

Interpersonal Communications Skills

One, apparently large, obstacle for many new Explorers is communication and public speaking skills. As you will find, public speaking skills will make a huge difference in the perception your Department and the public has regarding your Post can mean the difference between first and last place in Explorer competitions.

From this section the Explorer should develop effective interpersonal communication skills

The basic models and principles of communications:

A failure to communicate could result in dire consequences.

Communication is the transfer of meaning.

For communication to be successful, the meaning must not only be sent, but also comprehended.

A Linear Communication Model

- Sender - Mental images - Nonverbal feelings, intentions, or mental pictures
- Encoding - Method of communication (nonverbal, verbal, or written)
- Message - The actual transmission
- Decoding - Action process of changing the message back into feelings, intentions or mental pictures
- Receiver - Recipient of the message

Linear communication is not a complete representation of the type of communication we want the Explorer to master, the Explorer needs to be using the interpersonal variety.

In order for the sender to know if the message was received, the sender must obtain feedback.

Interactive Communication

Feedback is achieved by the receiver using the same methods previously used by the sender. This type of communication is called "Interactive communication."

The model of interactive communication suggests that after a period of time the mental images of both sender and receiver ought to match. If this happens then successful communication has occurred. This often does not occur. The meaning of your message is mistaken.

Examples:

- Your constructive suggestion is taken as criticism.
- Your carefully phrased question is misunderstood.
- Your friendly joke is taken as an insult.

Why does this occur? There are obstacles that must be overcome before effective communication can occur.

Environmental Communication

A person's environment influences how that person decodes the message that was sent. The term environment refers to a person's history or background. Each individual has different experiences to relate to for a certain situation.

Different types of environments

- Rich - Poor
- Sick - Healthy
- Old - Young
- Concern - Indifference

External, Physiological and Psychological Noise

Noise can be external, physiological, or psychological.

External Noise - physical noises in the environment, e.g., heavy equipment, sirens, people talking, etc.

Physiological Noise - involves biological factors such as a hearing loss, illness and so on.

Psychological Noise - refers to forces within a communicator that interfere with the ability to express or understand a message accurately.

Transactional Communication

Not simply a sender then receiver, sender then receiver type of communication, but rather both individuals sending and receiving at the same time. One person may be talking, i.e., sending communication, while receiving communications from another party that may be nonverbal.

Some principles of communication

Communication can be both intentional and unintentional.

It is impossible not to communicate through body language, dress and distance.

Communication is based on:

7% to 10% content

33% to 40% tone

60% to + nonverbal

Barriers to effective communication

- *Filtering* - Intentionally manipulating information
- *Selective perception* - Selectively seeing and hearing based on one's needs, motivation, experience, background, and other personal characteristics.
- *Emotions*- How the receiver feels at the time.
- *Words* - Words mean different things to different people (age, education, and cultural background).
- *Information overload* -Too much information into the brain at one time (Crime scenes-cannot remember what happened).
- *Nonverbal signs*- When nonverbal cues are inconsistent with the oral message, i.e., conflicting signals.
- *Time pressures*- Trying to communicate in a short amount of time that results in messages that are abbreviated and the meaning of the message is not fully sent.

Definitions:

Perceptions formulated by our needs, our past experiences, and our personal theory of personality. (Newil, p. 10)

Inference means to assess or to make an assumption as to why a certain act/behavior occurred in an interpersonal environment (Neil, p. 12) Being able to give accurate feedback is an essential skill.

Discuss examples of problems arising from faulty perceptions or inferences.

PEACE OFFICERS AS CRISIS INTERVENERS

Helping Techniques

(Also see Helping Techniques Handout at the end of this section)

Non-Verbal Techniques

- Eye contact
- Body posture
- Distance
- Touching
- Vocalization

Verbal Techniques

- Active listening
- Clarification
- Summarization
- Allowing Silence
- Stating the Obvious
- Personalized Statements
- "Mind-Reading"(Insight)
- Sharing Feelings

Employing tactical communications appropriate to the situation:

Positioning

- Distancing far enough to be safe, close enough to see and hear.
- Facing squarely the person, persons, or situation.
- Looking directly at persons and situation; making eye contact.

Posturing

- Standing erect to show strength and confidence.
- Eliminating distracting behaviors, e.g., biting nails, foot tapping, etc.
- Inclining forward to show that you are focused, interested, and concerned.

Observing

- Looking carefully at behavior appearance, and environment.
- Drawing inferences (initial conclusions subject to change as information becomes available) about feelings, relationships, energy levels, and values.
- Determining if things are normal or abnormal.
- Deciding whether it's a "trouble" or "no trouble" situation.

