Communication Skills
in New Teaching Methodologies

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SUMMARY. This chapter discusses the importance of communication in innovative teaching strategies. Three general types of learning environments are discussed: interpersonal communication (one-to-one interactions), small group processes, and group presentations. Faculty and students must use effective communication skills in a variety of learning experiences including instruction, advising, and mentoring. The theoretical frameworks are discussed, as well as practical suggestions to enhance learning in new environments. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: getinfo@haworthpressinc.com <Website: http://www.haworthpressinc.com>]*

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INTRODUCTION

Scott Thompson is a new faculty member who has been assigned the responsibility of evaluating a case presentation in one of the

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Applied Therapeutics small groups. Twelve students shuffle into the small group classroom and sit in the chairs organized in a circle. As instructed, Scott gets prepared to start the videotape camera and to take notes about the group's presentation. Scott asks the group to start their presentation. One of the students raises her hand and tentatively says, "Our group isn't quite ready. Mary isn't here yet." Scott asks, "Well, why doesn't someone else start and Mary can join in later." The student (looking at the floor) replies, "Well, Mary has all the material. You see she wanted to do the report in a certain way and the rest of us disagreed with her. So she went off and did the work herself. She is pretty good at doing that. Uh, she stayed up all night and overslept. John just called her before class. She will be here in about 10 minutes. Okay?!"

So much for student-based learning!! What does this situation reveal? That students are lazy? That Scott wasn't prepared for this situation? Basically it reveals that problems in small group dynamics and ineffective communication skills within a group can sabotage efforts to create meaningful learning experiences. Certain things did not happen in this group because the group failed to act as a group and relied too heavily on the performance of one individual. These points are just two of several factors that influence how small groups perform. While the elements in this case may seem rather obvious, faculty must become more familiar with the communication process that exists in small groups and other teaching environments if they are to become more effective educators.

This chapter will discuss the importance of communication-related factors and how they can enhance or distract from innovative teaching strategies. Three general types of learning environments will be discussed: interpersonal communication (one-to-one interactions), small group processes, and group presentations. Interpersonal communication skills will be discussed in light of their importance to interactive, one-to-one learning. Faculty must use these skills as they interact with students in various learning experiences as teachers, advisors, and mentors. The theoretical framework of interpersonal communication skill development will be discussed in the first section of the chapter followed by a description of how faculty can use elements of effective communication to enhance their ability to educate in new environ-

ments. Second, the dynamics of small group interaction will be discussed since many of the new learning methodologies use small group formats. Both faculty and students must understand these dynamics to create more effective group learning experiences. As illustrated in the opening situation, lack of attention to small group interaction may limit the effectiveness of small group learning. Finally, communication skills involved in group presentations will be discussed since faculty typically make presentations at various times before large and small audiences. The concepts discussed in this section are reinforced by information provided in other chapters dealing with creating and using audio/visual aids and creating effective handout materials.

When developing new educational methods, it is easy to overlook the communication skills upon which many of these strategies are built. As discussed in previous chapters, faculty must consider many issues when developing innovative teaching strategies, such as defining the correct abilities to nurture, determining the most appropriate active learning methods, and choosing the correct assessment instruments. The act of communicating with others is so basic and so prominent in everyday life that it is easily forgotten. Faculty should take time to reflect on the various aspects of communication and how they affect teaching. Teachers need to understand how personal communication affects their relationships with students. As will be discussed later, the manner in which faculty communicate with students influences student perception of the content provided to them.

Not only do faculty need to be aware of their own personal communication skills, but they must also help students with their skill development since students will use these same skills when interacting with real or simulated patients, physicians, or other health care providers. Thus, faculty must critique student communication skills and should model good interpersonal communication skills for students. In other words, faculty must teach and reinforce many of these concepts during their interactions with students. In this way, students will learn not only complex scientific and therapeutic information but also how to interact more effectively with others. Chapter appendices contain several instruments that will aid faculty in assessing their own communication skills and those of students. A key to improving communication is to identify which communication strategies work and what individual strengths and weaknesses exist in important areas.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To accomplish the goals of this chapter, the following learning objectives have been developed. After reading this chapter, readers will be able to:

1. Define the various aspects of the communication process
2. Describe the components of nonverbal communication
3. Describe the small group communication process
4. Describe communication elements used in making oral presentations
5. Determine techniques for assessment of student performance.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Communication Model

To enhance one-to-one interaction in the learning environment, faculty must first understand the communication process. Communication is best described as a process in which messages are generated and transmitted by one person and subsequently received and translated by another. A practical model of this process, as shown in Figure 1, combines five important elements: sender, message, receiver, feedback, and barriers.

