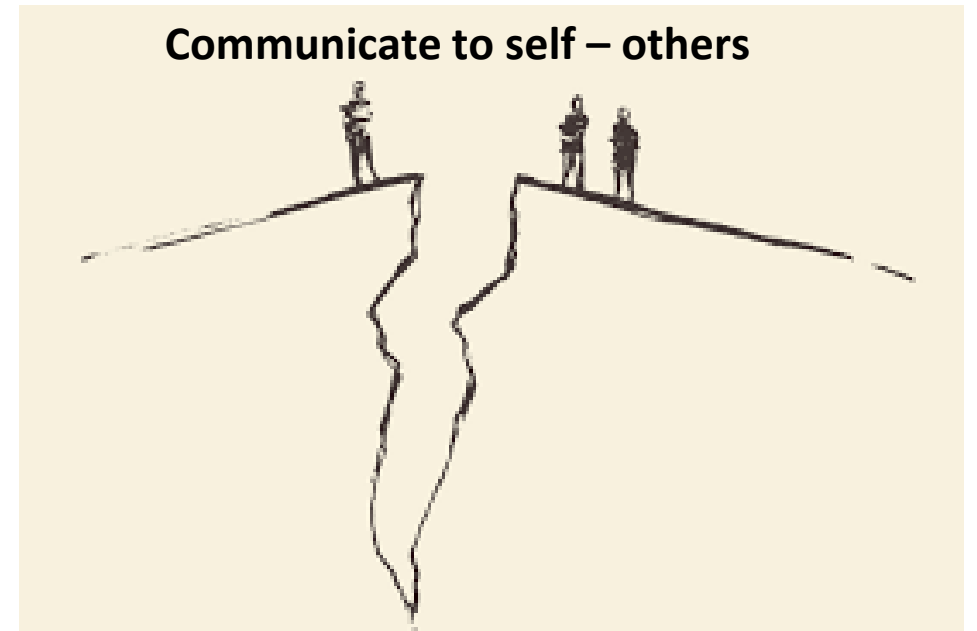


# The Trust Gap: Why Communication Makes or Breaks Workplace Culture



By: Haneen Farid



"Communication is about clarity, presence, and empathy — first for yourself, then for others."

# How are you communicating to yourself?



## How to communicate to yourself

Self-talk is a proven way to boost motivation, think clearly and process your emotions.



*'The single biggest problem with communication is the illusion that it has taken place'*

**George Bernard Shaw**

# What is Communication?

Let's Discuss ...



# Communication

The Concise Oxford Dictionary offers the following definitions:

- Communicate is to *'transmit or pass on by speaking or writing'*
- Communication is *'the act of imparting, especially, news'*

**The origin of communication stems from the Latin root *communis* ("to share" or "make common")**

# Communicating

The ability to use your Interpersonal Skills to exchange thoughts and ideas constructively is fundamental to communication and leads to thorough understanding, good problem solving and decision-making, all of which are essential to effective management.

# What are the advantages of good communication skills?

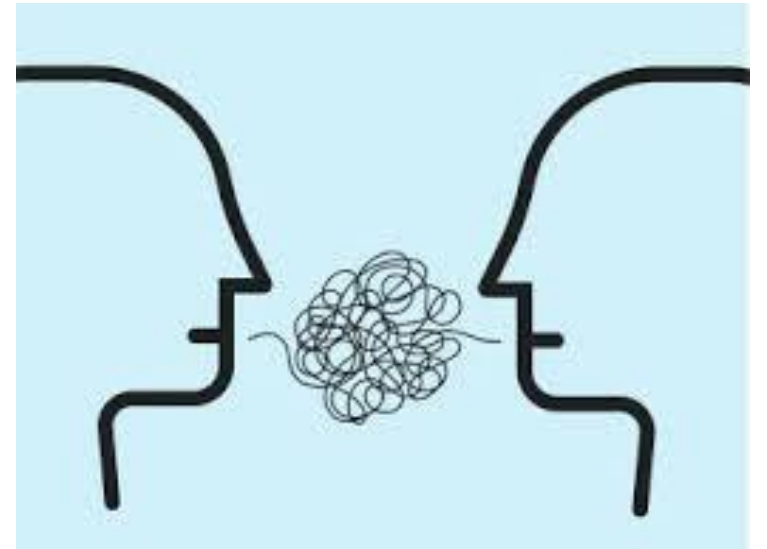
- **Efficiency**
- **Reduce Stress**
- **Improved relationships**
- **Increased understanding of others**
- **Save time and money**
- **Satisfaction**



# Effective Communication

*Effective communication is when the message is received as the sender intended'*

(KW Hamilton 2011)



# *Effective Communication – why does it matter?*



All organisational activity involves communication and when employees and managers communicate effectively, they are likely to perform well.

