

## **Framework: Nonverbal Communication**

We use nonverbal along with verbal communication in dialogue and other types of social interaction. When we join another person we monitor eye gaze, facial expressions, body language, gestures, and tone of voice for added clues about messages people may be sending. Unconventional or unusual instances can alter communication attempts or derail a message entirely.

### ***Eye Gaze, Facial Expressions, Body Language, Gestures, and Tone of Voice:***

- When we share a space with another person, we quickly notice who or what they are looking at. It will tell us if they are paying attention to us. Their gaze may give us a clue about another person or object that they are thinking or talking about. It may suggest eagerness, fear, disinterest, boredom, or other emotion.
- Facial expressions combined with eye gaze can alert us to much about how another person is receiving our message and feeling about us, the interaction, or the situation. These may be very subtle and the person may attempt to conceal any clue about how they are feeling.
- Body language also reflects how a person is receiving a message or feeling about a social interaction. We read much into how a person is sitting or standing as well as their posture. Movements can show excitement, anxiety, or calm.
- Gestures often accompany verbal messages. They can be exaggerated or rapid, distinct or nonspecific. We may be in the habit of using them frequently and be unaware of what they may imply to a person we are speaking with.
- Tone of voice most often will match our feelings and the intent of our message. We can alert someone to danger or put them at ease. We can be harsh, intimidating, humorous, or friendly. We can alter the message simply by changing our tone of voice. We notice when the pitch, volume, and intonation do not follow expected use. Deviations call attention to the manner of speech rather than the words and can alter or derail a message.

### ***Strategies for Activities, Lessons, and Materials:***

- Videos can be viewed to identify various types of nonverbal communication.
- Interactions can be role played with addition and change of various examples of nonverbal communication.

### ***A person with autism or other developmental delay might:***

- most often gaze at an object rather than the eyes of a person they are talking to.
- use eye gaze that is erratic or too constant and call attention to itself as unusual.
- use a limited range or no facial expression when speaking or listening. An unusual expression may be used that does not match what anyone is saying.

- may use body language that detracts from the message.
- may not use gestures to accompany speech.
- may use unusual combinations of voice parameters. Pitch, volume or intonation may be slightly unusual and detract focus from the message. Peers may view the person as "quirky".

***User Friendly Strategies for Activities, Lessons, and Materials:***

- Determine where eye gaze is focused in photos and video of interactions.
- Determine types of facial expressions in photos and video of interactions.
- Determine types of body language in photos and video of interactions.
- Interpret gestures in photos and video of interactions.
- Identify instances of unusual pitch, volume and intonation.
- Observe and detect sensory sensitivities to materials and environment and alter as necessary.
- Observe carefully to detect competencies in order to know what they don't know.

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