

T O P I C

05

THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN STRESS MANAGEMENT

The way you communicate and the skills needed for a healthy and assertive communication are key to help you prevent and avoid situations that can potentially create stress at work.



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

THIS TOPIC IS DESIGNED AROUND THE FOLLOWING MAIN LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

01

Listening is the Key

Explore methods and learn how to listen actively.

02

Give Feedback Appropriately

To learn how to give feedback adequately.

03

Right Communication in Conflicts

Learn how to use communication appropriately in conflict management.

04

Communicate Well to Prevent Work Related Stress

To understand the impact that communication has in preventing and managing work-related stress.

05

Respect Yourself and the Others

To learn how to develop assertive communication styles.

COMPETENCES

THIS TRAINING CONTENT IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU ACQUIRE THE FOLLOWING COMPETENCES:

- 01 **Building Positive Working Relationships:** Developing and using collaborative relationships to facilitate the accomplishment of work goals.
- 02 **Building Trust:** Interacting with others in a way that gives them confidence in one's intentions and those of the organization. Operates with integrity. Remains open to ideas.
- 03 **Communication:** Clearly conveying information and ideas through a variety of media to individuals or groups in a manner that engages the audience and helps them understand and retain the message.
- 04 **Empathy:** Ability to understand and share the feelings of another.
- 05 **Interpersonal sensitivity:** Show that you are aware of others and the environment as well as the influence exerted on both. Develop a behaviour that reflects the recognition of the feelings of others, showing empathy in the face of the different situations that can occur in personal dealings with employees or collaborators.
- 06 **Interpersonal Skills:** Exhibits acceptable standards of professional conduct. Listens carefully. Develops and maintains positive working relationships with all constituents.
- 07 **Managing Conflict:** Deals effectively with others in difficult situations; uses appropriate inter-personal styles and methods to reduce tension or conflict between two or more people
- 08 **Sociability:** Interact and relate effortlessly with other people. Being able to make contacts with others and develop social activities.

HOW COMMUNICATION IMPACTS THE GENERATION, OR NOT, OF WORK-RELATED STRESS



Introduction

According to **“The State of Business Communication. The Path to Productivity, Performance, and Profit 2023”** report by Grammarly Business, one of the main conclusions was that poor communication is stressful and hurts relationships. Business leaders and knowledge workers reported experiencing miscommunication at work at least once a week. It’s a hurdle that prevents workers from achieving their full potential in the workplace, with tangible impacts like decreased productivity, missed deadlines and extended timelines, or increased costs. But on top of these problematic outcomes, communication going wrong creates a stressful work climate.

A certain job demand implies, for the person who performs it, the accomplishment of something. The fact that what is expected of a worker is not clearly defined, that their role is confusing or that there is no fluid communication is one of the most important stressors, because the worker, not knowing exactly

what they have to do, in what way, what areas are their responsibility, etc., translates into a feeling of uncertainty and threat.

The problems that can arise due to poor information and communication, the ambiguity and the role conflict that arise from this, are some of the most powerful stressors. Furthermore, they constitute one of the factors that most affect efficiency in the company.

For all these reasons, it is very necessary to review the company's information systems, taking into account the following variables:

- Accuracy of information.
- Coherence between them.
- Coincidence (towards the same objective) of the decisions made based on the information.
- Language appropriate to the recipient.
- Communication frequency adapted to needs.
- Appropriate procedures for collecting, processing and transmitting information.

A good information system must allow everyone to capture precisely what is expected of them (tasks or objectives to be met) and know the results of the work carried out.



COMMUNICATION: DEFINITION, TYPES, BARRIERS, AND BENEFITS AT WORK

Introduction

We can define communication as the form of interaction between two or more people, whether through the spoken or written word, gestures, emotional expressions, etc., the result of which is the exchange of meanings that lead to understanding and, in the best-case scenario to an agreement, to appropriate behavior.

Organizational communication is defined as the channels and forms of communication that occur within organizations. It includes both communication within the organization and communication to the external public. It focuses largely on building relationships and interacting with internal members of the organization and interested external publics. It is important to highlight that communication does not consist solely of the transmission of messages between senders and receivers, but rather it is a complex process of meaning construction and negotiation of norms created by the people involved in a given context, which in this case refers to an organization.





Organizational communication helps us:

- Define all steps necessary to successfully complete tasks.
- Face unexpected changes through adaptation.
- Complete tasks through the development of clear policies and procedures that support daily and ongoing operations.
- Develop better interpersonal relationships between members of the organization, considering emotional, ethical and sensitive aspects.
- Coordinate, plan and control the operations of the entire organization in accordance with the objectives set by management.
- Create a positive organizational climate and culture, that is, one that is aware of and promotes the attitudes, values and objectives that characterize the organization and its members.
- Develop organizational strategies that take into account the needs of collaborators, in order to avoid work-related stress, burnout and problems of this scope.

Organizational communication barriers

While any director or leader of an organization may want to establish effective organizational communication, there are some barriers that may be preventing proper information flow. Some of them are the next.

- Lack or absence of planning
- Confusing assumptions or facts
- Poorly expressed information
- Loss of information
- Distrust or fears in communication
- Excess information.



Benefits of good communication

Among the main benefits that good communication can have, we can highlight the following:

- Fosters authentic relationships (with self and others)
- Avoid misunderstandings.
- Greater work involvement
- Increased effectiveness in achieving objectives.
- Stress reduction. Both stress and mental workload at work can be improved by applying communication techniques that promote a better work environment.

Types of communication

In contemporary business management and organizational communication, literature frequently discusses three primary types of communication: downward, upward, and horizontal.

