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Getting Through to People

Objectives

1. Participants will understand how nonverbal messages impact effective communication.
2. Participants will identify roadblocks to effective communication.
3. Participants will learn and rehearse strategies for saying “No” within relationships.

Rationale

Improving interpersonal communication requires that people examine personal styles and patterns that may interfere with effectiveness. Refusal, or saying “No” without damaging a relationship, is one area of communication that women often identify as anxiety-producing. This lesson helps women explore the impact of nonverbal messages and habitually used words and phrases that hamper communication. This provides a background for discovering and practicing effective methods of refusal.

Materials



- > Easel and paper flip chart or chalkboard
- > Pencils; magic markers; masking tape; paper
- > Overhead transparencies:
 - Communication Roadblocks*
- > Handouts:
 - Tips for Effective Refusal*
 - > Role Play scripts (p. 64-65)
 - > Role Play situations (p. 67)
 - > *Steps for I-Messages* charts from Session 2
 - > **Session Evaluations**
- > Refreshments

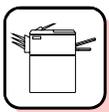
Prepare Before Class



For the *It Goes Without Saying* exercise, prepare slips using some of the feeling words listed below. Use a magic marker to write one feeling on each slip of paper. **You will also need a basket, box, hat, or paper bag from which participants can draw out a slip of paper.**

NERVOUS
FEARFUL
HAPPY
GUILTY
SUSPICIOUS
BORED
SHOCKED

ANGRY
SHY
CONFUSED
OUTRAGED
AMUSED
EMBARRASSED



Make copies of the following materials for each group member:

Communication Roadblocks (pp. 69-77)

Tips for Effective Refusal (p. 78)

Role Play scripts (p. 64-65)

Role Play situations (p. 67)

Session Evaluation (pp. 79-80)

**Prepare Before
Class**



TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE REFUSAL

Use a sheet of flip chart paper to write out the tips listed below:

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE REFUSAL

BEGIN WITH THE WORD "NO"

AVOID EXCUSES OR APOLOGIZING

USE I-MESSAGES

OFFER ALTERNATIVES

ASK FOR TIME TO THINK (when needed)

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR
BODY LANGUAGE

The discussion guide for this chart begins on page 61.

Procedure

1

Welcome members to the group as they arrive. When everyone is seated, go around the room and ask members to introduce themselves. Go around the room again and ask members to share their responses to this question: “If you could spend one hour with a famous person, past or present, who would it be and why?” Thank members for their participation.

2

Ask for a volunteer to discuss the issues that were covered in the previous session. Thank the volunteer.



3

Use flip chart sheets from the first session to briefly go over the *Group Goals* and the *Group Agreement* (as needed).

4

Tell the group that today’s session will continue to explore effective communication in relationships. The session will explore some ideas and skills that can help us become better at “getting through” to people. In other words, getting our ideas, thoughts and needs across to others. Explain that the emphasis today will be nonverbal communication, how to prevent roadblocks when we communicate, and how to say “No” effectively. Involve members by asking the following questions:

Discussion Guide

Have you ever been really confused by someone’s reaction to what you were saying? For example, you thought you were being nice and the person took it the wrong way? (Request examples)

Have you ever felt that a friend was holding back his/her **true** feelings? For example, you asked, “What’s wrong?” and the person said, “Nothing,” but somehow you just didn’t believe that “nothing” was wrong? (Request examples)

Do you ever feel guilty or selfish if you decide to say “No” to someone you really care about? Do you have a hard time saying “No” to some people? (Request examples)

5 **Thank members for participating.** Tell them these are the kinds of issues that will be discussed today, starting with nonverbal communication. Share with them the quote: “We cannot NOT communicate.” Ask for their ideas about what the statement means.

6 **Explain that communication is something that begins long before we ever say a word to someone.** We communicate with our bodies as well as our words. Ask the group for some examples. You may want to lead by providing a few examples first, or modeling some strong nonverbal messages and asking members to tell you the meanings. For example: shaking a closed fist; turning your back on someone; sticking your tongue out; shooting the finger.



7 **Note that part of being human is our ability to read other people’s body language.** Introduce the *It Goes Without Saying* exercise by noting that it provides an opportunity to think about and get in touch with how people communicate nonverbally.

IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING. . .

Place slips of paper with feeling words in a hat or paper bag. Ask members to choose a slip of paper from the “hat” that you are passing around.

