



SEASON READY



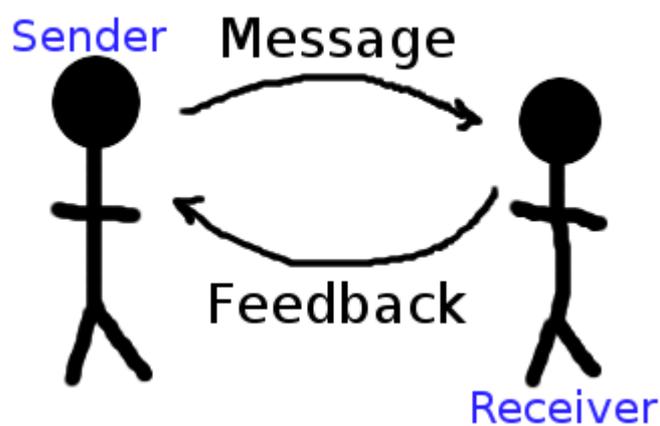
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SeasonREADY: WorkBased Methodology for Seasonal Hospitality workers

Training material for the up skilling of seasonal
hospitality workers

Module 2: Communication in SMHE





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Table of content

Introduction.....	6
Subunit 2.1: Principles of effective communication	6
Subunit 2.2: Active listening.....	11
Subunit 2.3: Barriers to communication	15
Interconnection activity	20
Final activity for application	21
Answers to activities.....	21
Answers to assessment questions.....	22
References.....	23



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Explanation of Symbols

For the facilitation of your study the icons below are introducing to you some different activities in this document

	Theory – Information
	Think about it
	Additional information from external resources
	Video
	Reflection exercise
	Apply what you have learnt



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	Solve a problem with peers
	Self assessment exercises
	Review



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Introduction

After the end of this module you will be able to:

- Recognize the factors pertaining to effective communication within SMHE
- Listen actively
- Effectively adapt to challenging situations in communication

Subunit 2.1: Principles of effective communication

If someone asks a hotel owner what is the number one priority at his/her hotel, it is very likely the answer to be something like “*providing great services to my guests*”. Every guest should go back home happy and look forward to return at the hotel in which has gained some great experience. Obviously there are a lot of things that contribute to perfective guest’s experiences. One factor is the way that the hotel staff interacts with their guests. That means that people who provide services to guests need to be aware of the multifaceted factors affecting communication.

Communication is a complex process that takes place at both verbal and non verbal levels. Its effectiveness depends on a number of factors such as the ability to skillfully encode and decode messages at both verbal and non verbal level as well as on the appropriate way of identifying the factors that affect communication whatever to their nature. This subunit presents principles that apply to these parameters of communication with special attention to SMHEs. It is important to remember that no single aspect can be considered as the key towards successful communication. Their interaction and combination is the factor that determines the outcome of communication.



Principles of verbal communication

Verbal communication is the sharing of information (message) between a person who send (sender) and the recipient (receiver) of the information by using a medium (spoken language, text, code). It is important when communicating the message you are sending to be understood in the way that it was intended and that communication procedure is not distorted. There are three important factors that should be taken into account in verbal communication (SESBA, 2017):

Formulation of the message: is my message clear, coherent and complete? Is all important information included in my message?