1. Downward communication.

Communication that occurs from a higher hierarchical level to a lower one. This type of communication has the following objectives:

- Coordinate the members of an organization to achieve its objectives.
- Inform people so that they contribute to the achievement of objectives and achieve a better understanding of the task and the organization and thus promote motivation, since knowledge and understanding of the work and the organization can have motivating effects.

2. Upward communication.

Communication that occurs from the lowest to the highest hierarchical levels.

It is particularly useful both because it facilitates the functioning of the organization and for its role in facilitating good personal relationships since:

- It allows us to know the points of

view and channel the initiatives of workers regarding different aspects of the company's operation.

- It facilitates good feedback to know the quality of downward communication and the level with which workers assume the organization's objectives.
- It constitutes a basic condition to facilitate the participation of workers.

3. Horizontal communication

When we talk about horizontal communication, we are referring to the exchange of messages between members of the same hierarchical level within the organization.

This type of communication makes possible the coordination of activities and the resolution of conflicts. Generally, it constitutes a means that facilitates emotional support among employees and is, in itself, a source of satisfaction.



DID YOU KNOW

BAD COMMUNICATION CAUSES WORKPLACE ANXIETY FOR **80%** OF EMPLOYEES

Ineffective company communication causes workplace anxiety for 80% of employees (SoftActivity, 2021). This means that when communication is improved, especially using technology, employees will be less stressed, and productivity will improve drastically.

**IMPROVE
COMMUNICATION,
REDUCE STRESS**

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EMPATHY IN COMMUNICATION

Empathy in communication is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person. It involves actively listening to your audience, acknowledging their emotions, and responding in a way that shows you care about them as individuals.

In a business setting, empathetic communication can help build strong relationships with customers and employees, and foster trust, loyalty, and ultimately improve the success of your business.

Communicating without empathy can lead to arguments, rash decisions, and lost trust. In a **Workplace Empathy survey from Businessolver (2023)**, 70% of employees and HR professionals say that an empathetic organization can increase employee motivation. Other benefits include:

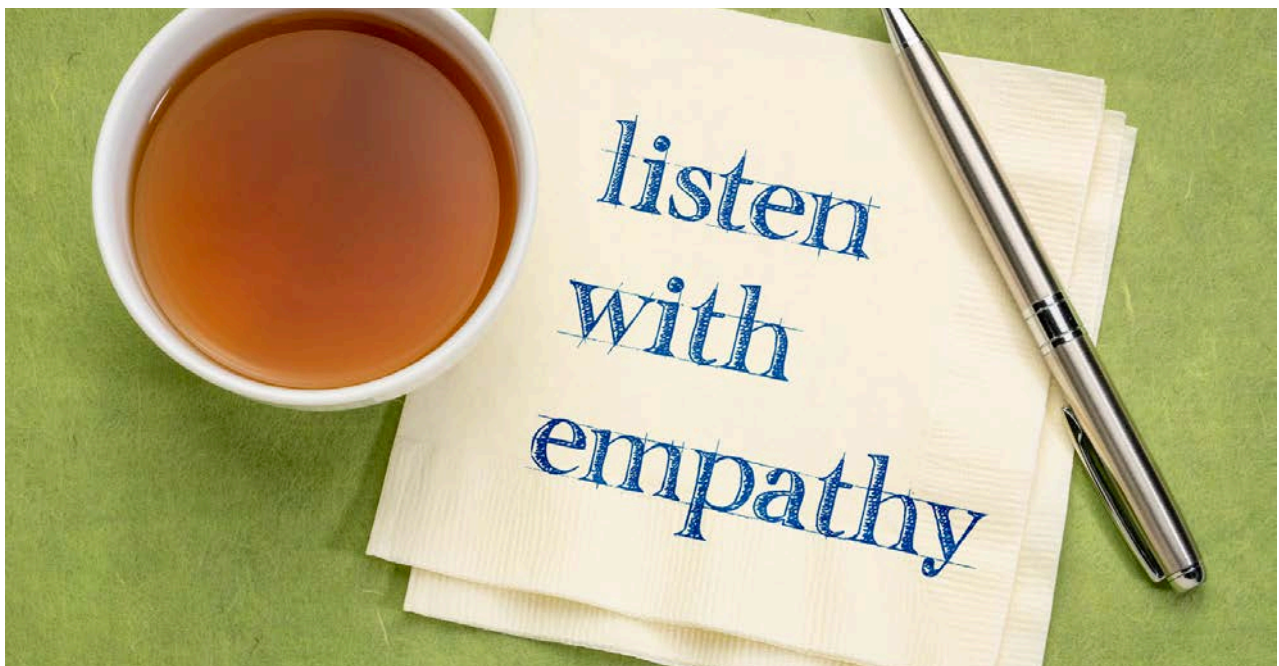
- Improved employee morale, since they have managers that care about their needs.
- Increased respect and collaboration among teams.
- Higher productivity and engagement as workers feel supported and valued.



- Enhanced customer loyalty, once they see your company is humane (when speaking on humanitarian issues).
- Reduced employee turnover

Together with empathy, two other skills worth improving include:

- **Self-awareness.** The ability to recognize and understand your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Self-awareness can be crucial for understanding the impact of your actions on team dynamics and company culture. For example, taking time to reflect on your communication style and how it may affect the team.
- **Emotional intelligence.** The ability to recognize, understand, and manage your emotions, and the feelings of others. For example, a leader who can read the emotions of their team members and respond empathetically can better communicate and collaborate.



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The single biggest
problem in
communication is the
illusion that it has
taken place.

