

**Communication Skills for Risk Professionals**

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# Importance of Communication Skills



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# Leadership is about people/interactions

Selected topics:

- *Leading by feel*
- *Emotional Quotient (EQ)*
- *Recruiting*
- *Listening skills*
- *Mentoring*
- *Psychological profile*
- *Handling setbacks*
- *Entrepreneurial culture*
- *People are complex/different*





3

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## Top-10 skills wanted by employers

1. **Verbal and written communication skills**
2. Honesty and integrity
3. **Interpersonal skills**
4. **Teamwork skills**
5. Strong work ethic
6. Motivation and initiative
7. Flexibility and adaptability
8. Computer skills
9. Analytical skills
10. Organizational skills

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## What can you do about this?

1. Recognize importance of communication skills
2. Overcome resistance
  - Talk of “soft skills”
  - Personal discomfort
  - Mistaken belief that these skills cannot be learned
3. Take formal communication seminars/courses

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## Listening Skills

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## Evaluation of listening skills

Assess yourself one point for each “yes” answer:

1. Do you interrupt people mid-sentence?
2. Do you multi-task during a conversation?
3. Are you busy preparing your response while they are still speaking?
4. Does your mind drift because you think you know what they're going to say?
5. Do you change the subject to a topic you'd rather discuss?
6. Do you try to get the person to “get to the point” quickly?
7. Is it easier for you to hear stated facts rather than expressed emotions?
8. Do you try to present quick solutions to expressed problems?
9. Do you often stay behind your desk during a conversation?
10. Do you feel uncomfortable with spaces of silence...in a conversation?

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## Scores

Score	Result
0	
1-3	
4-6	
7-10	

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## Barriers to communication

- Roadblocks are responses that tend to:
  - Have a negative impact on communication
  - Inhibit expression of their true feelings
  - Trigger defensiveness, resistance, resentment
  - Damage the relationship
- Categories of barriers
  - Judging
  - Sending Solutions
  - Avoiding

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## Judging

- Criticizing
  - Making a negative evaluation
- Name calling
  - Labeling, stereotyping, blanket classifications
- Praising
  - Making a positive judgment

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## Sending Solutions

- Ordering
- Excessive questioning
- Advising
  - Hammarskjold quote
  - Movie example

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## Avoiding

- Diverting
  - Reasons why people divert
    - Poor listening skills
    - Need for attention
    - Discomfort with emotions stimulated
- Reassuring

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## Attending skills

- Nonverbal communication
- Signals that you are paying attention to the speaker
- Listening with your whole body
- Attending skills
  - Posture of involvement
  - Appropriate body motion
  - Eye contact
  - Non-distracting environment
  - Psychological attention

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## Posture of involvement

- Relaxed alertness
- Body leaning slightly forward
- Facing the other squarely
- Maintaining an open position
- Positioning yourself at an appropriate distance

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## Appropriate body motion

- Ernst quote
- Listeners who remain still seen as cold /aloof
- Good listeners move in response to speaker
- Poor listeners move reacting to unrelated stimuli
- Continuing with one's activities is very distracting

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## Eye contact

- Effective eye contact
  - Softly focusing on speaker
  - Mostly on the eyes
  - Varying to face or gesturing hand, then back to eyes
- Poor eye contact
  - Repeatedly looking away
  - Staring constantly or blankly
  - Looking away as soon as speaker makes eye contact

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## Non-distracting environment

- Attending involves giving undivided attention
- Remove environmental distractions
- Remove physical barriers

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## Psychological attention

- Attending fosters real psychological presence
  - Fake attention is quickly detected and fails
- Attending triggers more engagement of speaker
  - Case study
- Attending will become more natural with practice
  - Ancient proverb

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## Exercise

- Practice attending skills in pairs

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## READING BODY LANGUAGE

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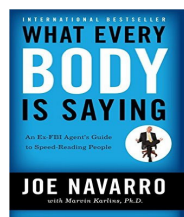
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## Source

- Former FBI agent



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## Some rules

- Observe people carefully, but non-intrusively
- Learn baseline behavior and watch changes
  - Squint, crossing arms, turning body, etc.
- Watch for pacifiers: touching (e.g., earlobes, legs, neck) to relieve stress
- Watch cultural/individual vs. universal
- Quick reactions are most accurate
- Focus on comfort vs. discomfort