Conversely, miscommunication reduces efficiency and effectiveness - ultimately costing the organisation money.



# What Happens When Communication is Ineffective?

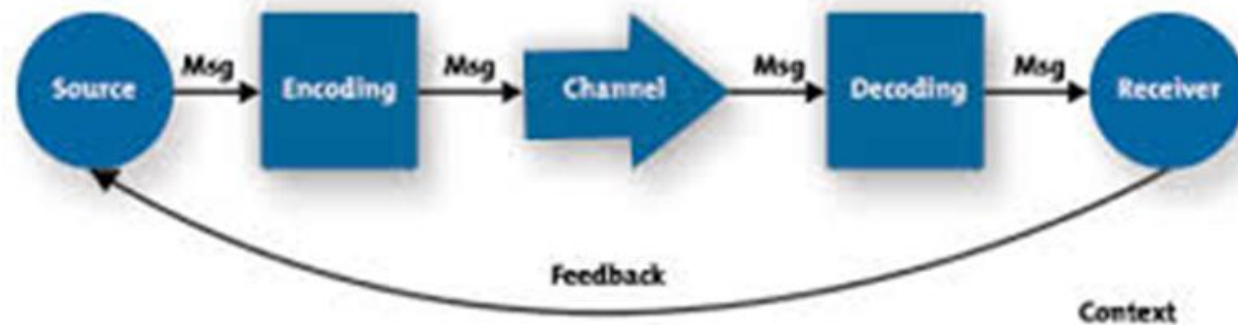


De-motivated staff;  
More mistakes and errors by staff;  
More workplace accidents;  
More confusion;  
Low morale of staff;  
Reduced productivity;  
Inadequate quality of outputs/products;  
Dissatisfied customers and clients;  
Conflict between team members;  
Conflict with other teams;  
Increased staff absenteeism;  
Increased numbers of staff off sick (particularly with stress-related illness);  
Impaired decision-making by staff;  
Inability of staff to solve problems effectively;  
Staff inability to cope with change;  
Reduced number of ideas and suggestions from team members;  
Reluctance of staff to take on extra work;  
Reluctance of staff to develop themselves;  
Increased likelihood of a 'blame culture' developing; and/or,  
Reluctance of staff to take responsibility for getting things done.



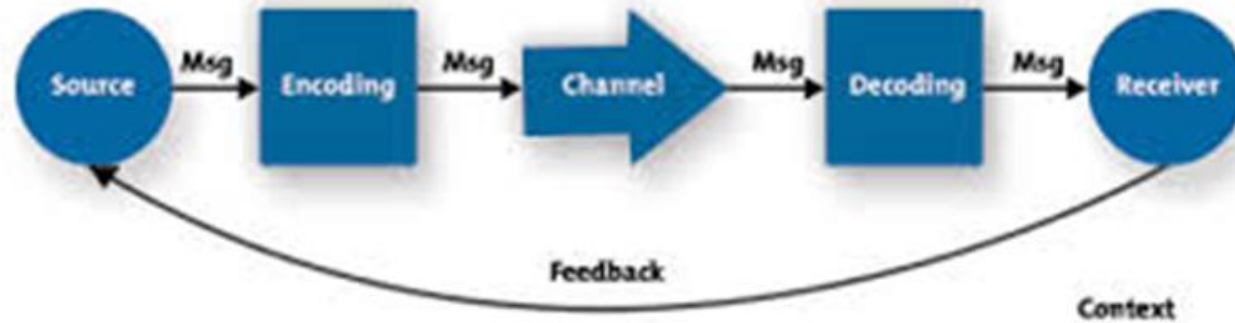
# Message: Encoding/Sending

- This is the process of transferring the information you want to communicate into a form that can be sent and correctly decoded at the other end.

