

## Module 9

# Building Communication Skills

### Essential Ideas to Convey

- ❑ To apply a facilitative approach to supervision, supervisors have to approach the people they manage in a different way, by using certain communication skills. Those skills are similar to the ones used in counseling clients, because facilitative supervision and counseling have some common goals: the creation of an environment of trust and the establishment of a spirit of cooperation.
- ❑ Facilitative supervisors use the following **communication techniques**:
  - Active listening
  - Body language
  - Verbal and nonverbal encouragement
  - Appropriate questioning techniques (using open-ended questions)
  - Paraphrasing and clarification
- ❑ Active listening is listening to another person in a way that communicates **understanding, empathy, and interest**:
  - It is different from hearing.
  - It requires energy, skills, and commitment.
  - It makes the speaker feel important, acknowledged, and empowered.
- ❑ **Use of body language** means the use of facial expression, posture of the body, the position of different parts of the body (arms, legs, eyes), gestures, space, and seating.
- ❑ Researchers have shown that what we call “body language” says more than our words or our tone of voice as a communication mechanism. ***More than half of what people “hear” from us has nothing to do with our words!***

### Three Aspects of Interaction

- ❑ When you communicate, three aspects are important and vary in the impact they have on the person(s) with whom you interact:
  - **Body language**    55%
  - **Tone of voice**    38%
  - **Actual words**    7%

*continued*

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- ❑ **Verbal and nonverbal encouragement** involve the use of words, phrases, and gestures that indicate attention and the wish that the person would continue speaking.
- ❑ **Open-ended questions** are the questions that cannot be answered with one word (i.e., “yes” or “no”). If staff are encouraged to explain a situation in more detail, supervisors will have a better understanding and be able to assist them more effectively. Usually, open-ended questions start with such words as “how,” “why,” “what,” etc.
- ❑ Paraphrasing is “restating what the speaker said in different words, to demonstrate attention and understanding and to encourage the speaker to continue.”
- ❑ **Clarification** is “asking questions in order to better understand what the speaker said.” Clarification is similar to paraphrasing, but its purpose is to ensure understanding rather than to motivate the speaker to continue speaking.

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## Building Communication Skills

### Objectives

By the end of this session, the participants will be able to:

- Explain the importance of communication skills when applying the facilitative approach to supervision
- Demonstrate active listening techniques
- Demonstrate verbal and nonverbal encouragement
- Ask open-ended questions
- Use paraphrasing and clarification techniques

### Materials

- Blank sheets of paper
- Participant Handout 9.1: Body Language
- Participant Handout 9.2: Open-Ended Questions
- Participant Handout 9.3: Exercise: Paraphrasing
- Participant Handout 9.4: Exercise: Clarification
- Resource: “Dos and Don’ts of Active Listening,” Participant Handbook, page 72
- Resource: “Paraphrasing: Guidelines,” Participant Handbook, page 71
- Flipchart paper and markers
- Flipcharts 9A, 9B, 9C, and 9D

### Advance Preparation

1. Set aside blank sheets of paper, two per participant.
2. Prepare the following flipcharts:

#### ***Flipchart 9A***

##### **Communication Techniques**

- Active listening
- Body language
- Verbal and nonverbal encouragement
- Appropriate questioning technique (using open-ended questions)
- Paraphrasing and clarification

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### *Flipchart 9B*

#### **Active Listening**

Active listening is listening to another person in a way that communicates **understanding, empathy, and interest**.

- It is different from hearing.
- It requires energy, skills, and commitment.
- It makes the speaker feel important, acknowledged, and empowered.

### *Flipchart 9C*

#### **Three Aspects of Interaction**

When you communicate, three aspects are important and vary in the impact they have on the person(s) with whom you interact.

- **Body language**            **55%**
- **Tone of voice**            **38%**
- **Actual words**            **7%**

### *Flipchart 9D*

#### **Paraphrasing**

**Paraphrasing** is “restating what the speaker said in different words in order to demonstrate **attention** and **understanding** and to **encourage** the speaker to continue.”

