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Passionately interested in life-long learning, writing, researching, and many other things. Spent many years as a management trainer.Semaphore is one method of communicationDreamerMegWhat is Communication?Communication is passing a message to another person and ensuring that the message they believe they received is the message you actually meant to send. This is a two-way process; there can be no communication without understanding. The communication can be in one of many forms - written, by letter, email or text, a thank-you card, a birthday card, spoken, face to face, by telephone, by video link and there are many other ways too - semaphore, Morse code, a bunch of flowers, a hug, etc.We may look at the same thing but we don't always see it in the same wayDreamerMegAn Anecdotal StoryA little boy was having a birthday and he wanted a party. His mother agreed and they decided on a time. The little boy wanted to help write the invitations for his party but he made a mistake on one of the invitations that he wrote and he put the finish time down in place of the start time. His mother didn't check the invite and one of the invited children turned up at the end of the party, instead of the beginning!The message had been written clearly, the receiver had understood what was written but the writer had not written what they meant to write - there was poor communication, even though everything seemed clear. This can happen with other forms of communication too - a hug may be seen as threatening, a text message may seem totally unreadable, an email message may be sent out to the wrong people!We don't always hear the same thingsDreamerMegWhat Are Communication Skills?If you have good communication skills, then you have the ability to let others know clearly what you want to let them know. You can't always be responsible for the other person RECEIVING that message clearly - after all, they may not want to hear it, or they may be unable to understand. But provided they are willing to hear and have the ability to understand, then there is nothing magic about the ability, it is called communication skills because this ability is made up of SKILLS - something you can DO and something you can LEARN.If there's a FIRE - let people know straight away - don't wait.DreamerMegListening is important. SHOW the other person that you really ARE listening.DreamerMegWhat Are Good Communication Skills?There are several and the most important one is LISTENING!Yes, the most important communication skill is not how you speak, nor is it articulating, or focusing on your message but the most important skill of all is listening to the other person. You may ask how this can be. How can a salesperson, a teacher, a parent, a boss, be expected to get their message across by listening to the other person? It's because nobody wants to listen to what you have to say UNLESS they believe that you will also listen to them. And to do that, you may have to listen first - before trying to get your message across. (Unless of course, it's an urgent message like, "Fire - run quickly, right now!") Don't just take my word for it - try it (listening, not escaping from a fire)!Listening is not just staying silent! Staying silent can come across as "not listening", "being sulky", ignoring the speaker", "disinterested". To really count as listening to someone, you have to look at them - really look and concentrate on what they are saying smile or at least a little "nonsense" or "filler" sounds, such as "mmhh hhm", "yes", "I see" etc., while they are speaking and occasionally repeating back to them what they have said, in different words. This is not just parroting what they said, but putting it in a slightly different way, while still keeping the meaning.When both are speaking, no one is listening and neither side is heard.DreamerMegBut I Don't Want to Listen!! want them to listen to what I have to say, I don't want to spend time listening to what they have to say! (Sub text - "What they have to say is not important but what I have to say IS important")It's a hard lesson to learn. I used to think that what I had to say was the most important thing in the world. I knew it all, had all the solutions, if only "they" would listen to me! "They" being anyone around me - my brothers and sisters, children, colleagues, bosses, friends, etc. That was, until I learned that MOST people think that what they have to say is the most important thing in the world and that NO, I didn't know it all. In fact, most people knew what they needed to do and they didn't actually need my advice, they maybe just needed a little help to work it out for themselves. That was devastating! They didn't need my input - well, at least not verbally. But they DID need me to listen. And that was a hard lesson to learn.And, no - communicating does NOT mean just shouting louder than the other person, to try to force them to hear you.How Can You Improve Communication Skills?Practice listening. This is the MOST IMPORTANT communication skill. No one will listen to what you want to say unless you are also a good listener.Look Smile Don't interrupt. If you can already do that, then practice the advanced listening skills, of nodding, using "filler" sounds and paraphrasing (saying it in different words) what they just said.Once you can do this, you will be in a position to use good selling skills, good parenting skills and good leadership skills to communicate YOUR wants and needs.The listener needs to show EMPATHY to allow someone to speak about their feelingsDreamerMegWhat Are Examples of Good Communication Skills?Person 1 says: "I had a really bad night last night."Person 2 says: "oh?"This is an invitation for them to go on talking.Person 1 says, "So then, the next thing I saw was this car hurtling towards me..." They pause.Person 2 says, "That must have been very frightening."This is an example of empathy. Person 2 has recognised that the situation Person 1 described must have been very scary and shows Person 1 that they recognise this. This allows Person 1 to keep on talking and to accept and admit that it was a scary situation.Person 1 says, "..... And finally, we reached our destination."Person 2 says, "You felt you had a much longer journey than necessary?"Person 2 is "paraphrasing" what Person 1 has said (including any earlier speech not recorded here). That means that they have tried to understand what Person 1 said, and concentrated its meaning into a few words. They will know if they were right if Person 1 says "Yes" or "That's right", or nods and keeps on talking. If they didn't quite get it right, then Person 2 is likely to say something like, "Well, not exactly, ..." or "No, not really, it ..." But Person 1 should still be able to keep on talking and will still feel they have been listened to.Not speaking is NOT the same as listeningDreamerMegWhat Are Examples of Poor Communication Skills?Person 1 says "I had a really awful night last night."Person 2 says, "That's nothing, you should hear how bad MY night was!"This is very poor communication. Person 2 did not listen, other than to use Person 1's remark as their excuse to start talking themselves. They also are trying to "go one better" than person 1, by saying that their night was worse, without even knowing what was so bad about person 1's night.Person 1 says, " So then, the next thing I saw was this car hurtling towards me..." They pause.Person 2 says, "Yes, I was in a car accident once. This is how it happened..."Person 2 has again found a phrase that they can use to bring the conversation around to themselves, rather than listening Person 1 says, "..... And finally, we reached our destination."Person 2 says, "That reminds me of a long journey I took last year We went to" or they might say, "I see. How about a cup of tea?" Again, they have either turned the conversation to themselves, or they are showing that they have tired of the discussion and changed the subject. Have a go at picking the best "listening" option!For each question, choose the best answer. The answer key is below.Person 1 says, "And then he said I was sacked!"Person 2 says, "What a shock."Person 2 says, "You should sue."Person 1 says, "What a day, I'll be glad of a cup of coffee."Person 2 says, "Me too. You know, they just kept on pushing through those doors. I thought it would never end."Person 2 says, "You've had a hard day?"Person 1 says, "And then they said it would mean an operation."Person 2 says, "That sounds like a big step."Person 2 says, "Never mind, it'll soon be over and then you can get back to work."Person 1 says, "I was a bit worried about opening the door."Person 2 says, "You should never open the door late at night, no matter what."Person 2 says, "You were concerned about that."Answer KeyPerson 2 says, "What a shock."Person 2 says, "You've had a hard day?"Person 2 says, "That sounds like a big step."Person 2 says, "You were concerned about that."Interpreting Your ScoreIf you got between 0 and 1 correct answer: Maybe you might like to read over the hub again?If you got 2 correct answers: Was that a guess?If you got 3 correct answers: You're doing well.If you got 4 correct answers: You aced it!You Don't Always Have to ListenYou don't have to listen all the time. You need to talk too - everyone does. See if you can find someone who will listen to you, without judging what you are saying. And then do them the same favour.This article is accurate and true to the best of the author's knowledge. Content is for informational or entertainment purposes only and does not substitute for personal counsel or professional advice in business, financial, legal, or technical matters.What Do You Think About Listening as a Communication Skill?DreamerMeg (author) from Northern Ireland on June 28, 2020:There are so many times I have said something that has been misunderstood. I find it easier to stay quiet and encourage others to talk these days! Thanks for visiting Denise. That's interesting about communicating with pictures, rather than words. Maybe that's why we all love memes. Denise McGill from Fresno CA on June 27, 2020:Misccommunication is so easy. It is hard to find just the right words sometimes and I will often say one thing out of my mouth but I was thinking something else - especially when saying numbers. Maybe that's why I love art so much. You can say a lot with pictures, more so than with words and usually, they can be understood better.Blessings,DeniseDreamerMeg (author) from Northern Ireland on July 20, 2019:I am glad you enjoyed it.Misty Anderson on July 20, 2019:lol, you are very funnyDreamerMeg (author) from Northern Ireland on July 14, 2016:Thank you very much. I certainly hope so too, LOL. I have known some teachers who did not communicate well but others were absolutely fantastic and got me enjoying subjects I never expected to! Thank you for visiting,Bill Holland from Olympia, WA on July 06, 2016:Interesting read with some very good tips. I guess I'm a good communicator. I was a teacher for eighteen years so I hope I was. LOLDreamerMeg (author) from Northern Ireland on March 14, 2016:That is so true! They are not listening, just waiting for the chance to do their own talking. Thank you for reading.DreamerMeg (author) from Northern Ireland on March 14, 2016:Thank you for reading. That's an interesting comment. Sounds like your friend just wants to talk, never mind be understood. It sounds like he doesn't want to think something through. Well, that's his choice. Maybe the hmm mmm, comments would help him talk more but he may have a problem he is not willing to work on.Stacie L on March 12, 2016:Many people miss the point of what the other person is trying to convey. They have an agenda that they want to get across, no matter if it alienates others or not.Taking time to listen to what someone is saying is only half the work. Gestures, eye contact, and pauses are also important in communication. You wrote an interesting hub here!Glenn Stok from Long Island, NY on March 12, 2016:You made some very important points here Meg that I could relate to, especially with past experience communicating with various people. I can think of a number of examples that make sense based on things you said, such as showing the other person you are listening in order to get them to listen, and how some people only hear what they want to hear, no matter how clear your communication is.Unfortunately, some people don't have an interest in clear communication. I have a friend who has trouble expressing himself. So I try to repeat back to him what I think he meant, just as you explained to do in your hub. But he gets frustrated when I make this effort, instead of appreciating that I am trying to understand him. He says he'd rather people just get what they can out of it, instead of pushing for full clarity. I could never understand this reasoning.DreamerMeg (author) from Northern Ireland on November 26, 2013:LOL. Thank you very much for visiting,Randy Godwin from Southern Georgia on November 26, 2013:Wonderful hub on how to communicate correctly, Meg. Yes, listening is required to do so effectively. I don't seem to have problems with communicating with others. Or do I? :)Rated up!DreamerMeg (author) from Northern Ireland on October 31, 2013:Thank you very much for visiting and commenting,Suzette Walker from Taos, NM on October 31, 2013:Excellent article on communication. So interesting and informative. Listening is most important in communication and as you say, also understanding the message parlayed. So many are so busy thinking of what to say next they are not properly listening. Three people can listen and each can come up with a different understanding or perception of what was actually said. This is one of the best articles I have ever read on communication and the importance of listening.DreamerMeg (author) from Northern Ireland on June 02, 2013:Thanks for visiting,Rajan Singh Jolly from From Mumbai, presently in Jalandhar, INDIA, on June 02, 2013:This is a great first and the most important lesson in communication skills. Thanks for sharing.DreamerMeg (author) from Northern Ireland on January 04, 2013:That's great! It's always fun to be able to beat the quizmaster or quiz mistress! LOL Thanks again,Marie Flint from Jacksonville, FL USA on January 04, 2013:Hi Meg, again, your writing and accessories to it are very well done. After reading these, I feel I have much to learn on the technicalities of writing hubs. There is so much more I might be able to do to enhance the content.By the way, I took the quiz and scored a 100%-that's nice to know! - Blessings.DreamerMeg (author) from Northern Ireland on October 17, 2012:Thank you very much.DreamerMeg (author) from Northern Ireland on September 27, 2012:Thank you very much for your kind words. I'm glad you liked the pictures. I like pictures too. Congratulations on your quiz score!daisyaie from Canada on September 27, 2012:Can I just tell you how much I enjoyed this hub? I liked your pictures,especially the one with the cat and the dog. It made it enjoyable to read. And I agree with the message that listening is important. I liked the quiz too, I got 100%.DreamerMeg (author) from Northern Ireland on September 09, 2012:Yes, indeed. Some people can talk for hours, yet say nothing!JP Carlos from Quezon City, Philippines on September 09, 2012:Many people confuse talking with communicating. Unfortunately the misconception can result in great problems.

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