

We mentioned that listening is very similar to learning. Just as you have a dominant style for learning, listening researchers argue that you have a dominant listening style.⁴³ To learn more about your listening style, take a few minutes to complete and score the Listening Styles Inventory in Rating Scale 4.1, developed by listening researchers Glenn Pearce, Iris Johnson, and Randolph Barker.⁴⁴

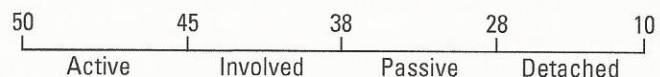
RATING SCALE 4.1 Listening Styles Inventory

The following items relate to your listening style. Circle the number of the response that best reflects your behavior. Please be candid.

Items	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Almost Never
1. I want to listen to what others have to say when they are talking.	5	4	3	2	1
2. I do not listen at my capacity when others are talking.	5	4	3	2	1
3. By listening, I can guess a speaker's intent or purpose without being told.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I have a purpose for listening when others are talking.	5	4	3	2	1
5. I keep control of my biases and attitudes when listening to others speak so that these factors won't affect my interpretation of the message.	5	4	3	2	1
6. I analyze my listening errors so as not to make them again.	5	4	3	2	1
7. I listen to the complete message before making judgments about what the speaker has said.	5	4	3	2	1
8. I cannot tell when a speaker's biases or attitudes are affecting his or her message.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I ask questions when I don't fully understand a speaker's message.	5	4	3	2	1
10. I am aware of whether a speaker's meaning for words and concepts is the same as mine.	5	4	3	2	1

Grand total = ____ + ____ + ____ + ____ + ____ +

Now consult the Interpretation Scale. Place an X on the part of the scale below that corresponds to your grand total score. Your listening style is described below.



The **active listener** gives full attention to listening when others are talking and focuses on what is being said. This person expends a lot of energy participating in the speaking-listening exchange, which is usually evidenced by an alert posture or stance and much direct eye contact.

The **involved listener** gives most of his or her attention to the speaker's words and intentions. This person reflects on the message to a degree and participates in the speaking-listening exchange. The involved listener practices some direct eye contact and may have an alert posture or stance, although this may be intermittent.

The **passive listener** receives information as though being talked to rather than participating as an equal partner in the speaking-listening exchange. Although the passive listener assumes that the responsibility for the success of the communication is the speaker's, he or she is usually attentive, although attention may be faked at times. The passive listener seldom expends any noticeable energy in receiving and interpreting messages.

The **detached listener** withdraws from the speaking-listening exchange and becomes the object of the speaker's message rather than its receiver. The detached listener is usually inattentive, uninterested, and may be restless, bored, or easily distracted. This person's noticeable lack of enthusiasm may be marked by slumped or very relaxed posture and avoidance of direct eye contact.

Note: The listening inventory gives you a general idea of your preferred listening style, based on how you view yourself. The scores indicating styles are approximations and should be regarded as such. Your listening style may change, depending on the given situation or your interests, intentions, or objectives.

Skills for Listening Effectively to Others

Listening Skill	Listening Strategies	Examples
Stop: Turn Off Competing Messages	Prepare yourself physically.	Turn toward the person, look the person in the eye, and relax.
	Prepare yourself by setting the scene.	If necessary, move to another room away from distractions.
	Prepare yourself by getting to meetings early.	Arriving a few minutes early is best, but even being a few seconds early will help you to refocus on the new task.
Look: Listen with Your Eyes	Look for liking cues.	Look for forward body lean, head nods, direct eye contact, smiling, open body orientation, and expressive gestures and voice.
	Look for interest cues.	Observe for vibrant voice, dynamic gestures, excited facial expressions, and energetic body movements.
	Look for status cues.	Observe body posture, body orientation, head position, and amount of smiling, nodding, eye contact, and facial animation.
Listen: Understand Both Main Ideas and Details	Listen for the major ideas in the message.	Ask questions to get at the major point of the message, which may be the relational message.
	Listen for the details in the message.	Ask questions about the specific details in the message.
	Link the details with the main ideas.	Use elaboration strategies for organizing the information in order to fully understand the message.
	Listen actively.	Give the other person your full attention, focus, ask questions, paraphrase, and withhold judgment.