George Bernard Shaw



COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Active Listening

We all like to be listened to, and even more so when we have a problem: we want someone to be there on the other side to help us, since that makes us feel valued. Only by listening we do engage, understand, empathize, cooperate and develop as human beings. It is essential for any successful relationship: personal or professional.

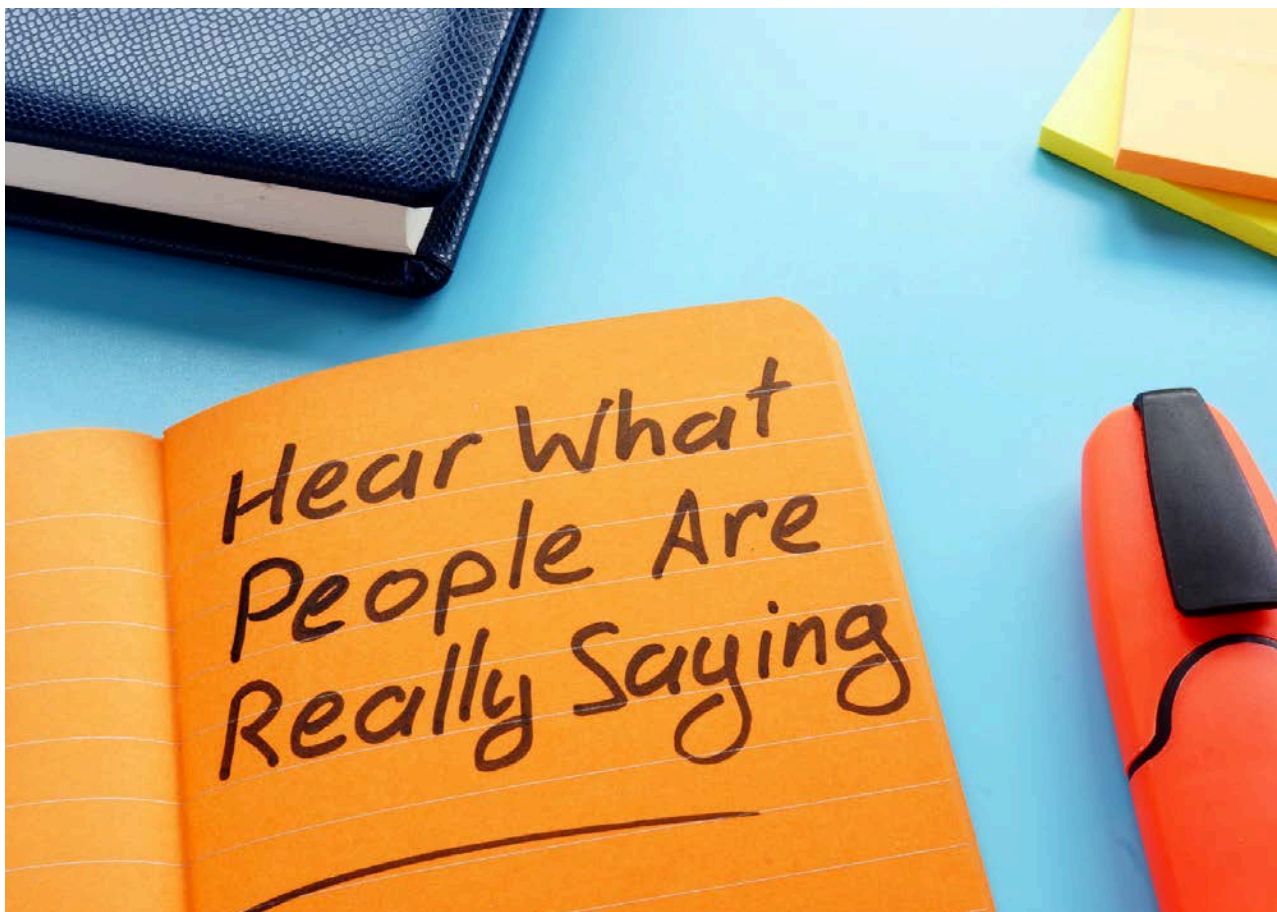
Active listening is a communication strategy that consists of the ability to listen with full awareness to the interlocutor's message, with the aim of understanding what they are saying, in a focused and empathetic manner.

Up to this point you may have been able to identify the differences between everyday listening and active listening. We know that listening to someone involves opening ourselves to receive a message from our interlocutor, while doing so actively involves paying attention to what they are telling us and putting special interest in offering a useful response. It's not just about hearing what others say, but about understanding their points of view, their emotions and their needs. Active listening involves paying attention, showing interest, asking questions, and avoiding interrupting or judging. Active listening is effective when communication involves:

- **Attention.** This is a required factor to not only receive a message, but also to discover the intentions behind what they communicate to us, as well as retain the ideas in our mind.
- **Objectivity.** It is especially useful for listening to our interlocutors without prejudices or filters. Once we receive the message we can analyze it from our perspective, but we must always open ourselves to listening objectively.
- **Empathy.** This skill is essential for active listening, since it is not only about being analytical, but about understanding what they are telling us to offer a useful response to others. Later we will review in detail the importance of this factor.
- **Provision.** Only through it can genuine interest be generated in what is being put on the table. Kindness is a way of expressing openness to listening more and therefore invites people to share more information.

