UNIT 2  COMMUNICATING WITH ADOLESCENTS

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2.0  OBJECTIVES

After given through this unit, you will be able to:

• explain communication, its various types and styles;
• describe the importance of relation between teachers and students; and
• identify the role and importance of communication among teachers and students.

2.1  INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the stage of transition and the youngsters has the tendency to experimentation. During this period they undergo series of emotional changes and hence communication becomes all the more important. Communicating with adolescents is an art and hence we should understand how we can communicate
with adolescents effectively. In this unit we may discuss and know the communication skill to deal with adolescents.

2.2 NEED FOR COMMUNICATING WITH ADOLESCENTS

Communication has a purpose. The main purpose of communication is to change or guide other person’s behaviour. There are various functions of communication - informative, commanding, influencing or entertaining.

- Information Function: The basic function is to provide or receive information.
- Command or Instructive Function: Another function of communication is to command or instruct a person as to how work is to be done.
- Influence and Persuasive Function: Communication influence one idea, feelings, knowledge, thoughts and behaviour.

As teacher, adults or parents, we most often use all the three functions. However, some teachers may use the first two functions more than others. Teachers influence students to a great extent. This influence may be used to shape a student’s attitude as well as improve his or her school performance. An adolescent spends more than half of his/her day in the school with the teachers thus giving the teacher the opportunity to mould the adolescent.

Communication is both a tool and a vehicle to reach out to adolescents. Teachers need to use communication effectively so that information can be given to adolescents; they can receive counselling and clarify their doubts. This module helps teachers to learn key communication skills.

Teachers place blame on students, describing:
- Adolescents as troublesome
- “Storm and Stress” of adolescents
- Anti-authority attitude

Adolescents blame on teachers, normally are:
- Authoritative
- Teachers do not listen to adolescents
- Not consulting no freedom.

2.3 DEFINITION, TYPES AND STYLES OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is far more than the words we use. It’s the art of connecting with others, of breaking down the walls and building bridges instead. Those who communicate effectively build a strong and healthy relationship with one another. But positive communication is a skill that takes work and practice.

Communication is an exchange of information, knowledge, ideas or feelings taking place between two individuals. In a face-to-face situation, communication is not just exchange of information but the gestures, expressions, language, the manner
of expression and tone that create an impact on those who are communicating with one another.

2.3.1 Definition and Meaning

Communication is an act by which a person shares the knowledge, feelings, ideas, information, etc., in ways such that gains a common understanding of the meaning, intent and use of the message.

Communication is a process of social interaction, i.e., in a communication situation two or more individuals interact. They try to tangibly influence the ideas, attitudes, knowledge and behaviour of each other.

- Communication is an exchange of information, knowledge, ideas or feelings taking place between two individuals.
- In a face-to-face, situation communication is not a mere exchange of information but something more, because in such a situation, along with the information one passes, the gestures, expression, language, the manner of expression and tone-all these combined together, create a sort of impact on both.

A) Gestures: Gestures are physical movements that frame or illustrate words coming before, during or after what is being said. An example of using a gesture to display and emphasize an emotion is clenching your fist to show aggression. Gestures may describe in words. How you gesture can vary according to your sex. Sometimes men’s gestures are larger, more sweeping and forceful, whole women’s gestures are smaller and more inhibited. Gestures can also take the place of words: for example, nodding your head whether up-and-down or sideways ‘yes’ or ‘no’ respectively.

B) Posture: Posture may convey various messages. Turning your body towards the client is more encouraging than turning away from them. In addition, whether you lean forwards or backwards may indicate interest or disinterest. Height tends to be associated with status: for instance, you ‘talk down to’ or talk up to someone. Women may be at a disadvantage unless a man’s body posture is changed: for instance, by sitting down. Posture may also communicate how anxious you are: for instance, sitting with arms and legs tightly crossed suggests being emotionally as well as literally uptight.

C) Physical Closeness: The degree of closeness is related to the distance at which we communicate with the other person. The zones of comfort in communication vary according to the nature of the relationship. In the ultimate zone (between 6 to 18 inches) is easy to touch and be touched. This zone is reserved for spouses, lovers, close friends and relatives. The personal zone (between 18 and 48 inches) is appropriate for less close friends and for parties and other social gathering. The social zone (between 4 to 12 feet) is comfortable of people not know at all well. The public zone (over 121 feet) is the distance for addressing public gatherings.

2.3.2 Types of Communication

You can communicate with other persons in different ways. Common types of communication are verbal and non-verbal: we may try to understand these types in detail.
A) Verbal

The researches show that, on an average, a person spends about 70 per cent of his active time on communication verbally – listening, speaking, reading and writing. In other words each of us spend about 10 or 11 hours a day on verbal communication. Language is one of the codes we use to express our ideas. The major components in verbal communication are language and content.

- **Language**: Language consists of many elements other than whether people are English-speaking or not. For instance, they may be from a language, words that DD News or Aaj Tak readers might use, as well as an informal or colloquial language, such as words you might use with your friends in school or market.

- **Content**: Content may refer to topic area, problem area or the task being undertaken, such as learning months social science. In addition, content rears to the focus of talk, whether it be about yourself, others or the environment. Furthermore, content can evaluate dimension of talk, for example, depressed clients may say many negative things about themselves such as ‘I’m worthless and ‘I’ just don’t seem to care any more’.

- **Amount of speech**: How much you talk. Whether too much words are required etc. comes in account of speech “volume (loud or soft), articulation, pitch etc. are also important speech. For example, when you talk to adolescent if your volume of voice is high they may think that you are angry and if you are soft in your speech then they may think you are loveable. It all depends when you have to be loud or soft.

- **Ownership of speech**: Distinction exists between ‘You’ messages and ‘I’ messages. ‘You’ messages focus on the other person and can be judgmental: for example, ‘You don’t appreciate what I’m doing for you’ or ‘You’re not listening to me properly’. ‘I’ messages use the word ‘I’ and are centered in a person as the sender: for instance, ‘I feel unappreciated or ‘I’m experiencing not being heard correctly’.

B) Non Verbal

Non-verbal communication includes the gestures, facial expressions, movement of hands etc., which make our communication more effective. This is also called the bodily communication.

- **Facial expressions** are perhaps the main vehicle for sending body messages. Ekman, Friesen and Elsworth (1972) have found that there are seven main facial expressions of emotion: happiness, interest, surprise, fear, sadness, anger and disgust or contempt. Your mouth and eyebrows can convey much information: for instance, ‘down in the mouth and ‘raised eyebrows’.

- **Gaze**, or looking at other people in the area of their faces, is both a way of showing interest and also a way of collecting facial information. Speakers look at listeners about 40 per cent of the time and listeners look at speakers about 70-75 per cent of the time. Gaze is useful for coordinating speech: for example, speakers look just before the end of utterances to collect feedback about their listener’s reactions. Women are more visually attentive than men in all measures of gaze (Argyle, 1999).
2.3.3 Styles of Communication

The important communication styles are:

A) Assertive

B) Aggressive

C) Passive

D) Passive-Aggressive

A) Assertive Communication

The most effective and healthiest form of communication is the assertive style. It’s how we naturally express ourselves when our self-esteem is intact, giving us the confidence to communicate without games and manipulation.

When we are being assertive, we work hard to create mutually satisfying solutions. We communicate our needs clearly and forthrightly. We care about the relationship and strive for a win/win situation. We know our limits and refuse to be pushed beyond them just because someone else wants or needs something from us. Surprisingly, assertive style is the least used style by most people.

B) Aggressive Communication

Aggressive communication always involves manipulation. We may attempt to make people do what we want by inducing guilt (hurt) or by using intimidation and control tactics (anger). Covert or overt, we simply want our needs met - and right now! Although there are a few areas where aggressive behaviour is called for (i.e., sports or war), it will never work in a relationship. Ironically, the more aggressive sports rely heavily on team members and rational coaching strategies. Even war might be avoided if we could learn to be more assertive and negotiate to solve our problems.

C) Passive Communication

Passive communication is based on compliance and hopes to avoid confrontation at all costs. In this mode we don’t talk much, question even less, and actually do very little. We just don’t want to rock the boat. Passives have learned that it is safer not to react and better to disappear than to stand up and be noticed.

D) Passive-Aggressive Communication

A combination of styles, passive-aggressive avoids direct confrontation (passive), but attempts to get even through manipulation (aggressive). This style of communication often leads to office politics and rumour-mongering.

2.4 COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Every day we communicate with different people and our methods and effectiveness of doing so differ depending on the individual, the circumstance and the degree to which we are interested. “Communication is the process of sending and receiving messages with attached meaning” (Schmerhorn & Hunt & Osborn, 2000, p. 335), and can be both verbal and non-verbal.
2.4.1 Process of Communication

Effective Communication is the ability to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally in ways that are appropriate to our cultures and situations. It means not only being able to express opinions and desires, but also our needs and fears.

Basically, communicating is like a two-way traffic, which entails the relation between the sender and the receiver. This process of communication always contains messages, which are to be transmitted between the parties. In this process, a cycle of communicating messages is formed between the sender and the receiver. The sender is required to conceive the message s/he wishes to send, encode this message and then transmit. The receiver then is required to receive the message, decode it and clarify his/her understanding of the message. Generally the process of communication is said to be complete when the receiver understands the message and gives the feedback or response. This feedback may be in any form. Even while talking to your friend ‘nodding of the head’ is treated as feedback. Thus, feedback becomes an essential element in the process of communication.

‘Communication Process’ includes the following elements:

a) Sender : The person who sends the message. Also known as the source.

b) Receiver : The person who receives the message.

c) Message : Subject matter of communication. It may contain facts, ideas, feelings or thoughts.

d) Feedback : Receiver’s response or reaction or reply to the message, which is directed towards the sender.

For example, a notice need by the teacher in the class says “There will be special assembly meeting of all students at 10 am tomorrow in the assembly hall. All are requested to attend without fail.”

In this communication the sender is school principal through school teacher, Receiver is students, message or subject matter is special assembly meeting and the feedback is the number of people attended the meeting.

![Fig. 2.1: Process of Communication](image-url)
2.4.2 Barriers of Communication

There are a wide number of sources of noise or interference that can enter into the communication process. This can occur when people know each other very well and should understand the sources of error. In a work setting, it is even more common since interactions involve people who not only don’t have years of experience with each other, but communication is complicated by the complex and often conflictual relationships that exist at work. In a work setting, the following suggests a number of sources of noise:

- **Language:** The choice of words or language in which a sender encodes a message will influence the quality of communication. Because language is a symbolic representation of a phenomenon, room for interpretation and distortion of the meaning exists. When we communicate with adolescents use precise, clear terminologies in an assertive way. Should not use chronological and double meaning words.

- Defensiveness, distorted perceptions, guilt, project, transference, distortions from the past.

- Misreading of body language, tone and other non-verbal forms of communication.

- Noisy transmission (unreliable messages, inconsistency).

- Receiver distortion: selective hearing, ignoring non-verbal cues.

- Power struggles.

- Self-fulfilling assumptions.

- Assumptions e.g., assuming others see situation same as you, has same feelings as you

- Distrusted source, erroneous translation, value judgment, state of mind of two people.

- **Perceptual Biases:** People attend to stimuli in the environment in very different ways. We each have shortcuts that we use to organize data. Invariably, these shortcuts introduce some biases into communication. Some of these shortcuts include stereotyping, projection and self-fulfilling prophecies. Stereotyping is one of the most common. This is when we assume that the other person has certain characteristics based on the group to which they belong without validating that they in fact have these characteristics.

- **Interpersonal Relationships:** How we perceive communication is affected by the past experience with the individual.

- **Cultural Differences:** Effective communication requires deciphering the basic values, motives, aspirations, and assumptions that operate across geographical lines. Given some dramatic differences across cultures in approaches to such areas as time, space and privacy, the opportunities for mis-communication while we are in cross-cultural situations are plentiful.
### Check Your Progress 1

- **a.** What are the four important elements in the process of communication?
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- **b.** Define Communication.
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- **c.** Which styles of communication do you often use, explain with an example.
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- **d.** Mention any five components in non verbal communication?
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## 2.5 LISTENING SKILLS

One myth about communication is that people think communication is what we want to tell rather communication is conveying what we want to tell in the way that the other person understands. One of the important elements in communication is developing listening skills and we would discuss that further.

### 2.5.1 Steps in Active Listening

Most of us don’t listen to understand; rather we listen to reply. Active listening means listening carefully to understand the student’s point of view. It means listening for feeling and for meaning. By trying to understand each other’s feelings we open the door for further communication.

Too often we try to listen while our minds are not on the subject, the phone is ringing, or we’re feeling rushed. As others speak we do chores, interrupt students while they are speaking, finish their sentences, give advice they didn’t ask for, or even ‘tune out’. Often students or even people whom we are close to complain or feel that - “You never listen” or “You just don’t understand”.

2.5.2 Positive Listening

There are situations where a student’s performance in class or at games suddenly deteriorates or a student becomes quite boisterous in class. In these cases asking a student about what is happening at home or asking him or her how they are feeling may be a demonstration of positive listening.

2.5.3 Enhancing Listening Skills

Tips for effective listening:

A) Give your undivided attention

When an adolescent walks into the staff room or when students are settling down to a lesson, give them your undivided attention. You will be able to detect the mood of the class. In the case of a single student approaching you, understand why s/he has sought you attention. Often the reason given may not be the correct one – it may just be something to attract your attention.

B) Tune in to the feeling being expressed

Listen not only for what is said, but also how it is said, and watch for the body language that goes with it. Listening “between the lines” helps you understand the meaning behind the words.

C) Check for understanding

To make sure you understand your student correctly on key points occasionally rephrase what you think you’ve heard: “It sounds like you think we’re being unfair,” or “Are you saying that you are unable to understand what I say in class?” Rephrasing allows a child to “rehear” what s/he is communicating, and if necessary, clarifies any misunderstandings.

D) Put aside judgment, criticism and your own stories

Step outside yourself and try to understand what your adolescent is saying. This means holding back on your own opinions and not interrupting.

E) Encourage more talk

Use questions of phrases that encourage your child to keep going. Ask, “Then what happened?” or repeat the last words, “you did not think that I would mind?” Often a simple “Mmmhmm,” is all you need to say to keep the conversation ball in your adolescent’s court.

2.5.4 Constructive Feedback

Feedback is a part of communication that gives student information about how s/he is functioning or how their behaviour is affecting others. It can also be given to groups of people for exactly the same reason; to let the group members know how they affect someone else. Feedback can be positive or negative. If it’s positive, it lets the person know what s/he is doing correctly – and encourage the person or group to continue with that behaviour to something more acceptable.
### Cues and Indicators of warmth and coldness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cue</th>
<th>Warmth</th>
<th>Coldness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tone of voice</td>
<td>Soft</td>
<td>Hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facial expression</td>
<td>Smiling, Interested</td>
<td>Poker-faced, Frowning, Disinterested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posture</td>
<td>Lean toward other, relaxed</td>
<td>Lean away from other tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye contact</td>
<td>Look into other’s eyes</td>
<td>Avoid looking into other’s eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touching</td>
<td>Touch other softly</td>
<td>Avoid touching other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gestures</td>
<td>Open, Welcoming</td>
<td>Closed, guarding oneself and keeping other away</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most important thing to remember about feedback is that feedback should be helpful. Telling a student “it is your background…” is finding fault with something s/he is unable to change. On the other hand, letting someone know you appreciate her/his drawing skills and wish that the student’s handwriting improves is helpful feedback – it encourages behaviour the person can control.

**The feedbacks can be more helpful if you:**

- Make sure your feedback is descriptive. It should paint a clear and specific picture of the behaviour you are trying to encourage or change. For example, “Can you try not to disturb other students?”
- In general, give your feedback at the earliest appropriate time. If you wait too long, you may not remember specifics – and the person or group may not remember the situation either. For example, “I noticed you this morning….”
- Be consistent in giving feedback. Work it into your interactions with other on a regular basis. For example, “The last time we spoke…”
- If the feedback is negative, add constructive ideas on how to improve or offer your assistance in making changes. Don’t assume that the person getting the negative feedback can figure out what went wrong and then how to correct it by him/herself. Instead of saying – “your marks are terrible,” try to give the student tips on how to study better.

**2.6 ADOLESCENT FRIENDLY COMMUNICATION**

When working with adolescents we have to be careful and take care of several things and one among them is friendly communication. Adolescent friendly communication. Means that while we want to communicate some message to the adolescent we may see that they are comfortable and try to feel them at ease. Environment should be friendly while dealing with adolescents, times occur that we have to communicate ‘anger’ also. But most of the time Adolescents can be communicated in a friendly manner and hence we have to develop the skill of assertive communication. Putting adolescents at ‘ease’ and “feel at home” are the two most widely adopted methodologies.
2.6.1 Skills for Teachers as Effective Communicators

Skill development among students has been an important objective of the school curriculum. The teacher themselves need to develop skills to realize the objective of skill development among students.

Teacher need to orient that communication is used in a number of ways – to inform, educate, persuade, motivate, help, reinforce or advocate. It is the ability as well as a process to express and convey information, ideas and experiences, both verbally and non-verbally. There are many channels of communication that aim at achieving these objectives and every channel employs specific set of skills to make communication effective.

Teachers need interpersonal communication skills to help adolescent students develop skills related to adolescence reproductive and sexual health. Interpersonal communication is a person-to-person, two ways, verbal and nonverbal communication technical or non-technical information and also the emotional or sensitive component, so important in interpersonal interaction.

The communication skills for teachers have certain important sub-skills, such as rapport building, listening, attending, speaking and questioning. These skills are commonly used by every individual, but quite often not in an effective way. For example, listening is what people do all the time, but that is what they do not do. Although their ears are open to what a person is speaking, they are thinking about what they will say when it is their turn to speak, or they are remembering something they have to do after attending that session: or they are thinking of other issue. In fact, they are hearing but they are not paying attention to it. Particularly, when teachers are to interact with students on adolescent issues, it is necessary to understand the following sub-skills that make communication effective:

A) Rapport Building: Teachers are expected to equip themselves with skills that facilitate the establishment of a spontaneous relationship between them and students based on respect and mutual trust. These skills help in creating a congenial environment free from apprehensions and inhibition.

B) Active Listening: The teacher has to develop listening skills consciously. For active listening, it is necessary to listen to the speaker(s) what s/he says and also how s/he says it. The speaker is not to be interrupted to cut in to describe teacher’s own experience. The teacher is expected to avoid distracting movements and not to pay attention to outside disruptions.

C) Attending: Students need focused attention of the teacher while interacting with them. The teacher is expected to make students feel comfortable and respond to them with interest. s/he needs to win the confidence of students through attentive listening. Students are not to be criticized or put down. The teacher has to encourage students to speak.

D) Speaking: While speaking the teacher has to maintain his/her voice at an appropriate pitch, neither loud nor too soft. The teacher should not dominate the conversation and express what s/he feels, not only what s/he thinks.

E) Questioning: When students are speaking the teacher has to ask questions. But questions should be asked to show interest in what speaker is saying, to encourage the speaker and not to find out his/her ignorance out to embarrass him/her.
2.6.2 Do’s and Don’ts in Communication with Adolescent

While teaching any value-laden area, it is essential for the teacher to be non-judgmental. S/he is not expected to impose his/her values and beliefs. This is more so in respect of adolescence education concerns. It is possible only when the teacher develops the needed skills to observe the following:

Do’s:

- First of all the teacher has to be convinced about the need for life skills development in respect of adolescents.
- S/he has to avoid conveying personal values, especially while discussing value laden issues.
- S/he has to respect the diversity of background of the learners, their values and beliefs.
- S/he has to convince students that no idea or opinion is absurd or unwarranted.

Don’ts

- The teacher need not be prescriptive, as experiences prove abundantly that preaching is counter-productive.
- S/he is not to make value judgment either of students or their views, as education is more effective when varied views are expressed and discussed.
- In any situation the teacher is not expected to treat students as problems, but as individuals who need compassion and care.
- S/he need not comment on things that cannot be changed.
- S/he need not reject or ridicule any point of view expressed by students, even though it may not be acceptable to him/her or may be against the social norms.

2.6.3 Skills for Having Empathy

Being empathetic may not be considered as a skill or a set of skills in itself, but it is required to understand the situation of a particular student with whom the teacher is interacting. Empathy is the ability to feel and appreciate the situation in which another person is placed, even though one is not familiar with that situation. It is the ability to understand how others perceive situations and to see things for value and belief systems of others. It enables the individual to experience fully the feelings and concerns of another person. The needed skills for empathy may help the individual to understand and accept others who may be placed in a very different situation. These skills also help in encouraging individuals to be compassionate towards others who are in need of care and attention. To help adolescents manage their problems well, teachers need these skills to see beyond stereotypes and appreciate how the world of adolescents work. It is necessary that the teacher understands how a particular student feels in a specific situation and what is her/his point of view. Communication with adolescents only be more effective when you have empathy.
2.7 LET US SUM UP

- By now you know that adolescence is the period when lifestyle develops, basic skills are learned, social conscience is formed, and the very ability to learn is recognised. The trusted adult be it a parent, relative or a teacher should remember not to fight an adolescent or condemn him for his ideas or label him as useless thinker etc. This unit has explained that communication has a purpose. The main purpose of communication is to change or guide other person’s behaviour. There are various functions of communication - informative, commanding, influencing or entertaining. Further, it has emphasised that communication is an exchange of information, knowledge, ideas or feelings taking place between two individuals. In a face-to-face situation, communication is not just exchange of information but the gestures, expressions, language, the manner of expression and tone that create an impact on those who are communicating with one another. All though you were aware of communication process but in this unit emphasis is on listening skills and adolescent friendly health services which will help you in communicating with adolescents and they will also communicate with you in friendly manner.

2.8 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

a. • Sender
   • Receiver
   • Message
   • Feedback

b. “Communication occurs when two corresponding systems coupled together through one or more non-corresponding systems assume identical status as a result of a single transfer along the chain, we are trying to establish commonness.”

c. As per your experience :

d. i. Facial expressions
   ii. Gaze
   iii. Eye contact
   iv. Gestures
   v. Posture
   vi. Physical closeness

2.9 REFERENCES


Websites:

1) www.psychology4all.com/
2) www.itaa-net.org/ta
3) www.mindtools.com/
4) www.communicationskills.co.in/