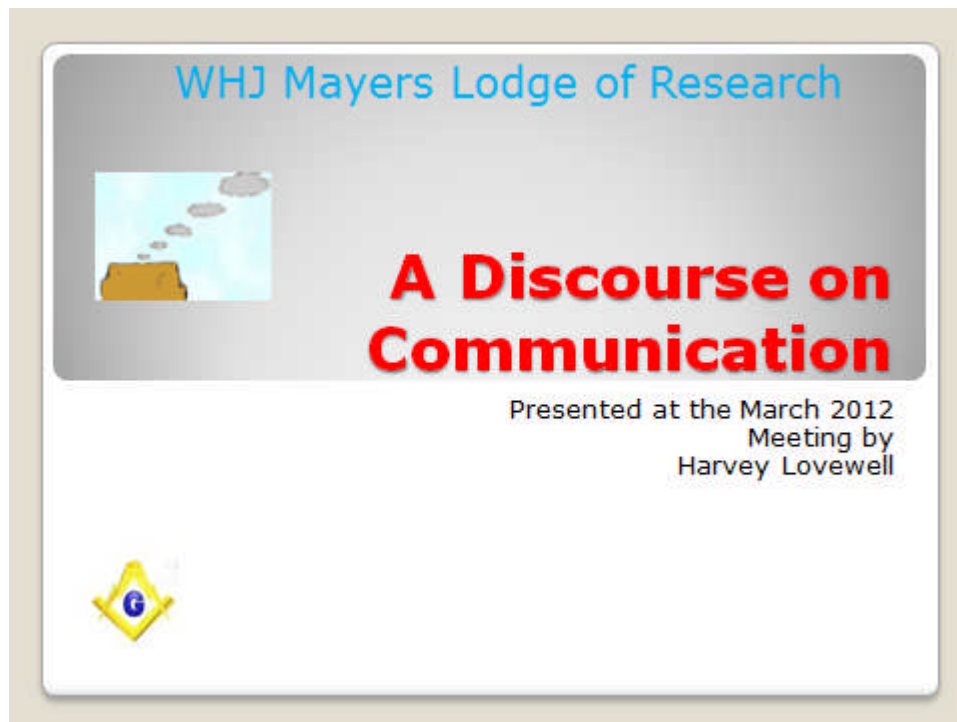


A Discourse on Communication



Slide 1

Words are fascinating and are frequently frustrating to define. Many words which are used in Masonic ritual or terminology take on special meanings, which further compound the confusion of definition. In this short talk I will look at:





Slide 2

In this age of changing technology, the science of communication has made some dramatic advances . . . Radio, TV, Satellite and Mobile phones. We tend to accept these advances without question, and in the course of acceptance we also seem to lose sight of some of the more basic definitions of communication.

Sometimes a simple referral to the dictionary definition can reshape our thinking and stimulate our awareness. Let's take a look at some of the definitions we find for communication in any standard dictionary.

Communication Defined

- Com-mu-ni-ca-tion:- noun. So what is a noun?
- It is the name of a person, animal, place, thing or abstract idea
- Masonically? Grand, Quarterly, even a Lodge meeting
- Joining together in common brotherhood



Define. COM . MU . NI . CA TION. noun.

Slide 3

an act or instance of transmitting; a verbal or written message; the act of communicating; exchange of information or ideas; intercourse; a system (as of telephones) for communication; Eucharistic communion; a system of routes for moving troops, supplies and vehicles; a process by which meanings are exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols; a technique for expressing ideas effectively in speech or writing through the arts; the technology of the transmission of information.

Communication in Masonry

Those are the basic definitions. However, they don't seem to include any of the Masonic meanings of COMMUNICATION. What about "stated and emergent COMMUNICATIONS?" . . . or "Grand COMMUNICATION . . . "Quarterly COMMUNICATION?" . . . or the "COMMUNICATION of Degrees?" In Mackey's Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry we find:

COMMUNICATION: *The meeting of a Lodge is so called. There is a peculiar significance in this term. To communicate, which, in the Old English form, was to common, originally meant to share in common with others. The great sacrament of the Christian Church, which denotes a participation in the mysteries of the religion and a fellowship in the church, is called a communion, which is fundamentally the same as a communication, for he who partakes of the communion is said to communicate. Hence, the meetings of Masonic Lodges are called communications, **to signify that it is not simply the ordinary meeting of a society for the transaction of business, but that such meeting is the fellowship of men engaged in a common pursuit, and governed by a common principle, and that there is there-in a communication or participation of those feelings and sentiments that constitute a true brotherhood.***

The communications of Lodges are regular and emergent. Regular communications are held under the provision of the by-laws, but special communications are called by order of the Master. It is a regulation that an emergent communication can only discuss that business for which it has been called and only one between regular meetings without a dispensation.

