

## Common Barriers to Effective Communication:

- **The use of jargon.** Over-complicated, unfamiliar and/or technical terms.
- **Emotional barriers and taboos.** Some people may find it difficult to express their emotions and some topics may be completely 'off-limits' or taboo. Taboo or difficult topics may include, but are not limited to, politics, religion, disabilities (mental and physical), sexuality and sex, racism and any opinion that may be seen as unpopular.
- **Lack of attention, interest, distractions, or irrelevance to the receiver.**
- **Differences in perception and viewpoint.**
- **Physical disabilities such as hearing problems or speech difficulties.**
- **Physical barriers to non-verbal communication.** Not being able to see the non-verbal cues, gestures, posture and general body language can make communication less effective. Phone calls, text messages and other communication methods that rely on technology are often less effective than face-to-face communication.
- **Language differences and the difficulty in understanding unfamiliar accents.**
- **Expectations and prejudices which may lead to false assumptions or stereotyping.** People often hear what they expect to hear rather than what is actually said and jump to incorrect conclusions.
- **Cultural differences.** The norms of social interaction vary greatly in different cultures, as do the way in which emotions are expressed. For example, the concept of personal space varies between cultures and between different social settings.

## Psychological Barriers

The psychological state of the communicators will influence how the message is sent, received and perceived.

For example:

If someone is **stressed** they may be preoccupied by personal concerns and not as receptive to the message as if they were not stressed.

*Stress management is an important personal skill that affects our interpersonal relationships.*

**Anger** is another example of a psychological barrier to communication. When we are angry it is easy to say things that we may later regret, and also to misinterpret what others are saying.

More generally people with **low self-esteem** may be less assertive and therefore may not feel comfortable communicating - they may feel shy or embarrassed about saying how they really feel, or read unintended negative sub-texts in messages they hear.

## Physiological Barriers

Physiological barriers to communication may result from the receiver's physical state.

For example, a receiver with reduced hearing may not fully grasp the content of a spoken conversation especially if there is significant background noise.

## Physical Barriers

An example of a physical barrier to communication is geographic distance between the sender and receiver(s).

Communication is generally easier over shorter distances as more communication channels are available and less technology is required. The ideal communication is face-to-face.

Although modern technology often helps to reduce the impact of physical barriers, the advantages and disadvantages of each communication

channel should be understood so that an appropriate channel can be used to overcome the physical barriers.

## **Systematic Barriers**

Systematic barriers to communication may exist in structures and organisations where there are inefficient or inappropriate information systems and communication channels, or where there is a lack of understanding of the roles and responsibilities for communication. In such organisations, people may be unclear of their role in the communication process and therefore not know what is expected of them.

## **Attitudinal Barriers**

Attitudinal barriers are behaviours or perceptions that prevent people from communicating effectively.

Attitudinal barriers to communication may result from personality conflicts, poor management, **resistance to change** or a **lack of motivation**. To be an effective receiver of messages you should attempt to overcome your own attitudinal barriers to help ensure more effective communication.

To improve your overall communication skills you need to be aware of, and attempt to minimise, any barriers to communication that are present.

By developing your emotional intelligence you will become more aware of how to communicate with others in the most appropriate and effective ways.