Listening

- Suspend judgment temporarily so you can hear what's being said.
- Pick out key words and phrases.
- Determine the intensity considering both volume and emotion. High intensity with an offender is a sign of danger.
- Reflect on the mood as positive, negative, or neutral, and whether this mood is normal or abnormal.

Responding

- Responding to content
 - Reflecting on what was seen and heard

- Use respond format: "You're saying _____."
- Responding to feeling
 - Reflect on feeling and intensity
 - Respond to feeling: "You feel _____."
- Responding to feeling and meaning
 - Reflect on feeling and reason
 - Respond to feeling and meaning: "You feel _____ because _____."

Asking questions

- Using the 5WH method (where, who, what, when, why, how)
- Thinking about what was said or not said in answering your question
- Responding to the answer by reflecting back content, feeling, and meaning.

Information in this section taken from *Interpersonal Communications in the Correctional Setting: Instructor's Guide*. National Institute of Corrections, May 1983.

Demonstrate effective positive controlling behavior appropriate to the situation.

Handling requests

- Check things out to determine if they are reasonable
- Give response and reason

Making requests

- Check things out using your sizing up and responding skills
- Taking action by selecting best way to make your request
- Start with politeness, getting stronger where necessary.

Reinforcing behavior

- Reinforcing positively and negatively
- Using verbal and non-verbal techniques

Define passive, assertive, and aggressive behavior/communications.

Definition and characteristics of passive, assertive, and aggressive behavior:

Communications and behavior can be seen as existing along a continuum that ranges from passive or non-assertive on one end to aggressive at the other extreme. Somewhere in the middle of these two extremes is assertive behavior. Behavior near the extremes does not usually achieve the legitimate goals of professional policing. Aggressive behavior may become necessary in an arrest situation when use of force becomes necessary. Passive behavior may become necessary to retain one's composure when dealing with verbally hostile individuals.

The Advisor may want to encourage discussion, giving examples of each behavior.

HELPING TECHNIQUES HANDOUT

This section will describe certain techniques that have been found useful in crisis intervention. These consist of verbal and non-verbal communication techniques that experienced officers may recognize as behaviors they have used intuitively for some time. Naming and describing them will, it is believed, help both the veteran and the recruit to use them more effectively. Not all techniques will work for all people; nor is this list presented as a complete catalogue of all the things one might do to help victims.

NON-VERBAL TECHNIQUES

It is common knowledge that the non-verbal aspects of communication are often more important than the verbal. That is, what is said is less important than how it is said. The reason for this is that the non-verbal techniques indicate exactly what interpretation should be put on the words that are uttered. However, we rarely examine exactly what factors in our non-verbal communication are most important. The following list examines some of the most important features of non-verbal communication and indicates how they may be used to help victims.

1. Eye Contact: This behavior is important for communicating that one is listening and is concerned. Victims will often avoid eye contact, but the officer who keeps looking directly at the victim's eyes will eventually establish contact. The result is usually an improvement in the victim's response to the officer, for eye contact usually communicates encouragement and support. On the other hand, the officer who is looking at a notebook or somewhere else may inadvertently communicate disinterest or impatience. Looking up to make eye contact after writing a statement and while asking the next question will often help establish better communication between the officer and the victim.
2. Body Posture: When we are sympathetically listening or even attentive, we tend to incline our heads (and sometimes the whole upper part of our bodies) toward the speaker. Standing or sitting with the head in an exactly upright position usually indicates that we are being impersonal. Leaning back from the speaker frequently indicates disbelief or skepticism. When interviewing victims, it is a good idea to monitor one's body posture to determine what is being communicated. This is less important when the officer is speaking, for the words will compensate somewhat for any body messages, but it is very important when the victim is speaking and can gauge the officer's responses and attitude only from the non-verbal messages.
3. Distance: There is usually an optimal distance to maintain when talking to other people. If one stands too close or too far away, the conversation is likely to be uncomfortable. However, there is a catch in the fact that the distance varies from person to person and across situations. Generally, the closer one stands the more one expresses intimacy. The greater the distance, the greater the feeling of formality. A police officer must learn to judge by the victim's responses whether the distance is too great or too small. If a victim starts to edge away, the officer should back up a half step; if the victim moves forward, the officer should stand fast until the victim has reached a comfortable place.

