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Brooke Swan

California State University, Monterey Bay

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Enhancing communication skills in adolescents

Brooke K. Swan

A Capstone project for the Bachelors in Human Development and Family Studies

Communication skills in adolescents

Introduction

Adolescents often do not understand how to effectively communicate when faced with conflict because they have not had enough practice with intimate relationships or have not been taught these skills. Without these skills, adolescents lack the ability to express one's self in an effective way. Therefore, I have created a one-day lesson on effective communication during conflict for adolescents at Ann Sobrato High School in Morgan Hill, California.

Need Statement

When people are in relationships whether it be a familial relationship, intimate relationship, or a friendship, it can be hard to express oneself in an effective way. According to Robinson et al., (2019) effective communication is more than just the conversation going on but fully understanding the feelings and emotions one is trying to portray. When dealing with conflict in any relationship it is good to know how to effectively express one's self and to listen to another that is talking. This practice can be shown by active listening and using several strategies to communicate one's feelings in that situation.

It is good for adolescents to know these skills so that they can use these in their everyday life now and as they become adults. These skills can allow them to express themselves in a way that is healthy and have their feelings heard in a more effective way. Majority of the way that adolescents communicate nowadays is through technology so they do not get to practice using their communication skills with others face-to-face so it is good for them to learn these skills so when they have to communicate face-to-face they know how to do so effectively (Pierce, 2009, p.1368). Using technology as a main way of communication can affect these adolescents in the

future by overflowing into their work world and causing them to be seen as unprofessional (Dinkel, 2013, p.1). With the lack of these skills adolescents are set up for failing when they are needing to use their communication as a key source of working with others. When an adolescent feels that they can not express themselves they are more likely to keep their ideas to themselves instead of being part of group work or try to fix conflict. Having good communication skills and being able to express oneself helps adolescents self-esteem (Van Dijk et al., 2014, p.1862). This could lead them to being more open to expressing oneself. According to Dinkel (2013), when these skills are lacking, adolescents are unable to effectively brainstorm with others, get and or give feedback on themselves or things that they have done.

Mulvany (1998) has identified eight effective listening techniques: attending or actively listening and concentrating on the speaker, appropriate sciences also known as giving the speaker time to finish thoughts before responding, using supportive statements or gestures like head nodding and saying “uh-huh”, questions that are relevant, rephrasing what the speaker has said, sharing your own experiences that are short and do not take away from the speaker, empathy; the person does not always need a solution to the problem, and labeling non-verbal conflicts. A non-verbal conflict is when a speaker says one thing, their actions do not match (Mulvany, 1998, p.2).

Having these communication skills helps with dealing with conflict with any relationship because it makes the person talking feel that they are being heard and understood. In order for them to gain and implement effective communication skills, I intend to provide a one-day, 90 minute lesson on communication for high school juniors and seniors and Sobrato High School in Morgan Hill, California

Theory Application

According to Albert Bandura, in his Social Learning Theory (SLT), one's behavior is based on social interactions that have occurred over one's life (Goldhaber, 2000, p. 88). When people interact with others, they start to develop the same behaviors, and the more they interact the more they are likely to pick up others behaviors (Nabavi, 2012). According to Goldhaber (2000), SLT can be imitations of real life and symbolic methods. They are imitations of real life because people learn communication skills by seeing how others around them communicate. Symbolic methods can be what one sees on television or in movies. Bandura called this symbolic modeling (Goldhaber, 2000). Symbolic modeling can be characters in movies or television shows as well as cartoon characters. Bandura expresses that there are three key components these components are; modeling, observing and imitation (Goldhaber, 2000, p. 91-92). When adolescents observe behaviors that are modeled to them, in real life or symbolic, they are likely to imitate those behaviors. Modeling these behaviors for the participants in my project will allow those adolescents to see those skills in use and then be able to do that same and become the model for others around them.

Consideration of Diversity

My project will be conducted at Sobrato High School in Morgan Hill California. My target audience are adolescents between the ages of 16 and 18. According to Ann Sobrato (2020), 33% of the student body is White and 40% Hispanic. It is likely that my participants will reflect the population of the school. One limitation would be that to participate in my activities students would need to be proficient in reading, writing, and understanding English. A way to make this project more inclusive would be to have versions in other languages or have subtitles for the

videos in needed languages. Another limitation that could affect my lesson is that the students have to get into groups of three, and if one student's walking ability is limited, that might make it harder to move and get into groups. While others can come to that student, it still might limit their ability to work with students that are new to them or not near them.