In the interpersonal communication process, the **sender** transmits a message to another person. The **message** is the element that is transmitted from one person to another. Messages can be thoughts, ideas, emotions, information, or other factors, and can be transmitted both verbally (e.g., talking) and nonverbally (e.g., using facial expressions, hand gestures). As will be discussed later, the nonverbal component of communication is important, since research has found that 55% or more of a message is transmitted through its nonverbal component. In most situations, senders formulate or encode messages before transmitting them. However, in some cases, messages are transmitted spontaneously without the sender thinking about it, such as a glaring stare or a burst of laughter. The **receiver** "decodes" the message and assigns a particular meaning to it. In translating the message, the receiver considers both the nonverbal and verbal components of the mes-

FIGURE 1. The Interpersonal Communication Model (Tindall, Beardsley, and Kimberlin, 1993).
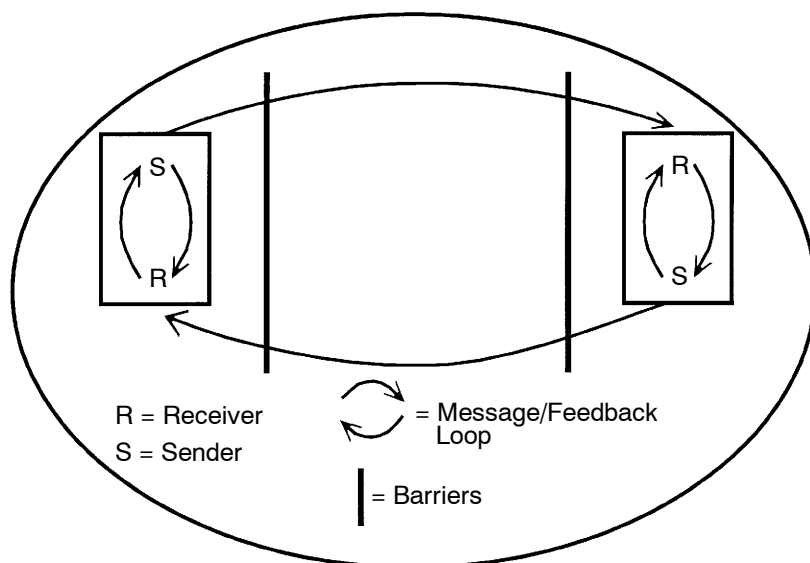
sage. In one-to-one teaching, we, as faculty, transmit several messages to students using verbal, nonverbal, and written formats. In addition, students transmit many messages to us that we must decode. As will be discussed later, communication is hindered when we do not provide information in an understandable way (making it difficult for students to decode the message), or when we have difficulty decoding student messages accurately.

To prevent these communication problems, we must use the feedback loop within the communication model. **Feedback** is the process where initial receivers communicate back to the initial senders their understanding of the senders' messages. By using verbal and nonverbal communication, receivers feed back information to senders about how messages were translated. In the feedback loop, the initial receiver becomes the sender of feedback and the initial sender becomes the receiver of feedback, as noted in the model. In the interpersonal communication process, individuals are thus constantly moving back and forth between the roles of sender and receiver. Feedback can be simple, such as merely nodding our head, or more complex, such as

repeating a set of complicated instructions. Feedback allows communication to be a two-way process rather than a one-way monologue. During the communication process, most of us tend to focus on the message and frequently miss the feedback component. We either fail to provide appropriate feedback to students when we are a receiver of a message, or we fail to recognize feedback or to ask for feedback from students when we are the sender of the message. We typically request feedback from students using either closed-ended questions (What is the dosage range of this drug?) or open-ended questions (What are the general characteristics of diabetes?) depending upon the type of information we are trying to make sure they understand.

Feedback can be strengthened by being sensitive to others and by being a good listener. These concepts will be discussed later in the chapter. Feedback is most effective when a person understands the situation in which a message is generated. The next section describes this important concept.

The Meaning of the Message

The interpersonal communication model shows how messages originate from a sender and are received by a receiver. The sender delivers the message, and the receiver assigns a meaning to that message. The critical component in this process is that the receiver assign the same meaning to the verbal and nonverbal message as intended by the sender. In other words, the receiver may or may not interpret the message's meaning in the same way as the sender intended. In general, individuals assign meaning to verbal and nonverbal messages based on their past experiences and previous definitions of these verbal and nonverbal elements. If two persons do not share the same definition or past experiences, misunderstandings may occur. The most common example of this is different terminology used in conversation. Words mean certain things to different people based on the definitions learned. For example, faculty many times speak in terminology that may have different (or possibly no) meaning to their students. We often assume that the receiver will interpret our message accurately. We fail to realize that different people may assign different meanings to words or phrases we use. Many of our problems in communication occur because we forget that individual experiences are never identical, for example, when we are interacting with a student of a different gender, age, or culture. In reality, we have enough common experi-

ences with students whom we see on a daily basis that we can understand each other fairly well. Typically, we can anticipate how students are feeling and their general level of understanding of course content. It is when we have limited common experiences or do not share the same meaning of certain words and symbols that communication breaks down.

A key to preventing misunderstanding is anticipating how students may act in certain learning environments. It may be helpful to assess their past experiences in small or large groups. If they have had positive experiences previously, then their perception of these learning situations may be different than if they have had bad experiences. For example, if they have had negative experiences in giving small group presentations, they may be reluctant to participate in small group learning experiences. In other words, the more we know about student frames of reference and the more we understand them, the easier it will be to anticipate how students may interpret the meaning of our messages.