Tell them to take a few minutes to study and think about the feeling that is written on the slip of paper. Ask them to imagine all the times they have felt this way, or have realized that another person was feeling that way. Ask them to concentrate on the nonverbal signals or messages that people use to convey the feeling.

Ask for volunteers to “play” their feeling, while the others guess what it is. Remind the players that the exercise is nonverbal; they are not to speak or say anything that would give the others a clue. Have several volunteers “play” their feelings, then stop and discuss the exercise. (You may find it helpful to compare the exercise to the game “Charades.”)

Process using the following questions:

***Discussion
Guide***

Was it easy or hard to “play” the feeling? Was it easy or hard to guess the feeling? Why or why not?

Did you like some of the body language that was used? How would you feel if someone you were communicating with behaved like _____ did? (Use examples from feelings play.)

Sometimes people’s nonverbal messages are unconscious (they aren’t aware they are sending them), and sometimes people are **very** aware of the nonverbal message they are sending. Can you think of examples of each?

How can being aware of body language or nonverbal messages help us communicate more effectively?



8

Use the following information to do a brief mini-lecture about EFFECTIVE NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION. Model the behavior you are discussing and give examples. Use a chalkboard or flip chart to list the key issues. Discuss each point and ask for participants’ input.

***Effective
Nonverbal
Communication
Discussion Guide***

When we communicate, we speak with our words, our bodies, and our actions. Often, the words we say are less important than the way we say them. In fact, facial expressions, tone of voice, and gestures are the primary ways through which we communicate our meanings and feelings. For example, if someone frowns, speaks in a gruff voice, and pounds their fist on the table — you will feel pretty sure they are angry or upset, even if they say with words that they aren’t.

In order to communicate effectively, our body language should match our words. If a speaker attempts to tell us that she feels happy about something, yet while she speaks she sighs, looks sad, and chews on her

nails — will we really believe that she is happy? We probably won't believe her because her words and body language don't match.

When we use I-Messages to assert our needs and feelings, our body language should reflect that we believe we have the right to express ourselves. Here are some nonverbal pointers to keep in mind:

When we use I-Messages to assert our needs and feelings, our body language should reflect that we believe we have the right to express ourselves.

Make Eye Contact

Look at the person with whom you are speaking. If you are comfortable, maintain steady, but friendly eye contact. However, don't try to stare down the other person. Avoid looking away, looking down at your hands or feet or looking to the sides. Maintaining eye contact takes practice. Try focusing on a spot between the person's eyes or looking into just one of their eyes. Another tip is to let your eyes watch the other person's face. Eye contact helps you appear confident and also provides you with information about the other person's feelings and meaning.

Posture, Gestures, Facial Expression

Effective communication is helped if we pay attention to keeping our posture straight, yet relaxed and open. Avoid slumped shoulders, crossed arms, and slouching down in a chair. Gestures should accentuate what we are saying. Facial expressions should match the content of what we are saying. For the most part, the most effective expression is open, friendly, and interested. A useful tip is to use a mirror to watch your facial expressions while talking with a friend on the telephone. Pay attention to making your facial expression match your mood and meaning as you talk.

Voice Tone and Volume

An effective speaking voice is strong without being overly loud. The tone should be open and pleasant, with appropriate emphasis and enthusiasm. A tape recorder can be useful in helping you learn to add volume and variety to your speaking voice. Work on removing "uh" and "you know" from your speaking style as these expressions can make you appear to lack confidence. Also avoid rapid, nonstop delivery of your message. Work toward developing a crisp, fluent, and enthusiastic speaking style.

Listening

Listening, and communicating to someone that you are listening, is an integral part of effective communication. We express that we are listening nonverbally by paying attention to the other person, nodding, maintaining eye contact, and using appropriate facial expressions to indicate interest and understanding.

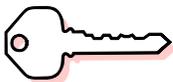
Other Factors

There are other types of nonverbal communication that may impact how others perceive us. For example, how we dress, the type of jewelry we wear, punctuality, or even where we choose to sit in a classroom. Consider a man wearing a silky shirt, tight leather pants with five heavy gold chains around his neck. What type of nonverbal message is he sending out? Consider a person who always arrives late to a meeting? What kind of nonverbal message is conveyed by always being late? What about the person who always chooses to sit right up front in a class?

Everything about us — our eyes, our facial expressions, our voice, our style of dress, our posture — is involved in communication. By becoming aware of this fact, we can use these attributes to help us communicate more effectively.

