

# One Way Two Ways Communication

Ask the students to stand up and find a partner with whom they do not interact very often or with whom they have not yet interacted. Tell them that they will have the opportunity to discuss the question on the flipchart for a few minutes. Pose a simple but relevant question to the group, such as "What would you change about the centre's facilities?"

Ask them to start discussing it. After a few seconds, without further explanation, ask them to continue the conversation while looking at each other without blinking. After a few seconds, ask them to continue while looking away from you (either at the floor, over their shoulder, to their right side, etc.).

Then, as they continue their conversation, they are asked to stand at a comfortable distance (as they determine) from their conversation partners. They are then asked to take two steps closer. After a few seconds, ask them to take four steps back. Ask them to begin to close their conversations and to touch each other's arms or shoulders.

Participants are then asked to talk without touching each other. Ask them to begin to close their conversations and to touch each other's arms or shoulders. Participants are then asked to talk without touching each other.

Once this conversation is done, we sit the group in a circle so that we can reflect on the activity by asking the following questions:

- What does it feel like to interact without blinking, and what does it feel like to interact without looking your partner in the eye?
- What combination of eye contact do you feel most comfortable with?
- What does it feel like to interact when you are close, and when you are far away?
- What personal space do you feel most comfortable with? Did your conversation partner feel the same or different?
- What about physical contact? What did you feel when interacting while being touched on the arm or shoulder?
- When do these aspects depend on the circumstances and how often do you have to adapt according to your personal preferences and those of the group or person with whom you are having a conversation?

Close the activity by explaining that what we have just experienced corresponds to different styles of non-verbal communication: use of eye contact, physical distance and physical contact.

Explain that communication styles can be defined as patterns of expression and rules of interaction that reflect the values and norms of a culture. They are generally described as continuous, with the understanding that no one uses one style to communicate or interact at all times. A person may rely heavily on one style or may adapt his or her use of these styles depending on the situation. Examples of verbal forms of communication styles are: direct/indirect, linear/circular and task-oriented/relationship-oriented.

## **Part II - Continuous Communication Style (30 min.)**

Briefly describe the following communication styles:

Direct and indirect communication:

- Direct: the message is communicated using explicit statements made directly to the people involved. Little reliance is placed on contextual factors such as situation or timing.
- Indirect: the message is communicated using suggestion, implication or non-verbal behaviour. In indirect communication, a statement addressed to one person may be communicated so that they only listen, but what is really meant to be communicated is addressed to another person.

Linear and Circular Communication

- Linear: discussion is explicitly stated and takes place in a sequential straight line. Causal connections develop between a sequence of points with a beginning and an end point.
- Circular: Communication with a high dependence on context. The discussion takes place in a circular motion, developing a context around the main point, which is often not expressed.

Task-oriented and relationship-oriented communication.

- Task-oriented: few emotions are involved in communicating the message. The conversation is calm and objective, with a value placed on the impartial stance of the speaker. Disagreement with ideas is stated directly and any relationship between the people disagreeing is not affected.
- Relationship-oriented: the message is communicated with attention to feeling and emotion. Speakers engage in conversation while sharing their personal opinions. Disagreement with ideas is established indirectly, with attention to the relationship between the people in contact.

Hand out a blank sheet of paper to each student and ask them to draw 3 lines and write the name of each communication style just described on the edge of each continuum. They should look like this:

DIRECT ----- INDIRECT

LINEAR ----- CIRCULAR

TASK-ORIENTED ----- RELATIONSHIP-ORIENTED

Ask them to take a few minutes and think about their preferred communication styles. Ask them to indicate with an X where they think their preferred styles are located along each of the three continuums.

Then ask them to get into groups of 4-6 people and discuss following these instructions:

- Share similarities and differences within the group.
- Discuss the possible impact of differences in styles when interacting with others.
- List at least two strengths and two possible challenges for each style.

Ask students to choose someone in the group who has a style that differs from their own. Ask them to practise communicating in their partner's style based on the following scenario: "It is important to be in class on time".

After each group has practised a style that differs from theirs, lead a discussion using the following questions:

- How do you feel about identifying your communication style based on these criteria?
- Is it easy to find strengths and challenges for each style?
- What were some of the similarities or differences within your group? Were there any surprises?
- Is it easy for you to change your communication style?