BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION and MANAGING COMMUNICATION

Effective communication is a process of exchanging ideas, thoughts, knowledge and information such that the purpose or intention is fulfilled in the best possible manner. In simple words, it is nothing but the presentation of views by the sender in a way best understood by the receiver.

We can say that it generally involves;

Sender: The person who initiates the process of communication by sending a message;

Receiver: The one to whom the message is to be delivered.

Just delivering a message is not enough; it must meet the purpose of the sender. Here are some **characteristics** of effective communication:
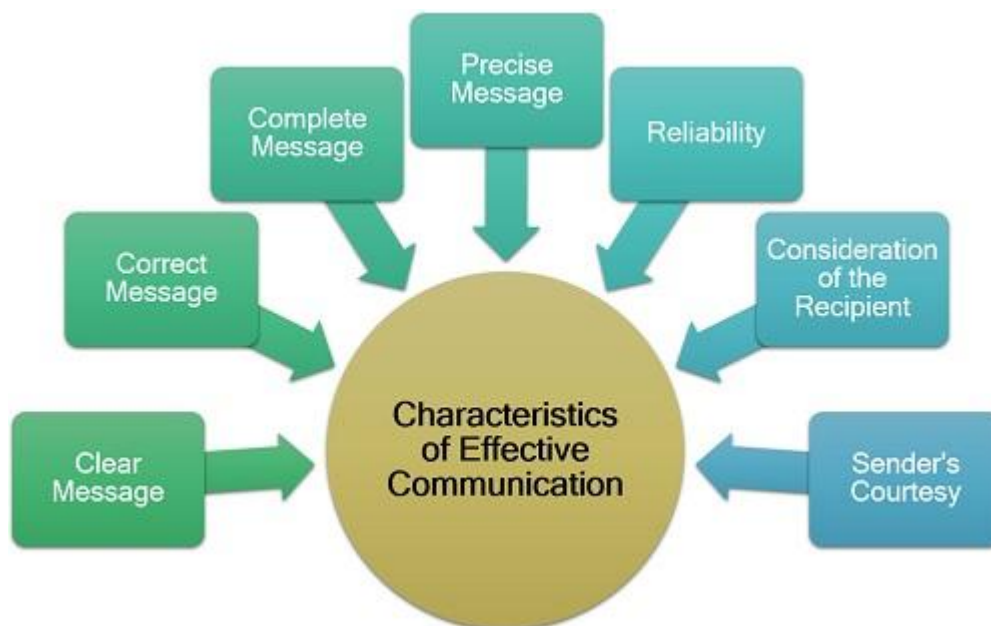
Clear Message: The message which the sender wants to convey must be simple, easy to understand and systematically framed to retain its meaningfulness.

Correct Message: The information communicated must not be vague or false in any sense; it must be free from errors and grammatical mistakes.

Complete Message: Communication is the base for decision making. If the information is incomplete, it may lead to wrong decisions.

Precise Message: The message sent must be short and concise to facilitate straightforward interpretation and take the desired steps.

Reliability: The sender must be sure from his end that whatever he is conveying is right by his knowledge. Even the receiver must have trust on the sender and can rely on the message sent.

Consideration of the Recipient: The medium of communication and other physical settings must be planned, keeping in mind the attitude, language, knowledge, education level and position of the receiver.

Sender's Courtesy: The message so drafted must reflect the sender's courtesy, humbleness and respect towards the receiver.

❖ **Barriers to effective Communication:**

Effective communication in the workplace is not always straightforward and barriers can easily get in the way. They cause messages to become distorted, subsequently leading to confusion, misunderstanding and even offense in some cases.
There are many reasons why interpersonal communications may fail. In many communications, the message may not be received exactly the way the sender intended and hence it is important that the communicator seeks feedback to check that their message is clearly understood. There exist many barriers to communication and these may occur at any stage in the communication process. Barriers may lead to your message becoming distorted and you therefore risk wasting both time and/or money by causing confusion and misunderstanding. Effective communication involves overcoming these barriers and conveying a clear and concise message.

❖ **Some common barriers to effective communication include:**

1. The use of jargon. Over-complicated or unfamiliar terms.
2. Emotional barriers and taboos.
3. Lack of attention, interest, distractions, or irrelevance to the receiver.
4. Differences in perception and viewpoint.
5. Physical disabilities such as hearing problems or speech difficulties.
6. Physical barriers to non-verbal communication.
7. Language differences and the difficulty in understanding unfamiliar accents.

8. Expectations and prejudices which may lead to false assumptions or stereotyping. People often hear what they expect to hear rather than what is actually said and jump to incorrect conclusions.