Communication Skills FOR A Digital Age

Listening to Your Social Media

In the digital age listening is no longer limited to audible messages, but also includes written messages. Today, companies engage in organizational listening, which means they carefully monitor how others are talking about them and their business practices using social media.⁴⁵

Coca-Cola learned through their monitoring of social media that they were the target of international criticism for using limited sources of water for their Coke products in India that could have gone to thirsty villages.⁴⁶ Even though Coca-Cola's water practices were legal, the number of blog entries, Facebook posts, and tweets suggested that global resentment against the company was growing. Through careful listening, Coca-Cola quickly responded by saying that the company was going to invest \$5 million toward water improvements to be "water-neutral" by 2020, which means that they will have systems in place to replace all the water they use. The response has been overwhelming with a number of stakeholders recognizing Coca-Cola for their corporate social responsibility.⁴⁷

Organizational listening is a two-step process. First, you need to set up a listening station where you monitor the conversations that others are having about you and your organization. A couple of free tools can get you started:⁴⁸

- Google alerts (<http://www.google.com/alerts>) inform you any time your organization shows up in online media, blogs, web pages, and news.
- Tweet beeps (<http://tweetbeep.com/>) is similar to Google Alerts, but for Twitter. Tweet beeps notifies you any time your organization is mentioned in a twitter conversation.

The second step is to learn to listen. Here are five types of information that you should focus on while monitoring social media:

- *Compliments.* They can be congratulations messages about a recent award. Or customers raving about the experience they just had with your product or with customer service.
- *Complaints.* Watch for posts complaining about your products or services, company, and staff. Catching

something early means getting a chance to respond and demonstrate your problem-solving abilities.

- *Expressed need.* People make known what they are doing and often ask the general public for advice when they are about to make a purchase. Both of these situations provide an opportunity for you to reach out with an offer of assistance or information related to your organization's products and services.
- *The competitor.* Listen to what your competitors are doing and the public's response to their products and services.
- *The crowd.* Topics will often pop up online that draw huge crowds, such as protesters against Walmart's carbon footprint.⁴⁹ Walmart immediately responded with a program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in its truck fleet over five years by 20 million metric tons, an amount equal to that produced by 3.8 million cars.
- *The influencer.* Determine who the opinion leaders are. They gain their power from how frequently they post on a topic, the number of people who link to their posts, the number of people gathering to comment, and how engaged visitors to their posts become. You want these folks on your side.
- *The crisis.* Discussions happening in social media can serve as an early warning system. What concerns do people have that can be avoided?

Applying Your Skills.

Take a few minutes and listen to your social media. Try some of the following:

1. Sign up for Google Alerts or Tweet Beeps so you know when others are talking about you. What are they saying?
2. Visit some of your favorite organization's Facebook pages. Take inventory of what people are saying. Do the postings fit one of the categories just listed?
3. Based on what you're reading and hearing, how would you advise the leader of this organization to respond?

Responding Effectively to Others

The title of this chapter, "Listening and Responding," reflects the active listening process that we introduced in the preceding section. Active listeners not only stop, look, and listen, they also respond to the speaker. As you'll recall, listening is a process that includes *responding*. Thoughtfully responding to others serves several purposes. First, it tells a speaker how well we understand his or her message. Second, it lets a speaker know how the message affects us.

whether we agree or disagree with a message. Third, in many situations our response to a speaker validates the speaker; it lets the speaker know that we're "with" him or her. Ultimately, all of these responsive messages allow the speaker to adapt his or her communication more appropriately to ensure that listeners understand the messages.

In this section of the chapter, we review three sets of skills for responding to others while listening to them: responding with verbal messages, responding with nonverbal messages, and responding with empathic messages.