4. Touching: People generally feel more comforted when someone gives them a supporting hand or arm. However, some victims may be threatened if an officer reaches out to them. This is particularly true of victims of sexual assaults. One way out of this dilemma is for the officer to make it possible for the victim to initiate touching and to accept such an initiation if it occurs. (It can be devastating for a rape victim to touch an officer's hand and have it jerked away). One can facilitate such initiation by putting one's hand on a table between oneself and the victim or by standing close enough to allow touching. Alternatively, an officer might make a gesture of offering a hand and allowing the victim to take it or not.

5. Vocalization: This term refers to the volume, speed and pacing of speech. It is generally a good idea to speak to victims in a soft and slow voice, while allowing a few seconds to lapse between questions. People who are upset tend to speak loudly and quickly. The officer's soft, slow voice will lead them to speak in a similar fashion. People who hear themselves speaking in this manner are likely to be better able to control their own emotions than people who hear themselves talking loudly and quickly. Pacing questions slowly gives an impression of patience and concern. The quick firing of questions leads to an impression of impatience and adds a note of interrogation that can lead the victim to feel blamed.

VERBAL TECHNIQUES

The importance of non-verbal behaviors must not be taken to mean that what is said is unimportant. There are some particular kinds of statements and inquiries that greatly aid the victim in coping with crisis.

1. Active Listening: When another person is talking, we may simply be present or we may communicate that we are interested in hearing what is being said. The latter process is called "active listening". Some of the main features of active listening are listed below.
 - a. Clarification. We clarify when we interrupt the speaker to ask a question about what was just said. This indicates that we have been listening and that the details are important to us. It is best to clarify when the person has finished a segment of the story and not to interrupt repeatedly to ask about details. For example, when a burglary victim has finished telling about finding the door open and is ready to begin describing what has been stolen, one might clarify by asking, "I didn't get about what time this was"?
 - b. Summarization. When a person has completed a statement, one can show interest by summarizing what has been said so far. The summary need not be long. Its purpose is to demonstrate to the victim that one has been following what was said. For example, an officer might say to the hypothetical burglary victim just mentioned. "Let me see if I have this straight...You came home from work about five and found the glass broken on the window and evidence that someone had entered the house. Is that the heart of it"?
 - c. Allowing Silence. Paradoxically, allowing silence to last is a way of showing that one is listening. Victims often are confused and need time to collect their thoughts. The officer who lets a silence last after a question is asked demonstrates to the victim an awareness of this fact. The tendency is to rephrase a question if it is not immediately answered, and this can often be confusing to a victim, especially if he or she is somewhat anxious that the police are going to be impatient.
2. Stating the Obvious. Victims are usually confused and thinking slowly. In many respects, their emotional level has reverted to that of children in that things are not clear to them. Therefore, the police officer does well to make obvious statements to reassure the victim. Stating, "I am here to help you", "You are safe now", or "I can see that this has been an upsetting experience to you", may seem condescending but really is important for the victim to hear.
3. Personalized Statements. Officers do not differ from other people in large organizations in their tendency to make impersonal statements on the order of, "It's probably a good idea for you to see a doctor". When dealing with victims, it is more effective to personalize statements by prefacing them with, "I feel", or "I think". "I think it's a good idea for you to see a doctor" conveys personal concern and involvement.

4. "Mind-Reading" Officers often recognize similarities between victims that let them know what to anticipate. Expressing this to the victim can often help the victim by identifying a response or feeling as common and not a cause for alarm. For example, an officer might say, "I know burglary victims often wonder whether there is something special about their house that led the burglars to pick on them...I can tell you that burglars simply go where they think valuables are and where it looks like they can get in". Mind-reading often helps anticipate fears that the victim can't voice and lets the officer initiate reassurance without the victim asking for it. For example, an officer might say, "I wouldn't worry about them coming back to harm you...victims often worry about that, but most burglars get what there is to get and then vanish".

5. Sharing Feelings. Officers are rightfully taught to be impartial. Unfortunately, as noted earlier, they often translate "impartial" into "impersonal". When dealing with victims, a personal expression of concern, such as, "I'm sorry this happened", can be very comforting to the victim. Some situations, especially sex crimes, cause discomfort in the officer. Rather than try to conceal the emotions, the officer does well to let the victim know that they are present. Non-verbal behaviors will betray that the officer is uncomfortable and, rather than have the discomfort misinterpreted by the victim, the officer should acknowledge them. The officer who is uncomfortable is asking a rape victim about the crime might say, "I'm going to have to ask you a few questions about exactly what happened...you will probably be a little uncomfortable when I get to them, and so will I...but there aren't very many, and I'm not going to be asking a lot of details".

