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Interpersonal Communication 112R

April 22, 2022

Reflection Paper

My prior communications skills were not something I had ever thought needed any improvement. I never was told or had given much thought to the idea of working on my communication skills because it seemed my messages were being heard.. Having conversations with influential people or even just everyday communicating in relationships are both important. But communicating was just a natural thing for me. I never have any difficulty conveying my ideas or understanding why some things are more difficult to express than others. I have always been careful, considering my words and my audience before speaking. However, this class has taught me many things about communication at different levels. Common interactions such as struggles, victories and simple conversation are very single-sided communication. Cautious word choice and being aware of body language was instinctive to me and, I assumed, for others. But I have learned that communication is a complex art form that has many sides.

The first concept that stuck out to me and taught me a lot was in chapter 2 of the textbook. (Beebe, Beebe, Redmond. 2020) It showed how integral that self-concept and self-esteem are in communication. Learning how the simplest things can actually change how you are perceived by others is revolutionary. I've caught myself several times taking what I learned from this class and trying it out in different social situations. This was to see if my point

or my opinion can be displayed differently to people using tips, tricks and different ways of thinking about things taught in this class. Another thing this chapter has taught me is that being confident in who you are and why you are here is a great way of helping your communication skills. If you had told me before reading the chapter that my self esteem was directly related to how I communicate I would not have believed you. But after reading that a little self-confidence actually portrays outwardly in a positive way completely changed a lot of interactions for me.

Since I was young I've always been told I'm a good listener. We learned in chapter 5 of the textbook the very big difference between hearing and listening. (Beebe, Beebe, Redmond. 2020) I felt like I always did the listening part pretty well, understanding the message that was being conveyed. However, learning about how body language displayed while listening can be interpreted, and how it affects the other person, was all new to me. Research conducted and reviewed by faculty members at the Shiraz University of Medical Sciences concluded that teachers who incorporated both verbal and non-verbal communication in their teaching were able to better hold the students' attention. Those strategies were deemed to have a positive and profound effect on the students' mood. Using both types of communication also helped the students to interpret the lesson if they were unsure of the message they were receiving verbally. The recommendation was clear that including non-verbal communication resulted in the students' increased learning. (Bambaeeroo and Shokrpour. 2017) The different steps people go through to perceive things and the subtle part we play in that perception was a new concept. Organizing certain information, interpreting that data and developing theories about the message all happen instantaneously. Being taught the skills to understand other people or learning how to further appreciate other people is a limitless gift. Perception skills build upon themselves. Being a good listener is a trait that most people should desire to have and can be taught. Learning

about it in a more of a school setting rather than by trial and error in social settings has been a very valuable, fascinating and rewarding experience. I feel that I have become a better listener through body language cues and looking at communication using more logical terms.

Learning how to be an active listener by cutting out other things in my surroundings has been a simple but essential part of this process. According to an article published in the National Library of Medicine, “active listening is the highest and most effective level of listening”. (Jahromi, Tabatabaee, Abdar and Rajabi. 2016) The article implores the listener to search for the content, intent and feeling of the speaker through active listening. This is a skill that takes time to develop but success will come fairly quickly. This article talks about employing the same skills mentioned in the textbook: body language, focus, showing interest. I am a person that can get easily distracted: other conversations, other people, animals, cars, even shifts in weather can all grab my attention. I am very perceptive of my environment which means it is very hard to keep my attention, so learning how I can do that in a more respectful way to the people I am listening to will greatly help my communication skills.

The textbook chapter 8 of conflict management and solution was by far one of my favorite chapters. (Beebe, Beebe, Redmond. 2020). I do not find myself in a conflicting situation very often, but when I do I don't really know how to handle it very well. Learning some ways that other people manage conflicts is helpful because they differ vastly to my typical strategies. Although my approaches to conflict have worked fairly well for me, they may not work for others. Some of those tactics may actually do the opposite of helping. Understanding management styles and resolution styles will definitely benefit me when I become an adult. Whether in an office, classroom, or social situation, the ability to resolve conflict for myself or

for my colleagues or students will be extremely helpful. It will allow us to all move on and talk or teach about the subject at hand.

Chapter 6 in the textbook is especially important for me given my career choice to be an educator. (Beebe, Beebe, Redmond. 2020) Words can mean different things depending on the culture and community that you come from. Slang words, abbreviations and idioms can carry entirely different connotations depending on the listener's background. One of the flipgrid assignments was about using slang terms that are normal for us to hear or that we have heard before. Many of the terms I chose were from my hometown in rural Vermont, but I just assumed that everyone knew what they meant. Naturally I know that in different parts of the world words can mean different things but I didn't expect it would be so drastically diverse throughout our country. A well-researched article by Kelly Moran spoke about the importance of word choice when teaching. She states that teachers should be aware of the words they are using even to the point of preplanning the words they choose when speaking to students. According to Moran, selective word choice can increase students' reading performance. (Moran. 2013.)

As a teacher, knowing that simple words can influence the thoughts and behaviors of my students is critical. Interpreting words and body language will be affected not only from a cultural standpoint but also depending upon household dynamics. This is all very good to keep in mind considering there's a very good possibility that my classroom will have multiple cultures of people with different backgrounds and home life situations. Moran maintains that if teachers are unaware of their word choice, they could miss opportunities to confirm the students' abilities and impede their future learning ability. (Moran. 2013)

References

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