## **Session Time**

1 hour

<b>Training Activities</b> . . . . .	<b>Time</b>
<b>A.</b> Importance of communication skills . . . . .	30 min.
<b>B.</b> Active listening . . . . .	15 min.
<b>C.</b> Positive body language and verbal and nonverbal encouragement. . . . .	15 min.
<b>D.</b> Open-ended questions . . . . .	5 min.
<b>E.</b> Paraphrasing and clarification. . . . .	20 min.

## Session 9 Detailed Steps

### Activity A: Importance of Communication Skills: Individual Work

#### Exercise/Presentation (10 minutes)

1. Present the objective for the session and tell the participants that during the following activities, they will gain or enhance the skills the facilitative supervisors need.
2. Distribute two sheets of paper to each participant. Change your style of communication with the participants: Tell the group in a **very formal way** to take a piece of paper and to follow your directions. Say that no questions are allowed.
3. With your back turned to the participants and a piece of paper in your hands, tell them to tear the paper according to your directions (see Instructions for Trainers).

#### Instructions for Trainers


- Do whatever you direct the group to do.
- **Do not allow the participants to ask questions, do not answer any questions that the participants might ask, and do not make any comments.**
- You can tear the paper wherever and however you like.
- Give six or seven directions for folding and tearing the paper, talking about where on the paper to make a tear and what shape it should be (for example, “Tear the left corner”). Use vague words like “small” or “large.”

4. When you have finished, **turn to the participants**, show them your paper, and ask them to unfold and hold up their sheets. Most likely, none of their “designs” will match up with yours.
5. Facing the group, ask them to take another piece of paper and follow your instructions again. This time you can show them what you are doing and answer any questions. You make sure that everyone understands your instructions and follows them correctly. You can interact with the group however you like. **Smile and be friendly. Answer all questions. Recheck whether everybody understands.** Make sure they can see what you are doing as you are giving your instructions. Give six or seven tearing instructions.
6. When you have finished, **hold up** your paper and **ask** the participants to hold up theirs. Their sheets should look much like yours.
7. Ask the group:
  - What was the difference between the two experiences?
  - Why do they think that the second outcome was so much better than the first?


#### ➡ Training Tip

The participants should point out that the second time, they were able *to watch you* and *ask questions* and that you *were friendlier* and *you helped them*. This allows you to **make the point** of *the value of two-way communication and in general about communication style*.

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8. Facilitate a discussion by asking the following questions
  - How would the participants describe the communication style of a facilitative supervisor?
  - What is a general style of communication or behavior that might occur in facilitative supervision?
  - What skills are important for using a facilitative approach to supervision?
9. Summarize the results of the discussion. The answer to the third question should be **“communication skills.”** Explain that there are specific communication techniques that the participants will learn about and will be able to practice during this course. These skills are similar to the ones used in counseling clients because facilitative supervision and counseling have some common goals: the creation of an environment of trust and the establishment of a spirit of cooperation.
10.  Reveal Flipchart 9A, which lists a variety of communication techniques. Tell the participants that they will learn about each of the listed techniques and will develop the skills necessary to use those techniques.

### Activity B: Active Listening: Group Exercise (15 minutes)

1. Conduct the exercise “Roses and Daisies” (see Trainer’s Resource) to start discussing an active listening technique.
2.  Reveal Flipchart 9B and ask for a volunteer to read it.
3. Explain that active listening is not a natural process, but rather requires energy, skills, and commitment. Refer to page 72 in the Participant Handbook (Dos and Don’ts of Active Listening). Ask for volunteers to read and comment on the statements found there.

#### ➡ Training Tip

If you can spend more time on this session, divide the participants into two groups and ask them to develop a list of dos (Group 1) and a list of don’ts (Group 2) of active listening. Then have each group report the results.

## Trainers' Resource

### Active Listening: "Roses and Daisies"

Ask the participants to arrange chairs in two rows, so that they can sit in pairs facing each other. Have them count off by twos, saying either "rose" or "daisy" instead of 1-2-1-2. Ask all of the "roses" to leave the room with one trainer, who tells them that the next exercise is about listening. Explain that each "rose" will be paired with a "daisy" who will talk to them about a particular subject. The job of the "roses" is **not to speak** at all and to **act like they are not listening**. (**Brainstorm** quickly some ways in which they can show that they are not listening, such as by making no eye contact, playing with a pen, looking at a watch, etc.) Then, after two minutes, the trainer will clap his or her hands (or ring a bell) and then the "roses" **can start listening actively**. **Discuss with them how they have to change their behavior**. The exercise will continue until the bell rings twice (or a trainer claps twice), signaling that three minutes are up.

