Communications Activity

Are you a good communicator? Do you listen critically? If you do not communicate effectively, a variety of problems may arise. For example: If your teacher gives you a math assignment and tells you to complete every other exercise, will you work on Problems 1, 3, 5 and 7 — or 2, 4, 6 and 8?

Activity

Select three or four friends to assist you in a communication exercise. You will be the facilitator or speaker, and they will be the listeners.

Materials needed

One 8½x11-inch sheet of paper per person. You will read the instructions in the following paragraph. *Warning:* Your listeners should not see these!

Instructions to be read by facilitator

This exercise requires listening to and following directions. As you hear the oral instructions, perform the requested task.

1. No one may ask questions during this activity.
2. You may use only the materials given to you for the exercise.
3. You must close your eyes during the activity — no peeking!
4. Fold your sheet of paper in half.
5. Tear off the upper right-hand corner.
6. Fold your paper in half again.
7. Tear off the lower right-hand corner.
8. Fold your paper in half.
9. Tear off the upper left-hand corner.
10. Fold in half a final time.
11. Tear off the lower left-hand corner.
12. Unfold your paper and hold it up.
13. Open your eyes, look at the product and compare it with the other participants' products.

Follow-up

Remember, when you communicate with others, they may not receive the message you sent. Individual perceptions vary.

1. If you were given the same directions, why were everyone's products different?
2. What does this mean to you as a communicator?

Now you can try writing your own directions for this exercise. Regroup into listening teams. Each team member should read his or her directions aloud as the remaining members do the paper folding and tearing. After all the team members have taken a turn reading directions, determine whose directions were the easiest to follow.

After a group discussion, write a brief essay on effective communication. Consider the following:

1. What did or did not work in your directions?
2. What did you do to communicate more accurately in the second exercise?
3. Why are good communications needed everywhere in life?
4. What kinds of real-life situations could be avoided if clear communication were always possible?

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