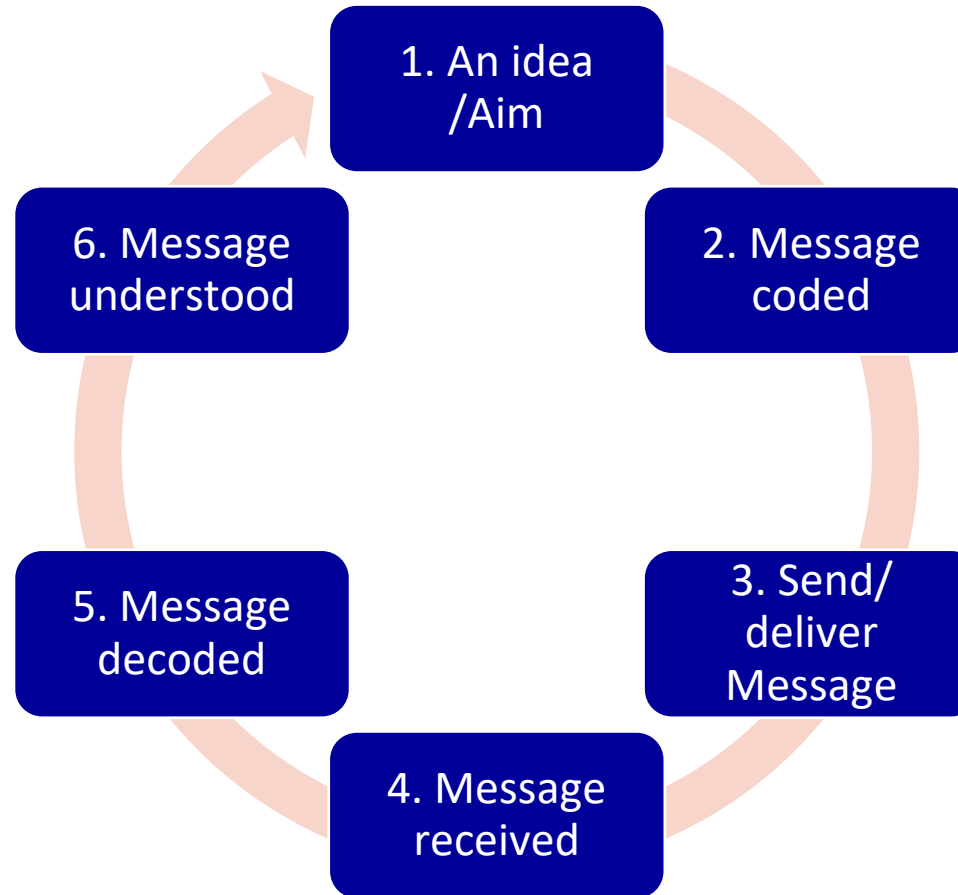


# Message: Decoding/Receiving

- Process whereby the receiver interprets the message into their own personal understanding.



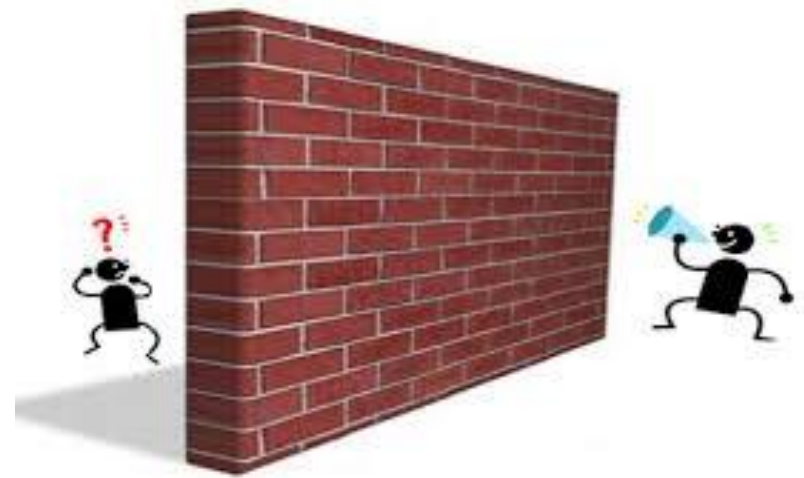
# The Communication Cycle



**The Communication Cycle**

(After Argyle 1967)

*List potential barriers that might impact on the effectiveness of communication*