Responding with Verbal Messages

A number of verbal responses allow us to provide a speaker with important feedback. Here are a few of them:

- Communicate messages that let the speaker know that you understand the message; for example, "I understand. I see what you're saying."
- Communicate messages that let the speaker know that you need clarification; for example, "I'm confused. Can you give me another example?"
- Communicate messages that let the speaker know that you're interested and need more information; for example, "I find what you're saying fascinating. Do you mind going into more detail?"
- Communicate messages that let the speaker know that you'd like him or her to continue speaking; for example, "OK, then what happened?"
- Communicate messages that let the speaker know that you'd like to say something; for example, "May I add something to what you're saying?"

What all of these verbal responses have in common is that they all convey that we've been paying attention to what the speaker is saying. Again, it's important that speakers use these messages as feedback and adapt their communication appropriately.

Responding with Nonverbal Messages

In some business situations, such as at a formal board meeting, it may not be appropriate to respond to a speaker with verbal messages. In these situations, we can respond with nonverbal messages, which are as important as (if not more important than) verbal messages. Nonverbal responsive messages include visual (sight) and aural (sound) cues. We've already seen a few visual nonverbal responsive cues: forward body lean, head nods, taking notes, maintaining eye contact with the speaker. A few of the aural cues include back channel cues, which we discussed in Chapter 3, including vocal assurances that signal understanding and "back starters" or utterances that signal that the listener would like to add something to the conversation. To get an idea of how nonverbally responsive you are in conversations, complete the assessment measure in Rating Scale 4.2.

4.2 Measure of Nonverbal Responsiveness

How responsive are you when listening to others? Take a few minutes to complete this self-assessment measure of nonverbal responsiveness.⁵⁰ The items comprising this measure will also help you become aware of various nonverbal responsive behaviors.

Mark each behavior in the list using the following scale: Never = 0, Rarely = 1, Occasionally = 2, Often = 3, Very Often = 4

When listening to others, how often do you:

- _____ display facial expressions that reflect your positive attitude.
- _____ show interest by taking notes on what the other person is saying.

- _____ smile at the person who is talking to you.
- _____ nod your head while the other person is talking to you.
- _____ look at the other person who is talking to you.
- _____ smile while you're asking the other person questions.
- _____ sit up and lean forward while listening.
- _____ gesture with your hands and arms while the other person is talking to you.
- _____ use vocal inflections that convey your positive attitude toward the person talking.
- _____ use vocal starters that suggest that you want to say something.
- _____ respond quickly to the other person's questions or comments.
- _____ use vocal variety in tone, pitch, rate, and volume to indicate that you're interested in what the other person is saying.
- _____ use vocal assurances that let the other person know that you understand his or her message.

Scoring Instructions:

Sum your scores for the 13 items. Scores above 26 indicate high nonverbal responsiveness. Scores below 26 indicate low nonverbal responsiveness.

You might be asking yourself, "Does a smile, head nod, or forward body lean really make that much of a difference when listening to others?" It does! Not only does using nonverbally responsive behaviors enhance listening comprehension, but speakers who see others responding using these behaviors feel motivated, satisfied, and effective in their communication.⁵¹ It's a win-win situation. How important is it to you that others be nonverbally responsive when they're listening to you? How do you feel when you're speaking to someone and you get a blank stare from them? Most people become distracted and begin to feel frustrated or insecure when this happens. Remember, nonver-

bal messages convey relational cues; when others don't respond to us nonverbally, we feel somewhat rejected and unsupported. We feel "unheard."

Responding with Empathic Messages

Empathy, as we noted earlier in this chapter and also in Chapter 3, is the process of feeling what another person is feeling. Empathizing is more than just acknowledging how another person feels; it is making an effort to feel what the other person is feeling. Responding with empathy is especially important when we want to support and encourage others. Although most people don't think of the workplace as a place where feelings are openly shared and people support and encourage each other by listening and responding with empathic messages, the role of emotions in the workplace is becoming more important.⁵² For example, one study examined crying in the workplace and included seven hundred working Americans equally divided by sex and representing the full range of occupations and economic levels.⁵³ This



Listening and responding to others with empathy can accomplish many communication goals, including enhancing the quality of your workplace relationships.

study found that 48 percent of men and 41 percent of women reported that it's OK to cry and to express your emotions at work.