While the "roses" are out of the room, the other trainer tells the "daisies" that each will be paired up with a "rose" and that they are to tell their partner about the most wonderful day or experience of their lives (their wedding day, a wonderful vacation, etc). They will have three minutes to tell their "rose" partner about this experience. Their partner will not talk or ask questions, but will just listen to them. The "daisies" are to talk until the bell rings twice (or a trainer claps twice), signaling that the three minutes are up.

The "roses" then **return** to the room and pair up with a "daisy." The "daisies" **talk** for two minutes, to a partner who is **not** listening! The trainer then will **clap** once (the signal to the "roses" to start listening), and for another minute the "daisies" will continue talking while the "roses" now **listen**. **Then ring a bell twice (or clap twice)**, and the "daisies" will stop talking.

#### Discuss with the participants:

- How did the "daisies" feel when their partners were ignoring them?
- What were the signs that they were not listening?
- How did it feel for the "roses" to act like they were not listening?
- How does this relate to their work?

### Activity C: Positive Body Language and Verbal and Nonverbal Encouragement: Discussion/Entire Group Exercise (15 minutes)

1. Suddenly, tell the participants not to move and to stay "frozen" as they are seated at the moment, then to look around the room and comment on what they see in other people's positions. Are they leaning forward? Do they look interested? How can you tell? Do they look comfortable?
2. Explain that the way we use our bodies, often without thinking, says a great deal about how we are feeling and what we are thinking. In fact, it says more than our words.
3. Ask the participants how they understand the term **"body language."**

### ➔ Training Tip

The possible answers include *facial expression, posture of the body, the position of different parts of the body (arms, legs, eyes), gestures, spacing, and seating.*

However, body language means different things in different cultures. In many Western cultures, looking people in the eye and leaning toward them with an open posture (arms and legs uncrossed) indicates attention to what they are saying, but in other cultures such actions are considered impolite. Also, body language may have a different meaning, depending on whether one is in a group or communicating one-on-one.

**Tell** the participants that researchers have shown that what we call “body language” says more than our words or our tone of voice as a communication mechanism. ***More than half of what people “hear” from us has nothing to do with our words!***



4. Reveal Flipchart 9C and ask for a volunteer to read the text on the flipchart.
5. Discuss with the participants three aspects of interaction.
6. Distribute Participant Handout 9.1, ask for volunteers to read the information in the table, and discuss with the entire group what the answers should be.
7. Summarize the discussion by reminding the participants of the ideas presented on Flipchart 9C and by emphasizing the importance of positive body language to facilitate communication between a supervisor and staff.
8. Ask the participants to describe your behavior since the training course began. Ask them to describe everything they have seen you do.

### ➔ Training Tip

Wait and listen to the participants’ responses. After a few responses, ask some more specific questions. For example, you might ask or say:

- “Describe my facial expressions.”
- “Talk about how I stand in relation to the group.”
- “Do I look relaxed? How can you tell?”
- “Where do I stand or sit when we are working together?”
- “How would you describe the tone of my voice?”

9. Tell the group that facilitative supervisors want staff and colleagues to feel free to discuss any issue or problem, so they may work together to find solutions. One of the ways to encourage people to continue speaking is through verbal and nonverbal encouragement.
10. Discuss with the group the meaning of the words “verbal” and “nonverbal” and verbal and nonverbal encouragement.



**➔ Training Tip**

Verbal and nonverbal encouragement involves the use of words, phrases, and gestures that indicate attention and the wish of the person to continue speaking.

11. Ask the participants to give examples of verbal encouragement and write their responses on a blank sheet of flipchart paper.
12. Ask the participants to give examples of nonverbal encouragement and write their responses on a blank sheet of flipchart paper.