So we find that a Masonic Communication takes on a much greater meaning—that of joining together in a common brotherhood in pursuit of common goals and common purposes based upon our common principles. With that explanation in mind, we can better guard our-selves in the transaction of our lodge business, in the conferral of our degrees and in the meeting in fellowship with our Brethren. The Lodge Communication is much more than just a meeting. It is much more than an assembly of Masons. It is, must, and should ever be,

a joining together of kindred spirits for those loftier purposes of promoting, practicing, extolling and trying to understand those Masonic values and virtues we espouse.

The meetings of Grand Lodges are known as “Grand Communications.” The word “Grand” is used to distinguish the level of meeting Masonically. COMMUNICATION, as we learned from Mackey, is the name given to a meeting; a lodge or Grand Lodge meets in a, regular, business, emergent or practice Communication, using the word in its ancient sense of sharing thought, actions, and friendship in common.

Now all of the above is theory, of which you no doubt are aware. It gets more difficult when we look at the practice of communication. What is it that we need to communicate? This may be the trigger to come to grips with the process of communication.

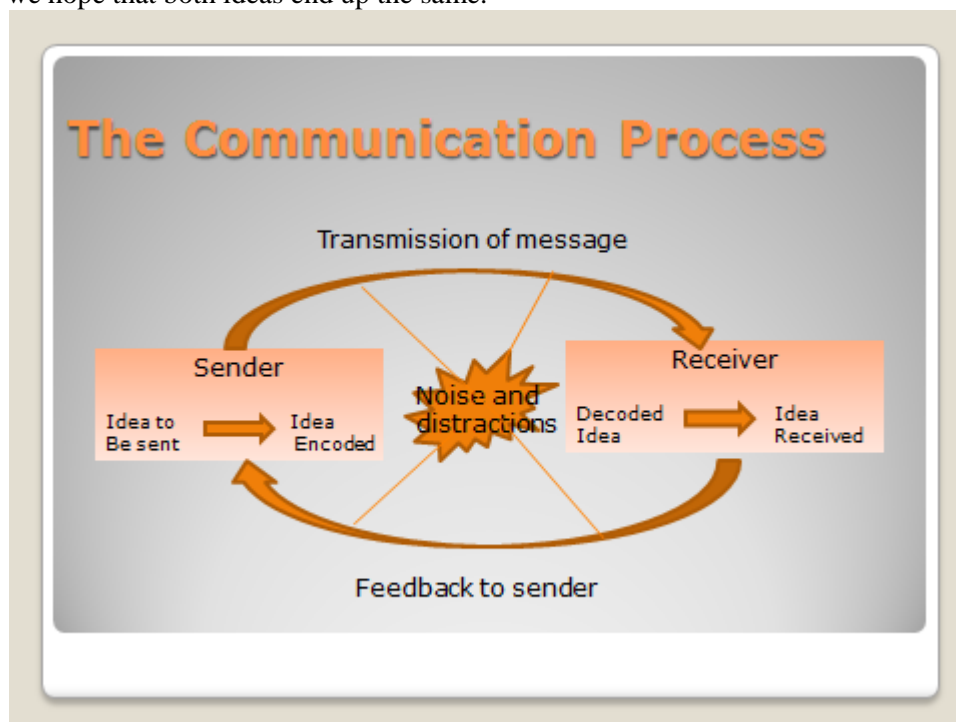
Communication Generally.

From childhood, we were taught how to talk. All through school we take classes in English to help us speak and write properly. What we aren't taught is the art of interpersonal communication. Being an effective communicator is especially important in developing and keeping good relationships with our family and our brethren, According to research by the American Management Association 90% of all problems in an organization is a direct result of poor communication. To make sure we, as an organization survive we need to improve our communication.