Empathy is a communication tool that can be used to accomplish a number of communication goals, such as building important workplace relationships, repairing workplace relationships, defusing workplace conflict, and even influencing clients and customers to purchase your products and services. Three strategies can enhance your ability to respond to others with empathic messages.

ASK APPROPRIATE QUESTIONS As we listen for information and attempt to understand how another person is feeling, we may need to ask a number of questions. Most of our questions serve one of four purposes: (1) to obtain additional information ("Can you tell me more about the problem?"); (2) to check how the other person feels ("Are you frustrated because you didn't meet your deadline?"); (3) to ask for clarification ("What did you mean when you said we need to outsource?"); or (4) to verify that you have reached an accurate conclusion about the other person's intent or feeling ("So are you saying you'd rather work at home than at the office?").

PARAPHRASE MESSAGE CONTENT After we have listened and asked appropriate questions, we need to check whether our interpretations are accurate by paraphrasing the content of a speaker's message. **Paraphrasing** is restating in our own words what we think the other person is saying. Paraphrasing is different from repeating what someone has said; that would be parroting, not paraphrasing. When we paraphrase content, we summarize the details and the main ideas. Here are some common scripts, or ways to begin paraphrasing:

"Here is what seems to have happened . . ."

"Let me see if I got this right. You're saying that . . ."

"Here's what I understand you to mean . . ."

"To the point you seem to be making is . . ."

"You seem to be saying . . ."

When a listener paraphrases the content and feelings of a speaker's message, the speaker is not only more likely to know that the message was understood but also more likely to trust and value the listener.

PARAPHRASE EMOTIONS The most important goal of empathic responding is to make sure that we understand the speaker's feelings and let him or her know that we understand. How do we do this? Paraphrasing emotions is similar to paraphrasing content. For example:

"You feel . . ."

"Emotionally, you're feeling . . ."

"I get a sense that you're feeling . . ."

"Let's see how you're feeling: you're feeling . . ."

Paraphrasing emotions or content can be especially useful in the following workplace situations:

- When you take an important action.
- When you argue with or criticize your business partner or associate.
- When your business partner or associate has strong feelings.
- When your business partner or associate just wants to talk.
- When your business partner or associate is using jargon that you don't understand.
- When you encounter new ideas.⁵⁴

terms & definitions

Paraphrasing restating in your own words what you think another person is saying.

Responding to Gender and Cultural Differences

How you respond to others at work also depends on gender and cultural differences, which we discuss more thoroughly in the next chapter. For now, think about how many times you have had problems understanding someone from a different culture or even a different subculture. What's interesting is that we don't have to travel far to have a cross-cultural experience. In fact, sociolinguist Deborah Tannen argues that men and women are socialized into two different cultural groupings that make it difficult for men and women to listen and respond to each other at work.⁵⁵ For example, during a break from a videoconference, a woman commented to her male colleague how wonderful it was for her to see, listen, and interact with her friends and colleagues from all over the world. The man agreed and then launched into a lengthy and detailed conversation about how the videoconferencing technology allows groups of people from all over the globe to see and hear each other at the same time. The woman became a bit irritated by his response, which focused on the technical detail, and ended the conversation.

As we can see in this case, people respond to each other based on their gender and cultural differences. The woman made her comment about seeing her friends from across the globe as a way of expressing her feelings for her international colleagues. She wanted her male colleague to listen and respond to her relational message. The male colleague took this opening as a chance to reveal his knowledge of videoconferencing technology and to teach his female colleague some of the things he knows. Although both colleagues had the good intention of listening and responding to a friendly conversation, they had differing expectations about the direction such a conversation should take. The male colleague may have believed that a "good response" was one with interesting, factual content; whereas the female colleague may have believed a "good response" to be one with personal content, which disclosed feelings.