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## Feet

- Most honest (we are taught to mask faces)
- Most ignored
- Feet point in direction of interest/receptivity
- Change in direction shows they want to go in that new direction (e.g., leave)
- Gravity-defying gestures: lifting up toes, moving feet up/down or jumping up/down → positive

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## Legs

- Crossing legs → comfort (OK being off-balance; need both feet down to flee)
  - Unless upper leg remains high as if a barrier
- Legs crossed/lean in direction of preferred person
- Gravity-defying gesture: up on balls of feet ("lighter than air")
  - Opposite is seen in depressed people
- Legs farther apart → comfort
  - Extreme distance → territorial display
- Harmony of walking pace → comfort
  - Pace is usually adjusted to higher-status person's pace
- Pacifying: stroking legs → sign of discomfort

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## Hips

- Shifting hips → discomfort
- “Arms akimbo”
  - Hands on hips, elbows out, thumbs back, legs apart
  - Territorial (“I’m in control”)
  - Can soften with thumbs forward

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## Torso

- More showing → generates more trust
  - Politicians wear two-button suits, not three-button
  - Evil characters in movies have outfit hiding torso
- Crossing arms across torso
  - May be just a comfortable position
  - May be defensive, especially if tight grip, chest out
  - Most do not do this when alone (so likely defensive)
- Turning torso away → reaction to negative event
- Turning torso toward → comfort with that person

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## Neck and head

- Pacifying:
  - Men tend to touch more roughly, women more gently or move necklace
- Pulling collar away from neck → stress
- Covering neck “notch” → when women uncomfortable (e.g., viewing 9/11)
  - If a woman doesn’t cover notch when describing vulnerable event → inconsistency (case study)
- Head tilt → comfort
  - Watch real-time change from tilt to non-tilt or opposite
  - Most unable to tilt head when face-to-face in elevator

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## Hands and arms

- Gravity-defying: hands up → happy
- “Regal”: hands clasped behind back → stay away
  - Opposite: arms outstretched/open palms (e.g., hug offer)
- Palms down, fingers apart → confidence, territorial
- Palms up → weak, begging to be believed
- Leaning back, fingers interlaced behind head, elbows out → comfort, territorial (highest-status person)
- Arms spread across chairs → comfort, territorial
- Hands touching someone/something:
  - With full palm → they care about the person/object
  - Fingertips only → distancing

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## Hands and arms (continued)

- People only trust when can see your hands
- Touching fingers, palms/fingers apart → confidence
- Pacifying: touching/rubbing hands together
- Rubbing hands together quickly → happy/excited
- Cold touch (blood flows to muscles, to flee) → not good
- Hiding thumbs in pocket/pants → lack of confidence
- Power stance: hands always in front not in pockets, usually in Steeple position, legs apart

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## Hands and arms (continued)

- Preening (e.g., adjusting clothes)
  - Before sitting down to talk → signals they are important; positively received unconsciously
  - During talking (e.g., picking lint) → dismissive/negative
- Pacifying:
  - Touching neck → may indicate an issue, because this is a hot spot (case study of suspected murderer)
  - Touching any body area or object repetitively
- Handshake: you should mirror theirs, because varies by culture

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## Eyes

- Close/cover eyes → negative
- Eyes widen (pupils dilate) → positive
- Squint → negative (sharper vision: nearer threats)
  - Case study of two name cards of potential spies
- **Gravity-defying: arching eyebrows upwards (flash) → conveys liking and helps greeting**
- Connection with smile
  - Eyes crinkle → sincere smile
  - Eyes not engaged → social smile

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## Nose

- Touching nose → stress (dries nose and nasal hairs more itchy)
- Wings dilated → may be about to flee (more air intake needed with physical activity)

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## Mouth

- Lips
  - Disappear → stress; usually straight mouth but when downturned corners → very negative
  - Pursing → disagreement or wants alternative
  - Pacifying: Touching/licking lips
- Exhale with puffed cheeks → stress relief

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## Jaw

- Out → confident
- In → lack of confidence

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## Miscellaneous

- Make people comfortable → more facetime → more chances to read nonverbals → more success
  - Smile
  - Stand when they enter the room
  - Comfortable environment
  - Synch to their walking pace
  - After handshake:
    - Man-to-man: move slightly to side
    - Man-to-woman: step to side only when woman decides to angle
    - Woman-to-woman: no rules
  - Do not sit across table (competitive), but to side (cooperative)
- Men should not wear brown suits, only blue, navy, black, grey
- Blue background → appear more authoritative and competent

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## STYLE-BASED INTERACTIONS

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## Style-based interactions

- Understanding the main styles
- Recognizing yours and others' styles
- Learning how to flex your communication approach to different styles

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## Understanding the main styles

- Four main DiSC styles/behaviors
  - (D): Dominance
  - (i): Influence
  - (S): Supportive
  - (C): Conscientious
- People tend towards one style, but **they may change what they exhibit situationally** (stress, excitement, etc.)