Many misunderstandings can be alleviated by providing feedback to check the meaning of the message. As senders of messages we should ask students to share their interpretation of our messages. Verifying the fact that students interpreted the intended meaning of our verbal and nonverbal messages takes additional time and is many times awkward. Most people rely on their own intuition to determine whether their intended message was received correctly. Unfortunately, this technique may not be the most accurate. We typically obtain feedback from students using exams, quizzes, and other assessments of learning. In other words, we assess the degree that they understood the concepts and facts presented. However, feedback during personal interactions must be more immediate and more personalized.

As faculty, we also receive countless messages from students; thus, we can alleviate some misunderstandings by offering feedback to students. After receiving the message, we should indicate in some way what we understood the message to be. Unfortunately, we cannot provide nor ask for feedback with every message. To do so would be awkward and inefficient. The key is to identify those critical messages that must be understood clearly and to provide or ask for feedback about them.

Nonverbal Communication

The process of interpersonal communication involves both verbal and nonverbal expression. A large measure of how we relate to others and how they relate to us is not based on *what* is said, but on *how* it is said. We are constantly providing messages to those around us by our dress, facial expression, body movements, and other aspects of our appearance and behavior. Nonverbal communication involves a complete mix of behaviors, psychological responses, and environmental interactions through which we consciously and unconsciously relate to students. The importance of nonverbal communication is underlined by the findings of behavioral scientists, who have reported that over 55-95% of all that we communicate can be attributed to nonverbal sources (1, 2). Awareness and skilled use of our nonverbal abilities can make the difference between fulfilling, successful interpersonal relations and frustrated, nonproductive interactions.

Nonverbal communications are unique for two reasons. First, they mirror innermost thoughts and feelings. This mirror effect is constantly at work, whether or not we are conscious of its occurrence. Second, nonverbal communication is difficult, if not impossible, to "fake" in order to have it fit a verbal communication in which we may be involved. Lack of congruence between our verbal and nonverbal messages often results in less than successful interpersonal communication (3).

Nonverbal communication is similar to verbal communication in that each person perceives and interprets a given nonverbal message or "cue" in a totally personal manner. While certain nonverbal cues, such as a smile, would generally be interpreted to mean happiness by most persons, other nonverbal cues lend themselves to numerous interpretations. This divergence of interpretation stems from the variety of social, psychological, economic, cultural, and other background variables found throughout the human race. Therefore, nonverbal cues can and often will have multiple interpretations. However, within a given society, groups of nonverbal cues (referred to as "cue clusters") generally provide an interpretation that is usually universally accepted. Cue clusters are combinations of nonverbal acts that, when taken as a group, signify a certain meaning or communicate a certain message. For example, a student who gives you a friendly handshake, a pleasant sounding "thank you," and a warm smile at the end of your

interaction is probably more pleased with the interaction than a student who abruptly turns around and quickly walks away mumbling something under his breath. These cue clusters contribute significantly to what is being communicated nonverbally. Other important nonverbal elements include kinesics (body movement) and proxemics (the distance between persons when they communicate).

Kinesics. The manner in which you use your arms, legs, hands, head, face, and torso may have a dramatic impact on the message that you send. The phrase "turning your back on someone" illustrates this concept well. Down through the ages, societies have developed and refined numerous body movements to communicate certain messages. In this country, for example, it is common for two people to shake hands when they meet to indicate friendship or at least tolerance of another person. Sincerity, respect, and empathy for another person can be nonverbally communicated by an "open" cue cluster. The classic example of an open posture is standing (or sitting) with a full frontal appearance to the person with whom you are interacting. As an open communicator, we should also have our legs comfortably apart, not crossed, arms at the side with the palms of the hands facing front, and a facial expression that expresses interest and a desire to listen as well as speak. A closed posture, one that would not lend itself to continued communication, occurs when we have our arms folded in front of our chest, legs crossed at the knees, head facing downward, and eyes looking at the floor. If this posture is retained throughout the interaction, or if it suddenly appears during a conversation, the student may either respond in a similar manner or break off the interaction. We should be aware of our own tendency to close off communication through nonverbal communication. While the closed posture should not be taken as a totally negative act, it does have the power to halt interactions and should be used appropriately. For example, if during a conversation with a student we suddenly have the impression that she is no longer listening or has retreated from the interaction, we should examine our nonverbal communication to see if it is in fact the cause of the disruption. A list of ways to communicate from an open posture includes:

1. Varied eye contact (consistent, but not a stare)
2. Relaxed posture
3. Appropriate, comfortable gestures

4. Frontal appearance (shoulders square to other person)
5. Slight lean toward the other person
6. Erect body position (head up, shoulders back).