9. Cultural differences. The norms of social interaction vary greatly in different cultures, as do the way in which emotions are expressed. For example, the concept of personal space varies between cultures and between different social settings.

❖ Barriers to Communication:

Language Barriers:
Clearly, language and linguistic ability may act as a barrier to communication. However, even when communicating in the same language, the terminology used in a message may act as a barrier if it is not fully understood by the receiver(s). For example, a message that includes a lot of specialist jargon and abbreviations will not be understood by a receiver who is not familiar with the terminology used. As nurses, we are especially prone to making this mistake. We must remember to use language that can be understood by the receiver.

Psychological Barriers:
The psychological state of the receiver will influence how the message is received. For example, if someone has personal worries and is stressed, they may be preoccupied by personal concerns and not as receptive to the message as if they were not stressed. Stress management is an important personal skill that affects our interpersonal relationships. Anger is another example of a psychological barrier to communication. When we are angry it is easy to say things that we may later regret and also to misinterpret what others are saying. More generally, people with low self-esteem may be less assertive and therefore may not feel comfortable communicating - they may feel shy about saying how they really feel, or read negative sub-texts into messages they hear.

Physiological Barriers:
Physiological barriers may result from the receiver's physical state. For example, a receiver with reduced hearing may not grasp the entirety of a spoken conversation, especially if there is significant background noise.

Physical Barriers An example of a physical barrier to communication is geographic distance between the sender and receiver(s). Communication is generally easier over shorter distances as more communication channels are available and less technology is required. Although modern technology often serves to reduce the impact of physical barriers, the advantages and disadvantages of each communication channel should be understood so that an appropriate channel can be used to overcome the physical barriers.

Attitudinal Barriers:

Attitudinal barriers are behaviors or perceptions that prevent people from communicating effectively. Attitudinal barriers to communication may result from personality conflicts, poor management, resistance to change, or a lack of motivation. Effective receivers of messages should attempt to overcome their own attitudinal barriers to facilitate effective communication.

Systematic barriers:

Systematic barriers to communication may exist in structures and organisations where there are inefficient or inappropriate information systems and communication channels, or where there is a lack of understanding of the roles and responsibilities for communication. In such organisations, people may be unclear of their role in the communication process and therefore not know what is expected of them.

Cultural Barriers of Communication:

As the world is getting more and more globalized, any large office may have people from several parts of the world. Different cultures have a different meaning for several basic values of society. Dressing, Religions or lack of them, food, drinks, pets, and the general behaviour will change drastically from one culture to another.

Hence it is a must that we must take these different cultures into account while communication. This is what we call being culturally appropriate. In many multinational companies, special courses are offered at the orientation stages that let people know about other cultures and how to be courteous and tolerant of others.

Perceptual Barriers:

Different people perceive the same things differently. This is a fact which we must consider during the communication process. Knowledge of the perception levels of the audience is crucial to effective communication. All the messages or communique must be easy and clear. There shouldn't be any room for a diversified interpretational set.

Technological Barriers & Socio-religious Barriers:

Other barriers include the technological barriers. The technology is developing fast and as a result, it becomes difficult to keep up with the newest developments. Hence sometimes the technological advance may become a barrier. In addition to this, the cost of technology is sometimes very high.

Most of the organizations will not be able to afford a decent tech for the purpose of communication. Hence, this becomes a very crucial barrier. Other barriers are socio-religious barriers. In a patriarchal society, a woman or a transgender may face many difficulties and barriers while communicating.

Incorrect filtering:

Filtering is screening out before a message is passed on to someone else. In business, the filters between you and your receiver are many; secretaries, assistants, receptionists, answering machines, etc. Those same gatekeepers may also 'translate' your receiver's ideas and responses before passing them on to you. To overcome filtering barriers, try to establish more than one communication channel, eliminate as many intermediaries as possible, and decrease distortion by condensing message information to the bare essentials.

Poor listening:

Perhaps the most common barrier to reception is simply a lack of attention on the receiver's part. We all let our minds wander now and then, regardless of how hard we try to concentrate. People are essentially likely to drift off when they are forced to listen to information that is difficult to understand or that has little direct bearing on their own lives. Too few of us simply do not listen well! To overcome barriers, paraphrase what you have understood, try to view the situation through the eyes of other speakers and resist jumping to conclusions. Clarify meaning by asking non-threatening questions, and listen without interrupting.

MANAGING COMMUNICATION BARRIERS:

There are a lot of communication barriers faced these days by all. The message intended by the sender is not understood by the receiver in the same terms and sense and thus communication breakdown occurs. It is essential to deal and cope up with these communication barriers so as to ensure smooth and effective communication.

