



Nonverbal Communication

CHS 446

**Communication Skills for the
Healthcare Professional**

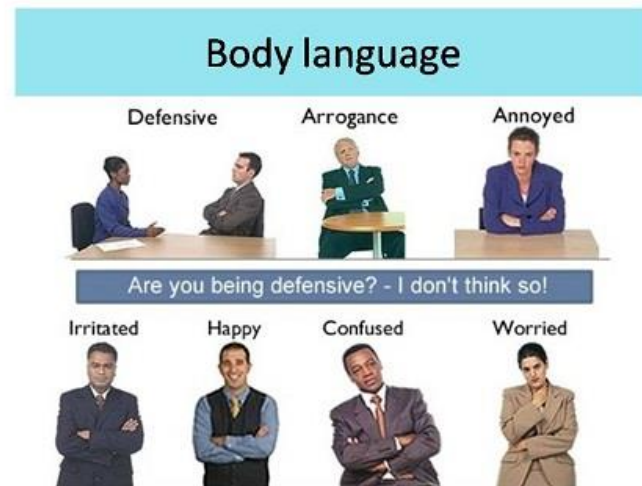
Mohammed S. Alnaif, Ph.D.

alnaif@ksu.edu.sa

Nonverbal Communication

Objectives

1. Describe why the understanding of nonverbal communication is important in healthcare.
2. Explain how each of the following may convey nonverbal messages to the observer: gestures, facial expressions, gaze patterns, personal space, position, posture, and touch.



Nonverbal Communication

Objectives

3. Explain why verbal and nonverbal messages must be congruent.
4. Describe the methods by which the healthcare professional can confirm their interpretation of a patient's nonverbal behavior.
5. List the proper nonverbal communication skills for the healthcare professional.

Nonverbal Communication



Nonverbal Communication

The process of sending and receiving messages without using words, either spoken or written. It begins when the HCP observed the **body language** of patient, and even when the patient observed the body language of the HCP.

Communication between healthcare professionals (**HCPs**) and their patients begins well before they actually say anything to each other.

Nonverbal Communication

- ❖ **Nonverbal communication** which may be unintentional, includes body movement, gestures and facial expressions.
- ❖ These behaviors convey information that words alone often do not.
- ❖ It is generally accepted that 70% of Communication is nonverbal, 23% involves the tone of voice, and only 7% of Communication occurs by the chosen words.



Nonverbal Communication

- ❖ **Nonverbal behaviors exhibited by the patients may also be revealing such as nail-biting, toe-tapping, and leg-shaking. No interaction may take place; however, these observations may allow the HCP to begin formulating opinions about their patient and the patient's emotional state.**



Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication

- ❖ **As a result, the HCP can adapt their behavior and select responses with which to interact with the patient according to these impressions**
- ❖ **For example, the nonverbal behaviors displayed by a seriously ill patient may convey a build up of feelings, especially fear, anxiety, confusion, and anger.**



Nonverbal Communication



Nonverbal communication

- ❖ It is important to remember that one cannot always be sure what certain behaviors indicate.
- ❖ For example, consider the patient who is sitting with their arms folded across their chest.
- ❖ An initial interpretation may be that the patient is angry or impatient.
- ❖ However, one must be mindful that this position could have other meanings.

Nonverbal Communication



Nonverbal communication

- ❖ **Nonverbal messages can enhance or interfere with verbal messages that are delivered.**
- ❖ **There must be congruency, or consistency between the verbal and nonverbal messages.**
- ❖ **If there is a conflict, then the nonverbal message tends to be believed.**
- ❖ **It is also important to remember that the patient is reading the nonverbal messages transmitted by the HCP.**

Types of Nonverbal Communication



There are several distinct categories of nonverbal communication

- ❖ ***Kinesics***, involving body movement in communication, for example, hand gestures or nodding or shaking the head
- ❖ ***Proxemics***, involving the physical distance between people when they communicate, territoriality and personal space, position, and posture, how you stand or sit, whether your arms are crossed, and so on

Types of Nonverbal Communication

Touch

- ❖ *Haptic* communication *touching* as nonverbal communication, and haptic communication refers to how people and other animals communicate via touching.
- ❖ *Haptic* communication describes how we communicate with each other through the use of touch



Types of Nonverbal Communication



Gestures

- ❖ Include movements of the head, hands, eyes, and other body parts.
- ❖ Often used in place of words, gestures are one of the most obvious and common forms of nonverbal communication.
- ❖ **Gestures** may be used when speech is ineffective (e.g., a language barrier) or insufficient (e.g., complex content in the message).

Types of Nonverbal Communication

Gestures

- ❖ Patients who are intubated and mechanically ventilated, are most likely to use head nods, mouthed words, and gestures as their primary methods of communication.
- ❖ **Gestures** serve to emphasize, clarify, or add to the verbal content of a message.
- ❖ **Gestures** may also be involuntary or subconscious. This is referred to as “**leakage**” when the true feelings or attitudes are revealed.

Types of Nonverbal Communication

Facial Expressions

- ❖ Provide a rich source of information regarding emotions.
- ❖ The **Facial Expressions** of many emotions such as happiness, sadness, and fear, are biologically determined, universal, and learned similarly across cultures.
- ❖ **Facial Expressions** are one of the most important and observed nonverbal communication.

Types of Nonverbal Communication

Gaze Patterns

- ❖ **Gaze** is a form of communication as well as a method for collecting information.
- ❖ **Gaze patterns** may be used to assess how others appear, to regulate conversation, or express feelings and emotions.

Types of Nonverbal Communication

Gaze Patterns

- ❖ **Gaze** serves three primary reasons:
 1. **Monitoring** (e.g., a nurse gazing at a very sick patient for clues about their condition)
 2. **Regulating** using gaze to regulate the conversation
 3. **Expressing feelings and emotions**

Types of Nonverbal Communication

Personal Space

Everyone has a personal space, or territory, that provides that individual with a sense of identity, security, and control.

- ❖ Intimate distance = up to 1.5 feet apart.
- ❖ Personal distance = 1.5 to 4 feet apart (about arms length).
- ❖ Social distance = 4 to 12 feet apart
- ❖ Public distance = more than 12 feet apart

Types of Nonverbal Communication

Position

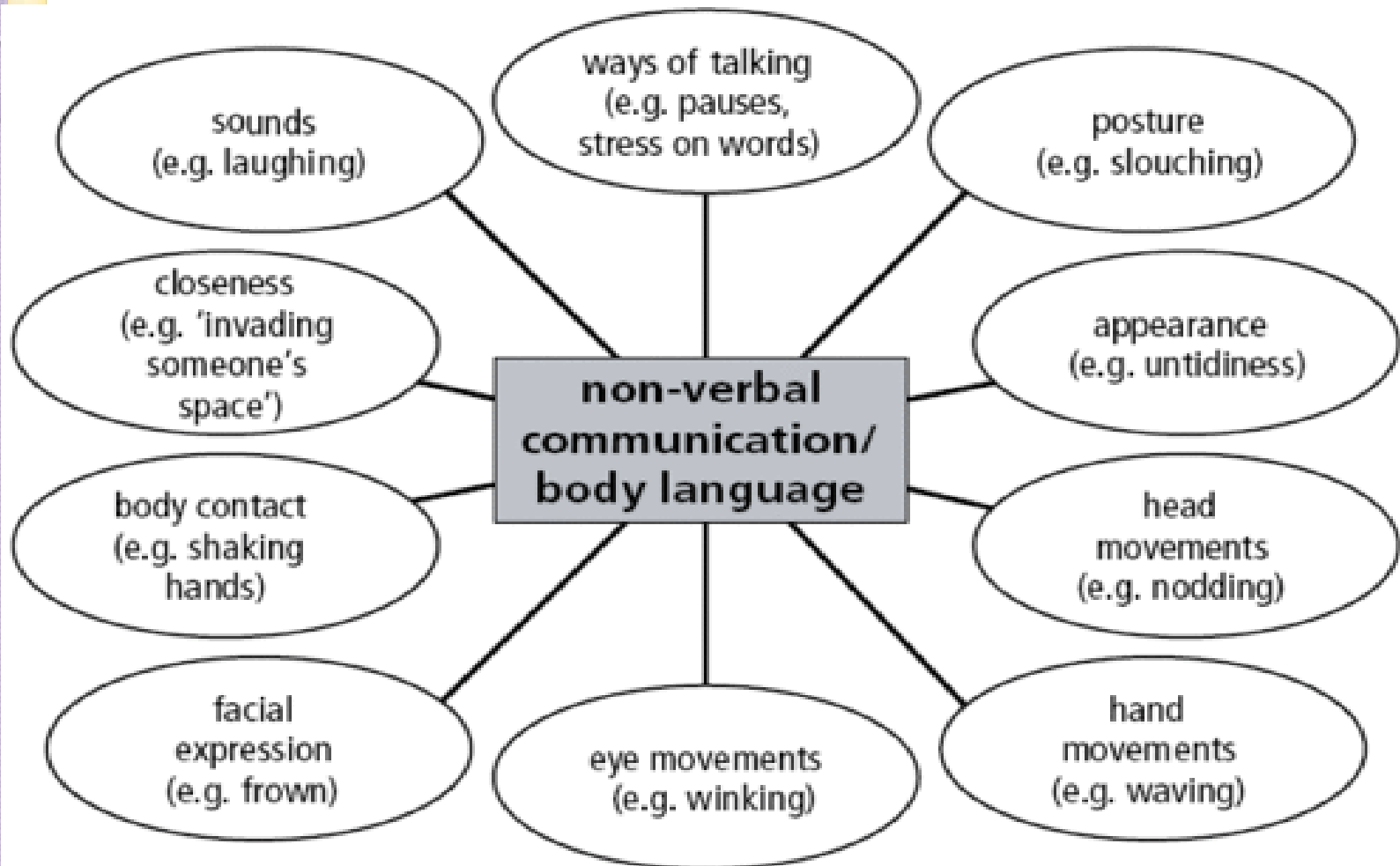
- ❖ **Most interactions between the HCP and the patient require face-to-face communication.**
- ❖ **Facing a way from the patient may be perceived as dominance by the patient, and could make them feel less comfortable and less forthcoming.**
- ❖ **A position leaning slightly towards the patient express warmth, caring, interest, acceptance, and trust.**

Types of Nonverbal Communication

Posture

- ❖ Refers to the position of the body and limbs as well as muscular tone.
- ❖ **Posture** may reveal a great deal about emotional status.
- ❖ A crucial aspect for showing confidence is the maintenance of a relaxed and open posture.

Types of Nonverbal Communication



Why nonverbal communication matters



- ❖ **The way you listen, look, move, and react tells the other person whether or not you care, if you're being truthful, and how well you're listening.**
- ❖ **When your nonverbal signals match up with the words you're saying, they increase trust, clarity, and rapport. When they don't, they generate tension, mistrust, and confusion.**

Why nonverbal communication matters

- ❖ **If you want to become a better communicator, it's important to become more sensitive not only to the body language and nonverbal cues of others, but also to your own.**



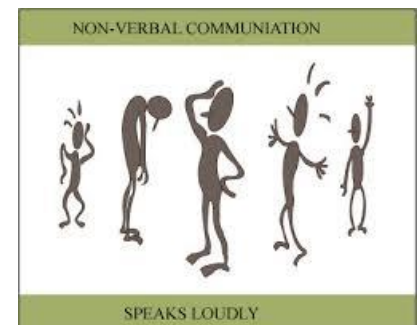
Why nonverbal communication matters

- ❖ **What you communicate through your body language and nonverbal signals affects how others see you, how well they like and respect you, and whether or not they trust you.**



Why nonverbal communication matters

- ❖ **In order to send accurate nonverbal cues, you need to be aware of your emotions and how they influence you. You also need to be able to recognize the emotions of others and the true feelings behind the cues they are sending.**



Interpretation of nonverbal communication

- ❖ **Successful communication requires similarity between the verbal and nonverbal messages, the two messages must be in agreement, or consistent with each other. For example, if a patient says “Okay” while shaking his head then he is sending mixed messages.**
- ❖ **The message of a patient’s nonverbal behavior is lost unless observed and interpreted correctly.**



Interpretation of nonverbal communication



- ❖ **In some instances, behavioral observation may be the only mechanism by which Health Care Professional (HCP) may derive information from a patient.**
- ❖ **For example, a patient may be speech impaired (e.g., due to stroke or intubation), too young, too sick, or simply unwilling to communicate verbally.**



THANK YOU