

Introduction:

This activity involves multiple “lines of communication” with some participants limited to verbal only communication, some to non-verbal, and a person who must respond to directions through these multiple modalities. This is a great way to illustrate how challenging giving, receiving, and interpreting directions can be.

Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Engage in verbal *and* non-verbal communication.
2. Respond to communication through the use of multiple modalities.
3. Give and receive directions while dealing with frustration.

Time:

30 minutes.

Group size:

Small group.

Materials:

See Participant Instructions (in [Downloads](#)).

Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance

AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

Verbal Nonverbal Communication

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).

Other Skills:

Friendship
Teamwork
Mentorship & Leadership

Activity Instructions:

1. The group is divided into 3 “lines of communication” which include four participants at the front of the room (line #1 non-verbal directors), a single person facing them (line #2 verbal director), and a third person placed behind them all who is the doer (line #3 the doer). The doer is challenged to complete a simple task with directions from the others.
 - Line #1/Non-Verbal Directors: Four participants are placed in the front of the room; they can see the task at hand and all the participants involved but cannot talk. They are only allowed to use non-verbal communication with the person in line #2 who is the verbal direction giver.
 - Line #2/Verbal Director: A single person is placed facing the group of four non-verbal direction givers. This verbal direction giver watches the first line of four participants but has their back to the “doer” who is placed behind them. This verbal director can talk, but cannot see what the “doer” is “doing”.
 - Line #3/Doer: This person in line #3 is the “doer”. They have their eyes closed and are placed a few feet behind the other two groups. This person will complete a simple task based on the directions the group gives them, which will be interpreted by the person in line #2 the verbal director.
2. The rest of the group comes up with a simple task using basic props such as moving a ball onto a chair or into a can or moving a book from a chair to inside a desk.
3. The group not involved in directing is responsible for spotting the “doer” participant as they complete the task, so they don’t bump into anything.
4. The task is shown to line #1 the non-verbal directors. The group in line #1 tries to non-verbally explain the task to the person in line #2 so they can explain the task verbally to person #3 the doer.
5. The rest of the group spots person #3 as they complete the task, but they don’t interfere.

Related Tools:

- [Building Team Communication](#)
- [Confrontation and Dialoguing](#)
- [Cross-Cultural Encounters](#)
- [Improved Solutions](#)