Deciding if someone is not being completely honest

Dishonesty - Verbal Clues

1. Repeating the question
2. Mumbling or speeding up
3. Nervous or false laughter
4. Hesitations or mental blocks
5. Fragmented or incomplete sentences
6. Voice changes or throat clearing
7. Inconsistencies of statements

Nonverbal Clues

1. Supportive gestures
2. Increasing manipulators
3. Averting eyes or darting glances
4. Shifting body position
5. Micro or squelched expressions
6. Asymmetrical facial expressions

The Advisor may try using this checklist when evaluation an Explorer's communication skills during a roll-play situation.

Non-Verbal Techniques

Appropriate use of the following techniques.

1. Eye Contact:
2. Body Posture:
3. Distance:
4. Touching:
5. Vocalization:

Verbal Techniques

Appropriate use of the following techniques.

1. Active Listening:
 - a. Clarification:
 - b. Summarization:
 - c. Allowing Silence:
2. Stating the Obvious:
3. Personalized Statements:
4. "Mind-Reading":
5. Sharing Feelings:

Overall Reactions: (Was the communication effective? Was it honest and ethical?)

Report Writing

Through this section the Explorer should improve their skills of written communication as it applies to report writing and communicating ideas. Although there are few competition events that require written reports, this section should help to improve the Explorers over all communication skills and help those that intend to go into Law Enforcement after Exploring.

Identifying and writing complete sentences:

CHARACTERISTICS OF A SENTENCE:

- A sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought.
- A sentence is a group of words that contains a subject, a predicate, and, if required by the predicate's verb, a word or words following the verb that complete its meaning.
- The subject of the sentence is the person, place, thing, or idea about which something is said.
- The predicate tells something or asks something about the subject of the sentence. The simple predicate of a sentence is the verb.

IMPORTANCE OF COMPLETE SENTENCES IN WRITTEN COMMUNICATION OF THE PEACE OFFICER:

- Written communication is an integral part of every day for each peace officer.
- Without clear, complete sentences in reports, a peace officer's thoughts cannot be understood by the any number of people who rely upon the report and/or notes.
- An understandable and well-written report can help make a case.
- Clear notes and reports can help jog a peace officer's memory when needed.

SERIOUS SENTENCE ERRORS:

We typically speak using groups of words that are not complete sentences. If the person listening cannot understand what is said, s/he can ask the speaker about the meaning. When written, however, the groups of words must state complete thoughts to help the reader to understand.

Two serious sentence errors occur in written communication as results of our trying to write in the same way as we talk: sentence fragments and run-on sentences.

Sentence Fragments

- ***A sentence fragment is a group of words that is only a piece, or fragment, of a complete sentence. Pieces of important information are left out of the "sentence."***
- The reader may have difficulty following what is meant and is left to try to figure out who did what, when, and where. This can lead to dangerous assumptions in some cases.
- Sentence fragments often occur through the simple **omission of words** - the mind racing ahead of the hand.
- A sentence fragment can also occur as a result of **incorrect punctuation**, i.e. a period in the middle of the idea rather than at the end.

Run-on Sentences

- A run-on sentence is created when the period or other end mark is not placed at the end of a sentence.
- Two or more sentences written as one are a run-on sentence.
- Closely related sentences are frequently but mistakenly combined as one, especially if the second begins with a personal pronoun referring to a noun in the first sentence.
- Joining two sentences together with a comma is called a **comma splice**.
- Run-on sentences cause similar confusion for the reader and can lead to incorrect conclusions about the intent of the writing.

Recognizing sentence clarity problems and correct them:

SENTENCE CLARITY:

To achieve sentence clarity, the writer must avoid and/or eliminate errors such as misplaced modifiers, sudden shifts in tense or in point of view double negatives, passive voice, and misuse of quotation marks.

The Placement of Modifiers

- ***A misplaced modifier is one that attaches itself to the wrong word in the sentence.***
- This error causes the reader to try to figure out the meaning of the sentence.
- Place every modifier as close as possible to the word it modifies.
EXAMPLE: We saw many swimming pools flying over California.

Avoid needless shifts

- From active to passive voice or vice versa.
EXAMPLE: We telephone all our friends, even strangers were called.
- In tense, i.e. if a sentence begins in present tense, it should continue in that tense.
EXAMPLE: The class was studying quietly, and suddenly Jerry lets out a yell.
- In person and number,
EXAMPLES: If one hears a baseless rumor, you can either ignore it or try to find out how it started.
The class roared its approval, and then they left the room.