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## Recognizing Styles

<b>DOMINANCE ("LEADER")</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Decides and takes actions quickly</li><li>• Initiatives</li><li>• Bold, assertive/aggressive actions</li><li>• Direct, blunt communication</li></ul>	<b>INFLUENCE ("GREGARIOUS")</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outgoing, friendly, fun</li><li>• Storyteller</li><li>• Optimistic</li><li>• Persuasive</li></ul>
<b>CONSCIENTIOUS ("CONTROLLED")</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carefully chooses wording</li><li>• Organized in thinking/surroundings</li><li>• Detail oriented</li><li>• Plans ahead</li><li>• Likes working alone</li></ul>	<b>SUPPORTIVE ("FLEXIBLE")</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Easygoing</li><li>• Avoids conflict</li><li>• Listens patiently, empathetically</li><li>• Rarely makes demands</li><li>• Likes working in a team</li></ul>

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## Recognizing Styles

Fast-talking

Task-oriented	<b>DOMINANCE ("LEADER")</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decides and takes actions quickly</li> <li>Initiatives</li> <li>Bold, assertive/aggressive actions</li> <li>Direct, blunt communication</li> </ul>	<b>INFLUENCE ("GREGARIOUS")</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outgoing, friendly, fun</li> <li>Storyteller</li> <li>Optimistic</li> <li>Persuasive</li> </ul>	People-oriented
	<b>CONSCIENTIOUS ("CONTROLLED")</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carefully chooses wording</li> <li>Organized in thinking/surroundings</li> <li>Detail oriented</li> <li>Plans ahead</li> <li>Likes working alone</li> </ul>	<b>SUPPORTIVE ("FLEXIBLE")</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Easygoing</li> <li>Avoids conflict</li> <li>Listens patiently, empathetically</li> <li>Rarely makes demands</li> <li>Likes working in a team</li> </ul>	

Slow-talking

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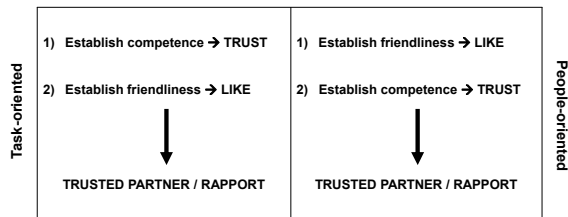
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## Recognizing Styles

Fast-talking



Slow-talking

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## Working with "D"s

### Actions to take:

- Talk business first, not social
- Get to the point and stay on topic
- When possible, let them initiate actions
- Show your competence and independence

### Be prepared to cope with:

- Blunt talk
- Demands
- Lack of empathy

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## Working with “I”s

### Actions to take:

- Talk social first, not business
- Use humor
- Let them talk
- Publicly praise accomplishments
- Communicate in writing

### Be prepared to cope with:

- Unrealistic optimism
- Need for attention/limelight
- Sensitive to rejection

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## Working with “S”s

### Actions to take:

- Avoid involving them in conflict situations
- Avoid unnecessary changes
- Express sincere appreciation
- When praising, phrase as their contribution to the team

### Be prepared to cope with:

- Friendliness
- Resistance to change
- Difficulty prioritizing
- Discomfort with pressure/deadlines

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## Working with “C”s

### Actions to take:

- Be tactful
- Avoid showing emotion
- Be precise, provide detailed instructions
- State deadlines far in advance, avoid surprises
- Allow opportunities to work alone

### Be prepared to cope with:

- Discomfort with lack of clarity
- Tendency to double-check work
- Independence

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## Think about key relationships

- You
  - Do you know your main style? When you shift to another style?
- Those relationships working well
  - Where are they in relation to you?
- Those relationships **not** working well
  - Where are they in relation to you?

### Potential actions:

- Flex your style to enhance existing partnerships
- Watch for shifts out of their main behavior style

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