Some of the main benefits of active listening are:

- **Improve communication.** One of the benefits of knowing how to listen actively is that we are able to understand what the other person thinks, feels and wants to convey. When we pay attention to their words and gestures we gain a much deeper understanding and this allows us to avoid misunderstandings and communication errors. Furthermore, by listening we demonstrate interest and respect for each other, which fosters a climate of trust and collaboration.
- **Increase learning.** Another advantage of knowing how to listen is that it helps you learn and assimilate knowledge from different sources.
- **Close ties between people.** We maintain our connections with others by listening. Therefore, it is a fundamental skill for any successful relationship.
- **Improves mental health.** Knowing how to listen also has a positive impact on our mental and emotional health. By listening to other people we can feel accompanied, understood and supported in difficult times. This helps us reduce stress, anxiety and depression.



QUOTE



WE LISTEN NOT ONLY WITH
OUR EARS, BUT WITH OUR
EYES, WITH OUR MIND,
HEART AND IMAGINATION.

Carl Rogers

Here's a 4-step approach to develop good active listening.

Prepare to listen



Determine what the objective of listening is and match your objective with the speaker's goals. Additionally, prepare a physical and emotional environment to facilitate this listening. That means letting go of thoughts and worries to focus on the speaker. Do not anticipate your response or think about the possible response before the interlocutor finishes (here you will stop listening), do not interrupt. This is important so that your interlocutor's message is received successfully and there are no misunderstandings. Likewise, it will help you be in the best conditions to concentrate on what they are telling you, understand it and process the information.

Avoid distractions when you are talking to a client, turn off any screen that could distract your attention and don't let anyone interrupt you while you listen to them. Focus all your attention on the message and activate your five senses by focusing on what he or she is telling to you through his words and body language.

Restate, ask and comment



Make sure your interlocutor knows you are listening, periodically summarize the interlocutor's comments in your own words, emphasize what is key in his message, and ask him if you understood him correctly. The goal of active listening is to understand what is being said. Reflect on what you are hearing and ask questions to clarify your doubts in case you are

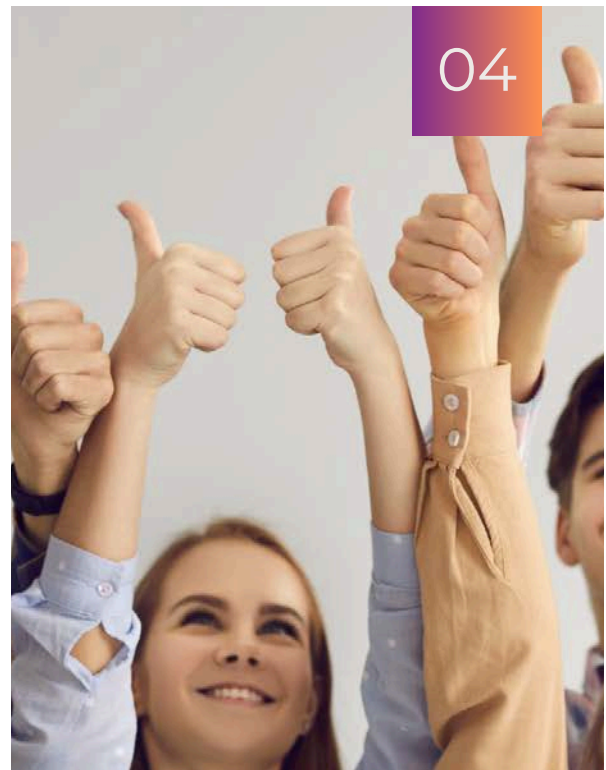
not understanding the message. This will make the person feel valued and calm their concerns. You can encourage whoever is speaking by asking open-ended questions and providing appropriate feedback, both verbal and non-verbal.

Establish eye contact



It is important to look into the eyes of whoever is speaking. This can help you focus and concentrate on what the other person is saying, in addition to transmitting peace of mind and generating trust. On the other hand, averted glances can make the client feel disinterested or uncomfortable on your part. Remember that what words don't say, your body says.

Maintain a good attitude



A good disposition is essential to trigger our interest in caring for others and reinforces empathy between people. It is desirable that the conversation occur at a time when you feel in a good attitude or that you quickly psych yourself up to put yourself in the other person's shoes and treat them properly. On the other hand, you have to be tolerant and non-judgmental, accepting what they are telling you, even if you don't agree. Transmitting a positive attitude to the interlocutor during communication is key in the active listening process.

Along these four steps, naturally you will be accompanied by some mistakes in communication. However, they are avoidable, but you need to be aware of what they are.

6 mistakes in practicing Active listening



INTENTION

Not listening with the intention of understanding. Predisposition is a fundamental part of active listening.



ANTICIPATION

Think of a response before letting the person finish expressing their message.



DISTRACTION

Full attention during communication is key in active listening. There can be no room for distraction

INTERRUPTION



Active listening requires patience and respect. Interrupting the conversation partner can stop the flow of communication and prevent the message from being transmitted.

JUDGING



Full attention is important during active listening, as is the ability not to judge the conversation partner. When combined, these two rules will allow the message to be understood correctly.

EMPHATHY



Putting yourself in the other's shoes allows for emotional participation and, therefore, a more accurate understanding of the message that is being transmitted.

Feedback

Feedback is a communication skill and a constructive criticism strategy that seeks to make evident a person's successes and failures when performing a specific task. Feedback must always be accompanied by a coherent, well-supported evaluation aimed at people's growth.

While it is true that every opinion is valid (unless it is offensive), feedback cannot come from a subjective judgment. On the contrary, it should be as objective as possible and based on the fulfillment of pre-established goals or expectations. Furthermore, it is important to note that feedback should only lead to the development and improvement of our habits, whether work, professional or human.

In the work environment, feedback is a communication process where an employee receives an analysis and assessment of their attitudes, skills, virtues and points for improvement.