Double negatives

- *When two negative words are used in the same clause, the result is a double negative.*
- The following negative words should be used one at a time, not in pairs: no, not, never, none, no one, nobody, nothing, nowhere, neither.
- The following words are negative in meaning and should not be used in the same clause with any of the negative words above: barely, scarcely, hardly.
EXAMPLES: There isn't no time left.
I can't hardly see the road in this fog.

Passive voice

- When the verb is in the active voice, the subject performs the action. When the verb is in the passive voice, the subject receives the action.
- Generally, use the active voice -- the sentence is clearer and stronger. If the actor is not known, however, the passive voice may be necessary.
EXAMPLES: Passive: The bystander was hit by a stray bullet.
Active: A stray bullet hit a bystander.

Quotation marks

- Quotation marks help the reader by setting off the words of the speaker.
- When quoting someone's exact words, set off their words, such as: Carl yawned and said, "Let's go."
- If not quoting verbatim, do not use quotation marks: Carl yawned and said that we should go.

Observation and descriptive skills:

OBSERVING:

- The better an officer observes things, the better the officer can then describe them.
- We experience the world through our five senses -- sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell.
- Concentrate on a different sense at various times to awaken and sharpen those less used. All senses must be sharp for the peace officer to effectively and safely do his/her job.

DESCRIBING:

- In the daily routine the peace officer must quickly describe things, places, and people, using clear and vivid language. This takes practice.
- When describing **things**, look for every possible distinguishing mark and for anything that might be compared or related to a commonly known thing or idea.
- Look for color, size, shape, texture, location, type.
- **Places** should also be described spatially, beginning at one point then proceeding top to bottom, left to right, or the opposite -- as long as it is thorough and systematic. The goal is to paint a picture of the place with words.
- Describing **people** is the most difficult. Use all of the above tips but, if possible, include other descriptive characteristics of persons, such as manner of speaking or walking, movements, things they are carrying.

The significant uses of the police report:

- Permanent record of facts
- Coordination of follow-up
- Basis for prosecution and defense
- Performance evaluation of officer
- Statistical data
- Reference material

The essential characteristics of the police report:

- Accuracy
- Conciseness
- Completeness
- Clarity
- Legibility
- Objectivity
- Grammatically correct
- Correct spelling

Four common types of police reports:

- Arrest reports
- Incident reports
- Offense reports
- Supplemental reports

Chronological or categorical order report writing:

- Chronological - arrangement of information in order of occurrence
- Categorical - arrangement of information by category, i.e., witnesses, suspects, crime elements, etc

The basic elements necessary in police reports:

- Verification that an offense or incident has actually occurred, identification of the victim, suspects, witnesses, the place of the crime or incident, and when the crime occurred
- Identification of solvability factors or leads
- Communication of the circumstances of the crime or incident, identification of completed investigative tasks and those tasks yet to be done.

The importance of separating fact from opinion in police reports:

Anything other than facts must be labeled as such to avoid any possible confusion.

Categories to Help in Descriptive Writing

Sight:

	Car Noises: backfire smooth-running missing stand/auto muffler clacking engine sound gunning the motor squealing brakes # of car doors closing	
colors sizes shapes distinct marks shininess smoothness brightness lights (on/off) cleanness	speed direction manner of walking manner of movement neatness/orderliness furtiveness clothing accessories alterations in original appearance	facial expression simile compare to familiar height weight proportions location relation to surroundings hand placement

Hearing:

volume pitch pace repetitions hollowness type of weapon	dead telephones simile compare to familiar unexpected noises distance direction	location & time defined by noises # people I.D. clues
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Walking noises:

limping
shuffling
running
scotting
jumping
walking
stumbling

Breathing:

heavy
raspy
sighing
hyperventilating
gasping

Speech:

slurred
guttural
gender
hesitation
accents
stuttering
nasal

Noises:

scratching
cutting
snapping
ripping
clicking
punching
scraping
slamming
ticking
dragging
sliding
tearing
cocking

Touch:

temperature
texture
size
shape
vibrations
thickness
cleanness
hollowness
sharpness
wetness
powdery/granular

alive/dead
weather conditions
stickiness
compare to familiar
location clues
locate weapons
firmness
imprints
air flow

Smell:

perfumes
personal scents
motor exhausts
gun powder
sulfur matches
cigarettes/cigars/pipes
drugs/incense
leather
cooking odors
breath

gases
fuels
compare to familiar
location clues
animals
blood
newness of things
mustiness
humidity

Taste:

Most tastes in police work are secondary functions of smell, i.e. salt air.