

# Interpersonal Communication

Session #9 within "Self-in-Context" Unit



VETERANS



**ONWARD**

## Training Materials:

- Whiteboard and pens or flipchart and pens.
- Paper and pen for all participants.
- Print outs or links emailed to Assessment Tool resources:
  - Willingness to Communicate (WTC) which can be accessed at <https://www.midss.org/content/willingness-communicate-wtc>
- Access to online Listening Skills Test (LST) at <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/tests/personality/listening-skills-test>
- Print out of graphic from <https://www.mindtools.com/media/Images/Infographics/listening-skills-infographic.pdf>
- Means to access and show video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvEci5Bjgd4>

## Learning Objectives:

1. Recognise the complexity of interpersonal communication and the importance of both sending and receiving within interpersonal communication.
2. Name and describe different forms of listening, identify and apply strategies to assist with effective listening and complete assessment on own listening skills .
3. Name and describe different forms of non-verbal communication.
4. Apply and analyse listening and interpersonal communication skills in interactions with others.

## Training Script:

Hello everyone, how are you today? My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am going to be your tutor today for this training module on Interpersonal Communication. It is the ninth session within the unit called “Self-in-Context”. This module will take between 90 and 120 minutes to complete. It follows on from the previous session on Social Skills and Behaviours.

Before we look at today’s learning objectives, I’d like to set aside some time to have a conversation about anything that came up for you from last session on. We completed the “spaghetti and marshmallows” challenge which gave us plenty of chances to develop our soft skills. We learnt some of the theory of Social Skills and Behaviours and Group Dynamics. There may be something you want

to ask or discuss based on what we covered last session. We have 5 – 10 minutes now to discuss any points arising from last session.

[Allow 5 -10 minutes for this facilitated discussion as a whole group].

So, today's learning objectives. By the end of this module, my aim is that you will be able to:

1. Recognise the complexity of interpersonal communication and the importance of both sending and receiving within interpersonal communication.
2. Name and describe different forms of listening, identify and apply strategies to assist with effective listening and complete assessment on own listening skills.
3. Name and describe different forms of non-verbal communication.
4. Apply and analyse listening and interpersonal communication skills in interactions with others.

Let's make a start on learning objective 1:

- 1. Recognise the complexity of interpersonal communication and the importance of both sending and receiving within interpersonal communication.**

In our last session, we identified communication as an essential soft skill. Communication includes both listening to others and also conveying our own message to others. Communication can involve words – spoken and / or written. It can also be non-verbal, expressed through gesture, eye contact and body language. Ever since we uttered our first cry as a new-born baby, we've been communicating. Communication is essential for human relationships. Communication is how we get our needs met (think of the newborn baby) and how we express our thoughts and desires to others. It is how we can gain a better understanding and a sense of connection with others.

The dictionary defines “interpersonal” as:

*“connected with relationships between people”.*

And “communication” is defined as:

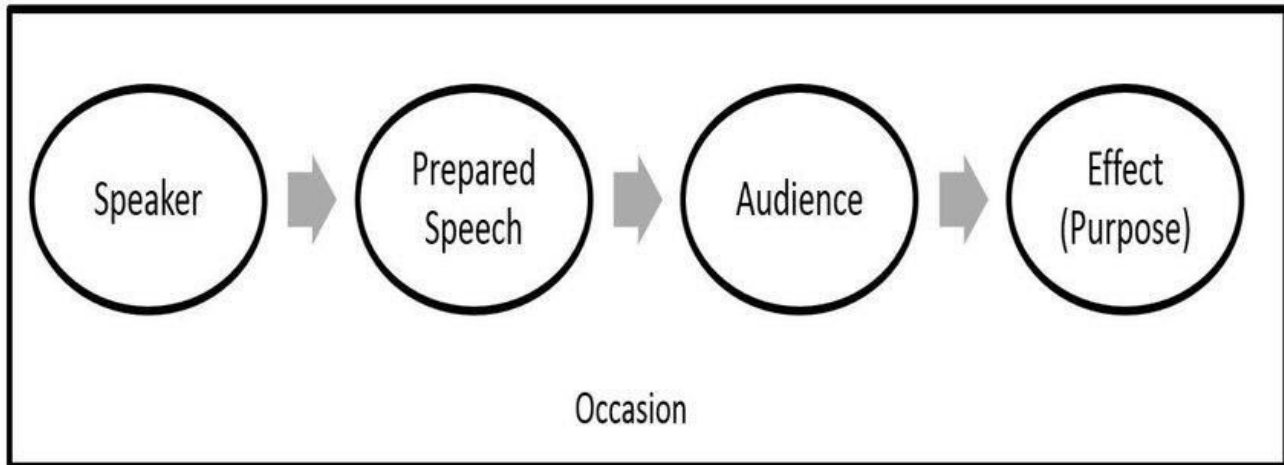
*“the exchange of information and the expression of feeling that can result in understanding”.*

In this way, all communication can be considered an interpersonal act – communication is the means of transmitting a message or information between people.

So, whilst it is true to say we have been communicating since birth, it is also true to say that communication is a complex process. To help us understand that, we will look at three theories or ways of thinking about interpersonal communication.

Firstly, let’s look at the **Aristotelian Model of Communication**:

Aristotle was an Ancient Greek philosopher from the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. He was interested in communication as “rhetoric”, or persuasion. He saw that communication that was effective needed to consider the audience and the occasion, and the desired effect of the communication. Once this was considered, it was then the responsibility of the speaker to craft a persuasive and well structured speech to communicate clearly the points they wished to make. In this model, communication is a linear process in which the audience of the “hearer(s)” is/are passive. (See figure 1). The speaker, the person delivering the communication is active and should consider the hearers needs to best communicate and convince the hearer of the speaker’s point.



*Figure 1: Aristotelian Model of Communication*

**Task:**

Consider your fellow learners today as your audience. Using the Aristotelian Model of Communication, create a brief and persuasive speech on which flavour of ice-cream is the best.

Take 3-5 minutes to prepare your speech.

Some of you will then have the opportunity to communicate your speech to us.

Remember that in the Aristotelian Model of Communication, persuasion matters: so think how you can convince your audience to achieve your desired effect. Think about the words you say and how you say them.

[Allow participants time to prepare their speech. Invite some to then perform their speech – allow for a facilitated discussion about what elements of the speeches were good examples of rhetoric, i.e. persuasive, and why. Allow up to 20 minutes in total for this task].

The second model or theory of communication we will cover is the **SMCR Model**:

The American communications theorist, David Berlo, created this model in 1960<sup>1</sup>.

The SMCR model explains the various components in the communication process. The four basic components are sender (or source), message, channel and receiver. As I describe Berlo's ideas, I will be the sender of information. I will be talking and explaining Berlo's ideas to you. As you listen, you will be in the role of receiver. The message I deliver will be the information about Berlo. The channel will be using spoken words, and body language and facial gestures.

### **S-Sender**

Sender is the source of the message or the person who originates the message and sends it to the receiver. The sender transfers the information using either writing, signalling or speaking. At this point, the sender's level of communication skills can directly affect the communication process. For example, if a sender has difficulty pronouncing words, then the communication may be less effective. Similarly, the attitude of the sender can affect the message. If I am bored of teaching you, I am less likely to be effective in my communication. The senders' confidence about the topic on which they are communicating can also impact the effectiveness of communication. Finally, cultural values and expectations can impact the sender's message. If a cultural expectation is that one person must not speak for any length of time, the sender's message is likely to be curtailed.

### **M-Message**

The step of creating a message (also called encoding) is the transformation of thoughts into words that the sender sends to the receiver. It can be in the form of voice, audio, text, video or other media.