This is one of the aspects most valued by employees, according to various international analyses. Well executed, it allows you to boost motivation, the professional development of workers and, ultimately, increase productivity and efficiency in the company.

The main objective of feedback is to reinforce and continue certain behaviors and processes that are

being effective, or to modify those that are not so useful. Naturally, there are two main types of feedback:

- **Positive feedback.** Positive feedback is one in which the comments given focus on the positive aspects of a person, a job or a group. This approach seeks proactive responses to improve a person's performance by highlighting their achievements and recognizing the work done.
- **Negative feedback.** It is one in which complications, abuses or areas of opportunity are addressed as a corrective measure. This approach also seeks to improve performance, but it arises in response to a conflict or situation that warrants immediate action.





Feedback can bring well-desired benefits such as:

- **It raises morale.** When people know that they are working well, they will feel more motivated to continue at the same level. This is only possible if we provide feedback that seeks to highlight the skills of the collaborators. Likewise, upon receiving feedback or criticism on performance, workers may feel motivated to give more of themselves, taking the feedback as a challenge to overcome in the future.
- **It increases productivity.** The obvious consequence of workers knowing what their successes are, their areas of opportunity and their goals is that they will make more efforts and, therefore, their productivity will increase. In many cases this growth will occur gradually, so you should not force your collaborators to change in the short term. It will probably take several months to develop the skills you need to improve. Feedback is also the beginning of training and learning.
- **They improve labor relations.** Feedback is not only useful for measuring a worker's productivity. There are some feedbacks that are aimed at identifying attitudes, habits or conflicts that occur within the

workspace and whose purpose is to find solutions that allow teamwork in a healthy environment. You can generate criticism and feedback dynamics that help your collaborators express themselves and make positive comments about their colleagues. If these activities are carried out with professionalism and empathy, the result will be a better work environment. So then, how do you give and receive feedback effectively?



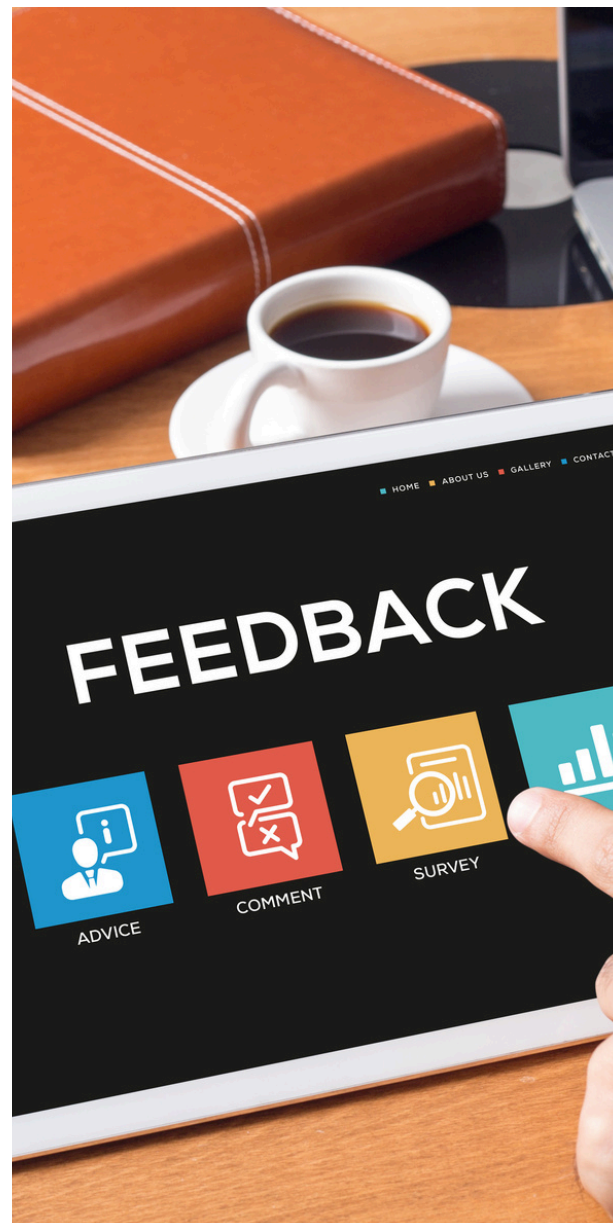
Feedback is often feared by people because it can be perceived as a scolding or as a time to bring out a person's weaknesses. It can also be an uncomfortable moment for the feedback giver when it is not handled correctly. Let's see what you should take into account to give feedback appropriately.

- **Set an exclusive time.** Giving feedback is important and should be given all due seriousness. The best thing you can do is set a suitable time to carry out the feedback. Schedule meetings in advance with each of your collaborators or with your teams and make sure it is the best time for everyone.
- **Choose a suitable space.** A space in which everyone feels comfortable, safe and confident to receive comments or constructive criticism. This way there will be no distractions or elements that increase tension.
- **Determine the tone of the interaction.** If you are giving positive feedback, you can adopt a friendly or even festive tone. But if it will be negative, you will have to think about how to give the matter due seriousness. The important thing is that you know how to manage your tone, language and form of expression to manage the reactions of your interlocutors without losing sight of the objective.

