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STRATEGY NAME: WHO'S ON FIRST-COMMUNICATION

PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES: Upon completion of this lesson students will understand the importance of good communication skills.

PROCESS:

INTRODUCTION:

"To introduce you more fully to the topic of communication, let's look at a classic film sequence from the past. While the film unfolds, watch closely the actual behavior and apparent strategies used by the principal characters. While watching the film, ask yourself the following questions:

1. What led up to the misunderstanding seen in the film?
2. Why did this lack of communication occur?
3. What communication and listening skills could Abbott and Costello have used to overcome the misunderstanding?"

SHOW FILM:

(YOUTUBE) ABBOTT AND COSTELLO WHO'S ON FIRST

JOURNALING OR DISCUSSION:

Questions About Abbott

1. How did Abbott, as the sender, contribute to the misunderstanding? Why?
2. What did Abbott do when he started to run into trouble with Costello's understanding of what he was trying to say? (e.g. he spoke louder, persisted in explaining, pointed his finger, told him to listen, tried to calm Costello down, shouted, used the phrase, "I'm telling you... etc.)
3. How often have we attempted to communicate like Abbott? Under what circumstances are we most likely to act like Abbott? (e.g. under stress or threat)
4. How can we act differently in situations where we are having trouble communicating? What are the risks? What are the payoffs? What skills can we employ to make the communication more effective?

Questions About Costello

1. How did Costello, as the receiver, contribute to the resulting misunderstanding? Why?
2. What did Costello do throughout the conversation? (e.g. tried to understand, repeated what Abbott said, asked questions, pointed his finger, shouted, showed his frustration nonverbally, at one point stated, "I don't even know what I'm talking about, "concluded with "I don't care," etc.)
3. What were Costello's reasons for acting the way he did?
4. How have we acted when we've had trouble making sense of a conversation? Any differently?
5. How could Costello have acted to create a better outcome of his interaction with Abbott?

DEFINE COMMUNICATION

USE PADLET TO DEFINE COMMUNICATION (DISCUSS)

SELF EVALUATION:

HAVE STUDENTS COMPLETE SELF APPRAISAL SURVEY--COMMUNICATION (HOW EFFECTIVE OF A COMMUNICATOR ARE YOU?)

Follow-Up: Ask questions of the students such as:

- ◆ Does your score surprise you?
- ◆ Do you think it is accurate?
- ◆ What can you do to improve your score?

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES:

Practicing Communication Skills

Blank sheet of paper for each student

1. Say this to the students:

We are going to play a game that will show us some important things about communication. Pick up a sheet of paper and hold it in front of you. Now close your eyes; no peeking and absolutely no talking. Simply listen closely to the directions I will give you and follow them.

2. Give the following directions while you demonstrate with your sheet of paper:

- ◆ The first thing I want you to do is fold your sheet of paper in half. (Give them time to do this.)
- ◆ Now tear off the upper right-hand corner.
- ◆ Fold it in half again and tear off the upper left-hand corner of the sheet.
- ◆ Fold it in half again. Now tear off the lower right-hand corner of the sheet.
- ◆ Now you can open your eyes and see what you have. If I did a good job of communicating, and you did a good job of listening, all of our sheets should look the same! (Hold your sheet up for them to see. It is highly unlikely that any of them will match yours.)

3. Observe differences. There will probably be much laughter.

4. Ask the participants why their papers did not match yours. (You will probably get responses like "You didn't let us ask questions!" or "Your directions could be interpreted in different ways.")

5. Point out to the group what a "poor job" you did as a communicator during this activity. Not only did you not allow for questions but you failed to recognize an important fact about the communication process: **The listener rarely makes the same assumptions as the speaker.** This means that when someone is told something, he or she will interpret the message based on personal experiences. Communicating has to be an interactive process so that the speaker and the listener can understand each other.