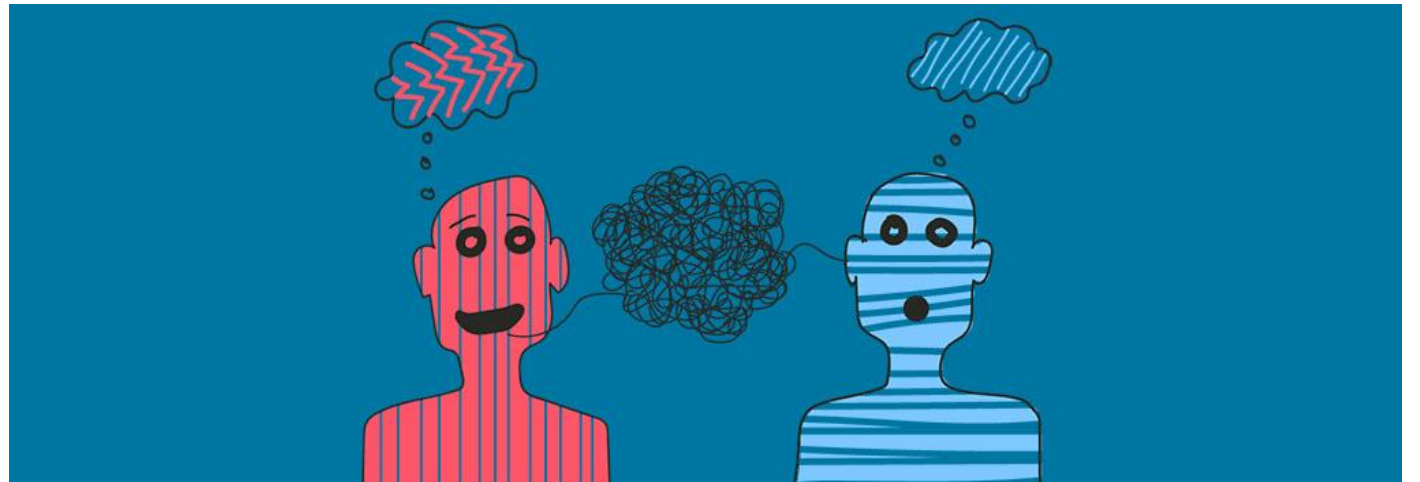
# Barriers to Communication

Age	Environment
Power (position)	Personality of sender and receiver
Authority (status)	Behaviour of sender and receiver
Gender	Confidence
Expertise and knowledge	Culture
Language (inc. jargon, acronyms, etc)	Peer pressure
Perceptions	Values and beliefs
Disability (physical and learning)	Inappropriate audience
Not listening	Personal style

# Communication Barriers

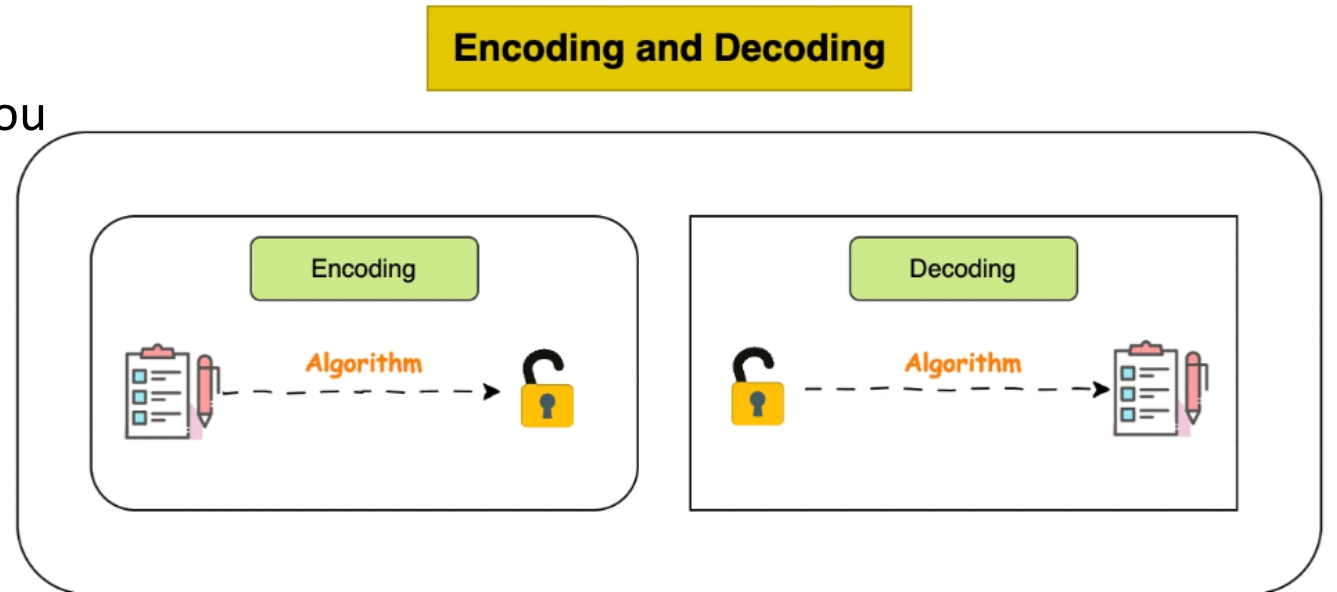
There are a range of sources of error in any act of communication, including:

- Coding/decoding errors
- Perception
- Context
- Assumptions



# Coding - Decoding Barriers

- Sender:
  - Idea may not be fully formulated before you express it
  - May not have the right words to express thoughts
- Transmission:
  - Medium
  - Environment
- Receiver
  - Receiver may not hear the correct words
  - Receiver's perceptions may distort the message