### **C-Channel**

Channel refers to the medium used to send the message. In mass communication technical machines might be used as a channel like telephone, internet, etc. But in general communication, the five senses of a human being is the channel for the communication flow.

---

<sup>1</sup> Berlo, David (1960). [\*The process of communication. New York.\*](#) New York: Rinehart, & Winston.

## **R-Receiver**

Receiver is the person who gets the message and tries to understand what the sender actually wants to convey and then responds accordingly. This is also called decoding. Berlo's model believes that effective communication can be achieved if the sender and the receiver are on the same level. The message might not have the same effect as intended if the receiver and sender are not similar.

For effective communication, the receiver must also have a very good listening skill. In this way, the receiver, or the listener is less passive than in the Aristotelian Model.

## **Task:**

We are going to try using Berlo's **SMCR Model** to communicate what your morning has been like for you.

You will pair up with another participant, then take it in turns to be either the Speaker or the Receiver.

The Speaker will have 2 minutes to communicate what their morning has been like. As you do so, think about the 4 elements of the model. You may use any object or tools you have to hand in your communication.

[Ask participants to pair up.

Signal when the activity will start, and then the time at which participants should change roles.

Following the task, facilitate a group discussion about each of the 4 elements of Berlo's model. For example, did participants make use of any resources to help with the channel of communication?]

Our final model we will cover is called the **"I-Thou" model**.

The phrase "I-Thou" comes from the English translation of the title of a book by *Ich und Du*, by Martin Buber, an Austrian Jewish and Israeli philosopher. The book was published in 1923, and first translated from German to English in 1937.

Buber was interested in the idea of dialogue and encounter. Dialogue means to share words with another, to discuss. Encounter means to meet another. He believed it was by encountering others, and communicating with others that we can grow and develop as humans, particularly when we recognise the dynamic happening between ourselves and others when we meet them in a genuine encounter and dialogue with each other as “I”, not “it”. For Buber, we sometimes relate to others as if they are an “it”, and “object” that we need something from. That is sometimes useful, for example, when we need to buy a bus ticket from the driver: we need to engage in a transaction, and the bus driver is a means to an end. Sometime, however, we can choose to encounter and dialogue with others as “I”, not “it”: in this way we are interested in hearing from the other person with a respectful attitude of curiosity, an openness to what they might say, and how that might change and transform us. When we approach others in this way, we are encountering them as a “You” or a “Thou”, not an “it”. In Buber’s model, it is both the sender and the receiver who are central to the encounter: both play a mutually important role in creating something between them that is unique to that encounter, that relationship.

**Task:**

Take a moment to reflect on the difference between treating someone as an “it” and a “you”.

Then, form pairs with another participant.

For 5 minutes, you are aiming to have an “I-Thou” encounter, in which you dialogue and encounter another person. There will be no expectation that one person speaks, whilst the other listens, and then you swap. See what emerges between you as you dialogue. If you need a topic to speak on, try focusing on your favourite childhood memory. However, feel free to dialogue about whatever emerges for you in the encounter between you both. Aim to see the other person as a “you”, not an “it”.

[Allow 5 minutes for this task. Following this, facilitate a discussion about the task. Also ask participants which of the three models of interpersonal communication they preferred and why. Allow up to 10 minutes for his follow up discussion].



With these three models of interpersonal communication, we have seen that all models recognise the role of the speaker and the receiver. The models differ in how much importance or responsibility each model places on these roles for effective communication. Being willing to engage in the process of communication, either as speaker or listener, is central to all 3 models. With this in mind, I'd like to offer you a chance to complete a self-assessment of your own willingness to communicate. This measure is designed to increase self-awareness about our own attitudes to communication. The measure is called the Willingness to Communicate questionnaire, and, like other assessments we have completed within this unit, has been designed by psychologists. We are going to take 10 minutes to attempt this questionnaire and see what comes up for us as a result.