- **Express your reasons.** It is important that not only you know the objective behind the feedback or the reasons why you carry out the evaluation. Your interlocutor should also know them. Keep in mind that the objective is to improve in our areas of opportunity, optimize our performance and grow as people.
- **Go from the particular to the general.** As a general rule it should not be generalized. On the contrary, you should start with concrete and specific things. Thus, you should see where the errors or areas for improvement are. You will notice that by doing this it will be more difficult to say the words "always" and "never."
- **Be proactive. Instead of focusing on the negative, talk about the positive.** Find a way to transform adversities or problems into spaces for improvement and growth, and make sure that your comments encourage the other to go forward and not backward.
- **Listen.** Finally, it is recommended that when you finish your feedback you leave an open space for your interlocutor to react to your comments. In this space you can ask questions about how to improve or resolve controversies that have arisen. At this point you should be cautious, since people can react negatively to feedback.

Even in these cases, listening to others will allow you to know their openness to criticism, their perception of themselves, and whether there is an atmosphere of trust with your team.

- **Be assertive.** Assertiveness allows us to communicate clearly and positively, instead of focusing only on the negative. By incorporating this skill, you ensure that persons think of feedback as a purpose, rather than an evaluation.



QUOTE



THE MOST IMPORTANT
THING IN COMMUNICATION
IS TO HEAR WHAT ISN'T
BEING SAID.

Peter F. Drucker

Assertiveness

Assertiveness can help you control stress and negative emotions such as anger and improve your ability to face challenges or situations.

Being assertive is a fundamental communication skill. Assertiveness allows you to express yourself effectively and defend your point of view. It can also help you do this while respecting the rights and beliefs of others.

Being assertive can also help you increase your self-esteem and earn the respect of others. This can help in stress management. It can especially help you reduce stress if you tend to take on too many responsibilities because it's hard for you to say no.

Ever asked yourself why assertiveness works? Because assertiveness is based on mutual respect, it is a diplomatic and effective type of communication. By being assertive you show that you respect yourself, since you are willing to defend your interests and express what you think and feel. You also show that you are aware of the rights of others and are willing to resolve conflicts.

Of course, not only what you say (the message) is important, but also how you say it. Assertive communication is direct and respectful. With it, you will have a better chance of your

message being transmitted successfully. If you communicate in a very passive or aggressive way, your message may not get through because others will be more focused on reacting to the way you communicate it.





Being assertive is generally considered a healthier communication style. Assertiveness offers many benefits and certainly helps preventing people from taking advantage of you. It can also help you not be intimidated in front of others. Behaving assertively can help you with the following:

- Gain self-confidence and self-esteem
- Gain a sense of empowerment
- Understand and recognize your feelings
- Get respect from others
- Improve communication
- Create win-win situations
- Improve your decision-making skills
- Develop sincere relationships
- Get more job satisfaction
- Learning to be more assertive can also help you effectively express your feelings when communicating with others about problems.

So, how can you become more assertive? Follow these tips:

- **Evaluate your style.** Do you express your opinions or stay silent? Do you accept more work even if you have a full agenda? Do you judge or blame others easily? Do people seem afraid to talk to you? Know your style before you start making changes.
- **Use first-person phrases.** Using first-person statements lets

others know what you think or feel without sounding accusatory. For example, say "I disagree" instead of "You're wrong." If you have to ask for something, say "I'd like you to help me with this" instead of "You have to do this." Make your requests simple, specific and clear.

- **Practice saying no.** If you have a hard time saying no to a request, try saying, "No, I can't do that right now." Remember that saying no is enough, and you don't need to explain why. Do not hesitate. Be direct. If you need to give an explanation, keep it brief.
- **Practice what you want to say.** If you find it difficult to say what you want or think, practice with general situations that usually occur to you. Say what you want to say out loud. It can also help you to write it down first, so you can practice from a script. Consider role-playing with a friend or colleague and asking for a clear opinion.
- **Use body language.** Communication is not just verbal. Act with confidence even if you don't have it. Maintain an upright posture, but lean forward a little. Make eye contact constantly. Maintain a neutral or positive facial expression. Do not cross your arms or legs. Look straight at the person. Practice assertive body language in front of a mirror or with a friend or colleague.

In addition to what you say, body language and facial expressions are also important.

- **Keep emotions under control.** Conflict is difficult for most people. Maybe you get angry or frustrated, or maybe you feel like crying. Although these feelings are common, they can interfere with conflict resolution. If you are very excited about a situation, wait a little if possible. Then, work on staying calm. Breathe slowly. Your voice has to be homogeneous and firm.
- **Start little by little.** At first, practice your new skills in low-risk situations. For example, test your assertiveness with your partner or a friend before approaching a difficult situation at work. Evaluate yourself afterwards and modify your approach as necessary.



Assertive behavior vs Passive behavior

If your style is passive or non-assertive, you may come across as shy or overly tolerant. You may often say things like, *"I'll go along with whatever the group decides"*. You tend to avoid conflict. Why is that a problem? Because the message you are sending is that your thoughts and feelings are not as important as other people's. In essence, when you are too passive, you let others ignore your wants and needs.

Consider this example: You say yes when a colleague asks you to take on a project, even though you're already busy. This extra work means you'll have to work overtime and miss your daughter's soccer game. Your intention may be to keep the peace. But always saying yes can poison your relationships. And worse still, it can cause internal conflict because your needs and those of your family are always in the background.

The internal conflict that this passive behavior can generate can lead to the following:

- Stress
- Resentment
- Growing anger
- Feelings of victimization
- Desire for revenge
- Doubts or questioning your own judgment



Assertive behavior or Aggressive behavior?

Now think about the other style. If you have an aggressive style, you may be seen as an intimidating person who ignores the needs, feelings, and opinions of others. You may seem conceited or superior. Very aggressive people embarrass, intimidate and frighten others, and may even physically intimidate.

You may think that being aggressive allows you to get what you want. However, this comes at a cost. Aggression undermines trust and mutual respect. Others may become resentful and try to avoid you or turn against you.