9

Thank members for participating. Briefly summarize **EFFECTIVE NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION** using the following points:



KEY POINT: It's important to pay attention to body language or nonverbal messages if we want to communicate effectively. If we have trouble getting through to someone, it's a good idea to check out our body language to see what kind of message we are sending.

KEY POINT: We can avoid a lot of confusion and frustration if we try to match our body language to our words. When there is a discrepancy, people will believe the nonverbal over the verbal.

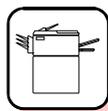
KEY POINT: If we notice that another person's body language is "speaking" differently than their words, we can increase communication effectiveness by checking it out. Example: "You say everything is fine, but you sure look unhappy."

10

Encourage participants to pay close attention to their own and other people's body language in the coming week.

11

Explain that there are things that we all do from time to time that can sabotage our efforts at effective communication. Point out that we don't do these things intentionally. Often, we are doing them out of habit. These **communication roadblocks** result in a lack of effective communication because they cause people to stop listening, become angry or defensive, or in some cases, lose respect for the speaker.



12

Use overheads of *Communication Roadblocks* (pp. 69-77) to discuss the topic in detail. Distribute handouts. As each item is discussed, ask participants to reflect on how they react when these kinds of messages are aimed at them.

Communication Roadblocks Discussion Guide

NAME-CALLING/LABELING: *First of all, it is disrespectful of another's personal rights. If you call people names, or put labels on them, sooner or later they will stop listening to you.*

GENERALIZING/ANALYZING: *Generalizing means using words like "always" and "never." For example: "You're always late." or "You never help me around the house." Analyzing often sounds like "Let me tell you what your problem is" or "The trouble with you is that you never listen." Most people will tune you out the minute you start a sentence this way.*

BLAMING/JUDGING: *This is an excellent way to destroy relationships. Even when people have made a mistake, they don't like to have it rubbed in. Blaming is very likely to cause people to react defensively, and that shuts down communications.*

COMPLAINING/WHINING/NAGGING: *This is a major turn-off for most people. Complaining, nagging, or whining WILL NOT make people change or do things the way you want.*

ACCUSING/THREATENING/DEMANDING: *These messages are bound to make people hostile and defensive, and it will be impossible to communicate with them.*

YELLING/SCREAMING/HITTING/USING PROFANITY:

When we do this, the likely response is that people will yell, scream, hit, and use profanity back at us. This is called a fight, not effective communication.

MORALIZING/USING “SHOULDs”/“OUGHTs”: *Remember how you felt the last time someone said to you: “You really should eat more fiber.” or “You ought to try fixing your hair differently.” It makes us feel like people are bossing us around, so we tune them out.*

NOT LISTENING/INTERRUPTING: *This may be the thing that destroys communication the fastest. When we feel like people aren’t listening to us, we become frustrated and we shut down. If we aren’t willing to listen to others, we shouldn’t be surprised if they stop listening to us.*

SARCASM/HUMORING: *Sarcasm and humoring are similar in that they both cause the person at which they are aimed to feel put-down and not taken seriously.*



13

Ask members if there are other roadblocks that need to be on the list. Go back over the list and ask the group for ideas on alternates to communication roadblocks. Make a list on flip chart paper or the chalkboard. Thank members for participating.

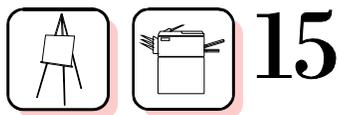
14

Introduce refusal as a skill that most of us have had trouble mastering at one time or another. Ask members to help you generate a list of people and situations that they often have trouble refusing. Point out that these should not be willpower issues; these are things that they really want to say “No” to but have trouble because of their relationship with the requestor. For discussion ask:

Discussion Guide

Why is it difficult to say “No” to some people?

What feelings are involved in saying “No” to those we care about? In saying “No” to strangers?



Tips for Effective Refusal Discussion Guide

Use the prepared flip chart of *Tips for Effective Refusal* (p. 53) to lead a discussion based on the information below. Distribute handouts (p. 78). Stress the importance of body language and using I-Messages to communicate effectively when refusing a request.

1. BEGIN WITH THE WORD “NO.”

When you begin with the word “No,” you give a clear, straight message. It is difficult to argue with a straight “No,” plus it is honest and there is no confusion about your meaning. Most people prefer and respect a straight refusal. Occasionally, you may find some requestors who feel disappointed or even angry — but that’s not your problem. Remember, they are entitled to their feelings, and you are entitled to say “No” whenever you want.