As, in the previous section we have discussed the major barriers of communication. Let's talk about how to overcome these barriers of communication.

1. **Eliminating differences in perception:** The organization should ensure that it is recruiting right individuals on the job. It's the responsibility of the interviewer to ensure that the interviewee has command over the written and spoken language. There should be proper Induction program so that the policies of the company are clear to all the employees. There should be proper trainings conducted for required employees (for eg: Voice and Accent training).

2. **Use of Simple Language**: Use of simple and clear words should be emphasized. Use of ambiguous words and jargons should be avoided.

3. **Reduction and elimination of noise levels**: Noise is the main communication barrier which must be overcome on priority basis. It is essential to identify the source of noise and then eliminate that source.

4. **Active Listening**: Listen attentively and carefully. There is a difference between "listening" and "hearing". Active listening means hearing with proper understanding of the message that is heard. By asking questions the speaker can ensure whether his/her message is understood or not by the receiver in the same terms as intended by the speaker.

5. **Emotional State**: During communication one should make effective use of body language. He/she should not show their emotions while communication as the receiver might misinterpret the message being delivered. For example, if the conveyer of the message is in a bad mood then the receiver might think that the information being delivered is not good.

6. **Simple Organizational Structure**: The organizational structure should not be complex. The number of hierarchical levels should be optimum. There should be a ideal span of control within the organization. Simpler the organizational structure, more effective will be the communication.

7. **Avoid Information Overload**: The managers should know how to prioritize their work. They should not overload themselves with the work. They should spend quality time with their subordinates and should listen to their problems and feedbacks actively.

8. **Give Constructive Feedback**: Avoid giving negative feedback. The contents of the feedback might be negative, but it should be delivered constructively. Constructive feedback will lead to effective communication between the superior and subordinate.

9. **Proper Media Selection:** The managers should properly select the medium of communication. Simple messages should be conveyed orally, like: face to face interaction or meetings. Use of written means of communication should be encouraged for delivering complex messages. For

significant messages reminders can be given by using written means of communication such as : Memos, Notices etc.

10. **Flexibility in meeting the targets**: For effective communication in an organization the managers should ensure that the individuals are meeting their targets timely without skipping the formal channels of communication. There should not be much pressure on employees to meet their targets.

11. **Retain Consistency about the Message**: The message conveyed should conjure with the organizational goals and policies. Whenever you are replacing any old message instead of the new one, you should clearly mention about it and clear all the doubts.

12. **Make use of the body language**: During the process of communication make sure you make the most appropriate use of your body language, Avoid showing too much of emotions as the receiver might misapprehend the message. Try to always keep a smiling face while talking and make eye to eye contact with the listener but make sure not to keep your eyes gazed at the person for more than five seconds and avoid too much of fluttering of eyes which indicate you are not confident. Sit in an upright position and feel relaxed.

13. **Communication chain should be short**: You should avoid using the mediocre or send the message through the third person unless it is very urgent. Try to directly communicate with the person concerned. The risk of distortion of the facts gets more if message is passed through the third party and just imagine if there are more people in between the sender and receiver the chances of filtering of the messages is doubled.

14. **Keep your Anger in Control**: Do not be aggressive or show your anger if you do not agree with any point of view or anything that is going against your ideology. State your thoughts politely with facts if you have and reflect positivity in your talk and nature.

15. **Have Clarity In Your Thoughts:** You should be very clear about your objective and what you want to convey. Arrange your thoughts in a proper order and then communicate accordingly. Systematic communication and clarity in thought get adequately received and appreciated. Aimless talks can be misleading so you should always try to show that there is an aim or motive behind your talk.

16. **Understand the needs of your audience:** You should be emotional and sensitive towards the needs of your receiver. Understand his behavior, nature, culture, and religion, however, it does not mean you cannot express your feelings or thought, but it simply means that you are showing respect to his religious beliefs or thoughts and then stating your point of view. Most importantly the message should also be structured as per his level or ability. If you are conveying the message to a layman then avoid using technical words and if you are addressing corporate elite, the language should have professional sophistication and maturity.

Simply a communication is a social endeavor to give and receive what people wants us to do and what we expect from the others. We can communicate with our friends and colleagues in many ways, but its

effectiveness can only be ensured if a message is conveyed appropriately and a person is able to understand and comprehend the same.

Above are though just few ways to remove the communicative hurdles but the basic crux of the same is a modification of your personality and adoption of a certain way which meets the demand of our people.