Assertive behavior or Passive-aggressive behavior?

Now think about passive-aggressive behavior. If you communicate passive-aggressively, you might say yes when you want to say no. You might be sarcastic or complain about others behind their backs. Instead of confronting an issue directly, you could show your anger and feelings through your actions or a negative attitude. You may have developed a passive-aggressive style because you feel uncomfortable being direct with your needs and feelings.

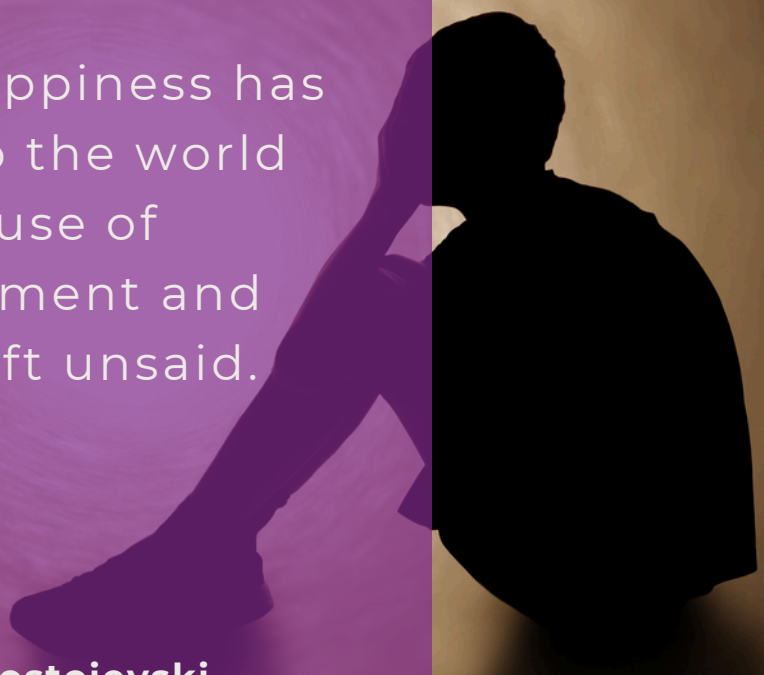
What are the drawbacks of a passive-aggressive communication style? Over time, passive-aggressive behavior damages relationships and undermines mutual respect. This will make it difficult for you to achieve your goals and meet your needs.



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Much unhappiness has
come into the world
because of
bewilderment and
things left unsaid.

Fyodor Dostoievski



BEST PRACTICES

COMMUNICATION: A FUNDAMENTAL SKILL AT WORK

Susan, a recently promoted senior manager, was very excited and happy about her new position in the company. The boss who decided on this promotion was aware of Susan's strengths but also of her weaknesses, among which was a low capacity for assertiveness. The team that Susan was now going to lead was made up mostly of senior staff with more than 15 years in the company who may not have accepted Susan first-hand as their new manager, which could be a problem and a source of stress and anxiety for Susan if she did not deploy her communication skills to lead her team.

Prior to joining her new job, Susan attended a communication skills course to improve her leadership skills. Susan began to apply certain actions that could help her improve her communication in general and her assertiveness in particular. Among these activities we find:

- During the course, with the help of his classmates and his teacher, she evaluated her style of assertiveness, thus, in the different practical activities they did, she analyzed whether she expressed his opinion or kept his thoughts to herself so as not to disturb, if in those activities she accepted extra workload from other colleagues to please them, if she easily blamed others if the objective was not achieved, etc.
- After the previous analysis, from which it turned out that he had a passive-aggressive style, she began to be conscious in the following practical activities and applied some simple instructions that she had learned in the course, thus using first-person phrases to say what she thought without being intimidating. At that same moment, she began to practice saying "no" without having to explain why, this was very difficult for her, but she managed it. She did it without hesitation and directly, after a while she began to feel good.

After the course upon returning to her company, she continued to apply some of her teachings such as practicing what she wanted to say, she tried to improve her body language while she was aware of how she controlled her

emotions. Shortly after being aware of the changes she was applying, she realized that her relationship with the subordinates in her department began to improve, she felt more secure and saw that her employees respected and trusted her.

Key messages

- Evaluate your style.
- Use first person phrases.
- Practice saying no.
- Practice what you want to say.
- Use body language.
- Keep emotions under control.
- Start little by little.





A CALL TO ACTION

If you feel that communication in general and active listening in particular are at the base of you feeling stressed or burned out at work, why not start doing something about it and try to reverse the situation?

Below, we propose some steps to start applying active listening in your work. Select those that you think can have the best effect on you, your performance and your health and apply them. At the end, try to analyze and reflect on the possible positive effects and continue applying them.

TRY THIS:

During your team meetings that will take place in the next month, try to apply the following actions to improve your active listening:

1. Prepare to listen.

- Determine what the objective of listening is and match your objective with the speaker's goals.
- Prepare a physical and emotional environment to facilitate this listening. Let go of thoughts and worries to focus on the speaker.
- Do not anticipate your response or think about the possible response before the interlocutor finishes (here you will stop listening), do not interrupt.

- Avoid distractions.
- Focus all your attention on the message and activate your five senses by focusing on what he is telling you through his words and body language.

2. Restate, ask and comment.

- Make sure your interlocutor knows you are listening, periodically summarize the interlocutor's comments in your own words, emphasize what is key in his message, and ask him if you understood him correctly.
- Reflect on what you are hearing and ask questions to clarify your doubts in case you are not understanding the message. This will make the person feel valued and calm their concerns.
- You can encourage whoever is speaking by asking open-ended questions and providing appropriate feedback, both verbal and non-verbal.