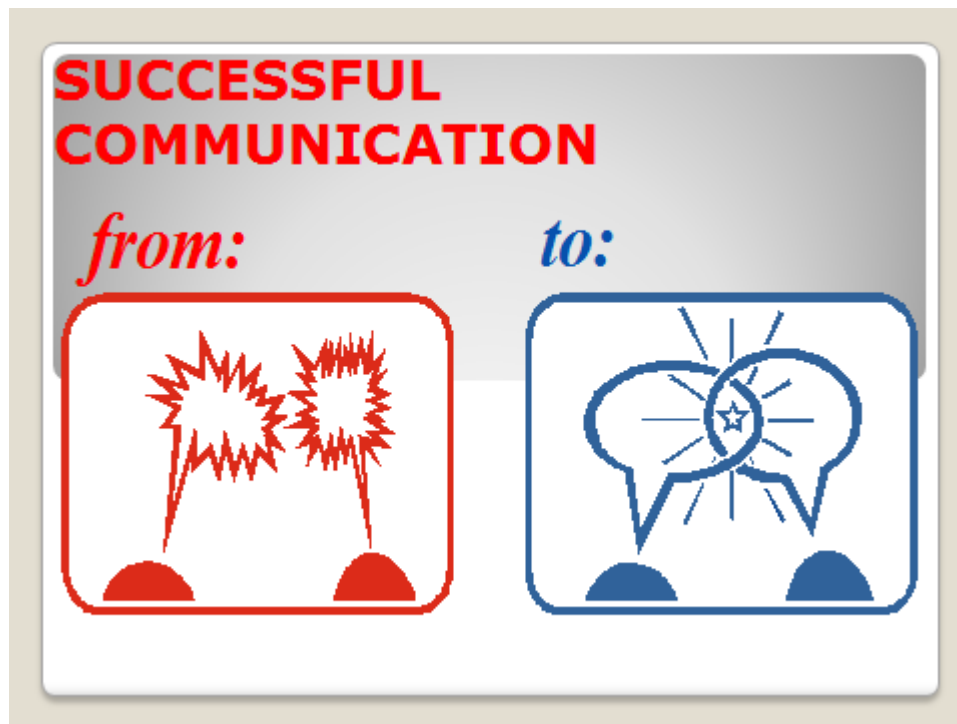
Good Communication Skills Can Be Learned. Good communicators are not born they are made.

What then is the communication process? Basically one, person, who could be an individual or representing an organization, needs to get a message from himself to someone else. Visual communication works better than many words so I have prepared a slide to illustrate this. Assume that here we are using a spoken communication between two people. See Slide 4, 5,

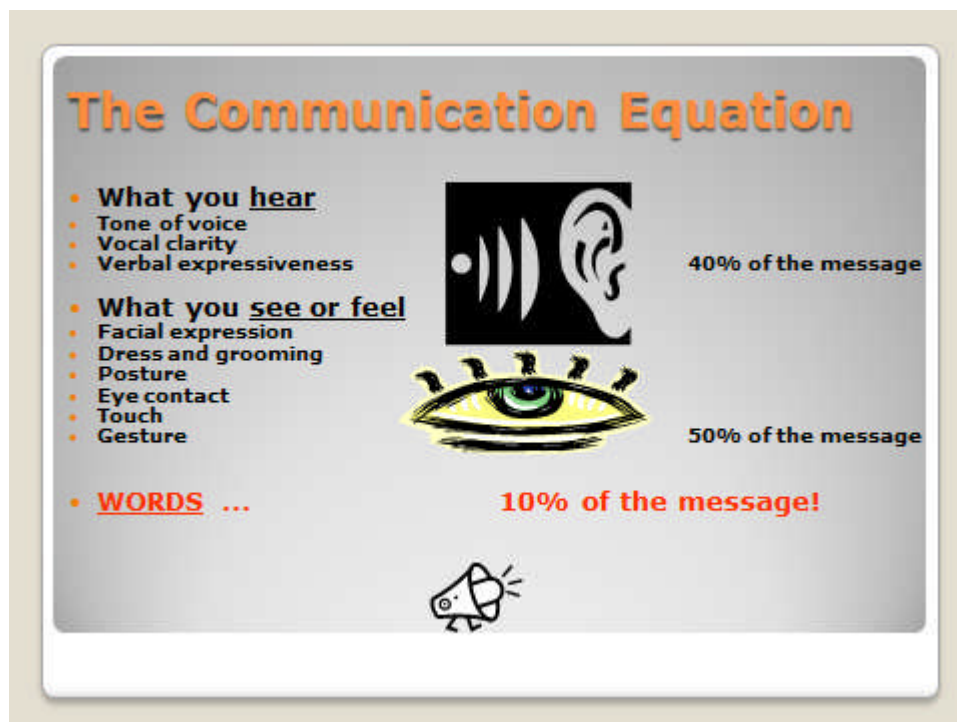
Any communication starts with an idea which is then encoded into words then spoken or transmitted. It is then received or heard and the words are decoded back into an idea by the receiver. A meeting of minds has occurred and we hope that both ideas end up the same.