# Perception Barriers

- Jumping to conclusions
- Unstated assumptions
- Stereotyping
- Perceptions about audience
- Status
- Values/beliefs



# Contextual Barriers

- Environmental barriers
  - Physical
  - Emotional
- Language
- Culture
- Organisational barriers
  - eg lack of access to people with important information
  - Culture that discourages informal expression
  - Organisational conflict



# The 3 C's of Communication

- **Control:** Regulating your nervous system, using pauses (5-7 seconds), and breathing to avoid reactionary, high-stress responses.
- **Confidence:** Speaking directly, eliminating filler words, and owning your needs.
- **Connection:** Prioritizing understanding the other person's perspective over winning an argument or just passing information.

Among the three C's of communication (Control, Confidence, Connection) which one do you naturally focus on, and which one do you feel needs more of your attention going forward?



# Tools for Effective Communication

- Tool #1: Connection
- Tool #2: Preparation
- Tool #3: Assertiveness

# Tool #1: Connection

**Effective communication requires prioritizing connection over mere information exchange.** This means genuinely understanding the other person's message and demonstrating that understanding to them. The problem arises when people enter conversations with predetermined expectations, such as wanting the other person to admit fault or provide validation. These expectations shift focus toward a personal agenda rather than active listening, which transforms the conversation into a competition rather than an opportunity for mutual understanding.

**True connection happens when you authentically listen to and comprehend the other person's perspective,** leading to more productive dialogue. Importantly, connection doesn't require agreement; it simply requires understanding their viewpoint and acknowledging it.



# Barriers to Connection

Four main barriers to effective connection and communication:

- 1. Poor self-awareness:** We're unaware of how our body language and expressions appear to others, leading to misinterpretations (e.g., a concentrated frown mistaken for anger).
- 2. Close-mindedness:** We dismiss different perspectives without understanding them, preventing connection with those who think differently.
- 3. Lack of self-assurance:** We communicate indirectly through avoidant body language and uncertain phrases, preventing others from understanding our true needs and thoughts.
- 4. Over-reliance on technology:** Digital communication lacks tone and facial cues, causing frequent misunderstandings.

# Tool #2: Preparation

It entails three key elements: **communication goals, discussion topics, and strategies for challenging conversations.**

- Identify Your Goals and Values
- Decide What You'll Talk About
- Without structure, conversations lose focus, run long, and leave people confused and frustrated. He offers the following approach to focused conversations.
- Prepare to Talk About Hard Things
  - schedule a specific time and place for the discussion
  - be direct in your approach
  - be prepared when *others* initiate difficult conversations
- Realistic goals should focus on what you can control