**➔ Training Tip****Examples: Verbal Encouragement**

- I see
- I understand
- I get it
- That is clear
- Uh-huh
- I hear you!

**Examples: Nonverbal Encouragement**

- Nodding your head
- Mirroring the speaker's facial expression (e.g., smiling when the speaker smiles, frowning when the speaker frowns)

**Activity D: Open-Ended Questions: Individual Work Exercise (5 minutes)**

1. Tell the participants that the way in which we ask questions often determines not only the response we get, but also the nature of the relationship we have with the other person. The following activity illustrates the difference between open- and closed-ended questions.
2. Mention that it is important for a supervisor to know how to ask questions in such a way that his or her customers (other supervisors or staff) are encouraged to provide maximum information.
3. Ask the participants to comment on how they understand terms “open-ended question” and “closed-ended question.”
4. Ask the participants to give 3–4 examples first of closed questions and then 3–4 examples of open-ended questions.
5. Distribute Participant Handout 9.2 and ask the participants to rewrite the closed-ended questions as open-ended questions. Tell the participants they have **5 minutes** to complete the exercise.
6. After individual work is completed, ask for 4–5 volunteers to read their answers.
7. Comment on their rewrites and discuss the responses with the group.

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8. Reinforce the message by saying that because the open-ended questions cannot be answered with one word, staff are encouraged to explain the situation in more detail. In this way, supervisors will have a better understanding and be able to assist more effectively.

### Activity E: Paraphrasing and Clarification: Entire-Group Discussion (20 minutes)



1. Tell the participants that paraphrasing is an essential element of the communication process. It allows both parties to know that they have heard correctly and that the other person cares enough to listen both to the words and to the feelings beneath the words.
2. Reveal Flipchart 9D, which shows a definition of paraphrasing. Ask for a volunteer to read it.
3. Comment on it and give examples of paraphrasing.
4. Refer the participants to page 71 in the Participant Handbook (Paraphrasing Guidelines). Allow a couple of minutes for them to read it individually.
5. Distribute Participant Handout 9.3.
6. Ask the participants to work in pairs (with their neighbors) on paraphrasing the statements. Allow **5 minutes** for the work in pairs.
7. Ask for volunteers to read the statements and the paraphrasing examples.
8. Comment on the examples and discuss them with the participants.
9. Tell the participants that a facilitative supervisor makes every effort to understand what other supervisors or site staff are trying to convey. Sometimes, the message is vague or contradictory, and the supervisor must attempt to understand it better. A technique to improve understanding is called clarification.
10. Give a definition of **clarification**.

#### ➡ Training Tip

**Clarification** is “asking questions to better understand what the speaker said.”

Clarification is similar to paraphrasing, but its purpose is to ensure understanding rather than to motivate the speaker to continue speaking.

11. Distribute Participant Handout 9.4: Exercise: Clarification
12. Ask for a volunteer to read guidelines on clarification and comment on them.
13. Ask the participants to write clarifying questions into an exercise form working first individually and then discussing the results in pairs.
14. Allow **5 minutes** to complete the exercise.
15. Ask for 2–3 volunteers to read the clarification examples to the entire group.
16. Tell the participants that use of clarification questions shows that you are genuinely interested in what you are being told.
17. Summarizing, tell the participants that as a facilitative supervisor, you will always want to convey to your colleagues, especially those whom you supervise, that you attach importance to what they are telling you. You also want to encourage them to give you all of the information you need so that you may be better equipped to help them solve their problems. Paraphrasing and clarification help you to do so.

## Participant Handout 9.1: Body Language

Please consider the following and check off if they would represent positive or negative body language in your culture.

Body language	Respectful and attentive	Impolite or inattentive	Neutral
Looking the speaker in the eye			
Looking down or away from the speaker			
Leaning toward the speaker			
Sitting directly opposite the speaker			
Sitting next to the speaker			
Sitting close to the speaker			
Sitting far from the speaker			
Crossing one's legs			
Crossing one's arms			
Showing facial expressions matching those of the speaker (frowning when speaker frowns, etc.)			
Showing no changes in facial expression			
Chewing gum			

Are there any other body positions or gestures that would promote or hinder active listening in your culture? If so, note them here.