2. AVOID GIVING EXCUSES OR APOLOGIZING.

Sometimes we feel we need to spare other people’s feelings by creating excuses for our refusals or apologizing profusely. These tactics can dilute the refusal or even create resentment in the requestor. There are alternatives that may work better for preserving important relationships. For example, rather than saying, “Gosh, I’m sorry I can’t go out with you tonight,” we might say “No, I can’t go out with you tonight, but I really appreciate the invitation. Maybe next week?” Remember, too, that an **excuse** is different from an **explanation**. For people we care about, we may choose to refuse in a direct manner, then follow with a truthful explanation concerning the reason.

3. USE I-MESSAGES.

Using I-Messages helps keep you in control and responsible for the refusal. Remember, it is very difficult to argue with an I-Message. For example, “No, I don’t want to go to the park this afternoon”; “No, I don’t feel comfortable loaning you my car”; or “No, thanks, I want to spend the time at home tonight.” I-Messages are also useful for helping you be firm and direct with people who don’t want to take “No” for an answer. With persistent requestors, you may want to simply repeat your refusal I-Message until they get the idea.

4. OFFER ALTERNATIVES WHEN APPROPRIATE.

Effective refusal is about stating your true feelings and needs when someone asks you to do something. It’s also about preserving relationships that are important to you. When someone you care about makes a request that you don’t want to do, you may want to

offer an alternative suggestion. For example, “No, Mary, I don’t want to baby-sit for you tonight. I’ve already made plans for the evening. I’ll be home tomorrow night, though, if that would work for you;” or “No, I don’t want to go to the party tonight, but I’d love to have you drop by on your way for a quick visit.”

5. ASK FOR TIME TO THINK WHEN YOU NEED IT.

Very few things in life require an immediate decision. If you feel unsure or uneasy about a request, ask for a little time to think it over. For example, “Gee, Mary, I hadn’t really thought about the idea of going out of town this weekend. Let me think about it and I’ll call you back.” By asking for thinking time you can clarify your own feelings about what you want to do. It’s important, however, to get back in touch with the requestor, otherwise you may hurt the relationship.

6. WATCH YOUR BODY LANGUAGE.

Pay attention to such things as eye contact, posture, and tone of voice. An effective refusal is polite, yet direct, strong, and firm. The requestor should both see and hear that you are serious about the refusal. Avoid looking down, mumbling, or speaking softly. It may be helpful to practice effective refusal techniques with a friend or in front of the mirror until you become comfortable.

16

As you discuss strategies for refusal, mention the following points:

- ❖ Refusing and not feeling guilty is a personal right.
- ❖ Refusal is not rejection.
- ❖ Refusal is positive. It shows you respect your own limits.
- ❖ You can love someone and still not do everything the person asks of you.
- ❖ Saying “No” can preserve relationships by keeping you from feeling resentful. We are likely to feel resentment when we agree to do something that we really don’t want to do.



17

Invite members to join in some practice for saying “No.” Ask for volunteers to read or “play parts” in the refusal scripts. Request two volunteers for Script #1 (p. 64) and two for Script #2 (p. 65). Have them read the scripts, stopping after each one for discussion.

After Script #1 is read, discuss the following points:

Discussion Guide

Was this an effective refusal? Why or why not?

What feelings are each of these players likely to experience?

After Script #2 is read, discuss the following points:

Discussion Guide

Was this an effective refusal? Why?

If someone was going to refuse your request, which refusal style would you prefer? Why?



MARY: Hey, Joan. I was wondering if I could borrow your car this afternoon. I have some errands to run.

JOAN: Uh..well, gee, Mary. The car isn't very clean right now...There's junk all over the seats.

MARY: Oh, that's okay. I don't mind at all.

JOAN: Well, I was thinking I'd take the kids for a drive this evening.

MARY: Come on, Joan. You can take the kids riding anytime. These errands I need to run are really important.

JOAN: Well, uh..you know, the tires are low and the air conditioning hasn't been running good lately.

MARY: Don't worry. I'll put some air in the tires, no problem. How about if I pick it up at 3:00?