What this implies for listening and responding is that when we hear someone speak, we are not only hearing the words they say. We are also activating our own expectations for how others should respond to our messages. If you understand how gender and culture influence how others listen and respond, you also better understand why others respond the way they do.

Listen Up⁵⁶

When you talk you expect other people to listen to you. So does your boss. In fact, one of Sheila Lirio Marcelo's sources of frustration as a leader is people who don't listen to her. As the founder and chief executive officer of Care.com, she assumed that her followers would listen to her. But even as CEO, she found her employees not listening. When asked, "What are your pet peeves?" she said, "Having to repeat myself more than three times." Having one of her employees tune her out is only one of her concerns. Another concern she has is "people who jump to conclusions with one observation. I'm a big believer in getting a few data points of observable behavior before you give somebody the gift of feedback on something. And I typically will say: 'Look, I've observed this two or three times. Let's have a conversation about it.'"

Marcelo emphasizes listening by giving employees a new perspective. She does this by asking her employees to do another person's job for a while. "I give them a new seat at

the table. And people don't have a choice where they sit; we rotate them. . . . You sit with somebody else from a different team so you get to know their job. What are they doing? What are they saying on the phone? How do they tick? It forces people to listen."

In this chapter we've emphasized what Marcelo and other leaders consider to be a weakness in new employees. Listening strategies that have been detailed include turning off competing messages, listening with your eyes, and linking both major ideas and details together. A number of responding strategies were also reviewed, including how to respond with empathic messages as well as responding by adapting to gender and cultural differences.

Whether you're listening to your boss, your colleagues, a client or a customer, make sure that you are listening at peak proficiency so that your listening behavior won't become a pet peeve of others—especially your boss's pet peeve.

Communication Apprehension

If you have ever experienced a bit of stage fright, then you've experienced **communication apprehension (CA)**, which is fear or anxiety associated with either ongoing or anticipated communication with another person or persons.¹⁰ To become aware of your level of CA, complete the communication apprehension measure in Rating Scale 5.2.

RATING SCALE 5.2 Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24)

This instrument is composed of twenty-four statements concerning your feelings about communicating with other people.¹¹ Indicate in the space provided the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) are undecided, (4) disagree, or (5) strongly disagree with each statement. There are no right or wrong answers. None of the statements are intentionally similar. Work quickly and record your first impression.

1. I dislike participating in group discussions.
2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in a group discussion.
3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.
4. I like to get involved in group discussions.
5. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.
6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.
7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.
8. Usually I am calm and relaxed while participating in meetings.
9. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called on to express an opinion at a meeting.
10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.
11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.
12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.
13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.
14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.
15. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.
16. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.
17. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.
18. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.
19. I have no fear of giving a speech.
20. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while I am giving a speech.
21. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.
22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
23. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.
24. While giving a speech I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

Scoring instructions: The PRCA permits computation of one total score and four subscores. The subscores are related to communication apprehension in each of four common communication contexts: group discussions, meetings, interpersonal conversations, and public speaking. To compute your scores, merely add or subtract the scores for each item as indicated below.

Desired
Discussion

Scoring Formula

Add 18 to the total of your scores for items 2, 4, and 6; then subtract your scores for items 1, 3, and 5 from this total.

terms & definitions

Communication apprehension (CA) fear or anxiety associated with ongoing or anticipated communication with another person or persons.

Meetings	Add 18 to the total of your scores for items 8, 9, and 12; then subtract your scores for items 7, 10, and 11 from this total.
Interpersonal conversations	Add 18 to the total of your scores for items 14, 16, and 17; then subtract your scores for items 13, 15, and 18 from this total.
Public speaking	Add 18 to the total of your scores for items 19, 21, and 23; then subtract your scores for items 20, 22, and 24 from this total.