[Invite participants to access the questionnaire, which can be found <https://www.midss.org/content/willingness-communicate-wtc>. Following completion, lead participants in a 5-10-minute discussion of any insights they have gained about their own willingness to communicate].

Thankyou for that. It is now time to progress onto learning outcome 2:

**2. Name and describe different forms of listening, identify and apply strategies to assist with effective listening and complete assessment on own listening skills.**

**Task:**

I'd like us to take exactly 1 minute to listen. I am going to say very little about this task, other than I am setting the timer on my phone / clock for 1 -minute. I would like us all to listen in that minute.

[Set timer. Remain silent during the task, regardless of how participants behave / react / noise outside].

[When the timer bleeps, turn it off.....]

Thank you. I wonder how hard that was for you? And what you felt the purpose of the task was?

[Allow a couple of moments for participants to share their responses to these two questions].

Most people believe they are good listeners without considering the important differences between hearing and listening. The ability to hear is typically innate, but the ability to listen well is a skill that must be developed and practiced. Listening means paying attention and making a conscious effort to process what you hear. It is one of our most important skills and it is also one of the most overlooked. We often take our ability to listen for granted, even though it plays a major role in good communication.

There are three main types of listening most common in interpersonal communication. They are:

- o Informational Listening (Listening to Learn)
- o Critical Listening (Listening to Evaluate and Analyse)
- o Therapeutic or Empathetic Listening (Listening to Understand Feeling and Emotion).

When I asked you to listen just now, which were you engaged in? My guess is you were listening to find out what was happening around you, or outside the room. In other words, listening to learn. In our session today we are going to have a go at the other two forms of listening, and also look at some strategies to support effective listening.

Let's think about the idea of Critical Listening – that is, listening to Evaluate and Analyse. In this form of listening, you are employing your critical skills to compare and contrast what is being communicated by the speaker, with what you think and believe. This form of listening may be aided by the receiver asking pertinent questions to clarify the speaker's position.

We are going to give this form of listening a try.

**Task:**

In pairs, you will each have time to speak on a given topic. One of you will play the role of speaker and the other will be the receiver. You will have 2 minutes. The speaker will express their views and opinions. The receiver will be listening critically to see whether they agree; they will be evaluating and analysing what is said. They may ask some questions to clarify but should not share their views yet. The purpose is to listen.

After the two minutes, you will have a chance to swap roles.

The topic you will be speaking on is: "what is the best pudding / dessert in the world and why".

[Allow participants chance to pair up, then indicate when they should begin, and when they should swap roles.

[Allow 5 minutes for this task. Following this, facilitate a discussion about the task. Consider how hard or easy it was for participants to listen critically].

Before we move onto our final task to practice the final form of listening, I'd like us to learn some strategies to assist with effective listening.

The way to improve your listening skills is to practice "**active listening**." This is where you make a conscious effort to hear not only the words that another person is saying but, more importantly, the complete message being communicated.

In order to do this, you must pay attention to the other person very carefully.

You cannot allow yourself to become distracted by whatever else may be going on around you, or by forming counter arguments while the other person is still speaking – even if you are listening critically. Nor can you allow yourself to get bored, and lose focus on what the other person is saying.

If you're finding it particularly difficult to concentrate on what someone is saying, try repeating his or her words mentally as he says them – this will reinforce his message and help you to stay focused.

To enhance your listening skills, you need to let the other person know that you are listening to what she is saying. You can show this through your eye contact and your body language.

To understand the importance of this, ask yourself if you've ever been engaged in a conversation when you wondered if the other person was listening to what **you** were saying. You wonder if your message is getting across, or if it's even worthwhile continuing to speak. It feels like talking to a brick wall and it's something you want to avoid.

There are five key active listening techniques you can use to help you become a more effective listener:

### **1. Pay Attention**

Give the speaker your undivided attention, and acknowledge the message. Recognize that non-verbal communication also "speaks" loudly.

