SESSION 3

Communicating in relationships
There are a range of skills both basic and complex that are used by effective communicators and this session examines some of the skills important in communicating effectively in relationships. Many of the students will be familiar with several of the skills and may be using them currently, however, the skill of being an active and attentive listener is important in forming and maintaining relationships. This session will focus on identifying and practising good listening skills. More complex skills such as negotiation, assertion, and conflict resolution are mentioned but not covered in depth.

In this session students:

- Investigate the role of communication skills in relationships.
- Identify skills needed to be an effective communicator.
- Practise initiating conversations and using good listening skills.

- Review of Session 2 and Home activity
- Activity 1 – Great openers
- Activity 2 – Are you listening? and Video Clip 3.1 – The skills of good communication
- Activity 3 – I hear you and Video Clip 3.2 – Demonstrating poor and good communication
- Extension activity – Complex communication
- Summary
- Home activity
Session 3

Communicating in relationships

SESSION PLAN – Communicating in relationships

REVIEW PREVIOUS SESSION

Using the Session 2 in review sheet (Resource 3.1 and page 21 of student book), revise the last session.

Include a discussion of the home activity.

ACTIVITY 1 – Great openers

1. Introduction – explain that today’s session is focused on some of the skills we need to negotiate our friendships. Ask students to consider a basic communication skill: starting a conversation with someone you don’t know well. Although some of the situations in which we make conversation are familiar and we feel quite comfortable and confident about handling them, other situations can be quite challenging – even common, everyday situations.

2. Form small groups.

3. Hand out scenarios (Resource 3.2) – one per group. Explain that each group is being given a different situation for which they must prepare an opening line/s (groups may choose another scenario if they prefer). Ask each student to suggest a possible opener and present it to the group for their comments.

4. Ask each group to report back to the whole class reading out a few examples of their great openers.

5. Discuss with students:
   - What are some possible strategies for starting conversations eg. topics/themes?
   - Situations where they might find it difficult or have found it difficult to start a conversation or make some kind of approach to others.
   - What are some negative/unhelpful thoughts that might interfere with starting the conversation?
   - What could they say to themselves that might help?
   - What could you do if the other person doesn’t respond?

PREPARATION

Photocopy then cut up scenarios (Resource 3.2)

8 - 10 mins
ACTIVITY 2 – Are you listening?

1. **Introduction** – Explain that we are now going to examine some of the basic and more complex skills needed to be an effective communicator.

2. **Play the video** – Clip 3.1.

3. **Move students** into pairs.

4. **Ask** students to think about something or someone they’re passionate about. For example:
   - best book ever read, favourite activity, best holiday ever, favourite video game
   - favourite athlete or sport, favourite singer or band, most admired person
   - an incredible experience, such as their most thrilling or proudest moment

5. **Ask** students to decide who of the pair will be the listener and who will be the speaker, and explain that the speakers will have 1 minute to talk about their passion to the listener. The listener does not speak or respond at all, in fact, the listener should convey a complete lack of interest and boredom.

**Note:** In order to make the experience more meaningful, you may like to give the speaker and listener instructions for their roles independently. The listeners could be given a slip of paper (Resource 3.4) which instructs them to show a complete lack of interest when they are in role. The speakers are asked to prepare their topic but are not told that the listener will be feigning a lack of interest.
6. **Ask** the listeners to briefly describe what they did to demonstrate their lack of interest. Write students’ responses on the board.

7. **Ask** the speakers to report on how it felt not to be listened to and what effect it had on them. Encourage all the pairs to participate.

Responses from the speaker may include:

- feeling angry, frustrated, stupid, annoyed
- giving up, thinking “what’s the point?”

8. **Ask** the speakers to explain what they would have liked the listener to do to show interest (i.e., how could the listener show that he/she was listening and interested). Open the question to the whole group, brainstorming how to listen respectfully. Write students’ responses on the board. Ensure that the following are raised:

- eye contact and gaze.
- body language and posture.
- tone of voice.
- using brief encouragers (uh huh, mmm, yeah)
- responding to what you’re hearing (“Really?”; “That’s interesting”; “You’re kidding!”)
- encouraging more talk (“How did that feel?”; “You must have been rapt!”)