To obtain your total score on the PRCA, simply add your four subscores together. Your total score should range between 24 and 120. If your score is below 24, or above 120, you have made a mistake in computing it.

Scores on the four contexts (group discussion, meetings, interpersonal conversations, and public speaking) can range from a low of 6 to a high of 30. Any score above 18 indicates some degree of apprehension. If your score for the public speaking context is above 18, you are like the overwhelming majority of Americans.

Average scores on the PRCA-24 are as follows:

Total Score:	66
Group discussion	15
Meetings	16
Interpersonal conversations	14
Public speaking	19

People who score high in CA experience fear when communicating with others in a variety of contexts, including in meetings, in small groups, one on one, or when giving a speech. People low in CA rarely experience fear when communicating with others. One situation in which most people have a degree of fear and anxiety, even those low in CA, is when speaking in front of others in more formal situations, such as giving a business presentation.

Research suggests that one in five Americans experiences an abnormally high level of CA in all contexts.¹² For these individuals, CA is a disorder that prevents them from doing their best in the workplace. Highly apprehensive individuals have a tendency to behave in one of the following three ways.¹³ First, they avoid communication. Rather than informally socializing with colleagues outside of work, for example, apprehensive individuals make excuses for not attending these social situations. Unfortunately, these informal situations are often opportunities for professionals to network with and influence each other. Second, when apprehensive individuals cannot actually avoid communication, they tend to withdraw from it. Rather than speaking up at a meeting and presenting their ideas, they tend to remain silent. Unfortunately, this reduces their ability to implement their ideas and influence others. Because of their communication withdrawal, individuals who are high in CA are often overlooked for promotions. Third, they experience communication disruptions. Apprehensive individuals have a tendency to communicate using improper articulation and pronunciation as well as too many vocal disfluencies or interrupters, such as “uhh,” “ahh,” “um,” or “like.” Because of these communication disruptions, apprehensive individuals tend not to be taken seriously.

You can adapt to and lead those who are low in CA by following these guidelines:

- *Place them in positions with high communication demands.* Many leadership positions require professionals who can make presentations and facilitate meetings with ease and comfort.
- *Monitor the quality and quantity of their communication.* Although nearly everyone experiences some degree of CA, it's important to monitor those who are low in this trait. These individuals are less guarded about their communication and may talk too much or say things they later wish they hadn't said. So a simple reminder of the possible consequences of phrasing statements carelessly or of not being discreet can help a person avoid “putting his foot in his mouth.”

Here are a few recommendations for adapting to those high in CA so as to enhance workplace communication:

- *Monitor how you perceive quiet people.* Understand that a person's apprehensiveness is to a large extent outside his or her control. Check your perceptions of others by focusing on their work performance rather than their talk or lack of talk.
- *Refrain from putting highly apprehensive individuals in situations or positions requiring a high level of communication.* Goodness-of-fit is achieved when the communication demands of a position fit a person's personality and communication traits. For example, staffing a receptionist's position with a person high in CA would not be considered a good fit.
- *Provide alternative channels for communication.* For example, rather than requiring all staff members to make oral presentations at work, allow individuals options, such as communicating through memos, email, or voice mail.
- *Inform highly apprehensive individuals of options for interventions.* There are a number of instructional, treatment, and medical interventions for managing communication apprehension.¹⁴ These are discussed in more detail in Chapter 12.

Argumentativeness

Argumentativeness is a communication trait of people who have a tendency to advocate strongly for their own position on an issue and criticize the positions of other people.¹⁵ A person who is argumentative enjoys a good debate. To determine your own argumentativeness, complete the self-assessment instrument in Rating Scale 5.3. This will help you become more aware of this communication trait and how it may affect others' perceptions of you as well as how you perceive others.

RATING SCALE 5.3 Measure of Argumentativeness

The questionnaire contains statements about arguing controversial issues.¹⁶ Indicate in the space provided the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether it is (1) almost never true, (2) rarely true, (3) occasionally true, (4) often true, or (5) almost always true. (Remember, consider each item in terms of *arguing or debating controversial issues*; the scale is not focusing on personal, emotional arguments.)