- Look at the speaker directly.
- Put aside distracting thoughts.
- Don't mentally prepare a rebuttal!
- Avoid being distracted by environmental factors. For example, side conversations.
- "Listen" to the speaker's body language

### **2. Show That You're Listening**

Use your own body language and gestures to show that you are engaged.

- Nod occasionally.
- Smile and use other facial expressions.
- Make sure that your posture is open and interested.

- Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments like yes, and "uh huh."

### **3. Provide Feedback**

Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments, and beliefs can distort what we hear. As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said. This may require you to reflect on what is being said and to ask questions.

- Reflect on what has been said by paraphrasing. "What I'm hearing is... ," and "Sounds like you are saying... ," are great ways to reflect back.
- Ask questions to clarify certain points. "What do you mean when you say... ." "Is this what you mean?"
- Summarize the speaker's comments periodically.

### **4. Defer Judgment**

Interrupting is a waste of time. It frustrates the speaker and limits full understanding of the message.

- Allow the speaker to finish each point before asking questions.
- Don't interrupt with counter arguments.

### **5. Respond Appropriately**

Active listening is designed to encourage respect and understanding. You are gaining information and perspective. You add nothing by attacking the speaker or otherwise putting him or her down.

- Be candid, open and honest in your response.
- Assert your opinions respectfully.
- Treat the other person in a way that you think she would want to be treated.

The graphic below (figure 2) offers a helpful summary of active listening skills:

# Listening Skills

Hear What People Are Really Saying

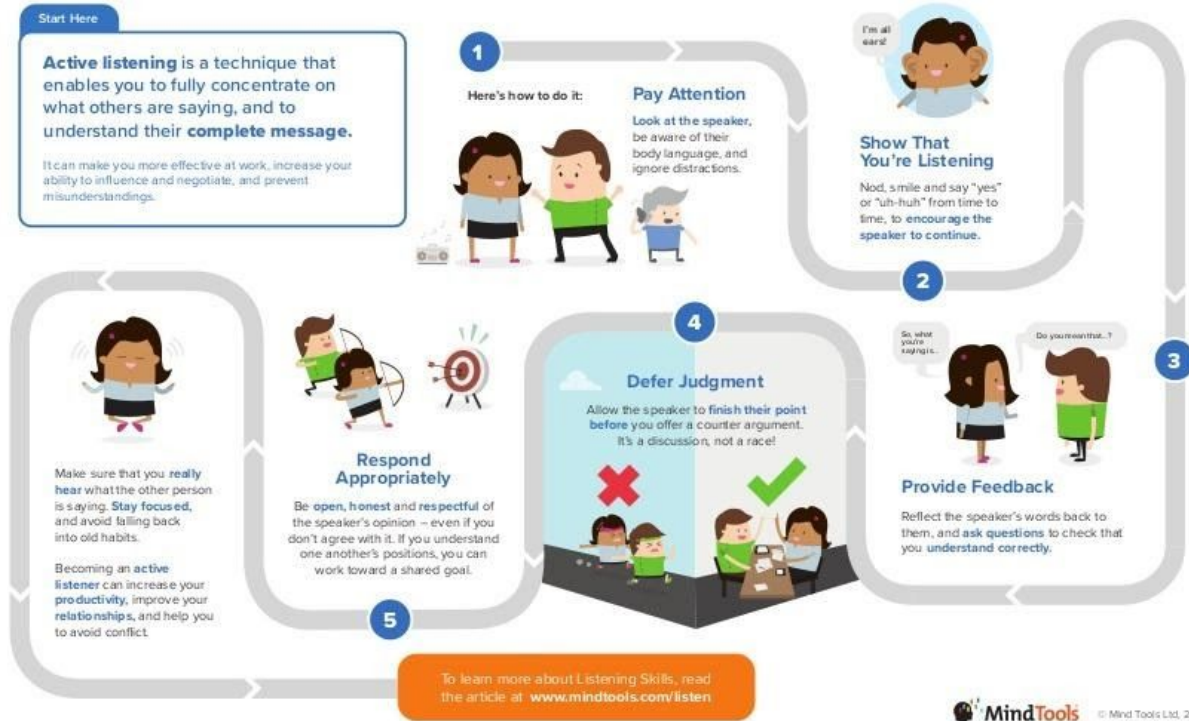


Figure 2: Active Listening Skills.