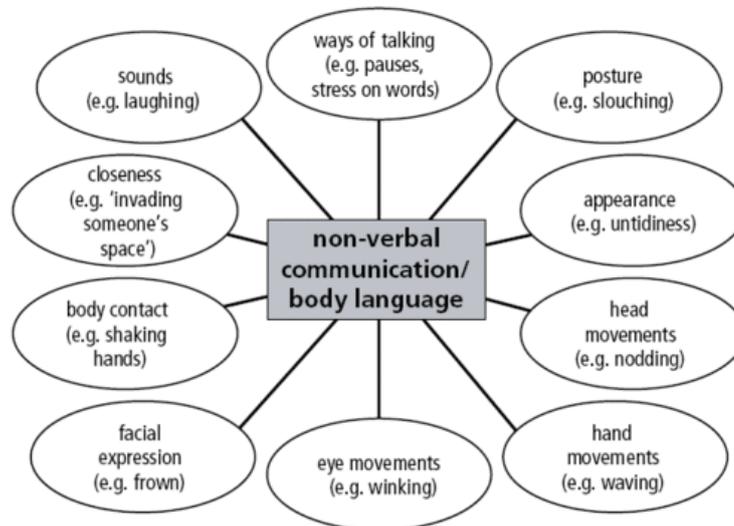
The **medium:** It is important to have clear and correct pronunciation and articulation, grammar and syntax and fluent expression.

The **receiver:** Is the linguistic register, message complexity, and courtesy level appropriate for the particular receiver in the given context? Is there consideration for the receiver’s viewpoints, background and mind-set?



Non-verbal communication and body language

Non verbal communication is a system of symbolic behaviors that includes all forms of communication except words, and reveals a lot for emotions, reactions that often is not expressed at verbal level. Non verbal messages can often be unintentional and spontaneous. Many people tend to rely more on non verbal cues rather than on spoken words. This means that it is important, especially in hotel industry to be aware of the messages of non verbal signals (SESBA, 2017). The aspects of non verbal communication are presented in the following graph.



Source: [http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-CMIqypi2Hco/U4vRZKlpnMI/AAAAAAAAAaY/6RPPqL4v29g/s1600/NonVS.gif)

[CMIqypi2Hco/U4vRZKlpnMI/AAAAAAAAAaY/6RPPqL4v29g/s1600/NonVS.gif](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-CMIqypi2Hco/U4vRZKlpnMI/AAAAAAAAAaY/6RPPqL4v29g/s1600/NonVS.gif)

Non verbal signals are not always easy to interpret, since there are cultural differences in nonverbal communication. Sometimes they are confusing or incongruent with verbal messages. But when they match up with the words you are saying, leads to trust incensement, clarity and rapport. When they don't, they generate tension, mistrust and confusion.



Did you know that body language signs mean different things in different cultures?

In some cultures it is insulting to make eye contact. In other it is a good manner to speak very loudly. When speaking to people from different cultures keep in mind that their norms of communication may be different from yours. You may need to ask them what the meaning of certain non-verbal signs means to them and explain the meaning in your culture.



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Here you can learn about some body language signs that mean different things in different cultures:

https://westsidetoastmasters.com/resources/book_of_body_language/chap5.html



Watch this slide presentation to learn more about body language
Body Language

Here are some more ideas for using body language in hospitality sector

Using body language in hospitality – staff tips with Mark Bowden



Now that you have learned more about body language, observe yourself, regarding the adoption of postures/expressions/gestures. Then observe other people that are working around you, on how they adopt postures/ expressions/gestures, do these descriptions fit to what you understand/know about them? What do you conclude about the interpretation of body language? How can you apply it when you are serving your guests?

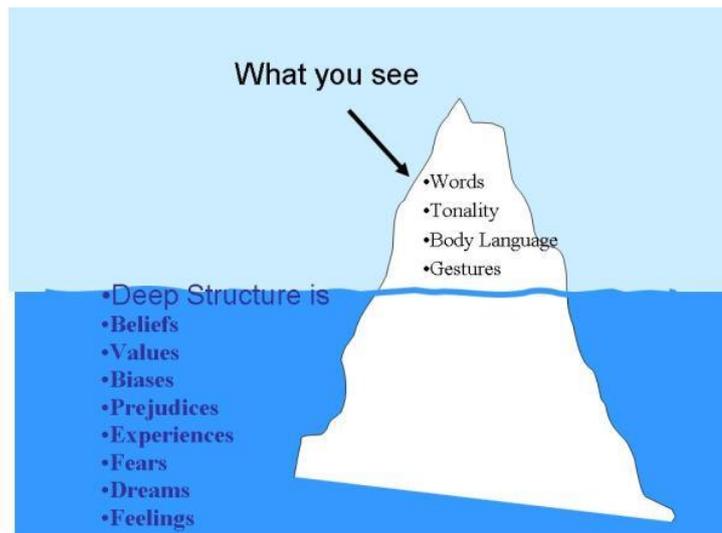


Watch a useful video of bad use of body language in hospitality service
Hospitality Customer Service Training