Proxemics. The distance between two interacting persons plays an important role in the content of what is communicated. Proxemics, the structure and use of space, is a powerful nonverbal communication tool. Behavioral scientists have found that at different distances between communicators different communications normally transpire (4). The most protected space is that from full contact to approximately 18 inches from our bodies. We reserve this space for others with whom we have close, intimate relationships. When a stranger, or even a nonintimate associate, ventures into this space during a conversation, we experience anxiety and perhaps anger at the trespass of our intimate zone. A crowded elevator is the best illustration of our need to maintain our intimate space free of strangers. People in a crowded elevator will do almost anything (to the point of standing like statues) to avoid touching one another.

We are much more comfortable in our daily interactions when we maintain a distance of 18 inches to 48 inches between ourselves and others. At this distance, casual personal conversations normally take place in our society. Interpersonal distances greater than 12 feet are generally reserved for those occasions when one person is speaking and others are the audience. This distance allows the speaker to use his or her voice's maximum capability and implies that little or no interruption from the audience will occur.

We may want to consider the factor of distance whenever we interact with students. A faculty member who persists in trespassing into a student's intimate zone risks appearing bullish and inconsiderate. Therefore, when interacting with students it is important to stand close enough to ensure privacy, yet at the same time to provide enough room for each person to feel comfortable. Most of the time people do indicate nonverbally whether they feel comfortable with the speaking distance by stepping back or leaning forward.

Distracting Nonverbal Communication. Communication is comprised of the transmission of both nonverbal and verbal messages in an environment plagued with barriers. An initial step in improving the communication process is to become aware of those barriers. One of the most obvious barriers in nonverbal communication is lack of eye

contact. It is frustrating to talk to somebody who is not looking at you. Unfortunately, many faculty unconsciously do not look at students when talking to them. Their tendency is to look at the floor, the ceiling, or other objects while talking. This behavior could indicate to students that faculty members are not really confident about what they are saying or that they do not really care about the situation. Not looking at students also limits our ability to assess how the information is affecting students; in other words, it limits our ability to receive feedback from students. For instance, do students have a questioning look? an expression of surprise? an expression of contentment? As will be discussed later, good eye contact is essential in effective listening. If we do not look students in the eye, students might get the impression that we are not interested in what they are saying, and thus they might not feel comfortable communicating with us. Using good eye contact does not actually mean that we continually stare at students, but that we spend most of the time looking directly at them.

Another potential distracting nonverbal element is facial expression. We may be sending a message that we may not intend to transmit. For example, we may be communicating a feeling of lack of interest or concern if our eyes continue to move around while we're talking or listening to another person. This is especially damaging when our facial expressions are not consistent with our verbal expressions. For example, if we say to someone, "Go ahead I am listening, tell me about it," and then appear to be distracted by something else around us, the person may hear that we are interested but may perceive that we are not by observing our nonverbal communication. Students will tend to believe facial messages more than the verbal aspects of our communication.

Another potential distraction to communication is tone of voice. People interpret the message not only by what words are used, but also by the tone of voice used. For example, a comment in a sarcastic or threatening tone of voice will produce a different effect than the same phrase spoken with an empathic tone. An inappropriate tone of voice can upset students and may create an entirely different meaning from the one intended. In an attempt to remove this potential barrier, many faculty have recorded their voices to monitor inflection and its effect on communication. Many have found that they sound far different than expected.

Detecting Nonverbal Cues in Others. Up to this point, our attention

has been focused on providing nonverbal communication. Skilled use of nonverbal communication also involves the detection of those nonverbal cues provided by others. It would be impossible to list all the potential nonverbal cues that we could observe in students. Some are rather obvious, such as a confused face, a blank stare, or head nodding, while others are more difficult to interpret. An important consideration is that even though we may exhibit similar nonverbal behavior, each one of us interprets nonverbal cues in a highly individualistic manner. A part of how we interpret these messages is based on our personal backgrounds. For example, when a student appears to be rushed or nervous, we need to determine why the student is nervous and then take steps to put the student at ease before attempting to talk with him. As part of the detection process, we need to check our perception of the nonverbal message, since the message that we receive may not have been the message intended by the sender. To clarify the perceived nonverbal message, we might ask, "It seems that you are a bit nervous, what exactly is going on?" Hopefully the student would be able to articulate the reason, such as having to rush off to another class, being shy, or being uncomfortable occupying our precious time. Once the reason is articulated, then we can work toward resolving the issue before dealing with the original question. Experience has shown that once the underlying feelings and attitudes are brought out in the open, communication is enhanced.

Overcoming Distracting Nonverbal Factors. As mentioned earlier, the first step in improving interpersonal communication is recognizing how we communicate with others. In the nonverbal area, this self-awareness involves constantly being aware of the nonverbal elements. Videotaping ourselves is particularly helpful because it reveals the positive and negative aspects of our nonverbal communication. The first step is to discover what aspects we need to change to become more effective. The next step is more difficult: finding strategies to overcome these distracting elements. Several suggestions have been made earlier on how specific nonverbal elements can be improved. One thing that should be mentioned is that potentially distracting behaviors can be overcome by using different nonverbal elements. For example, if we find that we naturally cross our arms while talking to others, we can overcome the possible perception that we are acting defensively by using other nonverbal elements, such as smiling, a friendly tone of voice, or moving closer to the student. We must

remember that the total message received by students is a combination of all verbal and nonverbal aspects, not just one isolated component. The key to this process is to recognize the distracting nonverbal elements and then to try to overcome them in some way. Developing an awareness of our own nonverbal messages and detection of nonverbal messages in others is the first step in developing skilled nonverbal communication.