# Tool #3: Assertiveness

## Assert Boundaries

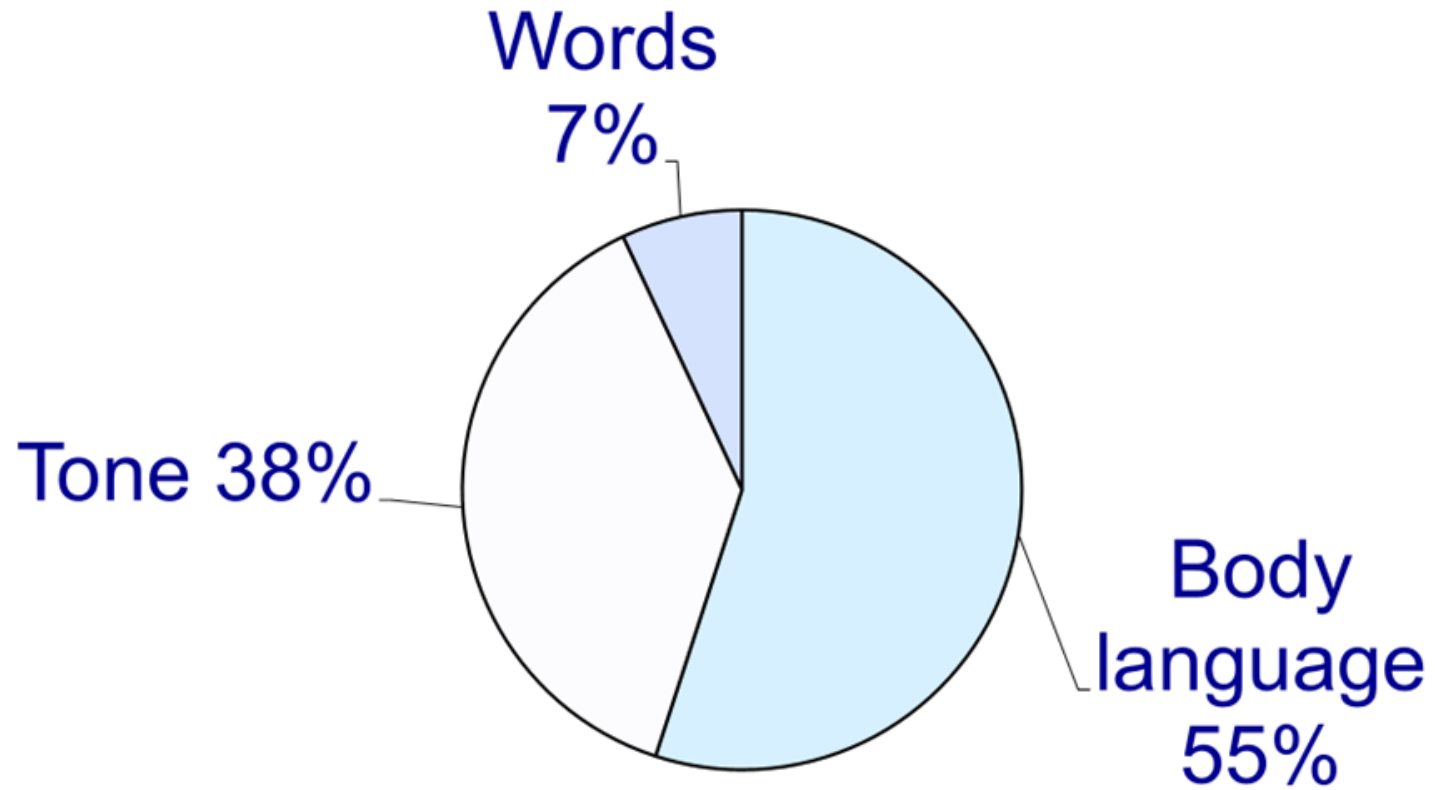
Effective communication requires asserting personal boundaries, rules that protect important aspects of your life. When establishing these boundaries with others, unambiguously communicate your expectations:

1. **Establish the boundary using an “I” statement.** Example: “I don’t take work calls after 6 p.m. because that’s my family time.”
2. **Explain the consequences.** Example: “If you call me after 6 p.m., I won’t answer and will return your call the next business day.”
3. **Follow through consistently.** Example: If a colleague calls at 8 p.m., don’t answer and instead return the call the next morning as promised.

# How do we communicate?



# How we Communicate



Albert Mehrabian

# Body Language

## Friendliness

- Smiles
- Relaxed tone of voice
- Expansive gestures
- Sympathetic gestures
- Open stance or posture
- Proximity

## Unfriendliness

- Aggressive posture
- Severe tone of voice
- Staring eyes
- Set mouth
- Distance
- Frowns

## Non-verbal Communication

## Domination and Control

- Interrupting
- Controlling tone of voice
- Ignoring responses
- Speaking loudly & quickly
- Speaking all the time
- Pointing finger
- Forceful gestures

## Passiveness

- Looking down
- Meek tone of voice
- Allowing interruptions
- Speaking quietly
- Saying little
- Hand 'washing'
- Nervous gestures

# Confirming that the Listener has Understood what has been Communicated

*How could you confirm that the listener has understood what you have said?*

聽

# "TO LISTEN" WRITTEN IN CHINESE



to hear



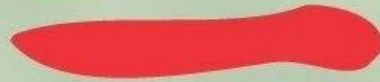
to think



to be present



to see



to focus



to feel



Identifying your core values, as they naturally shape how you listen, respond, and interact with others, while making decision-making easier during difficult exchanges.