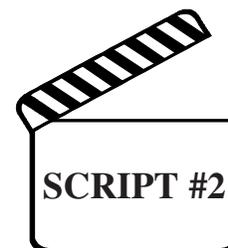
JOAN: Well, uh..I don't know, Mary. I may need the car.

MARY: Okay, sure. I'll pick it up around 4:00 then, okay?

JOAN: Uh..okay.

When Mary shows up at 4:00 to pick up the car, Joan says:

JOAN: I'm sorry, Mary. I've changed my mind. I can't let you use the car because I'm going over to visit Bob. Hope you understand. Sorry...



MARY: Hey, Joan. Can I borrow your car this afternoon? I have some errands to run.

JOAN: No, Mary, I need my car this afternoon. I promised my kids I'd take them for a ride and I don't want to let them down.

MARY: You can take your kids riding anytime. These errands I need to run are really important.

JOAN: I don't want to loan you my car today. I've already made plans. I can let you borrow it for a few hours tomorrow morning.

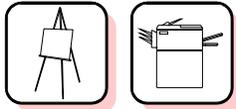
MARY: I guess that will work out. Thanks. I'll pick the car up at your house about 9:00, okay?

JOAN: Sounds good. I'll have some coffee on. See you then.



Review the purpose of and guidelines for role play with members.

Ask for volunteers to suggest refusal situations they want to role play, especially past situations they have found difficult. List the situations on the chalkboard or flip chart, and ask for 2 volunteers to serve as role players and one volunteer to serve as an observer. If there are no suggested role play situations, use the ones on the following page or create your own. Do 2 or 3 role plays as time allows.



Ask role players and observer to review the *Tips for Effective Refusal* chart (p. 53) and handout (p. 78). Allow the role play to proceed for 3-4 minutes, then stop the action. Use the following Discussion Guide to process each role play.

**Discussion
Guide**

(For players) How did it feel to refuse? How did it feel to be refused?

(For players) How confident did you feel in your refusal? If you were the requestor, would you have kept on trying? Did you feel your feelings were respected?

(For the observer) Describe what went on in this situation. Was it effective?

(Observer/group) How did the “refuser” handle the situation? Could she have done anything that may have worked better?



George wants his sister Betty to baby-sit for him while he and his wife go catch a movie. Betty has plans for the night and doesn't want to baby-sit George's 3 children.



Sam wants Doris to go to a party with him. (Sam and Doris are in a relationship together.) Doris doesn't want to go, because she knows there will be drinking and most likely drug use at this party.

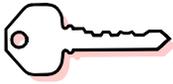


Clifford and Margie are married. Clifford wants Margie to go on a hunting and camping trip with him. He feels that he would like her to learn to appreciate his hobbies. Margie hates camping and the thought of shooting an animal makes her sad. She doesn't want to go.

19

Thank members for their participation. Go around the group and ask each person to tell you one thing they learned today that they didn't know before, and one thing they learned that they think will be useful in everyday life.

Summarize the session with the following points:



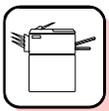
KEY POINT: Effective communication is important in building good relationships and increasing intimacy. We can only control our own communication style, not that of others. However, we can become good role models within relationships by showing others how to communicate more effectively and positively.

KEY POINT: We all have communication habits that may hinder us from getting through to people. Often we are unaware of these communication roadblocks. The more aware we become, the more we can practice making sure our ineffective communication habits don't hurt our relationships. Habits such as blaming, name-calling, making threats, nagging, and not listening can cause people to tune us out. Nonverbal messages or body language need to be monitored as well.

KEY POINT: All people have the right to say "No," and to not feel guilty about it. Most people would prefer to hear an honest, direct refusal, rather than to hear someone beating around the bush, making excuses, or accepting then whining and complaining about it.

20

Thank the group again for their participation. Tell them that the next session will continue to present ideas and information about improving relationships and increasing intimacy.



21

Ask participants to complete a Session Evaluation (pp. 79-80) before they leave.



NAME-CALLING LABELING

“You are so stupid.”

“You liar.”

“You are *such* a monster.”



GENERALIZING ANALYZING

“You never do anything right.”

“Your problem is that you are too picky.”