Significant factors affecting communication

The way that people communicate is based on their values, beliefs, intentions, mindset, relations, educational level, background etc. That is why communication is often described as an iceberg.



Source:<https://zestnzen.wordpress.com/2012/01/26/how-to-understand-cross-cultural-communication/>



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Principles of effective communication with guests

Here are some tips for effective communication with guests in hospitality sector (Club Training Australia, 2013):

- The message communicated must have a clear purpose
- The message should try to match the interests, abilities, needs and hobbies of the guest
- Communication should be clear and concise
- Unnecessary words should be eliminated
- Tone, volume, pronunciation and pitch should be clear and appropriate for the message.
- Humor should be used appropriately
- Feedback from communication should be provided
- Silence should be used when applicable
- Use pause when appropriate and to give emphasis
- Try to avoid words such as “um”, “you know”, “like” or words that show that you are not sure
- Try not to use too many jargons



Learn more about communication in hotels in the following videos

[Communication in Hotels](#)

[The Right Words at the Right Time- Customer Service Recovery for Hospitality Industry](#)



Activity 1

One guest comes for the first time at the hotel where Mary works in front office. After going to his room he comes back to the reception and starts complaining that his room is not the one that he has seen on the internet. He starts speaking in an ironic tone and accuses Mary that she has been cheated. Mary, annoyed by the client's attitude responds ironically and says to the client that it is not possible to book a suite in the price of a low budget room and that it was his fault. This behavior annoys the customer even more and creates more tense between them.

What was the mistake of Mary?



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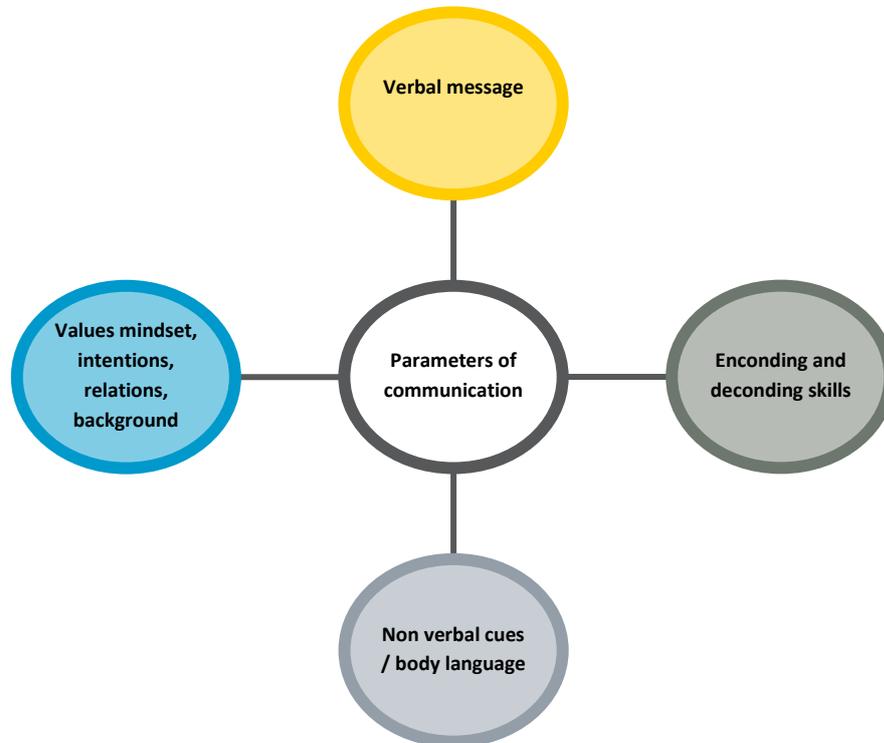


