  
*Wait until you have children and you will understand!*  
*Wait till your father gets home!*  
*When I was your age, I had it a lot harder!*  
*Do what I say!*  
*Not in my house you don't!*  
*Because I said so!*  
*Sit up straight!*  
*Don't you talk back to me!*  
*Is that the best you can do?*  
*You're just a kid!*  
*Pay attention when I'm talking to you!*  
*You're stupid!*  
*Shut up!*  
*You show me some respect!*  
*This hurts me more than it hurts you!*  
*You get to your room and change into something decent!*  
*Get the hell out of here!*  
*All right, now you're going to get what's coming to you!*

### Activity 2

In processing this activity, the facilitator can stress that an important point to note in dealing with young people is that they need the right *tools* to deal with the challenges of being a young person. Not having these tools, or having ineffective ones (such as the wooden knife in this exercise) is frustrating and aggravating for young people.

Introducing effective tools, such as conflict negotiation skills, can help build their self-esteem/self-confidence, and teach individuals to appreciate differences, learn how to manage their emotions and communicate feelings in a positive way.



## **HANDOUT 4-5: Understanding someone angry**

Often, people get angry because of unfulfilled needs. Trying to understand which unfulfilled need is the cause of anger is a difficult thing to do. Anger may be aimed at a person, who is oblivious of the anger s/he is causing. In such cases, our anger towards that person may be uncalled for. However, a conflict exists with that person and the situation still needs to be resolved. The negotiation process itself may reveal hidden truths about oneself and the other party that neither is aware of.

People deal with anger in different ways, but generally the result is considered either constructive or destructive. Anger is considered “good” when the expression of anger leads to a constructive result and to the solution of a persistent problem or improved conditions. On the other hand, anger is considered “bad”, when the repressed feeling of anger ends up with the person feeling physically sick and/or depressed. At the same time, when people express their feelings of anger in a destructive way, they hurt not only themselves but others as well.

Anger and strong emotion vary from individual to individual and from situation to situation. Yet, anger continues to exist, and as such, we must learn to deal with it constructively. This can be done by being aware of strong emotions and by developing skills to deal with them effectively.

It is extremely difficult to deal, or communicate, with someone who is angry whether that person’s anger is aimed at you or someone/something else. One’s immediate reaction to anger is to defend oneself. This defence can be in the form of a counter attack or withdrawal. However, neither of these two extreme strategies addresses the root cause of the anger/problem.

We all have our own different styles and approaches to dealing with problems. In dealing with someone who is angry, our attempts to calm the other person down may instead result in further aggravating the person’s temper. On the other hand, we may wish to delay dealing with the problem in order to give the angry person time to calm down. If our style and approach in dealing with the situation are not appropriate for and sensitive to the situation, we may find ourselves becoming entangled in the emotion of anger.



## HANDOUT 4-6: Feeling words

Sad		Scared		Angry	
Sorrowful	Miserable	Fearful	Anxious	Furious	Pissed off
Empty	Mournful	Terrified	Apprehensive	Mad	Frustrated
Unhappy	Despairing	Frightened	Worried	Annoyed	Peeved
Dismal	Lonely	Panicky	Insecure	Irritated	Aggravated
Dismayed	Helpless	Intimidated	Alarmed	Enraged	Bitter
Heppressed	Distressed	Shaken	Doubtful	Infuriated	Hostile
Hopeless		Unsafe	Shy	Rebellious	Upset
Powerless		Nervous	Timid	Vengeful	Hateful
		Cautious		Outraged	Resentful
				Agitated	Disgusted
				Spiteful	
Happy		Guilty		Ashamed	
Joyous	Delighted	Regretful	Remorseful	Shameful	Embarrassed
Excited	Ecstatic	Apologetic		Worthless	Inadequate
Enthusiastic	Joyful			Idiotic	
Optimistic	Cheerful				
Glad	Relaxed				
Relieved	Satisfied				
Peaceful	Calm				
Confident					
Confused		Hurt		Others	
Unsure	Uncertain	Disappointed	Distrustful	Hopeful	Tired
Indecisive	Perplexed			Exhausted	Discouraged
Puzzled	Ambivalent			Jealous	Vulnerable
Bewildered	Unsettled			Tense	Uneasy
Baffled				Uncomfortable	Defensive
Troubled				Ruthless	Hesitant
				Bored	Indifferent
				Apologetic	Discontented
				Powerful	Strong
				Curious	Envious
				Mischievous	

**PAGE 66: Blank**

*[no page number]*