The Coat

Materials Needed: A jacket, box of matches, or other prop

Directions:

Lay a jacket on the table. Select a “volunteer” and inform him or her that you don’t know what the jacket is or what to do with it. The volunteer’s task is to train you in the jacket’s use as quickly as possible. The “trainer” will often engage in telling behaviors whose effectiveness can be distorted by slow learner behaviors on the part of the “trainee” (e.g., grabbing the pocket when told to grab the collar, or inserting the arm up the sleeve in a reverse direction). The difficulty of completing the assignment can be further exaggerated by depriving the trainer of visual feedback, having the trainer turn his or her back to the trainee. After a brief time period of minimal progress, the class can be asked for its assistance. A fruitful alternative, of course, is to show the trainee how to use the jacket. This can effectively illustrate the merits of the classic Job Instruction Training (J.I.T.) approach, which is to:

1. Explain how to do it.
2. Demonstrate how to do it.
3. Request an explanation of how to do it.
4. Invite the trainee to do it.

Note: The same process can be used with other articles of clothing (e.g., shoes) or even with a box of wooden matches (with the goal of lighting one).

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION:

1. Why did the trainer initially have a difficult time with the task of training? *Because of assumptions about prior knowledge and common vocabulary, because of limited patience with a slow learner doing a “simple” task, or because of one-way communication.*
2. What are the benefits of demonstration? *Add the sense of sight, and the words take on additional meaning.*
3. What are the benefits of feedback? *Can gauge progress, understanding, and satisfaction of trainees.*
4. Bring out these points:
 - ◆ There is a danger in making assumptions about a participant’s background knowledge and common vocabulary.
 - ◆ There is an advantage of modeling, demonstration, and interaction over one-way communication.

ADDITIONAL NOTES OR COMMENTS:

Self-Appraisal Survey—Communications

The purpose of this survey is to determine your susceptibility to being a source of communication breakdown. Since no one but you will see the results of this questionnaire, answer the questions as honestly as possible. Respond not as you would like to be seen as a communicator but as you really are.

Indicate how frequently you engage in the following behaviors when communicating with another person or persons.

Use this scale to describe your behavior.

- 4 – I always do this.
- 3 – I often do this.
- 2 – I sometimes do this.
- 1 – I seldom do this.
- 0 – I never do this.

- _____ 1. When I have something to say, I am open and honest about my need to say it.
- _____ 2. I communicate with an awareness that the words I choose may not mean the same thing to other people that they do to me.
- _____ 3. I recognize that the message I receive may not be the same one the other person intended to send.
- _____ 4. Before I communicate, I ask myself questions about who my receiver is and how that will affect his or her reception of my message.
- _____ 5. As I communicate to someone, I keep a watchful eye and ear out for an indication that I am understood.
- _____ 6. I make my messages as brief and to the point as possible.
- _____ 7. I consciously avoid the use of jargon with those who may not understand it.
- _____ 8. I consciously avoid the use of slang words and colloquialisms with those who may be put off by them.
- _____ 9. I try not to use red-flag words (words that might trigger an emotional response) that may upset or distract the receiver of my message.
- _____ 10. I recognize that how I say something is just as important as what I say.

- ____ 11. I analyze my communication style to determine what nonverbal messages I send and how well they conform to the meaning I desire to get across.
- ____ 12. I carefully consider whether my message would be best understood by my receiver in a face-to-face meeting, over the telephone, or in writing.
- ____ 13. I form opinions about what others say to me based on what I hear them saying rather than what I think of them as a person.
- ____ 14. I make a genuine effort to listen to ideas with which I don't agree.
- ____ 15. I look for ways to improve my listening skills.

TOTAL SCORE

Analyze Survey Results

Find your score on the following table.

Score	Interpretations
50 – 60	Are you sure you were honest? If so, you are an extremely effective communicator who almost never contributes to misunderstanding.
40 – 49	You are an effective communicator who only infrequently causes communication breakdown. The goal of these exercises is to move everyone up to this level.
30 – 39	You are an above average communicator with occasional lapses. You cause some misunderstandings but less than your share.
20 – 29	Many people (at least those who are honest) fall into this category. While things could be worse, there is much room for improvement in your communication style. The goal of these exercises is to move you to a higher category.
10 – 19	You are a frequent source of communication problems. Enthusiastically tackle the rest of these exercises and consider their implications for you personally.
Less Than	Your honesty is commendable, but it will take more than honesty to improve your communication effectiveness. Consider taking a communication course.