

Six functions of nonverbal communication (human relations)



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Non verbal communication is an important aspect of human relations as at times an individual's body and actions are more expressive than his or her words. Non verbal communication has also been described as a non linguist mode of information transmission which can be tactile, auditory or visual. It has also been found that only small amount of neural function is dedicated towards verbal communication. There are six functions of non verbal communication which include complement, accent, contradict, repeat, regulate, substitute and complement (Adler & Rodman, 2012).

Repeating refers to the action of constantly repeating a word in a manner that duplicates another's utterance. In non verbal communication, the act of repeating statements non verbally involves the use of gestures and actions along with certain words. This has proven to be more effective in memory as people are able to recall these comments more easily (Adler & Rodman, 2012).

Substitution refers to the action of replacing verbal with non verbal communication. However, this at times may be very hard to interpret. Examples of substitution include replacing words with actions such as a sigh or eye rolling as a sign of disapproval. This is usually prominent when an individual feels the situation is inappropriate for him or her to express himself verbally (Knapp, 2012).

Complementing is another common trait of non verbal communication. This involves complimenting words with certain actions (Knapp, 2012). An example involves a boss vigorously pointing his finger at an employee showing his dissatisfaction and gives an impression that the employee has done something wrong. These gestures are often not formally acceptable
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and some individuals may be offended by them. However, they are more common and acceptable in domestic settings as a mother can show similar gestures when scolding her child.

Accenting is a mode of non verbal communication which is utilized in emphasizing a certain part of verbal speech (Knapp, 2012). This possesses a similar trait to bold letters in a certain part of a sentence. This is similar to complementing however focuses on one aspect of a sentence. An example is pointing at an individual whilst saying his name which can be a sign of criticism or praise depending on the dialogue and atmosphere (Adler & Rodman, 2012).

Non verbal communication also plays a role in regulating the flow of speech in a function known as regulating. This action involves cue such as intonation at the end of a sentence signaling another individual to start speaking. This is often referred to as turn taking. This is important during conversation whether social or business as one party must not make the other feel dominated (Ramaden et al., 2011).

Contradicting is a common behavior in non verbal speech which is often expressed by humans. For example an individual may state that he is not angry however, he has watery eyes, a red face and bulging jugular veins on his neck (Ramaden et al., 2011). This indicates that he or she is concealing his or her true emotions. Therefore individuals should always pay attention to these signs as they can often misrepresent a person's character.

Non verbal communication is an important and integral part of society. Each individual should be aware of his or her non verbal speech as it may inhibit or enhance the message being put across by verbal speech.

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