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Review



Assessment

1. Consideration for the receiver of your message should move you to (choose all that applies):
 - a. Speak fluently
 - b. Be courteous
 - c. Adjust the complexity of information to his/her educational level and background
 - d. Take into account his/her mindset

2. Body language and non verbal cues (choose all that applies):
 - a. Are the most important key to effective communication
 - b. Can be controlled and manipulated in certain cases
 - c. Have a universal interpretation that can be perfectly mastered
 - d. Are involuntary and beyond our control in certain cases
 - e. Are subject to cultural differences

3. Communication with guests can be effective through (choose all that applies):



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- a. Clear and concise words
 - b. Humor
 - c. Constantly speaking
 - d. Appropriate volume
4. The body language has to do only with posture, appearance and eye contact
- a. Yes
 - b. No

Subunit 2.2: Active listening

Listening is one of the fundamental components of good communication. Active listening enables the connection between the speaker and the listener, which leads to interaction and ensures that the messages are transmitted effectively.



Definition and importance of active listening

Do you know that anyone of us can listen four times as fast we can speak? It is easy to listen to our thoughts at the same time as listening to somebody else speak. It is also easy to listen only to our thoughts while someone else is speaking. To be an active listener you should resist to this tendency, by this way not only you will remember what the speaker is saying but the speaker will feel that you are listening (BC Cook Articulation Committee, 2012).

Active listening is something more than just hearing the spoken words, is about listening with all senses (Pande, 2016). An active listener is fully concentrated to what speaker says in order to understand it and demonstrates that he/she does so. Active listening means (SESBA, 2017; BC Cook Articulation Committee, 2012):

- Totally being involved in listening
- Paying attention by not speaking, focusing on speakers verbal and non verbal cues, avoiding distractions, wait until the speaker has finished.
- Conveying attention and interest with gestures / body language
- Understanding, making efforts to get the meaning, its implications, feelings
- Remembering what has been said
- Providing the appropriate feedback, confirmation and further questions



Active listening from peer lessons

Do the following simple exercise with your peers. One of you is partner A and the other one is partner B.



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Partner A (speaker): Share something with partner B related to your job, something that you are passionate about

Partner B (listener): do everything impossible to ignore the speaker

Take 90 seconds to do so

What were the feelings of both partners?

Then change the roles, partner B will be the speaker and partner A will be the listener

The listener should listen to the story of the speaker like it is the most wonderful amazing thing he/she have ever heard in his/her job

Take 90 seconds to do so

What are your thoughts and feelings at the second time?



Verbal and non verbal signs of active listening (SESBA, 2017)

Non-Verbal signs	Verbal signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –Smiling and nodding: small smiles show agreement –Gesture and postures. Active listeners face their bodies towards the speaker and lean forward. Their arms and legs are not crossed and their hands are open –Eye contact: friendly and appropriate eye contact encourage the speaker to continue –Mirroring: automatic reflection of facial expressions can be a sign of empathetic listening –Avoiding of instructions: looking at smartphone or watch, searching in other things, answering to others messages etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –The listener speaks more slowly and softer than usual to show that he is considering of what has heard –Remembering: remembering of key points or details, ideas and concepts (even from previous conversations) proves that attention was kept and is likely to encourage the speaker. –Questioning and Clarifying: Asking relevant questions confirms interest and helps clarifying what the speaker had said. Asking for clarifications is important enabling the message to be interpreted by the receiver as it was intended from the speaker. –Reflecting: repeating, paraphrasing, restating words and feelings can help speakers to feel that they are understood and focus on what they want



Watch this video on how you can improve listening skills through active listening