Effective Listening

When we think about skills of effective communication, many think first of the skills involved in speaking clearly and of the skills necessary to have an effect on others. An equally critical part of the communication process, and perhaps the most difficult to learn, is the ability to be a good listener. We experience a sense of satisfaction and gratitude when we feel that another person really listened to what we had to say and, to a large extent, understood our meaning. Our ability as a faculty member to provide our students and colleagues with this sense of being understood is a crucial part of our effectiveness in communicating with them.

Unfortunately, effective listening does not occur in all circumstances. Many times we attempt to listen and end up misinterpreting student messages. Most students recognize this and are accepting of our misunderstandings. If our listening appears to be natural, then this error will not damage the relationship; i.e., if students perceive us as trying to listen with caring and accepting attitudes, then it will minimize the effect that errors have on the relationships with students. The key is to provide feedback to make sure that you interpreted the message correctly.

Some communication habits may interfere with our ability to listen well. For example, trying to do two things at once gives the impression that students do not have our full attention. Planning what we will say next or structuring our next argument interferes with actively trying to understand the student. Jumping to conclusions before students have completed their message can lead to only hearing parts of messages–often pieces that fit into preconceived ideas. Focusing on content only, judging the person or the message as it is being conveyed, faking interest, or communicating in stereotyped ways all cause us to miss much of the meanings that are in the messages people send us. Domi-

nating the conversation also prevents students from participating in discussion sessions.

Listening well involves understanding both the content of the information being provided and the feelings being conveyed. Skills which are useful in effective listening include paraphrasing, reflection of feeling, nonverbal attending, and modeling appropriate behavior.

Paraphrasing. When students provide information to us, it may be necessary for us to summarize critical pieces of information. For example, if a student is reviewing a patient care plan in a clinic, we might summarize key points offered by the student, "So you think that we should recommend that Mrs. Johnson's digoxin dose be decreased to 0.125mg per day." Paraphrasing allows us to be sure that we understood accurately all that the student conveyed and also allows the student to add new information that may have been forgotten. Paraphrasing, like other types of feedback, serves to identify misunderstandings that may exist. It should be noted that not all statements need to be paraphrased. The key is to identify the critical statements that require paraphrasing to assure accurate communication.

Reflection of Feeling. When using this technique, we attempt to convey back to students the essence of what they are thinking or feeling. Reflection of feeling condenses aspects of another person's attitudes or feelings. For example a student might say, "I don't know about Dr. Smith. One time I go to him and he's as nice as he can be. The next time he's so rude I swear I won't go back again." A reflection of feeling would be: "So he seems to be very inconsistent and you feel reluctant to approach him." Providing accurate reflections of feeling is more difficult than paraphrasing because it involves emotions rather than content. It is easier to talk about content of messages rather than the feelings and thoughts behind them. People are more reluctant to talk about their feelings. In addition, it is difficult for us to identify underlying emotions. However, certain attitudes and beliefs can interfere with communication, and in some situations, honest communication cannot exist until these underlying emotions are addressed.

Nonverbal Attending Behaviors. In conveying our willingness to listen, we can do a number of things nonverbally to convey our interest and concern. Attending behaviors such as establishing eye contact while listening to students, calling students by name, leaning toward them with no physical barriers between us, and having a relaxed

posture, help to put students at ease and to show our concern. Sincere nodding of the head and other encouragements to speak are also part of good listening. A tone of voice that conveys our willingness to listen complements our verbal messages. Establishing a sense of privacy helps convey our respect for students. Conveying that we have time to listen–that we aren't hurried or distracted–makes our concern appear to be more genuine.

Modeling Appropriate Behavior. As mentioned earlier, faculty need to model effective communication skills in their actual interactions with patients and others. Students need to observe faculty in clinical and teaching settings using empathy and other communication skills. Students need to see that effective communication is critical in student-faculty and patient-pharmacist relationships. If students view faculty displaying the types of behaviors discussed above, they may be more willing to adopt new approaches. They will see the value of using effective communication skills and hopefully realize how different situations require different approaches to communication. In addition, faculty should not hesitate to discuss situations where they did not use effective skills, particularly those that resulted in unpleasant consequences. Students can learn from faculty mistakes as well as their own mistakes.

SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Small group communication has become increasingly important in pharmacy education as we have shifted learning experiences into small group formats. We must have an understanding of small group processes to make student groups more effective. If certain elements are not addressed, students who work in groups will have difficulty, as demonstrated in the example given at the beginning of the chapter. Unfortunately, many faculty do not pay attention to small group processes and have the mistaken impression that the groups will succeed because faculty communicated the assigned task to the students.

Efficient groups can be compared to well-oiled machines, which have many parts contributing to the work of a single unit. The many parts have different functions but work toward the overall benefit of the machine. Experts who have studied group processes have identified two primary needs of the group: what needs to be done by the group (task functions) and what needs to be done to keep the group

functioning effectively (maintenance functions). Task functions include setting agendas, assigning responsibilities, and establishing time lines, while maintenance functions include developing and maintaining group morale, ownership, and identity. Most groups focus on the task functions. However, experience has shown that if groups continue to meet over a period of time without addressing the maintenance functions, then group productivity will suffer, member interest will wain, or certain members will become "burnt out." This section of the chapter will discuss both task and maintenance functions that need to be addressed in learning groups.

Characteristics of Effective Groups

When studying effective groups, several communication experts found that certain common characteristics emerged (5, 6). To develop and maintain effective small group learning groups, we should consider the elements outlined below.

Clarity of Goals. Group members need to have a clear understanding of the group's mission and purpose. Unfortunately, too many groups waste time on issues that are not part of their mission or spend too much time deciding what they need to do. We can all cite several examples of ineffective faculty committee meetings we have suffered through because of the problems. Too often, these same problems arise in student learning groups. For example, many student groups spend valuable time trying to guess at the desired outcome. Thus, we must clearly articulate the purpose of each student group, its specific assignments, and our expectations of the final outcome. In certain situations, we need to ask for feedback from group members so that we are comfortable that they recognize their purpose and final objectives.

Clearly Defined Roles. Group members should understand their role and their obligation to the group because students serve in different capacities and receive different assignments within a group. Effective groups are characterized by students who can clearly articulate their role and their expectations of other group members. The most common deficiency in this area is obvious when someone states, "I didn't realize that I was supposed to do that. I thought you were going to do it!" Another common problem exists when two or more students want to have a role that can only be filled by one student.

Clear Communication. Effective groups appear to foster clear communication between group members. This involves written commu-

nication, such as having agendas distributed before the meeting, appropriate reports distributed prior to or during the meeting, and accurate minutes distributed after the meeting. A healthy group can be characterized as being a group of effective communicators. Many of the skills discussed in the "Interpersonal Communication" section of this chapter relate to group communication as well. Group members, especially group leaders, must be excellent listeners, must pay attention to nonverbal communication of others, and must paraphrase certain comments from their colleagues. The group leaders must use good communication skills to foster group maintenance; they must constantly clarify messages, provide feedback to group members, and listen to the concerns of others.

Balanced Member Participation. Clear communication should flow among all students, and each member should contribute to the discussion. Effective groups tolerate differences of opinion and provide forums for expression. A weak group is marked by students who monopolize the conversation or who allow the discussion to wander offtrack. Balanced participation also means that the group does not rely on one student to complete an entire task (as demonstrated in the earlier case). In healthy groups, students share responsibilities and are accountable to each other.

Well-Defined Decision Procedures. Effective groups have predetermined plans of how to make decisions. Generally, groups make decisions by majority rule, group consensus, or fiat of the leadership. Group members should agree on which decision strategy should be used before starting the decision-making process. Experience has shown that some people prefer to discuss issues extensively, while others are more task oriented and feel uncomfortable in situations that have a lot of discussion. Thus, some students enjoy discussion, while others are impatient with their colleagues who are discussing the issues. As a result, some groups have difficulty making decisions, which serves to frustrate the group members.

Deals with Conflict Effectively. It is realistic to believe that, since groups involve individual human beings, some type of conflict will arise during the life of a group. Disagreements can be rather minor, such as setting a time when everyone can meet, or disagreements can be significant, such as determining the group's direction, assigning responsibilities, or selecting leadership roles. A healthy group "agrees to disagree" in an orderly fashion, which leads to respect of group

members. Unfortunately, many student groups ignore conflict rather than confront it. Thus, group maintenance suffers as students choose sides, act passive-aggressively, or drop out of the group psychologically. Many times it is best to deal with conflict outside the group itself. For example, if students are disruptive, then group leadership could meet with them outside the group to resolve issues. If the group itself tries to deal with disruptive members, the members might get defensive. This is likely to result in an unproductive session.

Balance of Task and Maintenance Orientation. Effective groups should be concerned not only with being productive but also with maintaining group morale and interest. Students should take time to process how their group is working or how it could be more efficient and effective. Some student groups continue to limp along, making the same mistakes during the entire year. Many feel that this is just the way groups work–they are inefficient and cumbersome. We need to work with the groups to make sure students realize that group members need to pay attention to maintenance functions as well as task functions.

Effective group processes require the group members to establish the rules first, before the group actually starts its work. Key factors to be considered include determining leadership roles, what type of decision-making process to use, how to handle conflict, and how to communicate with each other. Faculty members can help student groups by addressing these issues before the groups form and by meeting with them periodically to see how these maintenance functions are progressing. Experience has shown that groups tend to go through three stages of development: initial formation, performance phase, and adjustment phase. Initial formation includes the period of time when the group establishes its working rules and assumptions as described above. The performance phase is when the group actually works toward accomplishing its tasks. The adjustment phase occurs when there is a major change in the group structure or function, such as when a new student is added or an important member leaves, when the group is given a new assignment, or when its leadership changes. Changes like these may be so disruptive that the group may have to return to the initial formation phase and start from the beginning. It is important to recognize that students may behave in different ways depending upon the developmental stage. An intervention that may help a group in one stage may be detrimental to a group in another phase.