### Promote active listening:

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### Hinder active listening:

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### Participant Handout 9.2: Open-Ended Questions

The following are examples of closed-ended questions. Please rewrite them as open-ended questions in the spaces below.

1. Do you have any questions?

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2. Are there any problems with the procurement system?

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3. Is the staff morale low because they feel overworked?

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4. Do you think that supervisory visits should be more frequent?

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5. Are clients waiting too long for services?

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6. Do you have any ideas how to deal with Marie?

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7. Did you organize a meeting?

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8. Did you solve the problem of the stock-out of reagents?

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## Participant Handout 9.3: Exercise: Paraphrasing

## Participant I

*Please paraphrase the statements below:*

1. **Statement:** We went to a workshop about interviewing clients. But I am still not sure how to do it.

**Paraphrase:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2. **Statement:** Those people at headquarters expect us to do more and more with less and less. Maybe they should come out here and take a look at what we are up against!

**Paraphrase:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Participant II

*Please paraphrase the statements below:*

3. **Statement:** Are you calling again for a meeting to discuss infection prevention? How many times can we discuss the same issues?

**Paraphrase:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

4. **Statement:** We really did not expect the level of changes that had happened.

**Paraphrase:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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### Participant Handout 9.4: Exercise: Clarification

#### *Some guidelines on clarification:*

1. Admit that you do not understand exactly what the person is telling you.
2. Restate the message as you understand it, asking if your interpretation is correct. Use phrases such as **“Do you mean that...?”** or **“Are you saying that...?”**
3. Do not use clarification excessively. People may resent being interrupted if it happens too frequently.

#### *Please write a clarifying question beneath the following statements:*

**Statement 1:** I wish I could make supervisory visits more frequently. When I arrive at the clinic, no one wants to talk to me.

#### *Clarifying question:*

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**Statement 2:** Our clinic practically does not provide services to men because men clients do not come to our clinic.

#### *Clarifying question:*

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## Resources

### Paraphrasing Guidelines

- Listen to the speaker's basic message.
- Give the speaker a simple summary of what you believe is the message. Do not add any new ideas.
- Observe a cue or ask for a response that confirms or denies the accuracy of the paraphrase.
- Do not restate negative statements that people may have made about themselves in a way that confirms this perception. If someone says, "I really acted foolishly in this situation," it is not appropriate to say, "So, you feel foolish."
- Use paraphrasing sparingly. Your objective is to encourage the person to continue speaking, and constant interruption may be counterproductive. Typically, you will use paraphrasing when the speaker hesitates or stops speaking.

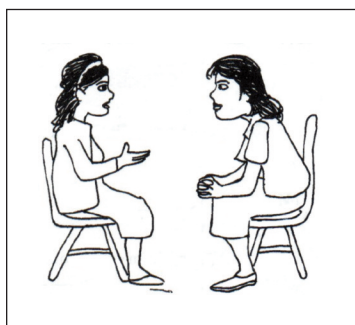
Participant Handbook, page 71

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### Dos and Don'ts of Active Listening

Dos	Don'ts
<b>Concentrate</b> on what the speaker is saying.	<b>Do not do</b> other things (e.g., look through papers) when the speaker is talking.  <b>Do not daydream</b> or get distracted by surrounding events.
<b>Allow</b> the speaker to express himself or herself.	<b>Do not interrupt.</b>  <b>Do not finish</b> the speaker's sentences.
<b>Allow</b> the speaker to control the conversation.	<b>Do not ask</b> questions that change the subject.
<b>Accept</b> the speaker's opinion as valid for himself or herself.	<b>Do not rebut</b> , criticize, or judge.
<b>Pay attention</b> not only to the words, but also to gestures and behavior.	<b>Do not anticipate</b> what the speaker is going to say next  <b>Do not ignore</b> the emotional context
<b>Prevent</b> emotions from inhibiting active listening no matter what the speaker is saying	<b>Do not become angry</b> , defensive, or upset

*Adapted from: Harper, A., & Harper, B. 1996. Team barriers: Action for overcoming the blocks to empowerment involvement and high performance. New York: MW Corporation.*



Participant Handbook, page 72