So, with all those tips in mind about active listening, we are going to try an exercise designed to give us some chance to practice that third form of listening: Therapeutic or Empathetic Listening which is listening to understand feeling and emotion.

## Task:

You will be in pairs again. You will have 5 minutes each to be the speaker whilst the other person is the receiver. Your aim as the receiver is to practice active listening and show that you have “received” or heard what the speaker is telling you about their feeling and emotion. The receiver will need to show that they are listening, respond appropriately and provide feedback.

Let me give you a chance to pair up and decide who will be the speaker first.

[Allow participants chance to do this].

The topic I'd like you to speak about is "how you felt on your first day of school".

[Indicate to participants when to start, and when they should swop roles. Following this, facilitate a 5-minute discussion about the task. Consider how hard or easy it was for participants to actively listen to understand feeling and emotion].

Our final task for this objective is to have a further opportunity to develop self-awareness by attempting a simple questionnaire, known as a listening skills test. This is an online resource and can be accessed at Access to online Listening Skills Test (LST) at

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/tests/personality/listening-skills-test>

[Depending on time allowance, this could be completed by participants in their own time].

We are going to move onto learning outcome 3 now:

### **3. Name and describe different forms of non-verbal communication.**

If you have been to a foreign country where you do not speak much, if any, of the language, you may have observed that you can still underrate something that others communicate by their tone or pitch of voice, their facial gesture and their body language. For example, it's possible to tell if someone is angry, no matter what language they speak. These forms of communication are known as non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication helps people to:

- Reinforce or modify what is said in words.

For example, people may nod their heads vigorously when saying "Yes" to emphasise that they agree with the other person. A shrug of the shoulders and a sad expression when saying "I'm fine, thanks" may actually imply that things are not really fine at all!

- Convey information about their emotional state.

Your facial expression, your tone of voice, and your body language can often tell people exactly how you feel, even if you have hardly said a word. Consider how often you have said to someone,

*“Are you OK? You look a bit down.”*

We know how people feel from their non-verbal communication.

- Define or reinforce the relationship between people.

If you have ever watched a couple sitting talking, you may have noticed that they tend to ‘mirror’ each other’s body language. They hold their hands in similar positions, they smile at the same time, and they turn to face each other more fully. These movements reinforce their relationship: they build on their rapport, and help them to feel more connected.

- Provide feedback to the other person.

Smiles and nods tell someone that you are listening and that you agree with what they are saying. Movement and hand gestures may indicate that you wish to speak. These subtle signals give information gently but clearly.

- Regulate the flow of communication

There are a number of signals that we use to tell people that we have finished speaking, or that we wish to speak. An emphatic nod, and firm closing of the lips indicates that we have nothing more to say, for example. Making eye contact with the chair of a meeting and nodding slightly will indicate that you wish to speak.

Non-verbal communication may also be both conscious and unconscious. Facial expressions are particularly hard to control, because we cannot see ourselves to know what we are doing. We may,



therefore complicate communication by trying to convey one message consciously, while in fact conveying quite another unconsciously.

Interpersonal communication is further complicated because it is usually not possible to interpret a gesture or expression accurately on its own. Non-verbal communication consists of a complete package of expressions, hand and eye movements, postures, and gestures which should be interpreted along with speech (verbal communication).

Let's take a look at some common forms of non-verbal communication and what they might mean in different cultures:

1. The thumbs-up gesture, which generally signals approval in English-speaking countries, is considered offensive in other countries, including Greece, Italy and some parts of the Middle East.



