

II. COMMUNICATION

It is important not only to know what you want to say, but also how to do it. Good communication must be simple and effective and you always have to make sure that the other person has understood your message. Hopefully the following exercises will help you improving the communication skills of the Chic & Craft peer mentors and thus the relation with the rest of the group.

II.1. HANDS TALKS

Abilities reinforced: Body language practice, expressiveness, inventiveness, observation, expressing feelings, facial expression.

Description: Ask the participants to form pairs (preferably the pair's members won't know one another very good). Ask the pairs to sit down facing each other and stay still, observing each other in silence. Invite them to hold their hands in a sign of saying "hello" to the partner. Next step, explain the participants that you are going to give them a series of instructions of what to transmit with their hands to each other.

The states of mind to transmit could be: - Joy - Tenderness - Domination -Submission - Vitality - Passivity - Arrogance - Shyness - Contained discontent - Sadness - Contempt - Acceptance.

Once they are finished, ask the participants to try and handle a conversation using their hands only.

To finish the activity ask the group members to close their eyes and think of what they have experienced.



Suggestions: The way of sharing the sensations can be conducted by means of touch or could be mimicked with hands of the participants detached. You can try two ways so that the participants may compare the sensations produced by each version of the exercise.

Instead of working in pairs, this exercise can be done as a whole group exercise, just bear in mind the characteristics of your group to decide the most appropriated organization.

Sometimes the participants can express also with their faces, even unintentionally, the participants can cover their faces with a cloth so there is no other way but use their hands. It is a way to make it a little bit more complicated.

This exercise is very interesting to make us aware about the difficulties when trying to communicate our feelings.





II.2. LEARN MY LANGUAGE

Abilities reinforced: Non-verbal communication- body language control.

Materials: Music player.

Description: Only for big groups. Inform the participants that you are going to play a song and ask them to walk all over the room whilst the music is being played. Every time the music stops, the participants should come together (in pairs, trios or any other number you stipulate) and talk to each other in a spontaneously made up language on the following subjects:

- Greet everyone.
- Ask and answer about the time.
- Picture the weather.
- Explain the last movie he/she has seen.
- Share one's concerns about the economic crisis.
- Set the time to go out for a drink.
- Decide on common vacations.

When the activity is finished, ask the participants how it felt to use an imaginary language; was it easy or difficult to understand each other; why was it easy/difficult; how did they try to make up for the lack of verbal understanding.





II.3. PAPER FOLDING

Abilities reinforced: Effective instructions giving, attentive listening and abstract thinking, understanding of diversity, communication.

Materials: Sheets of paper.

Description: Give each participant a sheet of paper. Tell everyone to close their eyes (you can also have the participants blindfolded) and follow your instructions. Start giving instructions about what to do with the piece of paper, i.e.: fold the paper in half- fold the lower left corner over the upper right corner- turn it 90 degrees to the left- fold it in half again- rip a half circle in the middle of the right side, etc.

Once you have given quite a few instructions, tell everyone to open their eyes and unfold their piece of paper. Invite the participants to look around and see the forms that the sheets of their colleagues have taken. Ask them why, in their opinion, the sheets took very different forms. You may suggest that the differences start from the very beginning given the difference in starting positions- probably some held their piece of paper vertically and the others held it horizontally. This might be extrapolated to the Chic&Craft training, since not all participants will have the same previous knowledge of sewing etc. Some interpreted to rip a piece of paper as removing a big piece, some as a small piece, we all see and interpret instructions differently, this highlights the necessity of our peer mentors to be clear in their instruction(communication). Some instructions appear vague to some and clear to others. Having eyes closed during the activity is equal to not receiving feedback during a task- if we cannot assess our progress as we go along we have no idea where we will end up; this highlights the importance of feedback from our peer to peer mentors to those they are teaching, and how encouragement, and continuous input is necessary.





II.4. FOLLOW MY WORDS

Abilities reinforced: Two-way communication, imagination, abstract thinking, concentration, ability of giving accurate and precise instructions, becoming a good listener, distinguishes the terms (vertically, horizontally, left and right), motoric skills.

Material: Pretzel sticks (skinny, small ones), paper towels.

