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Member Resource

Title:	Barriers to Communication
Shared by: (Your Name, State, Country)	Judy Brown Lehn and Craig Martin St. Augustine, FL
Email Address:	jbguarino@gmail.com
Type of Activity or Resource:	Role play
Objective:	Enhance awareness of barriers to effective communication
Recommended Age Group:	Middle school to adult
Materials Needed:	Handout 26A and blank paper.
Time:	60 mins

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Strategy 26

Barriers to Effective Communication

Objective(s):

To enhance awareness of barriers which impede effective communication.

Age:

Middle school to adults

Procedure:

Distribute the Handout 26.A entitled, "Guidelines For Effective Communication" [page 75].

1. Distribute a blank sheet of paper to each participant. Ask them NOT to write their names on their papers.
2. Ask each participant to write a description of an issue which is causing conflict in a relationship. Tell the participants that the situation may be real or created. If the situation described is real, request that the participants change names in order to protect identities.
3. Instruct the participants to be specific about the issues or situations described. For instance, "My mother and I don't get along" is too vague. Rather, ask the participants to describe the nature of the conflict. Does it have to do with household rules, curfew, time spent together, or perhaps all of the above?
4. When all of the descriptions have been collected, ask for volunteers to role play the people communicating in a situation. Allow the actors to role play spontaneously. Tell them not to worry about communicating effectively.
5. After the situation is role played, ask the participants to refer to the handout with the list of "Do's" and "Don'ts." Ask the participants to comment on the communication in the scene presented using the handout as a reference. Ask the participants to comment on any part of the interaction not alluded to on the handout. When the discussion is complete, ask the actors to repeat the same situation, this time trying to follow the guidelines. Ask the participants to comment on the revised scene.
6. Repeat this procedure using as many situations as time will allow.
7. Be sure to clarify questions regarding why the "don'ts" are barriers to effective communication.

Handout 26.A

Guidelines For Effective Communication

DO:

- Use "I" messages.
- Take responsibility for your own feelings. They belong to you.
- Be honest.
- Give feedback.
- Use active listening skills.
- Establish eye contact.
- Ask open-ended questions.

DON'T:

- Accuse**—"You've never cared about me."
- Criticize**—"You don't know how to talk to me."
- Judge**—"You shouldn't feel so bad."
- Compare**—"I wish you were more like Don's parents."
- Insult**—"You're such a baby."
- Manipulate**—To get what you want by false means.
- Give advice**—It denies the other person the opportunity to grow by making his or her own decisions. Instead, suggest as many solutions as you can think of, but don't tell the person which one to choose.
- Interrupt**—Allow the person to finish an entire train of thought.
- Threaten**—"If you do that again, we're through." A threat may cause you to have to do something you do not want to do to save face. A threat may cause the person to do what you do not want him to do out of rebellion.
- Tease**—Always take the other person seriously if there's a conflict.
- Use physical force**—It only shows who is physically stronger. It prevents two people from getting closer by working through problems together.