

“WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO AGREE AND DISAGREE CIVILLY”

UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS THAT MAY EXIST IN COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

There are numerous barriers that exist in the ability to communicate. It's important to be aware of these barriers so that you will know how to best communicate with others!

Physical Barriers: Among some of the most common everyday barriers we face, physical barriers include time, environment, comfort and needs, and the mode of communication (i.e. telephone, letter, etc.)

Examples: If you are in a hurry, trying to catch the bus or train, you may not take the time to listen very well to those trying to communicate with you. If you are tired and have a headache, you may also not want to listen to others. Or, when you are using a cell phone, there may be background noise that creates a challenge when trying to communicate.

Cultural Barriers: One of the most obvious barriers in communication, would be the ethnic, religious and social differences that may exist in trying to communicate. If you don't know much about the person's culture with whom you are trying to communicate, this can be a cultural barrier as you may not know how to start or end the conversation.

Example: You may be trying to help a person in line at the cafeteria who is not originally from Canada, and therefore just learning the currency.

Helpful References:

Intercultural Business Communication, by Robert Gibson

Perceptual Barriers: Perceptual has to do with your frame of reference. A perceptual barrier involves viewing what is said from your own perspective. Depending on your perception, you may take the meaning of something said differently.

Example: If your friend is quiet, you may assume that he/she is frustrated with you.

Motivational Barriers: This involves your ability (or lack thereof) to feel motivated in listening to what someone is saying. If you're bored or preoccupied with something, you may pay less attention to a conversation and may miss information. As well, if you sometimes think you can *never* understand a particular person, your mind can get trapped in certain thinking patterns, making decoding and encoding of language difficult. Don't limit yourself to what you think you can understand, however. If you are discouraged, learn how to motivate yourself somehow!

Experiential Barriers: When you may not have the experience or are unable to relate to what someone is saying because of a lack in similar life experience, this can be an experiential barrier.

Example: Someone from another country shares their experience as a refugee and you find yourself challenged to be able to listen and appreciate the story because you haven't experienced what they have.

Emotional Barriers: This involves the way you may interpret or misinterpret what someone says based on emotions.

Example: If you don't get along with a classmate, you may view anything they may say negatively.

Linguistic Barriers: Conflict in different languages spoken or use of vocabulary in a conversation can be a barrier. This can include jargon, abbreviations and technical terms that can be considered complexed to someone else.

Example: Text message: “u wanna g2 mll l8r” (Do you want to go to the mall later?)

Nonverbal Barriers: Caused by *how* something is said or other non-word messages, whether it may be appearance, clothing, attitudes, facial expressions, body language etc. These messages can account for 55% of what is perceived and understood by others.

Competition Barriers: A listener's ability to do other things rather than hear the communication is a competition barrier. When you are competing too hard to serve your own interest, you can be met with resistance from others.



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