Learning outcomes

I intend to provide one, 90-minute lesson to junior and senior level students enrolled at Sobrato High School in Morgan Hill, California

By the end of the project, participants will be able to:

1. Change three "You" statements into an "I" statement.
2. Identify two examples of nonverbal communication between others during communications.
3. Actively listen and tell back three main points of their classmates' story.

Methods

First, I introduced myself and introduced my capstone project and why I was there. I then asked them to think of someone in their life who is easy to talk to and what characteristics that person had. After about five minutes of independent thoughts, I asked if any of the participants would like to share who they thought of and the characteristics of that person. I then introduced my presentation on positive communication, the three attitudes and behaviors, and "I" statements. See Appendix A. I then showed the video: <https://youtu.be/vWTsH7rBffI> to introduce "I" statements. Following the video I passed out a worksheet for them to change "You" statements to "I" statements. See Appendix B.

I then introduced non-verbal communication by having the participants give examples of what they thought non-verbal communication was. I then went over examples from my presentation. I then used the video: <https://youtu.be/mCx0UHNk6aM> to introduce active listening skills, by showing how poor active listening can look. I then had the students use the second part of the worksheet given to them, to identify nonverbal communication and active listening skills. See Appendix B. They split into groups of three. One group of participants was the speaker and shared an embarrassing time or their most happy time. The second the listener who listened and identified three main points of the speaker's story. The third group member was the observer who identified two examples of non-verbal communication between speaker and listener. With three, 10-minute sessions, they all had a chance to be in each position. We then had a five minute discussion on how that went for them.

For the closing activity, I showed the video: <https://youtu.be/R1vskiVDwI4> to recap communication skills. After the video I went over the video and thanked them for their participation and had time for any questions.

Results

Participants were asked to think about someone who is easy to talk to and what characteristics that person has. Five students were willing to share and stated similar characteristics. Some of their characteristics were non-judgemental, gave advice only when asked, and made the person feel listened to.

Learning outcome one was to be able to change a “You” statement into an “I” statement. In my presentation, I gave them five examples of “You” statements to change. They were able to pick the three they wanted to change. In Appendix C, I have provided the number of students that

were able to change the “You” statements into “I” statements. One student out of 34 did not fill in this section of their worksheet. Table 1 shows examples students gave for each “You” statement. 28 out of 34 students were able to change three “You” statements into “I” statements. Four out of 34 were able to change two and then 0 only changed one. I feel this learning outcome was met because all but one was able to rewrite the “You” statements.

Learning outcome 2 was to be able to identify two forms of nonverbal communication between two other participants. The nonverbal communication they identified and how many times that form was mentioned by the students is shown in Table 2. I feel this was met because all students were able to identify two forms of nonverbal communications on their worksheet.

Learning outcome three was by using active listening they would be able to identify three main points of classmate’s narrative. I trusted that the students would grade each other to see if they were able to identify three main points. I feel this was not able to be met because I am not sure if they did accurately identify them.

Discussion

I feel that two of my three outcomes were met. Outcome number three was not met because I was unable to evaluate it accurately. This was a fault of my own in my decision of that learning outcome. The students were engaged and asking questions when they wanted to know more about a topic. The lesson that was taught worked with Bandura’s Social Learning Theory because I modeled good communication and they were able to practice it and hopefully take these new learned skills into their own lives to be models for others. One thing I could have changed to be more inclusive of the populations would have a translated slide in Spanish for the students who spoke Spanish. I would do so so that the students could share it with people in the school who do

not speak fluent English and they can be models for those students instead of having them be left out. If I was to do this again, I would do it to more than one class and compare how different classes understood the material. My lesson was successful because two out of three of the learning outcomes were met. I feel that it was valued by my audience, due to the participation that was given with the students.

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Table One

<i>I Statements</i>	<i>Students</i>
<i>Three</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Two</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>One</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Zero</i>	<i>1</i>

*Table 2**Nonverbal communication*

Eye contact	25
Smiling	10
Fiddled with nails	1
Facing speaker	33
Arms crossed	3
Using hands while talking	28
Straight face	5
Laughing	2
Facial expressions	30

Appendix A

Powerpoint on healthy communication skills

HEALTHY COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Brooke Swan
California State University Monterey Bay

1

THINK OF SOMEONE WHO IS REALLY EASY TO TALK TO...

