**Theories of Communication**

As mentioned previously, effective communication is a two way process. Both parties need to check their ideas have been understood by the other person and their communication has been correctly interpreted.

*For example: A boy approaches a girl and asks if she would like a drink and she thinks he means a date and says sure. It turns out he was asking if she would like him to pass her a bottle of water.*

In this lesson we will be looking at 2 theories of communication:

* Argyle’s Communication Cycle’ Theory
* Tuckman’s Theory of Group Communication.

**Theory Number 1: The Communication Cycle**

Before we go into this theory I want us to take part in an activity that will help us understand it.

***Activity:* Hidey-Boo**

Get into pairs and have a conversation. However one of you will cover certain parts of your face with a piece of paper. Start off by covering from your nose up, then from the nose down. Both people have a go at this and answer the following.

1. Did you find it difficult to understand the person when they were coving their face?
2. Which was more difficult to understand, covering eyes or mouth?
3. Why did you find this task difficult?

**This is why you found it difficult: The Communication Cycle explained.**

Michael Argyle (1972) said that interpersonal communication was a skill that can be learned, just like driving.

To aid this he created a communication cycle in which people can repeat until they become effective at communicating. We shall discuss each stage and you can add the example as we go along.

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| **Stage Name** | **Description** | **Everyday Example** |
| An Idea Occurs: | You have an idea that you want to communicate. | Jess wants to ask Anna something however she is in the other room.  |
| Message coded: | You think through how you are going to say what you are thinking. You put your thoughts into language or into some other code such as sign language. |  |
| Message Sent: | You speak, or perhaps you sign or write, or send your message in some other way. |  |
| Message Received: | The other person has to sense your message – they hear your words or see your symbols. |  |
| Message Decoded: | The other person has to interpret/ ‘decode’ your message (i.e. what you have said). This is not always easy, as the other person will make assumptions about your words and body language.  |  |
| Message Understood: | If all goes well then your ideas will be understood but this does not always happen first time. |  |

**Let’s put the Communication Cycle into practice**.



***Activity:* Who am I?**

In your pairs you need to take a post it note and write down a famous person on it. Stick the post it on the other person’s forehead.

**DON’T LET THE OTHER PERSON SEE THE NAME!!**

The other person needs to guess what name is written on the post it by asking you questions. When you both have had a go at this you need to answer the questions below.

1. What could the other person not do when trying to get you to identify the name?
2. Which stage of the communication cycle was being blocked here?
3. What did the other person say or do which helped you decide?
4. How does this relate to stage 2 “message encoded” and stage 6 “message understood” or the communication cycle?

**Theory Number 2: Tuckman’s theory.**

**Forming - Storming - Norming – Performing**



Tuckman's theory focuses on the way a group of people work to become a team.

An example of this includes when a group of strangers are put into groups and asked to complete a task. What stages do they go through in order to get the task completed?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stage Name** | **Description** |
| Forming | The team is assembled and the task is allocated. Team members tend to behave independently and although goodwill may exist they do not know each other well enough to unconditionally trust one another. Time is spent planning, collecting information and bonding. |
| Storming | The team starts to address the task suggesting ideas. Different ideas may compete for ascendancy and if badly managed this phase can be very destructive for the team. Relationships between team members will be made or broken in this phase and some may never recover.  |
| Norming | This tends to be a move towards harmonious working practices with teams agreeing on the rules and values by which they operate. In the ideal situation teams begin to trust themselves during this phase as they accept the vital contribution of each member to the team.  |
| Performing | Not all teams make it to the Performing phase, which is essentially an era of high performance.  Performing teams are identified by high levels if independence, [motivation](http://www.teambuilding.co.uk/motivation.html), knowledge and competence. Decision making is collaborative and dissent is expected and encouraged as there will be a high level of respect in the communication between team members. |

***Activity:***  One group of people will be given a problem to solve. The rest of the class must watch this happening and identify any of the stages from above. Write any notes below.

Write notes here.

**Better Communication through Reflective Listening**

Listening is just as important as communicating, but only if it is done in an appropriate way. Reflective listening is where your body language and reaction reflect the person you are talking to topic. For example if someone is upset and crying you won’t act happy and jump around, you lower your tone of voice, shoulders and be sympathetic.

***Activity:*** Read the activity below and answer the questions to find out more.

*“Sarah is unemployed and is looking for work in a specialised field. She looks worried and says “I don’t know what to do. I keep looking for work and going for interviews but I never get a job offer.”*

*Given that you know nothing about the kind of job she is looking for, how can you respond in a skilled way?*

Choose one of the choices below and discuss the question following.

1. *Try and reassure her, e.g. “I’m sure you will get the job”*
2. *Offer advice, e.g. “why don’t you go see a careers adviser”*
3. *repeat what was said, e.g., “You never get a job”*
4. *Reflecting the other person’s message, e.g. “It must be worrying when you can’t get a job”*

**A Case Study which shows good Reflective Communication:**



**Karen is talking to Jasmine, whose partner has just died,**

Please turn over for the conversation!!

*J****asmine –*** *“I can’t believe it. I don’t know how I’m going to cope on my own, I can’t sleep or eat”*

***Karen – “****You must feel awful, it must have been a terrible shock”*

***Jasmine*** *– “I’ll say it was – I just feel so anxious. I know I won’t be able to cope.”*

***Karen*** *– “Can you tell me a little about your life together?”*

In this brief example there is no helpful advice Karen can offer. Karen is careful to reflect back what Jasmine has said. This results in a communication cycle in which Jasmine can begin to share her feelings.

1. Why is it important for Karen to reflect back what they have understood from the conversation?
2. What might have happened if Karen just said “don’t worry you will better soon, time heals all things”

1. How can understanding the communication cycle help professionals in similar health and social care settings?

Referencing:

Team Building Company (2011) “more on forming, storming, norming and performing” URL <http://www.teambuilding.co.uk/more_forming_storming_norming_performing.html> accessed on 07/07/2011