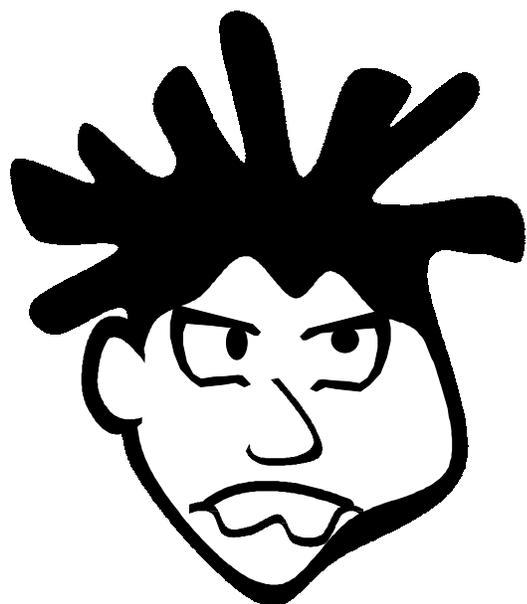


BLAMING

JUDGING

“This is all your fault.”

“I wouldn’t have done it that way.”



COMPLAINING

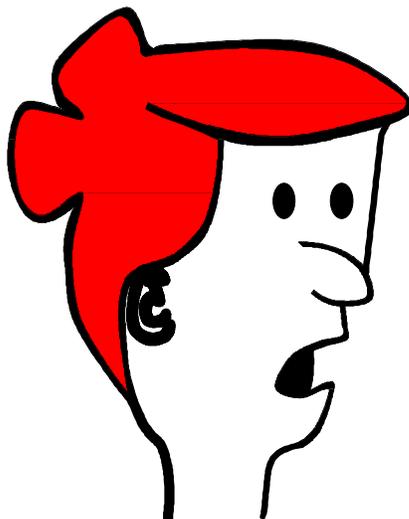
WHINING

NAGGING

“I don’t like the way you did that.”

“That’s not fair.”

“Why haven’t you done your work?”



ACCUSING THREATENING DEMANDING

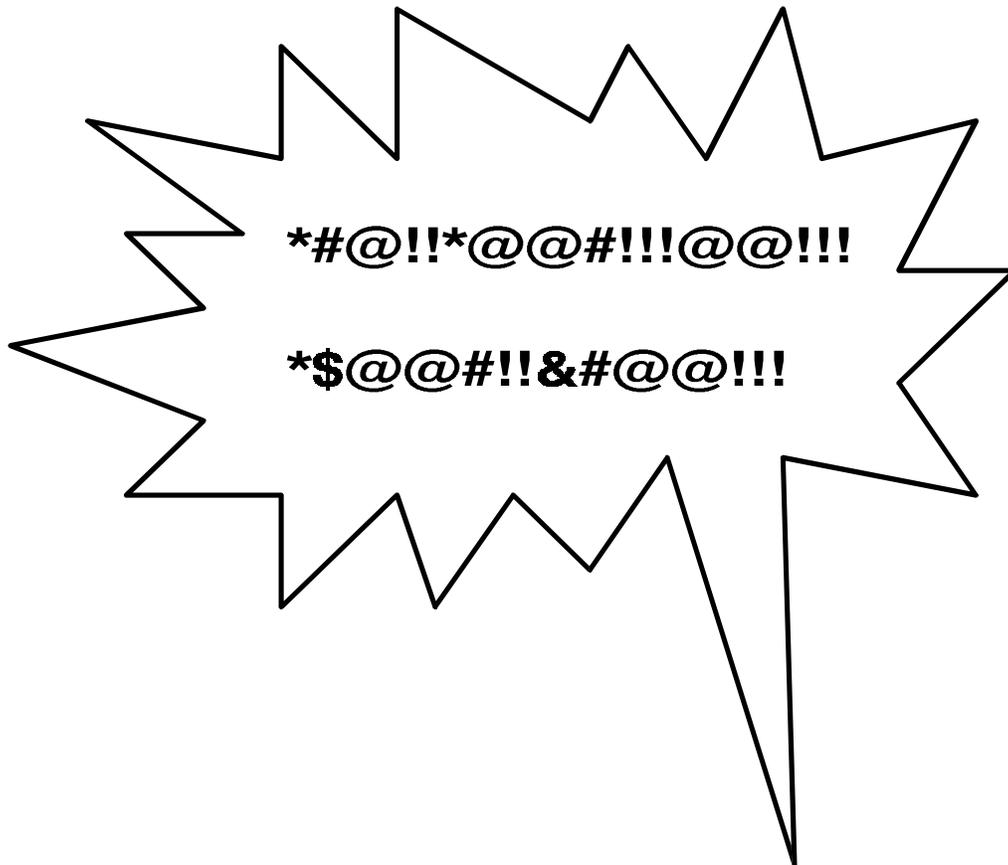
“You did that on purpose.”

