



## ROADBLOCKS TO COMMUNICATION

Roadblocks are things that get in the way of communicating instead of helping the process. When roadblocks are used they can:

- a) cause the other person to feel unaccepted, judged , blamed or rejected
- b) cause the other person to defend him/herself – get fearful and defensive
- c) damage his/her self-esteem
- d) promote dependent behaviour
- e) show the other person you neither trust nor respect him or her.

The first study of roadblocks is often startling to people. All of us are guilty of using roadblocks (often even after we should know better – we’re human after all!).

### 1. **Ordering, Commanding**

“You must...,” “You have to...,” “You will...,” “You need to...,”

- can produce fear or active resistance
- invites “testing”
- promotes rebellious behaviour, retaliation.

### 2. **Warning, Threatening:**

“If you don’t, then...,” “You’d better, or...”

- can produce fear, submissiveness
- invites “testing” of threatened consequence
- can cause resentment, anger, rebellion.

### 3. **Moralizing, Preaching:**

“You should...,” “You ought to...,” “It is your responsibility...,”

- creates ‘obligations’ or guilt feelings
- can cause a person to ‘dig in’ and defend his or her position even more (i.e., Who says?)
- communicates lack of trust in a person’s sense of responsibility.

### 4. **Advising, Giving Solutions:**



“What I would do is...,” “Why don’t you...,” “Let me suggest...”

- can imply that the person is not able to solve his or her own problems
- prevents a person from thinking through a problem, considering alternative solutions, and trying them out in reality
- can cause dependency or resistance.

**5. Persuading with Logic, Arguing:**

“Here’s why you are wrong...,” “The facts are...,” “Yes, but...”

- provokes defensive position and counter arguments
- often causes a person to ‘turn off’ speaker, to quit listening
- can cause the person to feel inferior, inadequate

**6. Judging, Criticizing, Blaming**

“You are not thinking maturely...,” “You are doing it the wrong way...”

- implies incompetence, stupidity, poor judgement
- cuts off communication from a person over fear of negative judgement or “being bawled out”
- person often accepts judgements as true (“I am bad.”); or retaliates (“You’re not so great yourself!”)

**7. Taking Sides, Agreeing**

“Well, I think you’re doing a great job!” “You’re right – that nurse sounds awful!”

- implies high speaker expectations as well as surveillance of person’s “toeing the mark”
- can be seen as patronizing or as a manipulative effort to encourage desired behaviour
- can cause anxiety when the person’s perception of self doesn’t match speaker’s praise

**8. Name Calling, Ridiculing:**

“Cry-baby...,” “Okay, Mr. Dreary...”

- can cause person to feel unworthy, unloved
- can have devastating effect on self-image of person



- often provokes verbal-physical retaliation.

**9. Analyzing, Diagnosing, Assessing:**

“What’s wrong with you is...,” “You’re just tired...,” “You don’t actually mean that...”

- can be threatening and frustrating
- person can feel either trapped, exposed, or not believed
- stops person from communicating for fear of distortion or exposure.

**10. Reassuring, Sympathizing, Placating:**

“Don’t worry...,” “You’ll feel better...,” “Oh, cheer up...”

- causes the person to feel misunderstood
- evokes strong feelings of hostility (That’s easy for you to say!)
- person often picks up speaker’s message as: It’s not all right for you to feel bad.

**11. Probing and Questioning**

“Why...,” “Who...,” “What did you...,” “How...”

- since answering questions often results in getting subsequent criticisms or solutions, people often learn to reply with non-answers, avoidance, half-truths, or lies
- since questions often keep the person in the dark as to what the speaker is driving at, the person may become anxious and fearful
- person can lose sight of his or her problems while answering questions spawned by speaker’s concerns

**12. Withdrawal:**

Remaining silent, turning away.

- closes down the conversation
- implies that life’s difficulties are to be avoided rather than dealt with
- can infer that a person’s problems are unimportant, petty or invalid
- stops openness from person when he or she is experiencing a difficulty.

**13. Telling Your Own Story**



Briefly tell your own story if asked and if it is relevant to client's issues.

Keep the focus on the client, not you.

#### 14. Day Dreaming

Is not being there. (I wander off and need to consciously bring myself back.)

#### 15. Diverting

"Lets talk about something more pleasant..."

- this says you are only a "good time Charlie". You are not there for people in their pain.
- This is not a quality for a Hospice volunteer

#### 16. Rehearsing

"He'll say, then I'll say..."

- Don't rehearse as this would be using an agenda.

Adapted from and add to: Carr & Saunders, Peer Counselling Project, Faculty of Education, University of Victoria.

## SELF-DISCLOSURE

From time to time a person may ask you for information about yourself, or you may wish to share some information about yourself. This is referred to as "self-disclosure" and may be appropriate when it benefits the other person.

### POINTS TO CONSIDER:

1. Know why you are disclosing yourself. Don't let self-disclosure become an end in itself.
2. Try to judge what impact your self-disclosure will have on the other.
3. You should not overwhelm another with your self-disclosure.
4. Taking reasonable risks creates a climate of trust.
5. The most productive immediate response to a person's self-disclosure is not someone else's self-disclosure, but some indication that the disclosure has been heard.



6. Be brief and to the point.
7. Return the focus to the other person.
8. Take into account the concern behind the question.
9. Be specific to yourself and don't talk in generalities.

A formula self-disclosing response includes the following components:

- EMPATHIC RESPONSE
- SELF-DISCLOSURE
- ASKING AN OPEN-ENDED QUESTION

Although self-disclosure may be used alone as a skill, its effectiveness can be increased by using it with other skills. First, an empathic response can be used to let another person know their self-disclosure has been heard. Following this empathic response, a self-disclosure by the volunteer can be made sharing a similar experience and thus demonstrating the depth of the volunteer's understanding. It is important, however, to return the focus to the person's concern. This can be done by asking an open ended question.

Formula:

1. Respond empathically
2. Self-disclosure
3. Ask an open-ended question.

Guidelines:

1. Match the intensity of the person's disclosure.



2. Be brief and to the point in your own self-disclosure.
3. Return the focus to the other person
4. Take into account the concern behind the question. (Sometimes responding to the underlying concern is more helpful than just self-disclosing).
5. Be specific to yourself, don't speak in generalities.
6. Stay with the same topic.
7. Be genuine.
8. We do not need to have been in exactly the same situation in order to share our feelings and experiences. We have all felt rage, sorrow, joy, terror at some time. By identifying what that time was like for us, the person can feel an understanding bridge.
9. You don't have to share personal information.
10. Listen more – talk less.

Self-disclosure is used for the benefit of the other person; to encourage that person to develop a better understanding of their situation and to encourage the development of trust