Roles Within the Group

To better understand how groups can be more effective, both faculty and students need to understand the roles that group members play. As mentioned earlier, members of effective groups share a vision of each role. Group performance suffers when roles are not clearly defined or when group members disagree with the stated roles. Possible roles include appointed leader, real leader, lieutenant, and blocker.[1]

Appointed Leader. Typically, one individual is designated as group leader or facilitator. In small group learning, either the faculty member or students themselves select this individual. In some small group discussions, we may serve in this capacity or may appoint a student to lead the discussion. In group projects, the students typically appoint the leader. Leadership may change depending upon the particular task--one student takes responsibility for one project, another student takes responsibility for the next. In some situations, small groups find that they do not need one designated leader because they have learned to work well by using group consensus. However, even these groups may appoint one individual to assume leadership over a specific task.

Real Leader. This individual may or may not be the appointed leader depending upon who the group members regard as the leader of their group. Many times, the appointed leader does not have the wisdom, skills, or respect required to lead the group in accomplishing its tasks. When the appointed leader and the real leader are two different people, conflict may exist between them or between the two factions within the group that support either of them. In some instances, the appointed and real leaders realize their situation and essentially colead the group.

Lieutenant. This individual supports the leader (appointed or real) and carries out tasks to please the leader. Groups can have more than one lieutenant. Lieutenants are effective as long as their devotion to the leader does not influence their role as a group member. For example, if lieutenants realize that the group does not agree with the leader's opinion, they should approach the leader rather than work against the rest of the group.

Blockers. These individuals disrupt group processes in a variety of ways. Students become blockers for several reasons. They may feel left out of leadership positions, disagree with the initial direction of the group, lose an important argument, lack enthusiasm for the group's

goal, or have conflicts with certain group members. The key to any effective group is to recognize the blockers and try to resolve the underlying reasons for such behavior.

When problems develop within student groups, students sometimes turn to faculty members to resolve the issues. Experience has shown that it is best if groups themselves work on resolving these issues rather than having a faculty member intervene. It is sometimes painful for groups to work through some issues, but these situations can be good learning experiences if handled correctly. These situations mimic what happens in actual practice when pharmacists have to work in groups-some of which are not too functional. Obviously, we need to intervene in situations where students cannot resolve major issues and student learning is inhibited. Our approach should be to help the group work through the issues using various problem-solving strategies rather than to impose a solution upon the group. If students look to us to solve all the group's problems, then essentially we become part of the group. The group becomes dysfunctional when we are not present.

GROUP PRESENTATIONS

This section focuses on enhancing presentation skills for large or small audiences. Many faculty evaluate their ability to give lectures the same way they would evaluate their ability to play the game of golf: they are not the best players on the course, but they are not as bad as others. This perception is evident in comments like, ''Well I am not the best lecturer on the faculty, but certainly I am not as bad as some of the faculty members,'' ''I may not be the Teacher of the Year, but at least I don't talk to the board like some of my colleagues do,'' ''I'll try my best to get through this stuff and not embarrass myself,'' or ''I have been doing this for years so I must be pretty good at it. Plus, I've got my Powerpoint presentation ready to roll so I don't have to worry about anything.'' Unfortunately, faculty do not realize the importance of stepping back and critically analyzing their presentation style and often times do not try to enhance skills in this area. Someone once said that there is no such thing as a perfect lecturer. We can always find ways to improve our presentation skills. With that attitude in mind, this section will discuss the various aspects of public speaking and how faculty can continue to improve in each area. Numerous books and articles have been written on public speaking. In fact, entire orga-

nizations, such as the Toastmasters, have been created to promote skill building in this area. In addition, extensive courses and training opportunities have been developed to enhance people's public speaking ability. The following provides a summary from a broad perspective of key issues that may assist faculty in improving their presentation style. Faculty are encouraged to read other works for more specific enhancement strategies.

Presentation Development

Several factors must be considered in developing a presentation. As mentioned earlier, we should consider these issues for our own self-development and to assist students in their skill development. As faculty, we critique student presentations at various times in the pharmacy curriculum. The following issues should be considered in evaluating both students' and faculty members' presentations.

Finding the Right Balance. Effective presenters consider both the content and the method of presentation. Unfortunately, many presenters focus only on content of the lecture and not on the presentation of the material, while others develop stylish presentations without regard to the depth, accuracy, or significance of the content. In preparing a presentation, we must remember to present the most appropriate material (content) in the most appropriate way (method) to assure that the audience will learn it (learning outcome). Many faculty get so excited about their material that they forget about how they are going to present it. Or they understand it so well that they do not realize that other people might have trouble grasping it; it makes sense to them, so why not to everyone? Thus, they do not consider exactly how to present the material in a meaningful way. On the other end of the continuum, there are many faculty members who are so enamored with teaching technologies that they do not spend time developing the content. The goal is to find a balance where substantive material is presented in a well-organized and meaningful way so the audience is able to learn it.