- _____ 1. While in an argument, I worry that the person I am arguing with will form a negative impression of me.
- _____ 2. Arguing over controversial issues improves my intelligence.
- _____ 3. I enjoy avoiding arguments.
- _____ 4. I am energetic and enthusiastic when I argue.
- _____ 5. Once I finish an argument I promise myself that I will not get into another.
- _____ 6. Arguing with a person creates more problems for me than it solves.
- _____ 7. I have a pleasant, good feeling when I win a point in an argument.
- _____ 8. When I finish arguing with someone I feel nervous and upset.
- _____ 9. I enjoy a good argument over a controversial issue.
- _____ 10. I get an unpleasant feeling when I realize I am about to get into an argument.
- _____ 11. I enjoy defending my point of view on an issue.
- _____ 12. I am happy when I keep an argument from happening.
- _____ 13. I do not like to miss the opportunity to argue a controversial issue.
- _____ 14. I prefer being with people who rarely disagree with me.
- _____ 15. I consider an argument an exciting intellectual challenge.
- _____ 16. I find myself unable to think of effective points during an argument.

terms & definitions

Argumentativeness a tendency to advocate strongly for one's own position on an issue and criticize the positions of other people.

- _____ 17. I feel refreshed and satisfied after an argument on a controversial issue.
- _____ 18. I have the ability to do well in an argument.
- _____ 19. I try to avoid getting into arguments.
- _____ 20. I feel excitement when I expect that a conversation I am in is leading to an argument.

Scoring Instructions: To compute your argumentativeness score, do the following:

Step 1: Add your scores on items 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 18, and 20.

Step 2: Add 60 to the sum you obtained in step 1.

Step 3: Add your scores for items 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, and 19.

Step 4: Subtract the total you obtained in step 3 from the total obtained in step 2.

If the number you obtain in step 4 is between 73 and 100, you tend to be high in argumentativeness. If the number is between 56 and 72, you tend to be moderately argumentative. If the number is between 20 and 55, you tend to be low in argumentativeness.

To determine your tendency to approach argumentative situations, add your scores on items 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 18, and 20.

To determine your tendency to avoid argumentative situations, add your scores on items 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, and 19.

Argumentativeness trait: subtract the total of the ten tendency-to-avoid items from the total of the ten tendency-to-approach items. Positive scores indicate a tendency to approach arguments. A higher positive score (between 20 and 40) indicates high argumentativeness. Negative scores reflect a tendency to avoid arguments. A higher negative score (between -20 and -40) reflects low argumentativeness.

Do you know people who like to argue? Although many people perceive arguing to be a destructive form of communication, if it's done well, it's quite constructive; and an ability to argue clearly is valued in business and professional settings.¹⁷ People who are argumentative can think critically and argue for or against a particular proposal using reasons and evidence. Research clearly indicates that professionals who can argue well are also considered more effective in their jobs.¹⁸ Specifically, highly argumentative individuals, when compared to less argumentative individuals, tend to be better at taking perspective or understanding another person's position on an issue. For example, when deciding how to operate the registration desk of a medical facility, a supervisor and her staff have different ideas. In a constructive argument, they each present their reason for operating the registration desk in a particular manner. Because the supervisor is high in argumentativeness, she values looking at an issue critically, from all perspectives, in order to make an informed decision. She is persuaded by the good reasoning staff members use, and she takes their perspective even though she had her own ideas of how the registration area should be arranged and organized. Individuals high in argumentativeness are naturally curious and thus tend to learn more about others, including their customers or their competitors' products and services. Another quality of people high in argumentativeness is that they tend to be better leaders and have followers who are more satisfied and committed to their jobs.¹⁹ For example, when there is disagreement on a policy or procedure, argumentative leaders have a way of managing the emotions, while helping others critically examine the issues by focusing on the evidence or the facts rather than on what a few people might say.