3. Establish eye contact.

- It is important to look into the eyes of whoever is speaking; This can help you focus and concentrate on what the other person is saying, in addition to transmitting peace of mind and generating trust.

4. Maintain a good attitude.

- A good disposition is essential to trigger our interest in caring for others and reinforces empathy between people. It is desirable that the conversation occur at a time when you feel in a good attitude.
- On the other hand, you have to be tolerant and non-judgmental, accepting what they are telling you, even if you don't agree.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY



Practical activity

Imagine that you are an employee of a company and that in your last performance evaluation, one of your most important weaknesses identified was your communication skills, specifically, active listening, feedback and assertiveness. You did not pass the thresholds of what should be acceptable in the company, which has meant that the annual bonus you expected to receive has been much less than you would have liked. Furthermore, this has revealed that much of the workload and stress you have felt lately has been due to poor management of these skills.

As a result of the evaluation and to improve your communication skills, your boss has asked you to develop an action plan that includes:

- the improvement objectives
- the benefits you expect to obtain from the possible improvement
- the actions to be developed
- the deadlines to achieve the objectives and implement the actions
- the internal and external resources that you will need to develop the plan and
- the definition of a monitoring mechanism to report to your boss.

EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1 / DAY ONE:

How can you rate yourself regarding your ability to communicate at work?

If your communication skills are not adequate or can be improved, do you think this is having or could have a negative impact on your stress? Could you get burned out?

What direct benefits could you obtain if you improved your communication skills?

Don't you think it's time to start analyzing how your communication skills are at work and what things you could improve?

If the answer is yes, we suggest the following activity:



GET STARTED BY:

Reflect on the next questions while trying to apply the knowledge acquired during this topic:

- *Can you describe a presentation you have given that went well? How was your communication?*
- *What methods do you use to establish positive relationships with your colleagues? Does communication help you establish these relationships?*
- *Describe a time when you had to resolve a conflict in a work*

environment. How did you approach it from communication?

- Have you ever had to share an idea that your colleagues didn't support? Were you able to convince them that it was valid?*
- Can you explain a situation in which you had to share negative information with a client?*
- Can you give an example of a situation in which you demonstrated exceptional verbal communication skills?*
- How would you help a team member who lacks good verbal communication skills?*

Based on your answers to the previous questions, identify your main weak points regarding your communication skills:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Design an improvement plan to apply over the next month to improve your time management skills through concrete actions:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now brainstorm and list the benefits you would obtain from applying the actions you've listed above:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Get started with the above actions right away! Allow yourself no procrastination! Feel free to come back and review at any time.

ASSESSMENT

01.

What is empathy in communication?

- ☐ A- Listen carefully
- ☐ B- Ignore the feelings of others
- ☐ C- Talk only about yourself

02.

What does active listening entail?

- ☐ A- Talk uninterrupted
- ☐ B- Ignore the interlocutor
- ☐ C- Pay attention and ask questions

03.

The feedback communication skill:

- ☐ A- Reduces morale in the company
- ☐ B- Makes labor relations difficult
- ☐ C- Improve productivity

04.

Assertive communication implies that:

- ☐ A- There's no need to say no even if you think you have to say it.
- ☐ B- You can express yourself effectively and defend your point of view
- ☐ C- Nothing happens if you don't respect your interlocutor

ASSESSMENT

05

If you demonstrate assertive communication, your interlocutor will be able to:

- ☐ A- Say that he feels respected by you even if you don't agree
- ☐ B- Feel attacked and intimidated
- ☐ C- Perceive that they can take advantage of you

ASSESSMENT ANSWERS

1 - A

2 - C

3 - C

4 - B

5 - A

KEY TAKEAWAYS

01

Both stress and mental workload at work can be improved by applying communication techniques that promote a better work environment.

02

Sharing your thoughts and feelings with others can make you feel less alone and more understood. Expressing yourself is a way to release the tension that builds up inside. Not talking about what worries you can increase your stress levels, making things seem worse than they are. Be assertive!

03

Communication makes us feel understood, clears up misunderstandings, boosts relationships, helps solve problem, allows emotional release, encourages support from others, improves self-awareness and builds confidence in dealing with conflicts

04

Active listening, feedback and assertive communication are the 3 key communication skills to achieve healthy and impactful communication in organizations, making them less likely to develop toxic climates or cultures where stress is the norm.

RESOURCE LIBRARY

Learning to say “no” and assert yourself confidently can empower you to set boundaries and prioritize your well-being. Explore our carefully chosen courses and talks to develop your communication and self-advocacy skills, overcome the fear of rejection, and break free from people-pleasing habits.



UDEMY TRAINING COURSES

Explore the following free self-paced training courses to learn more about saying “No”, cultivate your assertiveness skills, how to overcome the fear of being rejected and how to brake the habit of people pleasing.

[SAY NO TO PEOPLE PLEASING](#)[STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION](#)[SELF-ADVOCACY: BE YOUR OWN CHAMPION](#)

INSPIRING TED TALKS

Watch these wonderful TED talks by David Kaye, Julian Treasure and Adam Galinsky, uncovering a powerful strategy—unyielding in its simplicity—urge to say “no” and learn how to assert yourself, navigate tricky social situations and speak with empathy.

[‘NO.’](#)[SPEAK UP](#)[SPEAK SO THAT PEOPLE WANT TO LISTEN](#)

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE | THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

This free course, explores the importance of communication as a skill in the workplace. It aims to increase your understanding of communication skills and to help you to consider how your communication could be perceived by others.

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

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