

Key Concepts for Interactive Communication¹

Key Concepts & Examples:

Active Listening – Listening without interrupting. Listening without judging or reacting to what is being said. Communicating attentiveness to the speaker with your facial expression and other non-verbal behaviors (nodding ones head, eye contact, attentive body posture, etc.). The main goal is hearing and receiving a message with understanding.

Purposeful Sending – Giving out a message in a way that allows the intended message to be heard.

Paraphrasing – Stating what you heard using your own words so that the speaker knows the message was received. At times you may need to ask clarifying questions to be sure you know what has been said.

Examples of Paraphrasing:

I heard you say that _____
From what you said, it sounds like you felt _____

Example of Asking Clarifying Questions:

When you said _____ did you mean _____ or _____?

Feedback – Information to speaker about the effectiveness of communication by describing an observed act of communication or behavior without judging the message or the person. It is specific. It is both affirming (positive) and constructive (about something you would like changed).

Feedback to the Speaker and/or Listener

I noticed that you did ___ when I or ___ said _____
I felt heard when you said _____ or did _____.
I wasn't sure if you had heard me when I said _____ or did _____.
When you said/did _____ I felt _____ because _____.
When you said/did _____ I felt _____

Roles:

Speaker – Sends a message to the listener using symbols that convey ideas and feelings. This message includes both unconscious and conscious symbols that can be verbal as well as non-verbal.

Listener – Hears what the speaker says and responds to the messages by paraphrasing or asking clarifying questions as a way of providing feedback to the speaker about the reception of the message heard.

Observer – Observes how the speaker and listener communicate verbally and non-verbally. Focuses on the use of words, actions or reactions of speaker and listener. Seeks to provide concise and descriptive feedback to role of the speaker and listener in interactive communication, not judging or evaluating.

¹ Zúñiga, X. & Cytron-Walker, A. (2003). Exploring differences & common ground. Social Justice Education Concentration. University of Massachusetts Amherst. Adapted from Bidol, P. (1986). Interactive Communication. In I. Bardwell, P. Bidol, & N. Manning (Eds.), *Alternative Environmental Conflict Management Approaches: A Citizen's Model*. Ann Arbor School of Natural Resources (pp. 205-208). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan School of Natural Resources.

Directions for Active Listening & Feedback Activity

- Step 1: Participants to take a few minutes to think about the questions posted on newsprint and jot down some thoughts as needed (@ 2-3 minutes)
- Step 2: **Speaker** speaks without interruption focusing on purposeful sending (@ 3 minutes)
- Step 3: **Listener** actively listens and paraphrases in his or her own words what s/he heard so the speaker knows the message was received; asks clarifying questions if needed (see examples on Key Concepts for Interactive Communication handout) (@ 3 minutes).
- Step 4: **Speaker and Listener** check in and talk about how was to speak and listen (@ 2 minutes)
- Step 5: **Observer** shares descriptive observations of verbals and non-verbals and (words, actions, reactions that communicate purposeful sending and actively listening and paraphrasing). Jotting down notes while speaker and listener are interacting enhances the role of the observer (@ 3 minutes)
- Step 6: **Speaker, Listener and Observer** compare notes and debrief (@ 3 minutes)
- Step 7: Switch roles (and switch roles again until you complete the 3 rounds).