Although there are a number of benefits to being argumentative, people who are low in argumentativeness tend to perceive highly argumentative individuals as verbally aggressive and overbearing at times. You can adapt to less argumentative individuals in the following ways to enhance workplace communication:

- *Be aware that individuals who are not argumentative tend to perceive highly argumentative individuals as being verbally aggressive.* If you get a defensive reaction from the other person when you begin to argue, know that they're probably interpreting your messages as an attack.
- *Use **feed-forward messages**, which are messages that inform others of how to process information.* For example, "What I am about to say is not intended to be verbally aggressive, but I would like to challenge your ideas."

terms & definitions

Feed-forward messages
messages that inform others of how to process information from you.

- *Use nonverbally immediate behaviors when arguing.* Monitor your tone of voice for warmth, keep an open body orientation, and lean forward rather than away from the other person (which can signal defensiveness). These nonverbal behaviors add warmth and communicate approachability rather than aggressiveness.
- *Use nonverbally responsive behaviors when listening to others argue.* Leaning forward, using direct eye contact, nodding your head, and using back channel cues are examples of nonverbally responsive behaviors. These nonverbal behaviors signal to others that you're actively listening to them and their arguments.

• *Dealing with highly argumentative individuals, try these guidelines:*

- *Engage them in debates.* Make sure you have logical claims and evidence to support your claims. For example, when meeting with your supervisor to request more space for your retail business, make sure you go into the meeting prepared with sales figures that indicate how you are growing your business.
- *Play the devil's advocate.* A devil's advocate is someone who criticizes or opposes something purely to provoke a discussion or an argument. A devil's advocate is in many ways an ally whose goal is to help strengthen another's case by pointing out weaknesses. For example, if you own a restaurant and one highly argumentative waiter suggests that the restaurant is losing business because the menu doesn't include healthier food items, challenge his ideas rather than simply agreeing with him.
- *Learn how to argue.* Although argumentativeness is to some extent biologically based,²⁰ people can learn how to argue. It just may come more naturally for some than for others. Chapter 13 provides more detail on how to organize, develop, and present arguments.

The Power of Perspective²¹

You're undoubtedly familiar with the story of the three blind men who came across an elephant. The one who jumped into the elephant's trunk was certain that he'd found a snake. The unsighted man holding on to the elephant's tail thought he'd found a broom, and the man who touched the elephant's leg was convinced he was clinging to a tree. A leader who relies only on her or his observations can easily miss seeing the whole picture. Effective leaders know the importance of looking at issues from diverse points of view to gain an accurate understanding of issues and problems.

Joan Docherty, who leads the U.S. sales, service, and marketing team at General Motors, wants to make sure she sees the elephant and not the snake, broom, or tree. She makes it a point to ensure that there are different types of people who offer her advice and opinions on a variety of issues.

I like building teams with people who come from very different backgrounds and have very different experiences. I don't just mean diverse teams, in terms of men and women or people of different color or origin. I like people who have worked in different places in the world than I have because they bring a lot more context to the discussion. That's something that I value a tremendous amount.

I make sure that when I'm looking at people for my team, it's not just what's on their resume—their strengths or weaknesses or what they've accomplished—but it's the way they think. I can learn twice as much, twice as quickly, if I've got people who think differently than I do around the table.

Whether you are in a leadership role or not, it's important to understand and value the perspective of others. Each of the blind men was undoubtedly convinced of the accuracy of their own conclusion as to what they had discovered when encountering the elephant. But if they would have shared their different perspectives, they would have reached a more informed conclusion. To make sure you know an elephant when you bump into one, seek diverse perspectives to make sure you're getting the whole picture.

Understanding the relationships between personality and communication traits reveals how and why individuals differ in their workplace communication. Understanding how and why people differ in their workplace communication will allow you to adapt your communication to them more effectively. Some of your communication behaviors are natural, meaning that they are influenced by your biology or the genes you inherited. However, you can learn to modify and adapt your communication in order to interact more effectively with others and become a leader in the workplace.