Slide 4 above Slide 5 below

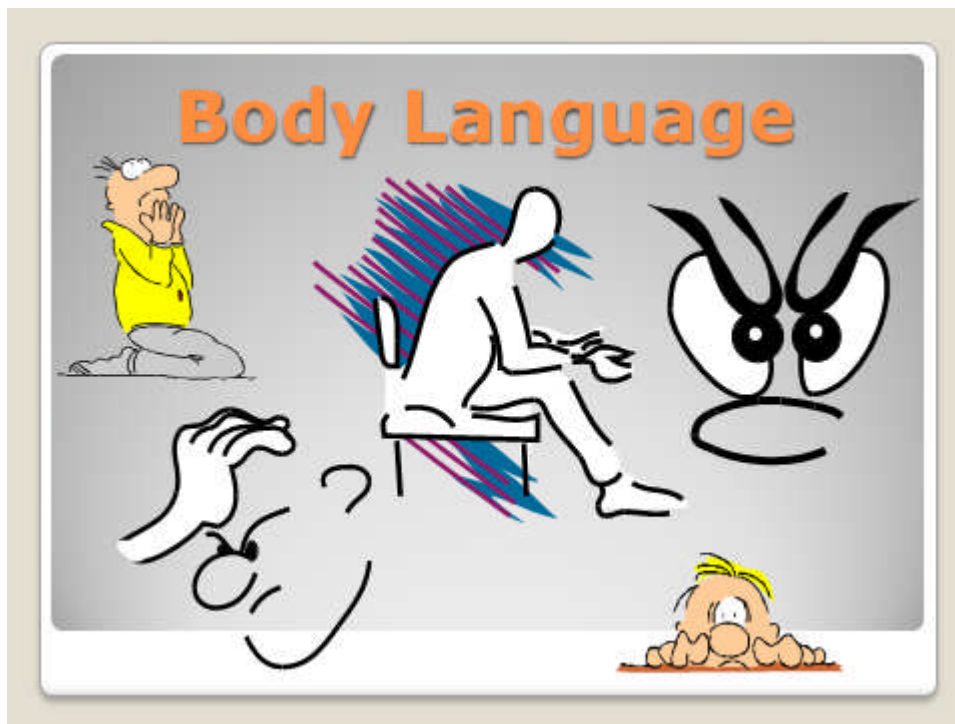


How then, does this process actually work? How do we understand the message?



Slide 6

You've probably heard the expressions before.. "Chin up, shoulders back," "Keep your distance," "Feet on the ground," "Pain in the neck." But have you ever wondered how they came about? It all has to do with Body Language.



Slide 7

Simply put, body language is the unspoken communication we all use in every face-to-face encounter with other human beings. You could say it's more powerful than anything said aloud. Ninety per cent of our everyday communications is non-verbal. Only 10% has to do with words at all. You could be telling that other person much more with your body language than you would ever say in words.

Determining and regulating your own body language could well mean the difference when it comes to job interviews, networking, banquets and business dinners, or even a social occasion, such as a date. Even trickier is learning to read and understand the other person's body language.

Territory

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intimate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Touching ◦ 120-350mm • Personal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Close - 300 to 900mm ◦ Far - 900 to 1300mm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Close 1.2-2M ◦ Far - 2-4 M • Public <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Close - 4-8M ◦ Far – 8M or greater
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So, you're probably asking yourself, "How do I regulate my body language to give a true representation of how I feel when I interact with others?"

Slide 8

Start with the distance between you and the person with whom you're speaking. If you get too close, people feel you're in their face, or too pushy. Too far away, and you could be seen as standoffish.

The angle of your body is a dead giveaway to others. We tend to angle our body towards those people we find friendly or interesting, and angle away from those we feel are cold or unfriendly. Crossing your arms over your chest shows defensiveness. This posture says, "I'm closed off and keeping you out."

Eye Contact is one of the most important ways to communicate with others. Looking them in the eye shows respect and interest. We've all experienced the person who looks constantly at their watch, or seems to be far away and not listening to us. Their body language says, "I have other places to be and other more interesting people to talk to than you." Or the person that you know is not listening to what you're saying, but instead is busy deciding what he/she will say next. Someone whose eyes are downcast, not looking you in the eye could be exhibiting signs of shyness, or it could be deceit. Someone who is lying to you will not look you in the eye.