2

POSITIVE COMMUNICATION

- The foundation of healthy and satisfying relationships
- Necessary for developing and maintaining closeness.
- This requires an **assertive** attitude and behavior.

★ Developing and maintaining positive communication is a SKILL

3

ATTITUDES & BEHAVIORS

Assertive

- Expressing thoughts, feelings and desires
- I respect myself and you
- I have needs and you have needs
- My goal is to be open and honest with you
- I am not afraid to listen to you
- I am willing to work on mutually agreeable solutions to our problems

Aggressive

- Hurting and putting down another; usually to feel better about oneself.
- I only want **YOU** to respect **ME**; I do not care about you

Passive

- Restricting self-expression due to anxiety/fear

4

"I" STATEMENTS

An assertive strategy

5

"YOU" STATEMENTS

- You make me angry
- You always interrupt me
- You must be stupid!
- You never let me do anything
- You never pay attention to me

6

"I" STATEMENTS

- You make me angry
 - I am angry about this
- You always interrupt me
 - I would like to finish what I was saying
- You must be stupid!
 - I don't agree with you
- You never let me do anything
 - I would like to use the car more often
- You never pay attention to me
 - I feel lonely when you do not make time for me

7


NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

- Facial expressions
- Eye contact
- Gestures
- Spatial behavior
- Body contact
- Sighs, grunts
- Posture

8

ACTIVE LISTENING

- ❖ Listening to speaker share without interruption; encouraging conversation
- ❖ Listen to understand not judge
- ❖ Validate one's feelings before responding
- ❖ Avoid blaming
- ❖ Avoid mixed messages!



9

ACTIVE LISTENING PRACTICE

10

1. SHARE ONE OF YOUR MOST EMBARRASSING MEMORIES

OR

2. SHARE ONE OF YOUR HAPPIEST MEMORIES

11



12

Appendix B

Worksheet

Healthy Communication

1. Change three "You" statements into "I" statements

2. As a group of three, one observer, one speaker and, one listener; you will practice active listening and identifying nonverbal communication.

Speaker- share one embarrassing thing or a time you were the most happy

Listener- actively listen; be able to tell back/write three main points of speaker's story

Observer- write down three acts on nonverbal communication you notice between S & L

Circle which position you were for each rotation.

a. Observer/Speaker/Listener

b. Observer/Speaker/Listener

c. Observer/Speaker/Listener

Appendix C

You statements

"YOU" STATEMENTS

1. You make me angry
2. You always interrupt me
3. You must be stupid!
4. You never let me do anything
5. You never pay attention to me



Capstone presentation

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Need


- ❖ Effective communication Skills
 - > Communication during conflict
- ❖ In Person communication
- ❖ Listening skills
 - > Active listening



Theory

Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura



Learning Outcomes

1. Change three "You" statements into an "I" statement.
2. Identify two examples of nonverbal communication between others during communications.
3. Actively listen and tell back three main points of their classmates' story.

Results

Change three "You" statements into an "I" statement.

- 1 student out of 34 did not answer at all
- 28 out of 34 wrote three
- 4 out of 34 wrote two

You statement	Student I statement
You make me angry	I feel angry when you take my stuff, next time I would like you to ask.
You always interrupt me	I feel disappointed when you interrupt me.
You must be stupid	I feel frustrated when you don't pay attention in class, next time could we try to focus more.
You never let me do anything	I feel angry when you restrict me from doing things.
You never pay attention to me	I feel neglected when you don't pay attention to me.

Identify two examples of nonverbal communication between others during communications.

Eye contact	25
Smiling	10
Fiddled with nails	1
Facing speaker	33
Arms crossed	3
Using hands while talking	28
Straight face	5

—


Actively listen and tell back three main points of their classmates' story



An illustration on a yellow background shows two stylized human figures in dark clothing. The figure on the left is gesturing with their hand towards the figure on the right. A large, light-yellow speech bubble is positioned between them, containing a smaller version of the same two figures, symbolizing active listening and feedback.

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Discussion



A photograph showing a wooden desk with several items on it: a tablet computer displaying a document, a pen, and some loose papers. The scene is lit from above, creating soft shadows.

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Thank You!

Questions?