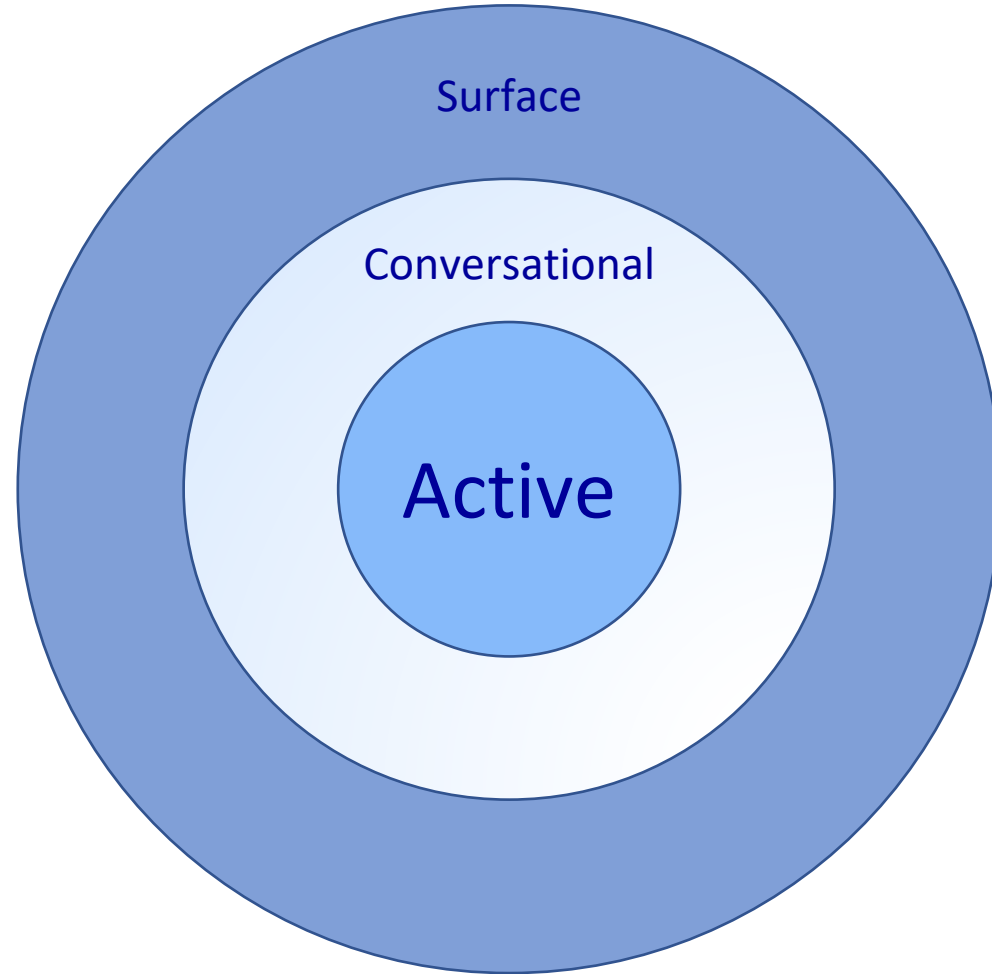
# Listening Skills...