“You’re gonna get it . . .”

“You better do it now.”



YELLING HITTING SCREAMING USING PROFANITY



MORALIZING USING “SHOULD” “OUGHTS”

“It serves you right.”

“You ought to know better.”

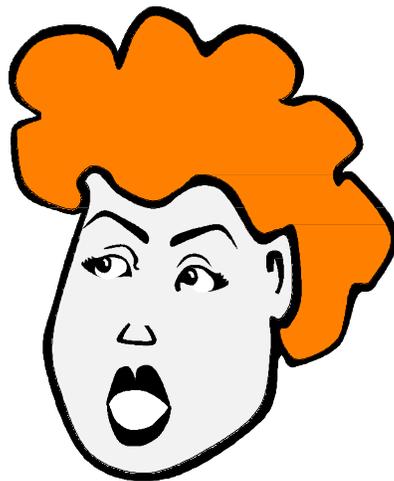
“You should pay more attention.”



NOT LISTENING INTERRUPTING

“Blah Blah Blah Blah Blah Blah . . .”

“Let me tell you what I think . . .”

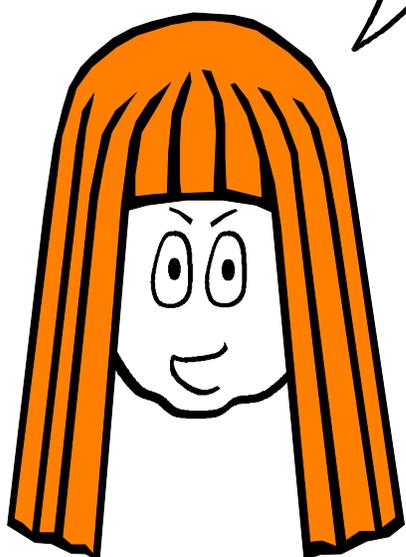


SARCASM

HUMORING

“Well, aren’t you special.”

“Anything you say, dear.”



TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE REFUSAL

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2. AVOID GIVING EXCUSES OR APOLOGIZING.

There are alternatives that may work better for preserving important relationships. For example, rather than saying, “Gosh, I’m sorry I can’t go out with you tonight,” we might say “No, I can’t go out with you tonight, but I really appreciate the invitation.”

3. USE I-MESSAGES.

Using I-Messages helps keep you in control and responsible for the refusal. Remember, it is very difficult to argue with an I-Message. With persistent requestors, you may want to simply repeat your refusal I-Message until they get the idea.

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6. WATCH YOUR BODY LANGUAGE.

Pay attention to such things as eye contact, posture, and tone of voice. An effective refusal is polite, yet direct, strong, and firm. Avoid looking down, mumbling, or speaking softly. It may be helpful to practice effective refusal techniques with a friend or in front of the mirror until you become comfortable.

SESSION EVALUATION OF “TIME OUT! FOR ME”

SESSION 3

THIS BOX IS TO BE COMPLETED BY DATA COORDINATOR:

[FORM 65; CARD 01]

SITE # __ __	CLIENT ID# __ __ __ __ __ __	DATE: __ __ __ __ __ __	COUNSELOR ID# __ __
[5-6]	[7-12]	MO DAY YR [13-18]	[19-20]

INSTRUCTIONS: Please answer the following questions based on what you learned in today’s session. Circle 1 (True) or 2 (False) after each statement.

True	False
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1. You can tell a lot about someone’s feelings by paying attention to their body language. 1 2 [21]
2. Communication roadblocks can be overcome by threatening the person you are talking to. 1 2
3. You should feel guilty if you say “No” when a friend asks you to do something you don’t want to do. 1 2 [23]
4. People are often unaware of the nonverbal messages they are sending. 1 2
5. Communication roadblocks can help you communicate effectively. 1 2 [25]
6. Being constantly late for an appointment is a form of nonverbal communication. 1 2
7. The best way to refuse a request is to be direct and firm when you say “No.” 1 2 [27]
8. Using I-Messages can help reduce communication roadblocks. 1 2
9. Most people are able to completely hide their feelings when they communicate. 1 2 [29]
10. Refusing to do something for a friend is the same thing as rejection. 1 2

|__|__| [31-32]