Making a circle with your thumb and forefinger like this means OK in Western cultures. It is used in particular by divers in this way. In Japan, however, it is reputedly the sign for money, and in Arabic countries, it is a threat.

And, this video is a great example of some non-verbal communication through facial gestures:

Watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvEci5Bjgd4>

I hope you enjoyed that. So, finally. Let's name and describe some of the different types of non-verbal communication. They include:

- **Body movements (kinesics)**, for example, hand gestures or nodding or shaking the head, which are often the easiest element of non-verbal communication to control;
- **Posture**, or how you stand or sit, whether your arms are crossed, and so on;
- **Eye contact**, where the amount of eye contact often determines the level of trust and trustworthiness;
- **Para-language**, or aspects of the voice apart from speech, such as pitch, tone, and speed of speaking;
- **Closeness or personal space (proxemics)**, which determines the level of intimacy, and which varies very much by culture;
- **Facial expressions**, including smiling, frowning and blinking, which are very hard to control consciously. Interestingly, the broad facial expressions that show strong emotions, such as fear, anger, and happiness, are the same throughout the world; and
- **Physiological changes**, for example, you may sweat or blink more when you are nervous, and your heart rate is also likely to increase. These are almost impossible to control consciously and are therefore a very important indicator of mental state.

We are ready to move onto our final objective for this session, which allows us to put into practice our learning from the session. Learning objective 4 is:

- 4. Apply and analyse listening and interpersonal communication skills in interactions with others.**

**Task:**

We will be working in groups of 3 for this task. So, I am going to ask you to form groups of 3.

You will have a chance to play different roles over the course of the task. Speaker, receiver and observer.

The speaker's role will be to communicate their thoughts and feelings on a given topic, using as many of the tips and strategies for communication that we have covered today as possible.

The receiver's role will be to actively listen, using as many of the listening strategies that we have covered today as possible.

The observer's role is to notice what is happening between the speaker and receiver. At the end of the 3 minutes that the speaker and listener have, the observer will take 2 minutes to describe the strategies for communication that they observed.

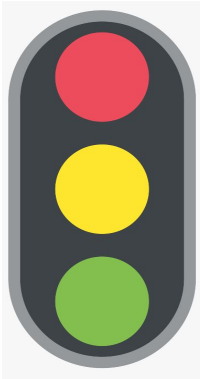
At the end of this process, you will swap roles, so you all have a chance to experience each of the three roles.

The topic the speaker will be communicating on each time is as follows: What do I want to achieve or do in my life over the next 10 years.

[Allow participants time to form groups and allocate initial roles. Indicate when it is time for the speaker to begin. Allow 3 minutes before stopping the groups and inviting the observer to provide 2 minutes of feedback. Then ask groups to swap roles and repeat the process for a second, and then a third time].

[Following this, facilitate a group discussion about what strategies for communication were observed during this task].

So, finally, using a simple traffic light system, I'd like you to evaluate your own learning today. For each objective, you are going to decide whether you feel you are:



<b>RED / STOP</b>	You have made no progress in learning this and are still at a "standstill."
<b>AMBER</b>	You have some understanding but aren't quite ready to apply it yet.
<b>GREEN / GO</b>	You have a good grasp of this objective and are ready to go and apply this learning in the real world.

1. Recognise the complexity of interpersonal communication and the importance of both sending and receiving within interpersonal communication.

**RED** **AMBER** **GREEN**

2. Name and describe different forms of listening, identify and apply strategies to assist with effective listening and complete assessment on own listening skills.

**RED** **AMBER** **GREEN**

3. Name and describe different forms of non-verbal communication.

**RED** **AMBER** **GREEN**

4. Apply and analyse listening and interpersonal communication skills in interactions with others.

**RED** **AMBER** **GREEN**

What do you want to do as a result of your learning today?

Thank you to everyone for your engagement and participation in the session. I hope you have learnt some useful ideas that can be applied in your daily life.