Clinicians and the Language of Nonverbal Communication: It’s Not Just What You Say, But How You Say It
Introduction

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• 30 years' experience working as a professional communicator in several areas of communication skills training, including high-impact communications skills, listening, media training, executive coaching, creativity training, culture change seminars and career transition planning

• Worked extensively with physicians, physician leaders, medical residents and medical students

• Experience as an award-winning broadcast and print journalist for news organizations such as CNN, Associated Press, CNBC-TV and the Discovery Channel
Why does Nonverbal Communication Matter

- Improved patient safety & satisfaction
- Increased adherence to treatment
- Improved diagnostic accuracy
- Enhances empathy
Why does Nonverbal Communication Matter

- Better HCAHPS scores
- Reduced potential of lawsuits
- Improved collegial relationships
- Enhanced career satisfaction & sense of purpose
Objectives

- Explore the Nonverbal Channels of Communication
Agenda

- Building Trust & Believability
- The ‘Anatomy’ of Nonverbal Communication: Visual & Vocal Channels
- Research
- Cultural Differences in Nonverbal Communication
“Often it is not what providers say but, the manner in which they say it that leads a patient to trust or like, or dislike them.”

- Nalini Ambady, Ph.D. and Robert Rosenthal, Ph.D.
Trust & Believability

Visual

Vocal

Verbal

The Value of Trust

Return on Influence

100%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Value of Trust in Return on Influence*
Trust & Believability - Telephone

- Verbal: 15%
- Vocal: 85%
The VISUAL Channel:

- Facial Expression
- Eye Gaze (the “look of listening”)
- Gestures (head, hands, feet)
- Extraneous movements (e.g. ticks, playing with hair, pen, etc.)
The VISUAL Channel:

- Posture
- Sitting versus Standing
- Walk (especially entrances & exits)
- Proxemics (use of space)
The VISUAL Channel:

- Touch (culturally sensitive)
- Appearance & Dress
- Electronic Medical Records
- Multi-Tasking
University of Kansas Hospital Study: Patients’ Time Perceptions of Physician Visits

- Physicians stood for 1 minute, 28 seconds

Results: Patients perceived visit: 3 minutes, 44 seconds
University of Kansas Hospital Study: Patients’ Time Perceptions of Physician Visits

- Physicians sat for slightly more than 1 minute

Results: Patients perceived visit: 5 minutes

Patients perceived seated physicians spent 40% more time with them than standing physicians
Physical Therapists’ NV Cues Predict Geriatric Patients’ Outcomes

- Distancing Behaviors (not smiling & looking away)

Results: Strongly correlated with short and long-term decreases in patients’ physical & cognitive functioning
Physical Therapists’ NV Cues Predict Geriatric Patients’ Outcomes

- Facial Expressiveness (smiling, nodding, frowning, furrowing brows)

Results: Associated with short and long-term improvement in functioning

(N. Ambady, J. Koo, R. Rosenthal, CH. Winograd)
The Importance of Non-Verbal Communication to Achieve Desired Medical Outcomes

“Stop, Look and Listen!”

Stop facing the computer.

Look at your patients while you talk to them.

Listen for more time than you talk.

- Carol Cassella, M.D. and Author
The Importance of Non-Verbal Communication to Achieving Desired Medical Outcomes

“Body language can say more than words. But, you’ll miss it if you aren’t looking and your patients can’t ask you questions if you don’t give them space.” - Carol Cassella, M.D. and Author
The VOCAL Channel - Paralinguistics

- Volume
- Pitch
- Tone
- Speed
- Clarity/Articulation
The VOCAL Channel - Paralinguistics

- Vocal Emphasis
- Intonation Pattern
- Pauses
- Quasi-Verbal Behaviors
  (interruptions, hesitations, speech errors, sighs, fillers, accents)
The VOCAL Channel - Paralinguistics

- Trailing off
- Trendy rhythms (e.g. uptalk, vocal fry)
- Sound Interrupters (cell phones, beepers)
- Accents

Check out: “Like, You Know” Video:

www.youtube.com/results?search_query=like+you+know
Voice Qualities: Predictor of Whether Surgeons will be Sued for Malpractice

Patients listened to 40 second recordings of surgeons’ voices.

Higher Dominance Tone = deep, loud, moderately fast, unaccented & clearly articulated speech correlated with whether surgeon had been sued for malpractice.

Results: Interpreted as low concern; lacking empathy & understanding; indifference.

More likely to have been sued.
Concern or anxiety in the voice was positively related to expressing concern and empathy.

Results: These surgeons were less likely to have been sued.

Cultural Differences in Nonverbal Communication

- ‘High Contact’ Cultures: Latin American, Middle Eastern, Southern European
- ‘Low Contact’ Cultures: Northern European, North American, Asian

Cultural differences can potentially have a significant impact in clinical settings
Thank you!

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Evidence-Based Importance of Communication Skills

• Improve medical outcomes
• Decrease malpractice claims
• Enhance physician/provider satisfaction
• Improve patient satisfaction scores
  • HCAHPS surveys mandated by the government if hospital receives Medicare funds from the government
  • Analysis demonstrates that 2 communication dimensions drive scores
DocCom Overview

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• Learning goals
• Content
• Videos interspersed
• Behavior checklist
• References
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Facial Recognition
Resources
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  • Responding to Strong Emotions
  • Delivering Bad News

• Podcast – Healthcare Communication: Effective Techniques for Clinicians
  •Clinicians and the Language of Nonverbal Communication
  • Effective Communication to Resolve Conflicts
  • Mindfulness & Reflection
  • Linking Communication to Motivation
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