Improve Your Listening Skills with Active Listening



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*Changing your listening behavior may take some time! The acquisition of a new habit takes at least **66 days**, according to some researchers.*

Source: <https://wholeperson.com/blog/active-listening>



The following link provides some tips for you to become a better listener

<https://www.ragan.com/flowchart-are-you-a-good-listener/>



Test yourself in active listening

Over reading this material, for the next 2 days try to observe your listening behaviour at work and in informal settings. Check the following:

- *How often have you been distracted by other activities while listening? How do you deal with these distractions?*
- *How is your eye contact with the speakers?*
- *How often do you catch yourself thinking of a reply before the speaker has finished?*
- *How often do you ask for clarifications or paraphrase to make sure you have understood?*

After becoming conscious of your listening skills, set specific goals for improvement! You might also ask a friend or colleague to provide feedback!



Activity 2

What should a hotel employee do if a guest constantly interrupts him/her and tries to finish his/her sentences for him/her?



Activity 3

A hotel employee may be an active speaker but some clients - speakers are not good communicators. They may repeat themselves or go on saying insignificant things to the employee when he/she provides services to them.

What the employee should do?



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Some clients who are poor communicators when they speak may appear angry or disrespectful.

Keep your focus. Ask yourself what is their message; even if they are angry or disrespectful they may still have a message. Ignore their poor communication skills and ask questions that will help you to determine what they really want to say.

(BC Cook Articulation Committee, 2012)



Activity 4

Anne is seasonal staff for the first time and she is working in the service of the restaurant in a small hotel. The restaurant manager who rarely speaks to her grabs her arm as she passes by and says "What's with the salad bar today; was there a special on wilted lettuce? The communication is poor; Anne doesn't understand what the manager is talking about and takes his comment as an insult, as a reflection on how she is doing her job.

How should Anne react taking into account the principles of active listening?



Review

Active listening is something more than just hearing what the speaker says; it is about listening with all senses. Active listening involves attention, focusing on speaker verbal and non verbal signs, getting feedback. It helps to understanding and remembering.



Assessment

1. Active listening is important because (choose all that applies):
 - a. It helps build trust and rapport
 - b. It speeds up communication
 - c. It ensures mutual understanding
 - d. It leads to more relevant responses
 - e. It increases chances of agreement

2. It is easy to develop active listening skills:
 - a. True
 - b. False



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3. Which of the following reactions are signs of active listening (choose all that applies)
- Eye contact
 - Crossed hands
 - Questioning
 - Clarifying
 - Reflecting

Subunit 2.3: Barriers to communication

When two or more people are communicating the decoding of the message is often disturbed by several interferences, also called as “noises”. By learning how to cope with these distractions you will become more able to properly encode and decode messages and you will become more successful in collaborating with your colleagues or superiors and in providing services to guests.



Barriers to perception

Perception can be distorted by a number of reasons such as (SESBA, 2017):

- Allowing our selves to see what we want to see, using only small amount of information (stereotyping & generalizing)
- Jumping to assumptions and conclusions without taking time to look into details; reality is usually more complex
- Focusing only on negative aspects
- Inconsistency between verbal and non verbal cues
- Assuming that all people involved in a discussion interpret in the same way

How to cope these barriers (SESBA, 2017):

- ☞ Analyze your own perceptions
- ☞ Take your time before drawing conclusions
- ☞ Increase your awareness on perception barriers
- ☞ Listen actively



Barriers to communication

Factors that affect communication are (SESBA, 2017; BC Cook Articulation Committee, 2012):

- Language differences: even people speaking the same language may have differences in understanding depending on their age, education, profession, origin.
- Bad command of common languages in tourism ie. English



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- Using too much professional jargon when communicating with clients
- Interruptions, ignorance, responding in irrelevant ways, criticism
- Lack of confidence; a person lacking self – worth might not have the ability to articulate viewpoints and opinions. On the opposite overconfidence may lead to manipulation and unpleasant behavior
- The use of inappropriate grammar, vocabulary or technical language
- Different qualities, like preconceptions, stereotypes, attitudes, which interfere in the communication between the sender and the receiver
- Environmental or physical conditions, telephones ringing, other people talking, crowded conditions, extreme temperatures, bright lights, busy kitchen etc.
- Physiological noise; refers to distractions caused by hunger, fatigue, headaches, medication, and other factors that affect how we feel and think

How to cope these barriers (SESBA, 2017):

- ☞ Analyse your audience and make sure that everybody understands the language you use
- ☞ Be aware that accenting and intonation can cause meaning to vary significantly
- ☞ Focus on the issue, being polite, positive and affirmative
- ☞ Be genuine, valuing yourself and your experiences
- ☞ Wait the noises to eliminated if possible
- ☞ Listen actively



Cultural differences and principles of intercultural communication

Some cultural aspects that have a great impact on how service provision and communication takes place are the perception of time, message clarity, the degree to which emotions are expressed (SESBA, 2017; Goman, 2011).

In Scandinavian, German and the English-speaking countries time is viewed as something that should be controlled (Goman, 2011). People focus on the sequence of tasks and deadlines are to be adhered to. In Mediterranean countries time is rather viewed as a constant flow. Different items may be dealt with at the same time, while deadlines tend to be much more flexible.

Culture e.g. Mediterranean, Slav, Central European, African, Arab, Asian prefer to leave part of the message unspecified, expecting the listener to understand the full meaning through context, nonverbal cues, and between-the-lines interpretation of what is actually said (Goman, 2011). This may be very confusing and disturbing to people from Germanic and English-speaking countries where messages have to be clear, explicit and specific.

In some cultures emotions are expressed not felt; in others task orientation is of greatest importance or maintaining good relations and avoiding conflicts.

How to cope cultural differences (SESBA, 2017):

- ☞ Try to understand how the people you communicate with tend to behave.



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- ☞ Listen even more carefully. If there is any doubt, ask for confirmation of understanding.
- ☞ Be mindful how the worldview or values of different groups of people affect their communication.



A useful article on communicating across cultures

Communicating across Cultures



Watch this video related to cross cultural communication

Cross- cultural Communication



Challenging behaviors

While some people are good in communication some others behave in a way that makes communication a real challenge. Examples of challenging communication styles include (SESBA, 2017):

Aggressive: Individuals express their feelings and opinions and advocate for their needs in a way that violates the rights of others, being abusive, dominant, over-critical etc.

Passive: people avoid expressing their opinions or feelings, protecting their rights, and identifying and meeting their needs

Passive – aggressive: people tend to express their negative feelings harmfully, but indirectly. Instead of dealing with issues, they behave in ways that veil their hostility and mask their discontent

It is obvious that all these kinds of behaviour are a result of deeper psychological issues. The challenge for the hotel employee is to establish a trusting atmosphere of mutual respect and healthy exchange of messages.

How to cope these challenges (SESBA, 2017):

- ☞ Stay calm
- ☞ Identify the behaviour
- ☞ Identify the cause
- ☞ Use language carefully
- ☞ Depersonalize and shift from reactive to proactive
- ☞ Create a safe environment



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Learn more about challenging behaviors

The Four Basic Styles of Communication

How to Manage Passive-Aggressive People

Dealing with Non-Assertiveness



Some useful video on how to handle challenging behaviors are listed below

Dealing with Difficult Guests in a Hotel

Hotel check-in (a difficult customer)

How to Deal with Rude Guests in the Restaurant



Have you ever been at the position to deal with some challenging behavior? What did you do? How are you going to react, after reading this material, if you face this behavior again?



Activity 5

Go back to Activity 1. What should Mary have done in order to cope with the guest's behavior?



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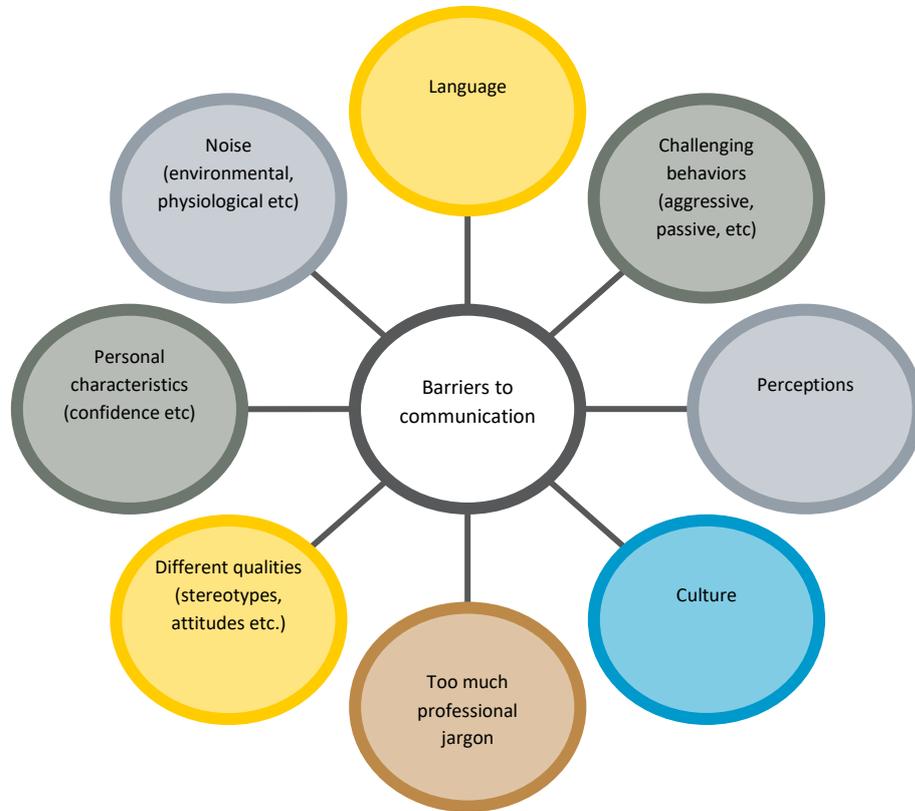


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Review



Assessment

1. Which of the following is physiological noise? (Choose all that applies):
 - a. Anxiety
 - b. Heat
 - c. Hunger
 - d. Sleeplessness

2. Stereotyping and jumping to assumptions are typical:
 - a. Perception barriers
 - b. Challenging behaviours
 - c. Cultural barriers

3. Language barriers are more likely to occur when (Choose all that applies):
 - a. Speaker and listener use a common language other than their own



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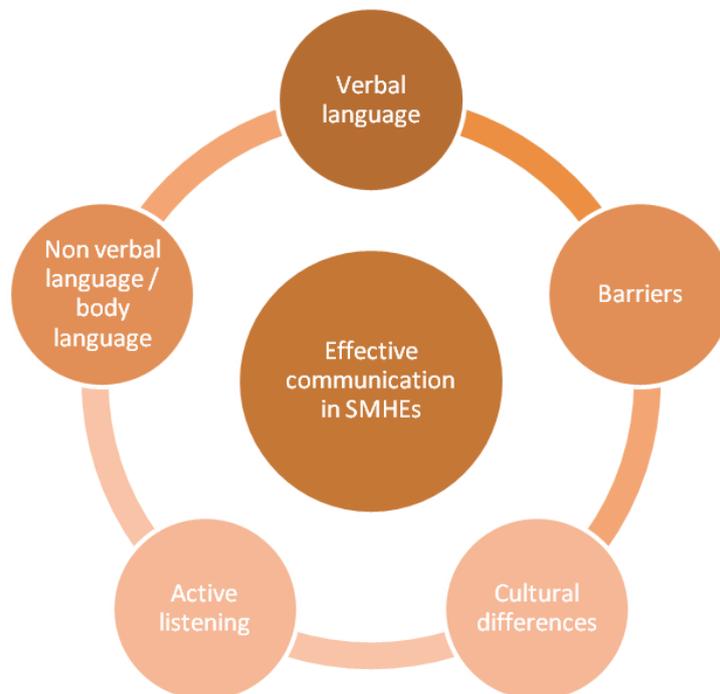


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- b. The educational level of the speaker and the listener differs
 - c. The speaker is interrupted
 - d. All the above
4. All individuals who belong to a certain culture behave according to a predictable pattern as far as time and relationships are concerned.
- a. True
 - b. False
5. One of the guests at the hotel you are working comes from a culture that you understand very well because you have lived in that country for some years. However you are not particularly fond of this culture. What communication barriers may occur from your part? (Choose all that applies)
- a. Stereotyping
 - b. Language barriers
 - c. Jumping to assumptions
 - d. Challenging behavior
 - e. Distorted focus

Interconnection activity





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Final activity for application

After having completed this module think:

Which 3 communication skills do I want to improve first? Why?

How am I going to employ self-awareness and feedback in order to achieve my goal?

Answers to activities

Activity 1

Mary made two mistakes. First of all, the message “is not possible to book a suite in the price of a low budget room” was not clear and he used unnecessary words. Secondly her tone wasn’t appropriate.

Activity 2

She/he just need to say “Please let me finish” in calm voice and continue talking

Activity 3

Some people repeat themselves because they want to give emphasis on what they are saying or as a cue for the others to start speaking. As an active listener the hotel employee should keep them on their subject. If they continue to repeat she/he can say “Yes I understand that” and then ask a question that move the conversation forward. If they continue to say insignificant things she/he will need to find out whether they just want to talk or they have any difficulty to say what they really need. The employee can say “is this part of the same problem that we were discussing before or a separate problem? When is clear that the client just wants to talk for the sake of talking the employee should judge if she/he has the time to chat. If she/he doesn’t have time she/he should say “I have to go back to work, but let’s talk again later”. If she/he has time such conversations are a good opportunity to get know the client and establish a better understanding of his/her personality and needs. Clients will appreciate if the hotel employees remember details of their personal life, such as names of their children or favorite sports and dishes. If clients are inclined to tell much about personal things the employee should politely make it clear that she/he is not willing to be a listener. She/he could say politely “I would rather not hear about your”.

(BC Cook Articulation Committee, 2012)

Activity 4

The words of the manager might be valuable information for Anne to learn. She could find this out by asking the manager “Is there any problem with wilted lettuce in the salad?”. He might have noticed a problem that reduces the quality of the lettuce in the salad bar. If Anne wouldn’t do this question she



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would never find out this information and she would remain with her initial idea that the manager wanted to insult her.

By finding out what comments are really about, the employee may be able to deal with a problem she/he had not noticed. As he/she shows her/his willingness to listen, the people she/he listens to will show a greater willingness to speak. They will tell him/her about problems that they notice sooner. On the other hand, if she/he takes poor communications personally and respond by ignoring or insulting the person, those people are less likely to speak to him/her.

(BC Cook Articulation Committee, 2012)

Activity 5

Mary should have stayed calm, identifying the challenging behavior and its cause. She should have used more carefully her language and depersonalize the reaction of the guest. The problem wasn't with her. Then she should have explained to the guest the price of the room he had booked politely, smiling, with a clear tone, speaking slowly.

Answers to assessment questions

Subunit 2.1

- 1: b,c,d
- 2: b,d,e
- 3: a,b,d
- 4: b

Subunit 2.2

- 1: a,c,d
- 2: b
- 3: a, c,d,e

Subunit 2.3

- 1: c,d
- 2:a
- 3:d
- 4: b, There may be significant differences in the way individuals of a certain culture behave, depending on their personality, experiences and choices.
- 5:a,c,e



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