Description: Ask the participants to pair up with another person and sit back to back. Place a paper towel down flat in front of each person. Give each person 10-15 pretzels. Ask the pair to choose who will be the communicator and who will be the receiver. The communicator will go first and make a design/shape on their paper towel. They will then explain their design/shape one pretzel stick at a time. Example: "I placed my first pretzel stick vertical in the middle of the towel". The receiver of the information shall follow the instructions placing his/her stick as explained. He/she cannot ask any questions to clarify the instructions they are receiving. Once the activity is completed, invite the team members to look and see how well they match. Now it is time to switch roles. The receiver now becomes the communicator, but this time the receiver CAN clarify and ask questions.





Some questions proposed for the subsequent reflection and debate are: What was it like to follow directions and not be able to ask questions? Did you find yourself getting frustrated? Discuss what it was like to be able to talk? Why was this easier? Which is better one-way or two-way communication? Why?

Suggestions: You can use colour sticks instead of pretzels. It can be difficult to some people to clearly give/understand the instructions, so it is worthy that you repeat this exercise several times. The trainer can show how to implement this exercises putting in the place of someone giving the instructions in the first place.

The participants will be surprised about how differently we understand the same things and how important is to explain everything as exactly as possible.





II.5. FOOTBALL DEERS

Abilities reinforced: Attentive listening, open-mindedness, non-stereotypical way of thinking, concentration.

Description: Tell participants that you are going to read them a brief story that ends with a question related to it, so they should listen carefully.

The story is as follows: *Two deers chat about football while sitting on a lag. The little deer is the big deer's son. The big deer, though, isn't little deer's father. How is this possible?*

The answer is: The big deer is the little deer's mother. If there were wrong responses, ask the participants what's the cause of that. It's a good moment to lead a dialogue about preconceptions that may often distort the way one sees the reality, leading to wrong conclusions.

Suggestions: You may ask the participants to give out loud responses or, otherwise, to write down each one's own response on a sheet of paper before sharing it with whole group- this latter option will give all the participants the enough time to come up with the solution.





II.6. DOODLE AND DESCRIBE

Abilities reinforced: Effective communication, observation, listening.

Materials: Cards containing simple diagrams placed in different positions on pieces of paper, sheets of paper, crayons.

Description: Ask one member of the group to come out and show him one card, explaining that he/she has to describe what is on the card to the fellow group members. The name or use of the object is forbidden from being employed in the description, solely visual elements of the diagram such as shape, size, and positioning. The other members of the group must try and draw as accurate a representation of what is on the card as possible.

This exercise requires clear communication, specific descriptive language and imparting of information as accurately as possible. It will highlight specific skills needed when mentoring and imparting knowledge to others. It also requires careful listening and deciphering skills from the other participants.





II.7. WHISPERS IN THE WIND

Abilities reinforced: Communication, attention, correct pronunciation, concentration, memory.

Description: To start the game, participants should stand in a line, or a circle. One person begins the game by whispering a sentence to the person after them. This sentence should be prepared beforehand, by someone moderating the game, but it should only be known to the person starting the game. The person who received the messages should then whisper it to the person after them, and so on.

By the time it gets to the final person in the group, they should say the message aloud. The first person will read the sentence they were given, and participants can note how much the two have changed. It's very unlikely, especially in large groups, that the message has not been altered at least a little bit.

Suggestions: In a bigger group you will find more deviations and the exercise will be even funnier. This exercise uses to have a relaxing effect on the participants.





II.8. SELECTIVE LISTENING

Selective listening is the act of hearing and interpreting only parts of a message that seem relevant to you, while ignoring or devaluing the rest. Often, selective listeners will form arguments before they've heard the full story, making them not only poor listeners, but poor speakers too!

Abilities reinforced: Attention, communication, memory.

Description: To confront this in a group environment, one moderator should compose a list of objects or ideas, all similar in theme. For example: turkey, lettuce, tomato, mayo, mustard, cheese, etc. These are all sandwich components, and most people will recognize this. The list should be relatively long, maybe 15 to 20 words, and have some repeated words. For example: turkey, lettuce, tomato, mayo, mustard, cheese, ham, lettuce, pickles, onion, olives, lettuce...The moderator should read this list to the group, and then allot them 30 seconds to write down as many words as they can remember. Most people will remember the word that was repeated the most, and a notable amount will most likely write down words that were obvious, but not actually stated in the list. For example: bread, sandwich or food.

Suggestions: You can write down different words related to a larger term, for instance "sewing: tailoring, fabric, pin, needle, etc.)".

This dynamic can be helpful to understand why in some situations we do not hear each other and also to be aware about dangerous is thinking "*I know the end*".

This exercise can work as an energizer one.