*'The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention.'*

Rachel Naomi Remen



# Three Levels of Listening



# Active Listening

## Non-verbal behaviour

Open alert posture

Good eye contact

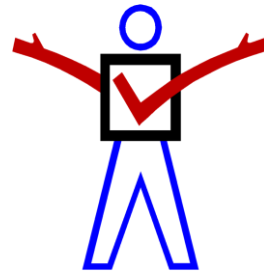
Encouraging gestures

Mirroring and pacing

Suspend judgement

Distinguish facts/feelings

Whole message not part



## Verbal behaviour

Encouraging words

Clarifying

Paraphrasing

Summarising

Reflecting emotion

Questions

Pausing

# Active Listening

**L** - look interested, get interested

**I** - involve yourself by responding

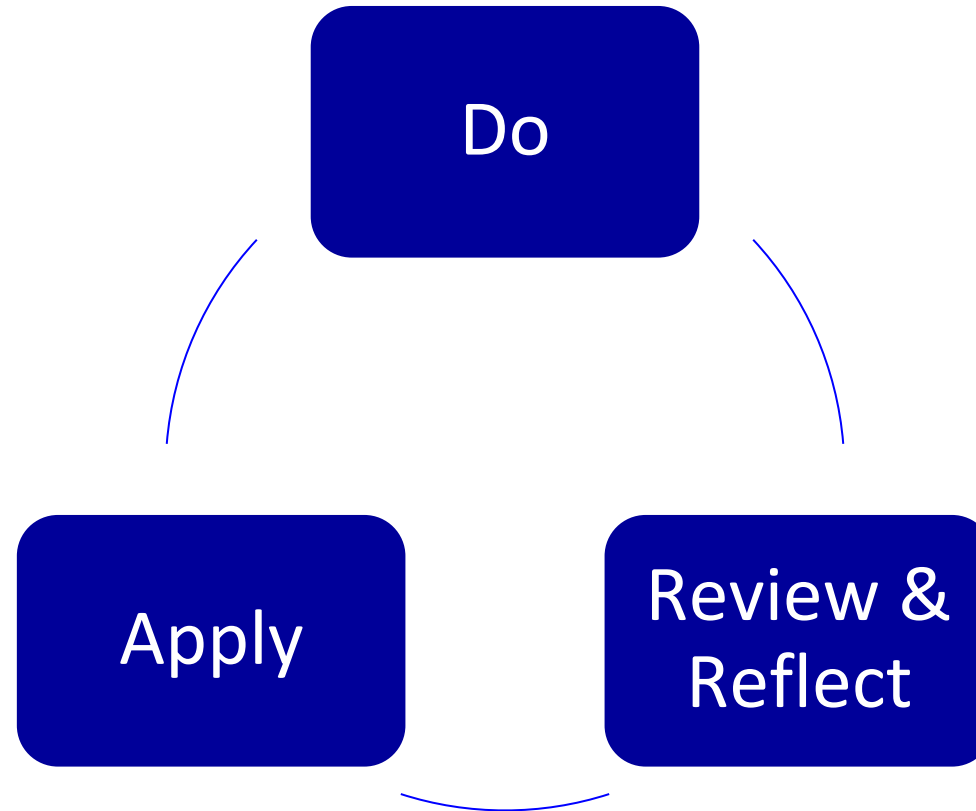
**S** - stay on topic

**T** - test your understanding

**E** - evaluate the message

**N** - neutralise your feelings

# Reflective Cycle - Evaluating your Communication and Gaining Feedback from Others



**The Reflective Cycle** (Format: AH Raymondson, 2012)

# Creating a culture of effective communication

What makes a company's culture great?



**Trust**

**Ideas**



**Empathy**

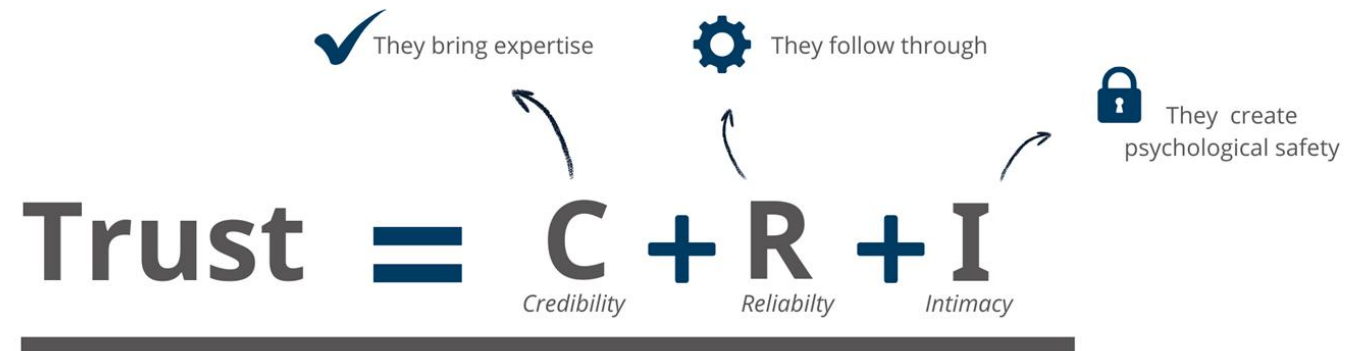
**Leadership**

**Equity**

**Community**

- Trust is one of the fundamental elements contributing to effective communication. Where there is a high level of trust, there is likely to be a much better level of communication and far greater rapport.





# Developing Trust

- Trust is the belief in the integrity, character and ability of a leader and manager
- It can be argued that there are five dimensions that make up the concept of trust:
  - Integrity – honesty and truthfulness
  - Competence – technical and interpersonal knowledge and skill
  - Consistency – reliability, predictability and good judgement in handling situations
  - Loyalty – willingness to protect and save face for a person
  - Openness – willingness to share ideas and information freely



**Learning how to communicate is  
the backbone of all relationships**



# Tips ...

1. Learn how to talk to yourself kindly first.

In the morning, ask yourself: *“What is the one thing I can do to make today great?”*

At the end of the day, ask yourself: *“How am I feeling? What do I need this evening?”*

This exercise allows you to practice empathy toward yourself, which helps you practice empathy toward others. It's usually small adjustments that create big freedom.

2. Use different words to express how you're feeling.

We consistently use the same words: good, bad, fine, and okay. These words are familiar to us, but they don't *really* communicate what's happening on the inside.

3. Experiment out loud.

By treating ideas as experiments, you can play with possibilities without grounding decisions into reality right away. This makes conversations clearer, more creative, and more fun.

4. Separate content from context.

When someone is speaking, give them your full attention. Listen for what is *actually* being said, not *how* it's being said or the circumstances around it.

A great listener can understand the message (content) without getting distracted by the delivery (context). That skill alone can transform any relationship.

# Actions ...

- What action will you take?
- What are you changing in the way you communicate?
- What support do you need/want?



# Questions



# Feedback form: Why Communication Makes or Breaks Workplace Culture - SIMFOTIX