9. **Ask** students to identify some other situations/relationships in which it is really important to show good listening skills.

Possible answers:

- *friendships*
- *job interviews*
- *at work*
- *with parents, relatives*
- *at school*

10. **Explain** that by listening well we are not playing an inactive and passive role. Rather, by listening actively and attentively we are conveying to our listeners that:

- we are interested in them
- we care about them
- we understand them
- we believe them
- their story or concern is important
ACTIVITY 3 – I hear you!

1. **Introduction** – Explain that we are now going to look at two different types of communication within an interaction.

2. **Play the video** – Clip 3.2.

**VIDEOCLIP 3.2 [2 MINS 15 SEC]**
**START: [15 MINS 15 SEC] ON THE VIDEO COUNTER**
**DEMONSTRATING POOR AND GOOD COMMUNICATION.**

The video clip will show an example of poor communication skills in an interaction between two students and then an example of good communication skills between the same students in the same situation.

3. **Ask** students to discuss the differences between the two interactions. Highlight the good communication skills, teasing out particular skills that may have been missed by the students:
   - eye contact and gaze
   - listening gestures – nodding, smiling
   - verbal encouragers – “yeah,” “uh-huh”
   - posture, body language, appropriate distancing
   - asking for more information
   - facial expression – appropriate for the subject matter, i.e. smiling or frowning at appropriate times

4. **Ask** students in their same listening pairs to think about an embarrassing moment that they are prepared to share. Possibilities include:
   - tripping up or falling over in public
   - being caught out doing something wrong
   - dressing inappropriately for a function or party
   - something your parents did in front of your friends
   - something your little brother or sister said that was totally inappropriate
   - doing or saying the wrong thing in front of someone important
5. **Suggest** that the listener from the previous activity go first as the speaker. The listener should attempt to employ the listening skills demonstrated in the video. The speaker uses the checklist on page 23 in the student book to identify skills that the listener used and discusses the ratings with the listener.

6. **Ask** students swap roles when they are ready.

7. **Review** as a whole class the skills employed and the effect it had on the speaker, summarising the key skills in the process.

**EXTENSION ACTIVITY – Complex communication**

1. **Ask** students to role play a more complex situation (negotiating a difference, asking for help, saying you’re sorry, expressing your opinion) with a partner or in groups of three (speaker, listener, observer).

2. **Observer** provides feedback to the pair. Swap roles.

3. **Discuss** with students:
   - Whether the task was more challenging when the conversation was about more difficult topics.

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**SUMMARY**

Main points:

- Communicating effectively in relationships requires a range of skills, some simple and some more complex.
- One of the key communication skills is listening.
- Good listening is active and attentive.
- Good listeners show they are listening and that they care by using a variety of verbal and non-verbal skills.

**Note:** If students prefer, they may choose to describe something (the latest computer game, a latest model car, a fabulous dress), or to give instructions on how to do something (change the tyre of a car or bike, bake a chocolate cake, put up a tent).
HOME ACTIVITY

1. Refer students to page 24 of the student book or hand out home activity sheet.

2. Instructions:

   Part 1
   
   Choose an everyday situation where you are talking to someone.
   
   Apply the listening skills you practised today.
   
   Ask yourself: “In what ways did using these skills change the interaction or what you or the other person got out of it?”

   Part 2

   Observe the interaction of others – list the listening skills they used and did not use in their interaction, and try to identify how communication might have improved with the use of other listening skills.
Session TWO In Review

"RELATIONSHIPS"

are associations with people we know and relate to in a significant way

People play different roles in our lives and we play different roles in others’ lives.

Some relationships have different levels of importance and meaningfulness.

Roles and relationships can change over time.