The head position also says a lot. To show confidence or authority, simply keep your head level. This says, "Take me seriously, my words are important." To show friendliness and interest in what the other person is saying, tilt your head slightly to one side or the other.

Mouth movements are easy clues to what the other person may be feeling. If they purse their lips or twist them, they could be thinking carefully about what you just said, or disagreeing with you, but holding back comment. You can certainly tell when someone is not pleased.

The handshake is extremely important in communication with others and as Masons don't we know this. No one wants to shake a hand like a wet noodle; at the same time, a handshake needn't be a contest of strength. It's a handshake, not arm wrestling. Many people also don't quite know what to do with their hands after the handshake, especially when meeting someone new. They tend to clasp their hands together, nervously, or fiddle with their jewelry.

Since we're constantly sending out these powerful messages, it's clear we should make an effort to learn more about what our bodies say to others. And learning what others are really saying to us is of paramount importance in our day-to-day communications.

Having the aforesaid in mind this is why a written communication must be very clear, here are some written communications found in Church newsletters.

- * Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our church and community.
- * For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.
- * This afternoon there will be a meeting in the South and North ends of the church. Children will be baptized at both ends.
- * Tuesday at 4:00 p.m. there will be an ice cream social. All ladies giving milk will please come early.
- * This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs. Lewis to come forward and lay an egg on the altar.
- * The service will close with Little Drops of Water. One of the ladies will start quietly and the rest of the congregation will join in.
- * Next Sunday a special collection will be taken to defray the cost of the new carpet. All those wishing to do something on the carpet should come forward and do so.
- * The ladies of the church have cast off clothing of every kind. They can be seen in the church basement on Saturday.

You Have Two Eyes, Two Ears And One Mouth. Many people assume that good communication only deals with how well you talk. This couldn't be further from the truth. Most of the communication mishaps happen because of poor listening and observational habits. To become an active listener one could follow these 6 rules:

- **Limit your own talking** - You have two ears and one mouth. The more you listen the more opportunity you'll have to find and understand the wants, needs and aspirations of the person who is talking to you, be it a family member or brother or business associate.
- **Don't interrupt** - By interrupting, sensitivity, rapport and commitments are all killed. Although at times it seems expedient to interrupt, this perceived lack of respect helps to deteriorate the relationship and makes it harder to develop rapport.
- **Notice nonverbal communication** - Only 10% of the message we are communicating is through the words we use, 40% is through the tone of our voice and 50% is through our body language. This means that

body language and tone of voice convey 90% of the message that someone communicates. Therefore, if you're talking to someone and they start doing things like, crossing their arms, crossing their legs away from you, yawning, leaning back, looking bored or avoiding eye contact, you need to "listen" to their body language. By being sensitive to their body language you pick up the real underlying messages and feelings that are being conveyed. In addition, you can encourage others to communicate with you by softening your own body language. Follow the key points in this acronym. **SOFTEN** S- smile, O - open posture, F- forward lean, T- watch others territory, E- eye contact, N- nodding to show you're listening.

Don't only think about what you're going to say next - Too many times we are so concerned about we want to say that we don't hear what the other person is really saying. By not paying total attention, we focus on what we think is important to them and not what they're really concerned about.

- **Talk in a comfortable setting** - To get others to listen to us and have them focus on the substance of our message, distractions must be minimized. Heat and noise will create a poor communicating environment.
- Do you have distracting habits? To make sure active listening takes place, you must alleviate all distractions.
- **Paraphrase what has been said** - To avoid misunderstandings, it's important to repeat back what you have understood. The problem is that when you talk, how you say something and the words you use may have a different meaning to your listener than intended. Many times we say, "do you understand? or does that make sense?" In most cases the answer is "yes". The question we really need to find out is, "what did they understand?" And since it may seem rude to ask that question, we need to repeat back what they said to make sure we are both hearing and understanding the same thing.

What has all this to do with Masonry? I say that it has everything to do with Masonry. Realistically, at your last Lodge meeting or Communication.. Were you able to hear all that took place? Did the Master, Secretary speak clearly or mumble? Did you ask for clarification of some point? Did you complain after the meeting that you could not hear what was going on? If so what did you do about it? Communication is two ways what is understood must align with what was meant. I will repeat that Communication, be it between individuals face to face or be it a general communication between management and membership. it is a two way street. Management must ensure that the message received is the same as that sent and the receiver should confirm understanding. In summary Communication principles are:

