

PROGRAMME COMPLETION REPORT

Communication and Presentation Skills

Jhansi Nov 8-9 2004

1. The topics covered were:

1.1 The Importance of Listening

- Listening more carefully and responsibly
- First acknowledge and then express your point of view
- Acknowledging does not mean approving or agreeing
- Listening to others helps others to listen

1.2 Speaking for clarity, coherence, persuasiveness

- Know your audience
- Get to the point; Keep it simple; Less is more
- Main idea first
- Organization and logic

1.3 Exploring impact of non-verbal behaviour on others

- Being alert to the variety of signals we use to communicate
- Importance of direct and congruent interpersonal communication

1.4 Barriers to communication

- Rigidity or Stereotyping others
- Bias and preconceived notions

2. Day-wise coverage

Day One:

2.1 Introductions: “My best friend”

Each participant introduced himself as his best friend covering:

- Three things, which give pleasure or satisfaction to my friend, are...
- Three things, which make my friend angry, are...
- Three things my friend does to relax outside work are...

Participants said they enjoyed this exercise as it not only served the purpose of introductions and icebreaking, but it also made them pause and reflect about their own personalities. They had never given conscious thought the above questions.

2.2 Programme expectations

A brief discussion was held on programme expectations to which participants' responses were in these two categories:

- To know more about scientific methods of communication and presentation skills
- To have an opportunity for self-assessment.

2.3 The importance of listening

Exercise a: Participants were asked to close their eyes and imagine (for two minutes) themselves communication. When asked what they had imagined, all replied along lines of:

- *Speaking* to a group of school principles;
- *Disseminating* information to a SHG
- *Talking* to a group of women on health issues;
- *Addressing* the village panchayat members, etc.

Point of learning and reflection: We all view communication as *speaking, talking, addressing*, etc, but don't think of it as *listening*. Listening with interest and an open mind is not a passive activity - and more important towards rapport building than speaking.

Exercise b: A group discussion was conducted where four participants were asked to volunteer to play the role of consultants. They were asked to leave the room for five minutes, at which time the remaining group members were instructed that during the actual discussion, they would pay close attention to two consultants and show disinterest towards the other two. (Names were decided in advance).

In the debrief that followed, it was clear that when others don't listen to us, or ignore us, we feel devalued, neglected, even irritated and angry. When others listen to us carefully and attentively, we feel respected and find our self-confidence growing.

Point of learning and reflection: What kinds of listeners are we with others? Do we demonstrate our interest through attentive body language? Do we listen with biases and preconceived notions?

2.4 Communication exercise

In a role-play the 'Field Coordinator' had to explain to the "Programme Coordinator" how to solve a jigsaw puzzle. The jig saw puzzle solution is available to the former, but not to the latter. A screen obstructs the view between the two.

Point of learning and reflection: Effective communication requires constant checking and rechecking (closing of feedback loop) to ensure both parties involved are on the same wavelength. Sometimes we assume the other side understands what we are saying but gaps in communication remain unless we crosscheck and ask for feedback.

2.5 Video recording and replay of participants' presentations

Participants prepared 2-minute presentations, which were video recorded and replayed. During the replay, the group learnt and appreciated the importance of non-verbal communication. Participants actively gave each other feedback (not looking towards the facilitator for the 'final verdict' or 'final evaluation' thus practicing in true spirit participatory learning and self-reliance.

2.6 Closing session

After final feedback session (regarding the workshop), the programme ended with a song which was sung by the group (and initiated by the group) holding hands, embodying the spirit of togetherness and sharing which had been experienced by all during the workshop.

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