Planning. Presentation experts agree that planning is the most crucial aspect of presentation development. The following series of questions must be asked during the planning process:

- What do I want (need) to say? What content needs to be presented? What am I trying to accomplish? What abilities am I trying to develop?

- What does the audience want to know? What are they interested in? What do they know already? How does my presentation fit into the rest of the course or program?
- Who is my audience? What experiences have they had? How homogenous is the group?
- What is my time limit? It may change from planned time, so I must be flexible.
- What type of room will be used? Is it too large or too small for the audience? Is it too noisy? Is it too hot? What audiovisual support is available?
- What type of presentation will be used (lecture, open discussion, panel)?
- How will we organize the material (deductive, inductive)?

Presentation Delivery

The next phase is the actual presentation of the material. Several elements must be considered if the learning experience is to be a positive one.

- Know the material that is being presented (practice-practice-practice).
- Establish credibility with the audience to assure that they will listen.
- Present information in the audience's frame of reference, not your own. Present the material as if the audience is asking, "Why should I listen to this?"
- Develop a system that works best for you (use an outline, note cards, written speech, or list of key words).
- Use eye contact with the audience, vocal variation, and appropriate body movements (gestures, head movements).
- Be aware of distracting fillers ("ah," "umh," "and," "you know," "okay") and other vocalized pauses.
- Ask for feedback from the audience to assure that learning has occurred.

Some of these skills are relatively easy to address, while others are more difficult to master. For example, developing better vocal variety takes a lot of practice and patience, but experience has shown that people can learn how to alter their tone of voice when making a presentation. Another issue is that we should not worry about being

nervous. The key is to control the nervousness; practice and experience help. Some presenters use nervousness to instill energy into their presentation. A good presenter must be able to regroup when he forgets what he wanted to say. Experts counsel that a hallmark of a good presentation is that it is natural, so we should be ourselves and not try to imitate another person.

To communicate effectively with groups, we must be aware of how the communication process is going during the presentation. This awareness can be facilitated by being cognizant during the presentation of questions such as, "Am I keeping on track?" "How is my pace of presentation?" and "Does it appear that the audience is following me?" We should be aware of questions that are asked during the presentation and whether or not we are listening appropriately. Many times, the types of questions asked by the audience indicate that they have not understood the content.

Assessment

The final stage is evaluating the presentation, which is typically divided into two levels: (1) Was the material received correctly? and (2) Was it presented in the most efficient and effective manner? We should conduct some type of evaluation from the audience and perform a self-assessment as well. We also should use peer evaluations by having our colleagues attend our presentations to provide constructive criticism. Videotaping presentations for both self- and peer assessments is also a useful strategy. Experience has shown that people can learn a great deal about their presentation styles by viewing videotapes and by trying to improve the deficiencies noted. The Appendix contains a sample of an evaluation instrument.

CONCLUSION

It is beyond the scope of this article to address all the tips and techniques that have been advocated for improving public speaking. As mentioned earlier, numerous experts have written excellent works that offer suggestions. Even Yogi Berra offers advice that is relevant to evaluating a speech, "You can observe a lot by watching," or ending a presentation, "It ain't over, until it's over." Faculty members are

encouraged to consider the several elements offered above. If these issues are considered and addressed appropriately, it is likely that the ability to communicate with students will be enhanced. The key is to practice these skills, assess performance, and then, practice some more.

NOTE

1. Other authors have proposed role categorization schemes that are slightly different from the one proposed here. One main difference is that they categorize the roles according to their function within the group. In addition to task and maintenance roles, members can be categorized as individual roles. While task-oriented and maintenance roles focus on the tasks of the team or the relationships among team members, the individual roles operate to disrupt or resist the progress of the group. See Refs. 7-9 for descriptions of other role categorization schemes.

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APPENDIX

PRESENTATION
EVALUATION FORM

Presenter:_____   Date: _____

Evaluator:_____   Subject:_____

Each area is scored on a five-point scale: (1 = unacceptable, 5 = superior; NA = not applicable)

<u>Area</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Organization of remarks (logical progression, conciseness)	NA 1 2 3 4 5	
Length of presentation	NA 1 2 3 4 5	
Depth of presentation	NA 1 2 3 4 5	
Communication skills		
spoke clearly	NA 1 2 3 4 5	
rate of speech appropriate	NA 1 2 3 4 5	
nonverbal communication	NA 1 2 3 4 5	
varied tone of voice	NA 1 2 3 4 5	
use of fillers (umhs, okay, etc.)	NA 1 2 3 4 5	
Used discussion aids well (AV equipment, blackboards)	NA 1 2 3 4 5	
Group dynamics (handled questions, encouraged participation)	NA 1 2 3 4 5	
Closing (summarized session, drew appropriate conclusions)	NA 1 2 3 4 5	

Additional strengths and weaknesses: