**Lesson Plan**

**Introduction**

**Attention:** To be effective parents, workers, citizens, or students we must be effective communicators. We are going to begin today to use our listening skills to help us understand the message that other people are sending to us. We learned that communication is the process of sharing ideas, feelings, and thoughts with other people and having those ideas, feelings, and thoughts understood. Today we will look more in depth at a communication skill and identify strategies to help us improve our ability to communicate effectively.

**Question:** What would happen to your family if you were unable to communicate with them?

You can see that being unable to communicate can cause many problems. Yet even with the ability to communicate sometimes misunderstandings occur, feelings are hurt, and things go wrong all because people did not communicate effectively with us or we were unable to effectively communicate with them. Today we will learn that when we communicate there is a constant flow of information and that by using communication strategies we can obtain the information we need, solve problems, and be confident in our ability to communicate with others.

**let’s begin by looking at an essential communication skill—*Listen Actively.***

**Activity:** *Do the following activity with your learners. You will need to have distracters such as a penny, nickel, and dime. Using the distracters, hold each one up as you say a name in the following story.*

*Say:* Jerry’s mom and dad had three kids. The first child’s name was Abraham (hold up penny). The next child’s name was George (hold up the nickel). What was the third child’s name (hold up dime)? Wait for learner responses. Usually you will have to repeat the story. They will ask you to tell them the story again. Most of the time learners will say a president’s name because they are focusing on the coins instead of what is being said. Every time you tell the story, emphasize Jerry’s name. Some of them will usually get the story after the third time.

***The answer is Jerry.***

**After this activity say to the class:** Listening is more difficult than you may havethought. You were focusingon the coins, which were adistracter and not useful tothe meaning of the information.

The distracter changed your focus. This can happen at any point in the communication process. Remember the communication process? Point to the process in the room and specifically to the barriers.

Barriers are those things that interrupt the message.

**Main Point 1. Why Do People Listen?**

People listen in order to:

• Increase knowledge or to learn • To gain understanding

• For general reasons —To respond appropriately to what we hear

—To gain information about work or school—it gives us details about what to do, how to do it, when and where to do it.

***Example:***When is the first break? How do you know?

• To gather data to make decisions

• To be more effective in our interpersonal relationships:

When children return home from school and it has been a “bad” day or when your spouse had a “hard day” at work.

**Main Point 2. Importance of Listening**

Listening well is critical to our ability to become an effective communicator.

Listening is one of the most used communication skills and one of the most neglected communication skills. How many of you have ever had a course in how to listen? Listening is not as easy as it sounds. When you are listening actively, you are focusing on what the other person is saying in order to understand what they mean. This requires energy and effort.

**Main Point 3. Effective Listening Means Hearing, Comprehending, and Remembering**

It takes all three elements to be an effective communicator. Let’s look at each element.

**A. Hearing—hearing is not the same as listening.** Have you ever heard your spouse or child tell you something but you misunderstood their message? To really hear the message takes energy. It means paying attention physically, asking open-ended questions, maintaining eye contact, and focusing on what the speaker is saying.

**Teaching Tip**

Give learners time to read these two pages, and then ask for a volunteer to define listening. Write student comments on the board. Ask students why it is important to listen. Record their responses.

**B. *Comprehending* is *understanding* the message.** It means being able to interpret what the speaker is saying. It also means being aware when you are not understanding the message and adjusting your listening strategies so you can comprehend the message. Some ways you might do this are to ask the person questions, paraphrase what the person said, try to understand the other person’s point of view, or watch the person’s body language.

**C. Remembering—once you have heard the message you will need to remember it.**

**Main Point 4: Tips for Effective Listening and Ways to Improve Your Listening Skills**

**Before Listening**

• Take responsibility for comprehension. Your teacher can make sure that you hear but only you can be sure that you understand.

• Get ready to listen; focus your attention on the speaker.

—***Physically***

1. Try to tune out physical distractions such as noise, hunger, being hot or cold.

2. Try to remove things that may distract you as you listen in class.

*Example:* pagers, cell phones, materials on desk, etc.

—***Mentally***

1. Resist mental distractions; actively focus on the speaker.

2. Review what you already know about the subject.

3. Review your notes.

4. Try to find an area of interest within the subject.

**During Listening**

• Listen for the main ideas.

• Listen to understand rather than to argue or find mistakes.

—Hear the person out before you respond. You are listening to gain information, not necessarily to agree with it.

—Don’t be critical. Don’t tune out on the information because you don’t see the value in it.

• Keep an open mind.

—Control your emotions. If your emotions take control then you have created a barrier. Try to maintain balance.

—Judge content, not delivery.

• Be mentally agile. Most people speak at about 200 words a minute, but the mind processes words at around 400-500 words per minute. During the mind’s spare time it can easily wander. Be alert.

• Feedback/paraphrase to check understanding—ask questions and put the information into your own words.

• Take notes—you can always reread but you can never relisten.

**Ways to Improve**

• **Work at listening—active listening is understanding.** It takes energy to concentrate on what the speaker is saying and not what you want to say next. You will need to be aware of the verbals and the nonverbals. When you are communicating with others you must become a people watcher. Look at their nonverbal communication. What are their facial expressions? What is their stance? Are their arms folded? Do they ask you questions? Are they playing with their hair, jewelry, or clothing?

• Practice effective listening—put yourself in situations that require effective listening. While you are in class take notes and ask questions when you do not understand what is being said.

**Question:** What must we do in order to communicate effectively?

• Stop talking—“I never learned anything while I was talking” (unknown sage). You can’t hear if you are talking. Don’t interrupt; let the speaker finish. A good listener will maintain eye contact with the speaker, not be doing other things, and not talking when the speaker is talking.

**Main Point 5: Monitor the Effectiveness of Your Communication**

In order to be an effective communicator you must monitor the effectiveness of your communication at all times and adjust your strategies to increase understanding, overcome barriers, and respond in the right way.

**ACCESS VOICE INDEPENDENT ACTION BRIDGE TO THE FUTRE STANDARD**

Listen Actively

• Attend to oral information.

• Clarify purpose for listening and use listening strategies appropriate to that purpose.

• Monitor comprehension, adjusting listening strategies to overcome barriers to comprehension.

• Integrate information from listening with prior knowledge to address listening purpose. **Family**

**Citizen Worker**

**Teaching Tip**

Have learners give specific examples of what “attend to oral information and visual information” means.

Check to see if they can identify listening and observing strategies.

If they cannot identify strategies, tell them that they will get a handout that will help them identify these strategies.

**Conclusion**

**Summary:** This lesson builds on the basic concept of the communication skill that you have been using in daily life. You learned that poor communication skills can cause conflict and that effective communication can eliminate many problems at home, school, or on the job. You also learned that listening and observing work together.

**Re-Motivation:** Becoming an effective communicator will help you to achieve many of the goals you have set. You can improve your communication skills by assessing yourself on a daily basis. You can also ask teachers and friends or family members to give you feedback on how you are doing. Practicing your skills daily will make them become habits. At the beginning of this lesson you took a listening inventory—use that to help you decide which skills you will work on.

**Close: *Activity:***Tell the students the following story. Ask them to listen closely and answer your question.

You are driving a bus. At the first stop five people get on the bus. At the next stop three people get off the bus and two people get on. *(Usually at this point students will begin to try to solve a math equation. Let them do it.)* At the next stop ten people get on the bus andsix people got off.What was the bus driver’s shoe size?

Usually students will say, “How am I supposed to know?” or give you a math problem. At this point ask the students to listen closely while you retell the story. Sometimes one or two students will get the answer after hearing the story three times. This story seems to be more difficult than the Jerry story. (The answer is: *You are the bus driver. What is your shoe size?*)

**Homework Assignment:** *Listen Actively.* Assign students to listen to the radio or television, take notes on what they saw and heard, and report back to the class.

**Teaching Tip**

Sometimes students will ask for another story. At that point you can tell the slop story. Ask everyone as a group to spell out the word slop and then say it three times in a row. Then ask, what do you do when you come to a green light? Most students will say stop. *(The answer is go!)*