Some characteristics of friendships include:

trust  respect  honesty  shared experiences

generosity  forgiveness  acceptance  being there

non-judgmental  thoughtfulness  availability  openness

patience  showing you care  understanding

empathy  humour  good listener

have fun together  shared values  get along

helping  spending time together

FRIENDSHIPS

Friendships are very important not only at school but throughout life.

We all expect certain things from our friendships:

Friendships can mean quite different things to different people as well.
Your parents have dropped you off at the party, but you’ve arrived earlier than your friends and you don’t know anybody there.

There’s a new student in your class who is walking around alone at lunchtime so you decide to go up to him/her to make conversation.

Can’t believe your luck - you’re actually in the canteen queue standing beside the student who you want to ask to the school social.

This is your first karate lesson, and a group of you from different schools are standing around in the foyer of the hall waiting for the instructor.

You’ve been told by your Mum to show your cousin who’s from out of town around for the day. Although he is the same age as you, you don’t even know him.
The key to good communication is listening. If you're thinking about something else or worrying about what to say next, you can't be listening properly to what the other person is trying to say. There are ways to show people that we're listening to them. And remember, different cultures, even different families, can have different ways of using these non-verbal cues to communicate. Part of being a good listener is picking up on these differences.

OK we've been talking about communicating and having a go at it, now let's have a look at some not-so-good communication. Check this out.

[Video shows Daniel and Bec talking]

"Pretty ordinary hey? Have a bit of a think about what was done wrong there - and let's have a look at that scene again, but handled differently."

[Video shows Daniel and Bec talking]

Language skills - they're not just for when you're in another country. We need good skills to be able to understand and get along with the people we see every day. When these skills are working, you probably don't even realise you're using them. But when they don't work, it's a pretty sure bet you'll know about it.

You can probably remember heaps of times when you were talking to someone in a shop, or your parents, a teacher, or even a friend, and what you were trying to say just wasn't getting across. Maybe you weren't making yourself clear or maybe they were distracted or had problems of their own, or maybe they didn't have good communication skills themselves.

just like you need more than one CD in your collection, you need a whole stack of skills to communicate with other people.

There are more complex skills like:

- negotiating
- resolving conflict
- being assertive
The key to good communication is listening. If you’re thinking about something else or worrying about what to say next, you can’t be listening properly to what the other person is trying to say. There are ways to show people that we’re listening to them.

**Listening Skills**

**gaze and eye contact** - in a conversation, it’s good to look at the person you are listening to, but to stare at them can freak some people out.

**gestures** - like nodding, smiling, frowning and scowling all help us communicate. Generally if someone smiles or nods, they’re agreeing or encouraging us to continue and if they frown or scowl, they might be disagreeing or they might not understand us.

**little words** - like yeah and uh huh also encourage us to continue.

**posture** - a relaxed posture is good and makes the person you’re speaking to more at ease, but you can go too far and you’ll give the impression you’re bored. Turning away also says you’re not interested.

**distance** - is also important when you’re talking to someone. Too close can be a bit freaky, but too far away gives the message you are trying to back off.

**facial expressions** - are important too. The appropriate expression lets a person know you’re interested in what they’re saying but a flat expression can give the impression you’re bored. And while you can’t always laugh when people hope you will, there are times when it’s not appropriate to laugh (like when someone tells you that something bad has happened).

And remember, different cultures, even different families, can have different ways of using these non-verbal cues to communicate. Part of being a good listener is picking up on these differences.

Okay we’ve been talking about communicating and having a go at it, now let’s have a look at some not-so-good communication. Check this out.

[Video shows Daniel and Bec talking]

“Pretty ordinary hey? Have a bit of a think about what was done wrong there – and let’s have a look at that scene again, but handled differently.”

[Video shows Daniel and Bec talking]
Your partner will be telling you about something of interest to them. As listener, your role is to not speak or respond at all to the speaker. In fact, you should convey a complete lack of interest and boredom.