**Effective Communication Strategies**

It is worthwhile to include a focus just on good and effective communication strategies. Not only is it important while you are teaching, it can be a game-changer if you are dealing with a stressed student.

Guidelines involved in effectively communicating with a person in crisis when working alone are similar to those important in any crisis situation:

* Treat the person with dignity, respect, and courtesy.
* Listen actively to the person.
* Speak directly to the person.
* Remain calm.
* Offer assistance but do not insist or be offended if your offer is not accepted.
* Do not overassist or be patronizing.
* Reduce background noise if possible.
* Be prepared to repeat what you say.
* Don't pretend to understand if you do not. Ask the person to repeat what was said.
* Recall the Integrated Experience.
* Be aware of how your own personal space, body language, and paraverbals may affect the individual in crisis.
* Be patient, flexible, and supportive. Take time to understand the individual and make sure the individual understands you.
* Focus on the person's strengths and adapt your communication skills to the person's needs.
* Allow the person time to say or do things at her own pace.
* If warranted, provide reasonable accommodations according to current laws and policies.

(cpi training concepts)

We need a definition of the “Integrated Experience:”

CPI describes the Integrated Experience as how my attitudes and behaviors affect your attitudes and behaviors and vice versa. If my attitude and behavior is positive, it will most likely yield positive results.

The reverse is true as well. If I have a poor attitude or I’m exhibiting rude, disrespectful behavior, my results will likely not be great, and could contribute to someone escalating to verbal aggression or worse—physical assault.

(cpi customer service)

And also, a definition of “paraverbal:”

Paraverbal refers to how we say the words we say, for example do we seem happy, sad, angry, determined or forceful. Some researchers suggest it accounts for about 30% of what we communicate.

Tone of voice and the way in which we choose our words is important here. When we are angry, we tend to speak more rapidly and at a higher pitch. If we feel someone is attacking us, we tend to respond in short, curt, sentences. You can usually tell if a person is bored by a tendency towards a slow and monotone delivery.

However, the paraverbal can also be misread. Regional or culturally influenced accents can confuse our reading of tone. Some people tend to end their sentences on an upward note, others on a downward note, regardless of the mood they are in.

(ucdpreceptors)

Here is more on paraverbals.

When we are talking to someone (or even when we are not talking but within sight of someone) we are giving all sorts of non-verbal signals. Cantor (1992) estimates that 65% of all communication is non-verbal. Our body language is therefore important in our communication with others.

Argyle (1994) suggests that a number of factors are worth considering and gives examples of ways in which we can make non-verbal signals effective communication strategies:

* Proximity: being physically closer, leaning forward while seated.
* Orientation: either face to face or side to side depending on the situation.
* Gaze: regular eye contact.
* Facial expression: smiling face is more effective for good communication.
* Gestures: head nods, encouraging gestures.
* Postures: open arms, non-cross legged, gives an expression of openness.
* Touch: appropriate touch, perhaps hand on a shoulder or guidance in movement of a particular skill.

(ucdpreceptors 2)

This idea of your words and body language being misunderstood or culturally misinterpreted is important. Also, you could be misinterpreting the other person’s words or body language: this works both ways. The safer strategy is to use several communication modes, to increase your chance of being heard and understood as you intend.

Note that body language in itself can be misinterpreted. For example, a person may sit with clenched fists, but this could be done to personal habit rather than anger. A person could have her arms folded just because the room is cold.

There could also be cultural reasons behind body language, postures and signals. Japanese tend to remain more silent than westerners when negotiating; some cultures are quite uncomfortable with eye contact. Hand signals mean different things in different countries. Indeed one of the first things you should do when starting to work with a learner, is to explore and establish his or her cultural mores or norms.

There are two important learning points here:

* Any single communication mode, whether writing, verbal or body language, can be misinterpreted. Some people make the mistake of relying too much on their preferred communication mode. It is better to use a full communication range, to build as complete an understanding as possible of what the person is really saying.
* Using more than one mode also gives you the chance to see if there is any conflict between them. A person may be saying one thing but their paraverbal or body language modes may be communicating something else. You need to try to resolve those conflicts.

(ucdpreceptors 3)

The counterpoint to having someone listen to your communications is for you to listen to them. You also need to be able to assess the truth or falsity of their statements by looking at their paraverbals.

**Principles of Active Listening**

* Open body language generally.
* Good eye contact.
* Appropriate questioning.
* Paraphrasing to confirm understanding.
* Non-judgmental.
* Empathy, not sympathy.

**Keypoint**

Check to see if there is any conflict between the different ways the person is communicating. For example, your learner can say "I'll have that assignment done by Friday" but the lack of eye contact could mean she may be a little 'economical with the truth'. Or the paraverbal could be conflicting with the spoken assertion that "I’m absolutely fine with your assessment of my progress."

(ucdpreceptors 4)

Some of our verbal communications are on the phone, where paraverbals are not visible. Another aspect to consider is keeping your audience in mind: do they know the vocabulary you will be using?

Again clarity and directness is [sic] important.

A telephone call is not as ‘rounded’ or complete a form of communication as face-to-face is. … But when you can’t see the person you are talking to, you can’t read his or her body language – the eyes or hand gestures, for example. This puts a limit of the effectiveness of the call.

Using understandable language is also important. Think, for example, of the learner in their first exposure to the clinical setting, they may not understand many of the terms and jargon that surround clinical practice that you have become accustomed to.

(ucdpreceptors 6)

When your communications are in writing, there are important points to keep in mind.

This includes handwritten and electronic communications. … it is important to be clear, concise and accurate.

There can be some dangers in written communication, especially email and text:

* You cannot read humour or irony as easily as if you were in the presence of the person.
* Reading 'between the lines' can be dangerous. If you receive a very short email, you could read it as being deliberately curt, whereas the sender might just have been in a hurry to come back to you.
* Misinterpretation is more likely with exclusively written communication.
* Written communications can be difficult to retract if you change your mind about something.

(ucdpreceptors 5)

Teaching is communication, through reading, writing, and speaking. We can consider how we are communicating through all these methods, while keeping in mind cultural interpretations. I don’t see this as meaning we have to be worried about misinterpretations; just to be aware they can happen and respond well if a student voices questions or concerns.

Classroom management requires us to be able to assess a student’s words and body language. This helps us determine a good response that will not escalate or even de-escalate the situation. Effective communication strategies make us that much better at it.