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COMMUNICATION AND OBSERVATIONAL SKILLS

The aim of this module therefore is to:

- ♦ understand what communication is
- ♦ identify how to develop officers' operating potential
- ♦ demonstrate how to apply the skills
- ♦ link to other modules within this manual.

Introduction

It is often said that communication is a two-way process that relates to verbal interaction (listening and hearing), non-verbal interaction (interpretation) and observational interaction (looking and seeing).

These skills are the most important ones that a police officer must possess, and they encompass all that an officer may do.

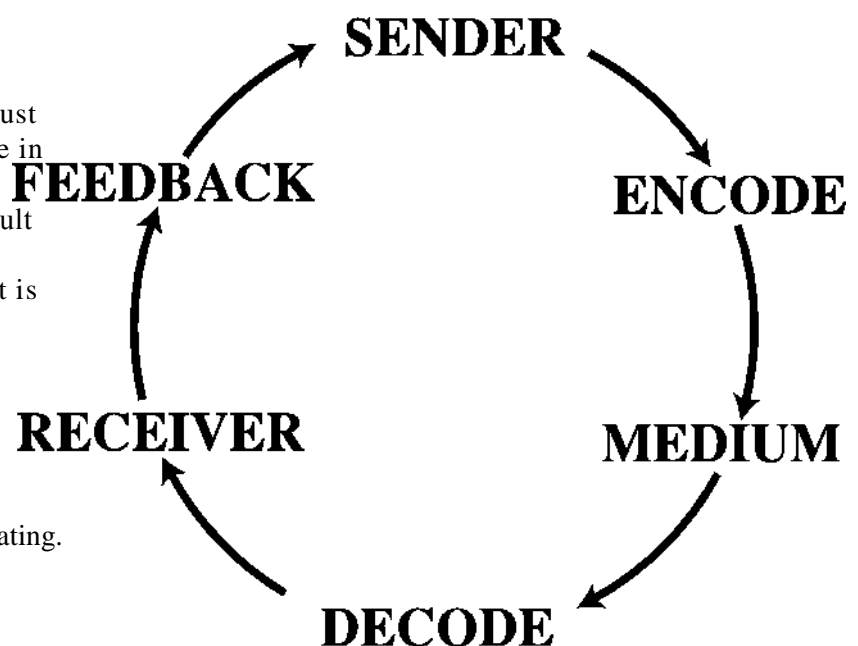
The Communication Vehicle

It is important to understand the key ingredients of effective communication, especially as they relate to a conflict environment.

The first and most important consideration is that there is a sender and a receiver, and the responsibility for the understanding belongs to the sender (police officer) not the receiver. It is the officer's sole purpose to get the message through.

The officer must encode ideas, needs, desires or intentions into some type of format that is understood by the receiver. We transmit the message to the receiver through verbal and non-verbal means. Since not all of our interaction may be face-to-face, the medium of a radio, telephone, fax or e-mail message must also be considered. How an officer or subject is feeling can be known from the tone, style, brevity, speed and accuracy of what is said or written, even though the other person is not actually present.

The receiver (subject or officer), through their ability to decode, must attempt to understand the message in light of their own 'frame of reference'. This is the most difficult part of communication because it involves the perceptual process; it is also the most crucial. The last component of the communication process is feedback. It is through feedback, both verbal and non-verbal, that an officer may determine if and how the subject understands what we are communicating.



The perceptual process

In the perceptual process the receiver must attempt to understand the message, however this can be difficult because the sender must ascertain the receiver's multitude of 'frame references'. The sender must first determine what the stimulus was that triggered the aggression. Was it an officer or subject, an event, a situation or an object (edged weapon)?

The receptors are our sensory organs, which are the means by which we absorb the information. To this could be added the sixth sense, or subtle accumulation of the other five senses together with precognition (see Personal Management Module). The filtering process is the initial processing of the data received.

- ◆ Knowledge is the acquaintance with facts, concepts or principles that have been learnt academically, physically or operationally. It is therefore important to realise that an officer must communicate within the subject's ability to comprehend.

- ◆ Attitudes are important in that they come from within and are demonstrated by our actions. In a confrontational environment it is important to understand in what way a subject's attitudes will play into their actions.
- ◆ Feelings are, in this context, considered a state of emotional perception, such as feelings of joy, sorrow or anger. These states of emotional perception can enhance or detract from our ability to communicate.
- ◆ Needs are defined as a requirement or a lack of something essential. Abraham Maslow identified five different levels of need. In this hierarchical representation, a subject who is extremely hungry is unlikely to be motivated by a higher need, until that base need is fulfilled. In police use of force issues this application should be obvious.

Human Needs and Wants



♦ **Values** are the ideals, customs and institutions of a society or culture. These can be positive or obstructive to perception. The key to effective communication with regard to values is to first recognise that **we all look at the same things differently, so we must observe rather than judge**. Police officers and subjects are likely to trust each other when an understanding and appreciation is made of each other's customs. When we consider our own cultural diversity, it is important to pursue its strengths, not its weaknesses, and therefore develop.

Cultural diversity

In a 1993 lecture Mr Justice Brooke related the following story.

‘A white youth and a black youth were in the dock of a magistrates’ court together. They had committed the same offence together, and they had identical records. Yet they received different sentences. Why? Because the white youth looked the magistrates in the eye, while the black youth looked all over the court and seemed shifty and evasive and unapologetic for what he had done, and the magistrates believed he needed to be taught a lesson.’

Mr Justice Brooke went on to relate that the reason he knew this story was that one of the magistrates was black and shared the story with him. The black magistrate told him that he tried to persuade his two white colleagues that they were condemning the youth for **behaviour that was ingrained in his culture** and which they were misinterpreting. He explained to them that he too was conditioned from birth not to look those in authority in the eye, as this would be perceived as being insolent and disrespectful, and that instead he should keep his eyes averted. But the two white magistrates simply could not accept this, and they overruled him by two to one.

This story is an example of the significance of non-verbal behaviour, an important form of communication of which, some of the time, officers and subjects are unaware. It is also an example of how communication between people of different cultures can easily produce misunderstandings, which if not recognised and remedied may in turn give rise to the possibility of injustice.

Why cross-cultural communication can be difficult

Most of the time in our daily lives we experience no difficulty in communicating with others. We speak the same language and feel we understand each other, at home and at work. If something seems unclear and we need more information, all we have to do is ask. If no-one does this, we have been understood.

However, this assumption does not necessarily hold up where the two people communicating with each other come from different cultural backgrounds. It may of course be obvious to one or both parties that they have not been understood. Quite often, however, this is not the case, as they may think they have been understood correctly, when in fact this is not so.

Officers and subjects are likely to read behaviour from the point of view of their own cultural group, without being aware of the possibly different meaning attributed to it in the culture of the other party. It is where this quite natural tendency towards ‘ethnocentrism’ creeps in, ie where parties interpret the behaviour in terms of their own cultural frameworks, and do so unconsciously, that the greatest danger of cross-cultural misunderstanding arises.

It is important to recognise that the condition for success in overcoming this problem does not consist solely in acquiring knowledge about the culture of the other group. It requires also a degree of knowledge and awareness of one's own culture since, whatever others may do or say, it is this that provides the outlook on the world.

The challenge arises as most societies come to be increasingly multi-cultural in their make-up. It is a challenge which members of the minority communities have already had to meet simply as a condition for being able to operate successfully in the majority society. It is a skill which may come more slowly to members of the majority culture, who do not face the same challenge routinely.

Verbal communication

There are a number of ways in which communication problems may arise. The most obvious is the straightforward lack of competency of an officer or subject in the English language. The more common and less obvious problems arise where basic competency is present, but specific problems arise around the use of certain terms or phrases, or around the manner in which a person speaks.

Words for time and space

All cultures have words dealing with aspects of time and space. Concepts of time and space may differ, and words in the English language may not always be correctly understood. For example, with regard to the time of the day, concepts of afternoon and evening may vary considerably between different cultures. Other examples of time-related words, which can give rise to misunderstanding and confusion for members of minority ethnic communities, are the English words for mealtimes, 'dinner' and 'tea'. Such confusion is hardly surprising since the words are often found confusing by the English themselves, due to different uses between social classes and between the north and the south of England.

Racial and ethnic terminology

Confusion, for example, may arise unless the meaning of racial and ethnic terms (eg 'Asian', 'Black') is made clear and their relevance specified. It should be borne in mind that use of certain racial or ethnic terms (eg 'Coloured', 'Oriental' and 'Half Caste') is likely to give offence to those to whom they are applied.

Inappropriate words or expressions

There is little need to rehearse the fact that, in all cultures, offensive terms exist to refer to members of other racial, ethnic or national groups. Other than in the reporting of evidence, their offensiveness should be clear and of course not tolerated.

There are, however, words or expressions which may be used by some members of the majority society without them being aware of the negative impact these may have on members of minority ethnic communities.

Turning to inappropriate expressions, here too there should be little need to draw attention to phrases that are quite clearly offensive or even racist. Over-generalisation, eg by speaking of all Nigerian or Chinese as if they are the same, is one example. Another is conveying a patronising attitude, by using a phrase such as 'you people must realise' or referring to 'the way we do things in this country'. Yet a third seems to imply that certain ethnic groups have particular criminal characteristics, a use of popular stereotypical phraseology.

Jargon, slang and figure of speech

Use of slang expressions, which are familiar to those who have grown up in Britain with full exposure to the mass media, may also exclude minority group members from following the meaning of what is said. Jokes and implicit assumptions might also be capable of giving rise to similar confusion and misunderstanding in the minds of members of minority communities. Officers need to express themselves in as direct and explicit a manner as possible when communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds.

Accent and mispronunciation

Non-native speakers of English may often have strong accents based on the speech patterns of their own languages, and they may also have difficulties with pronunciation as well. This is a situation which may arise in any multi-lingual or multi-cultural society, and calls for patience and tolerance on the part of all. If an officer or subject who has difficulty in being understood feels under pressure on this account, they may speed up rather than slow down, and the accent may then become even stronger.

It is not only as speakers that difficulties may arise for members of minority ethnic communities. English is spoken with a wide range of regional accents on the part of native speakers, among whom for the most part these variants are normally easily understood. Members of ethnic communities often have much less experience of regional English accents, and when broad variants of these happen to be in use, the possibility of difficulty for members of ethnic minorities should not be overlooked.

Speech delivery

Although true for the wider public as well, many members of the ethnic communities may feel extremely nervous and lacking in confidence when dealing with police officers, especially when speaking English in a formal, public domain. In addition, especially among communities of Asian origin, some women (especially among the older generation) may find speaking difficult or embarrassing as a result of cultural conditioning, and of persisting conventions about the need for modesty in demeanour and about the women's role. This may be particularly the case when issues of an intimate or personal nature are under discussion or the matter is felt to belong to the world not of women but of men.

All these difficulties may be manifested by subjects and officers speaking very softly, or having difficulty in projecting the voice, or by not being forthcoming generally. On the other hand, some young, black people in particular may feel suspicious or angry on account of past experiences, real or imaginary, relating to racism, and may sometimes express this in a forthright and apparently aggressive manner, occasionally even in an outburst of some kind. Reducing pressure by allowing extra time for subjects to speak may often be sufficient to overcome the kinds of difficulties that have been mentioned.

Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication, as has already been explained, demands our attention for two reasons. The first is that it is a powerful form of communication, the use and effects of which we are normally unaware. The second is that forms of non-verbal communication, like verbal languages, differ between cultures, and thus, especially on account of their unconscious operation, have considerable potential for causing misunderstanding in cross-cultural communication. At first sight, therefore, the solution would simply appear to be to develop a bank of knowledge about the typical non-verbal clues that relate to members of different cultures.

The first warning is to be careful about how a culture is identified. For example, although there may be much in common within such broad cultural groupings as 'Asians', 'Caribbeans' or 'Chinese', there may also be internal differences that have been grafted onto many other regional or local cultures.



WARNING.
Knowledge about non-verbal behaviour can indeed be formulated; however, two warnings should be heeded!

towards over-generalisation about non-verbal behaviour, and of thus creating stereotypes about behaviour of members of particular cultural groups, which could be as damaging as ignorance itself.

Knowledge about non-verbal behaviour of different cultural groups should therefore take the form of guidelines as to what might possibly be expected by way of behaviour, but what should certainly not be presumed. Providing that knowledge about non-verbal behaviour of different groups includes recognition that such diversity exists, and that there is a need for its validity or application to be checked in each case, then such knowledge will be useful knowledge. If it is not used in this cautious and conditional way, then such knowledge will be in danger of becoming another form of stereotyping.

Scope of non-verbal behaviour

It is normally only when we reflect on the subject that we become aware of the large number of ways in which we may use the body as a means of non-verbal communication.

The second warning is that it is dangerous to assume that all those who identify (or are identified) with a particular ethnic group will necessarily display the same nonverbal behaviour. Not only may there be differences within the group such as gender or social class, but there are also likely to be differences between individuals (this is obvious when one considers the differences in style and temperament amongst one's own friends within one's own cultural group). There is, therefore, great danger in moving

Gestures involving the hands are those which we most often think of, and these are the more likely ones to be conscious and intended. In terms of their importance in the non-verbal part of the communication process, however, they undoubtedly fall into second place behind the face.

Eyes

In many cultures the eyes are an extremely important means of communication. In modern European culture, the eyes speak about feelings, and about sincerity. Closely linked to the ability to express such feelings is the perceived ability of the eyes to convey whether a person is (or is not) respectful and sincere.

Whereas in England for a young person to look a person in authority in the eyes is to signal respect and integrity, in African-Caribbean culture it is likely to indicate impudence or insult. Among South Asian cultures, looking away from authority figures rather than directly at them tends to be how a subordinate or young person indicates deference and respect.

For these reasons, the greatest care should be taken before allowing eye behaviour to be interpreted in any particular way when there is a cross-cultural context involved. In particular, care should be taken to avoid generalising about the eye behaviour of any ethnic group in Britain due to the element of cultural diversity and change commented upon earlier. Most important of all, perhaps, is the need to have specific knowledge of what eye behaviour means in any other particular culture, and simply to be aware how easily one may unconsciously interpret such behaviour falsely in terms of one's own culture.

Tone of voice

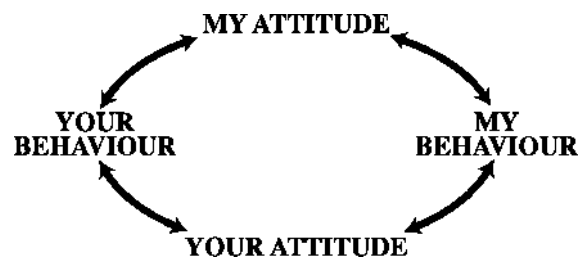
Tone of voice is another aspect of body language which is frequently in danger of being misunderstood in cross-cultural contexts.

In English culture, raising the voice is associated with becoming angry and losing control, or with trying to impose oneself aggressively upon a conversation or other situation. Value tends to be placed upon 'keeping cool and behaving rationally'.

In other cultures, volume, pitch and manner of delivery do not necessarily convey the same meaning, nor are they necessarily judged in the

same way. Using a loud voice does not necessarily indicate loss of control, nor does it necessarily indicate hostility or an aggressive disposition. Treating people as if this is the case may often be experienced as patronising, with the result that they may at the very least become angry. In the same way, if police officers interpret the loud talk and the animation of black youngsters on the street as aggressive behaviour, they may through their own response induce the very behaviour their role is to prevent.

A simple model used in the training of police officers and other members of society who deal exclusively in people management is known as **Betari's Box**.



This illustration shows the way in which officers and subjects can get locked into a cycle of behaviour which, if it remains unchecked, can escalate out of control.

Because the role of a police officer is to deal effectively with a situation, and because officers are the very people in society who have authority, it is their role to break the cycle of attitude and behaviour.

The manner of voice delivery may also give rise to cross-cultural misunderstanding. Many people who grew up in South Asia before migrating to Britain will have an accent, when speaking English, which can appear to English ears as rather tense and staccato, and may be interpreted as aggressive in tone. At the least this is likely to be an exaggerated perception, and often it may simply be incorrect, as it will be the person's normal mode of English speech. A similar misunderstanding can arise when native Chinese or Japanese speakers converse in English.

The body

Posture, positioning of the body and body movement generally are other important ways in which non-verbal communication is carried out. Here, too, care must be taken before interpreting the behaviour of those of minority ethnic origin in terms of English cultural assumptions and standards.

Positioning of the body in relation to others, for example, has been shown to vary between cultures as to the degree of closeness and general demeanour that are acceptable. In all cultures people desire to maintain a certain amount of space around themselves and may feel uncomfortable if this is invaded. When such invasion occurs or is threatened, avoidance or offensive/defensive action may be initiated (see Operating Ranges - Personal Management Module). In general, social terms these may be known as:

- ◆ **The Intimate Zone.** This may refer to very close contact, from a point of touching to a point of around half a metre (18 inches). This space may be reserved for intimate contact or fighting, however this may depend upon cultural issues.
- ◆ **The Personal Zone.** This may refer to the area from half a metre up to a distance of around four metres (18 inches to 13 feet). This may be the zone in which, subject to cultural issues, most verbal and non-verbal interaction takes place.
- ◆ **The Public Zone.** This may refer to the distance beyond four metres (13 feet). It may, with some cultural and environmental issues, be difficult to communicate across this potentially safer zone.

Within any particular culture, rules of this kind are learned in childhood and subsequently applied unconsciously. Police officers, due to the nature of their role in dealing with people in tense and public settings, may be particularly vulnerable to becoming involved in misunderstandings of this kind.

Body movement is also capable of creating considerable misunderstanding in cross-cultural contexts. Particular care should be taken as to how such behaviour as animation or fidgeting should be interpreted, as well as apparent disinterest or repeated looking away. Generally speaking, when different cultures are involved, it should be presumed that to make any inferences from such behaviour about honesty or integrity would be dangerous and unreliable.

Officers need to be aware of the ways in which their own body language might possibly be misunderstood by ethnic minority subjects. In particular, they should take care to ensure that their body language does not unwittingly imply ridicule or contempt, for example through raised

eyebrows, exchanged glances, or signs of exasperation, impatience or incredulity. Some subtle or impromptu forms of bodily expression may be barely noticeable by the officer or subject who gives such signals, but members of minority communities may over time have become much more alert to them.

Using interpreters

A more fundamental difficulty arises when a person of minority ethnic background does not possess adequate linguistic competence and non-verbal understanding, and an interpreter needs to be involved in the communication process.

The role of interpreter is primarily to provide technically efficient and accurate translation of what has been said, and the first qualification required of an interpreter is that the person has the necessary skill and integrity for undertaking this task.

How to obtain interpreters

A number of professional interpreting agencies now exist, which can be relied upon to provide a generally competent service. It should be borne in mind, however, that these agencies may not be able to deal with particular languages or dialects and their interpreters may have little knowledge or experience in some areas.

Using non-professional interpreters, on the other hand, may give rise to considerable problems and involve considerable risk. The incompetence or bias of an interpreter may sometimes but not always be obvious.

- ◆ **Comprehension** is the organisation of the stimuli through an intricate sorting process. Officers and subjects evaluate stimuli for usefulness, pleasure, threat and trust in relationship to a need to act. The ability of the officer and subject to **identify, match, differentiate, classify** and **evaluate** based on the ground that either has prepared is essential to the ability to persuade verbally. First, we identify a stimulus and match it against other information we have. We then differentiate it and classify it into broad categories. Finally, we evaluate it for usefulness, **trust** or **threat**.

Methods of establishing trust

Officers and subjects trust others who speak, act and look like themselves, so how can an officer speak, act and look like the subject?

- () Look for common ground between you and the subject
- () Invest the time; learn the facts and pertinent information about the subject.
- () Be empathetic (see LEAPS - Communication Module); try to think how it must feel to be the subject at that moment
- () If the subject is dressed casually, then within the bounds of the circumstances, also dress down to casual, ie remove your headgear, maybe sit down
- () Do not attempt to 'play a part' that you do not know or understand, as a lack of sincerity may have the reverse effect
- ◆ Outcome. Finally, the comprehension process leads to action. Some stimuli are discarded as unimportant, some are stored for future reference, some are lumped together with other experiences to confirm validity, and some moved quickly to the forefront for immediate action. The last may be the result of a threat and necessitate the need to protect oneself, or it may be an experience so different from the past that it must be thought about, to be either discarded or allowed to significantly alter the filtering process.

Perceptual blocks to communication

It is important to understand what perceptual blocks may be present, because they may limit the entry of stimuli into the mind and distort reality to such an extent that an officer or subject is not fully connected with reality and to what is going on at the moment of interaction or confrontation. People carry blocks to perception deep within, creating a barrier through which the world is seen and understood.

Confusion arises when officers and subjects find it impossible to either understand or accept the differences in viewpoint which exist amongst others. Confusion is a product of the inevitable differences which can arise from both the individual nature of perception, and/or the number of perceptual blocks.

- ◆ Stereotyping. Grouping officers and subjects into categories so that we attribute all characteristics of a category to an individual who exhibits only one characteristic. Stereotyping leads to misunderstanding on the part of the perceiver and resentment on the part of the perceived. Examples of this may be:
 - () regional accents
 - () speech - manner
 - () paramilitary uniforms
 - () colour
 - () tattoos
 - () spectacles
 - () short/cropped and long hair
 - () beards and moustaches
 - () dress - generally.
- ◆ Halo effect. This is closely linked to stereotyping, where an officer or subject takes an outstanding characteristic of the other and attributes that thing to them completely, ie tattoos, ankle chains, short cropped hair, public order equipment. Halo effects filter out the real person presented to such an extent that the receiver sees only a partial likeness, rather than a living, changing person.
- ◆ Selective perception. We sometimes tend to accept information that may support our point of view and discard that which denies it. Information is selectively screened; that which confirms our own biases is allowed through and positively accepted. This can be both an unconscious and a conscious decision.
- ◆ Projection. This type of block is built around transferring our attitudes and feelings onto others without truly understanding how they view a particular situation. Projection may lead us to assume attitudes without allowing others to be honest in their feelings. This may cloud reality and alienate others by trying to force our/their views upon them.
- ◆ Self-fulfilling prophecy. When we are in a majority it is sometimes easy to expect a member of a minority group to behave in a certain way. This is very often based on

assumptions about the other person, which are based upon little knowledge of them or their culture. This may lead us to unconsciously filter out information about the person which does not fit our assumptions. Eventually the person does something that fits our assumptions and we may think and say, "I told you so" and our expectations may be reinforced. Of course, this can equally apply to a member of a minority group's expectations of a majority group member.

- Rose coloured glasses syndrome. An officer or subject with an optimistic outlook on life may filter all events through a set of glasses which are rosy. While this in itself is not a block, it may become so when all difficulty and evil are filtered out as if they do not exist. The antithesis is the 'dark glasses syndrome', which sees evil, uncertainty and threat within everything.
- Primary-recency effect. It may be easy to remember instances which happen at the beginning (primary - first impressions), and end (recency), of a protracted period of time, such as the arrest of a subject. If recorded evidence (see Report Writing Skills Module) is not systematically and exactly recorded, it may be difficult to produce an accurate assessment; instead it might be based upon what can be remembered. This might be based upon the first impressions and not the overall picture of events.

These perception blocks to communication can be distorting in such a way that the officer or subject may not really see or understand what is happening outside of themselves. The key is to recognise the kinds of blocks which the officer/subject has, and work to overcome them.

- Feedback. The receiver may provide feedback almost immediately to the sender. During the transmission of the message the receiver may provide a non-verbal response indicating a multitude of thoughts, and normally these will be congruent (the gestures match the words). However, if they do not then the officers need to be aware that these incongruent signals may be the prelude to a surprise attack upon them, such as a nervous laugh, which may or may not be congruous (see Personal Management Module).

By focusing on gesture clusters it is possible to gain clues as to the attitudes and feelings of both the officer and subject who are exhibiting them. Gesture clusters may indicate someone who is calmly reasoning with themselves. Officers can train themselves in 'people watching' during periods of tranquillity or socially with friends, for example look for consistency between verbal and non-verbal communication.

- Open hands with palms up plus arms and legs in an unfolded position may signal openness
- Arms crossed on the chest or the hands closed in fists may signal defensiveness
- Silence or very few comments may be an indicator of boredom
- Tapping of the feet, drumming of the table and looking away may be signs that the receiver is only going through the motions.

However, in confrontational matters other than pre-incident indicators (see Personal Management Module), an officer or subject who is ready to be aggressive may display three levels before committing a physical act: anxiety, loss of verbal control, loss of physical control (warning and danger signs).

Anxiety

- Sweating and pacing about
- Refusing to co-operate with an immediate authority and/or supervision
- Spreading rumour and gossip to harm others
- Consistently arguing with co-workers
- Belligerent towards others
- Constantly swearing at others
- Making unwarranted sexual remarks
- Arguing increasingly with others
- Refusing to obey policy and procedures
- Sabotaging equipment and stealing property for revenge
- Verbally issuing a desire to hurt others
- Seeing self as victimised by authority and/or management

Loss of verbal control

- ◆ Ability to communicate becomes unintelligible and disjointed
- ◆ Use of vulgarity, in an incoherent way
- ◆ Baring the teeth

Loss of physical control - warning signs

Generally, subjects who are going to attack officers, and officers who are intent on controlling subjects, may engage in actions known as ‘ritualised combat’ (see Fright, Flight, Fight, Posture, Submission - Personal Management Skills Module).

Identifying these non-verbal signs (consider cultural differences) may give officers a significant advantage. They are:

- ◆ direct prolonged eye contact
- ◆ bobbing up and down or rocking back and forth
- ◆ expanded veins in the arms and face area
- ◆ changed facial colour
- ◆ the head is back
- ◆ officer/subject stands tall to maximise their height
- ◆ kicking the ground
- ◆ exaggerated movements, especially with the hands
- ◆ acceleration of breathing rate
- ◆ abrupt stopping and starting of nervous behaviour.

This is not an exhaustive list.

Loss of physical control - danger signs

As the word ‘danger’ implies, the signs listed here have a higher impact potential than warning signs.

When these signs occur an attack may be imminent (see Pre-emptive Action Use of Force Module). Neglecting or ignoring these signs may place the officers at a disadvantage.

- ◆ Fists clenching/unclenching
- ◆ Changed facial colour

- ◆ Lips tightening over the teeth
- ◆ Head dropping forward to protect the throat
- ◆ Eyebrows dropping forward to protect the eyes
- ◆ Hands rising above the waist
- ◆ Shoulders tensing
- ◆ Stance changing from side on to square on (fighting stance)
- ◆ Glancing at intended target areas
- ◆ Lowering of the entire body before launching an attack.

This is not an exhaustive list.

Warning - Officers should be aware of the one per cent of subjects who are fully comfortable with confrontation and who may be able to disguise their intentions because of their military or martial arts training, or their own natural fighting skill, which may be frequently honed.

Ego state communication

It is not just the words that we use, but the value of the words that we use, that are important. All the feeling and experiences people are exposed to during infancy and childhood are unconsciously recorded in the brain. These recorded messages greatly influence our behaviour for the rest of our lives.

These are observable and may be used to describe a subject’s communication and demeanour (see Use of Force Report Writing Module) as three distinct modes of behaviour called ego states. These may considerably affect our style of communication and its effectiveness.

Everybody has three ego states: **parent, adult** and **child**.

Parent

The parent is an officer or subject who feels and behaves in the same way as they perceived the feeling, and behaviour of their mother and/or father (or other influential grown-ups) when they were a baby. Therefore, parent ego state expressions might be:

- ◆ give advice
- ◆ criticise
- ◆ moralise

- ◆ nurture and protect
- ◆ make rules and regulations
- ◆ teach
- ◆ judge
- ◆ direct or control others.

Child

The child ego state contains memory of impulses and responses felt and made when we were young as being the source of feelings, wants and needs. Besides spontaneous feelings, the child is the origin of adapted behaviour. Therefore, child ego state expressions might be:

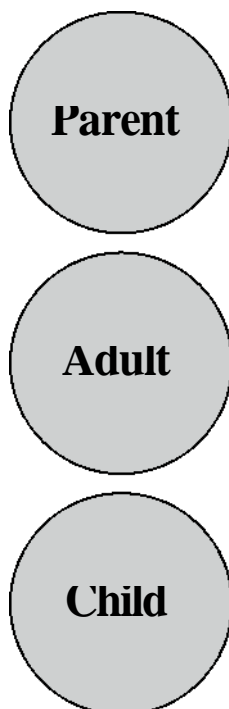
- ◆ anger
- ◆ fear
- ◆ rebelliousness
- ◆ curiosity
- ◆ creativity
- ◆ trust
- ◆ love
- ◆ excitement
- ◆ self-indulgence
- ◆ aggression
- ◆ co-operation.

Adult

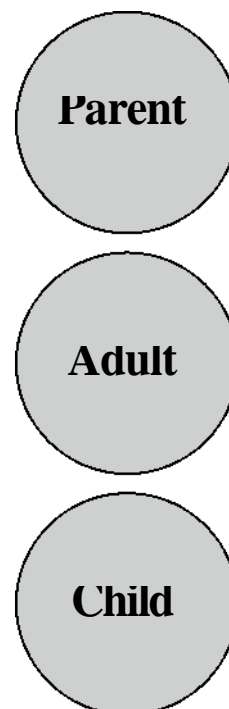
The adult ego state helps to gather information and use it to make rational decisions. Like parent and child ego states it is not related to age. Therefore, adult ego state expressions might be:

- ◆ store information
- ◆ plan
- ◆ check alternatives
- ◆ make decisions
- ◆ reason
- ◆ recall information
- ◆ evaluate
- ◆ estimate probabilities
- ◆ set limits.

Initiator



Responder



These three ego states are within us all the time. Using the adult ego state can increase officers' potential for success.

Ego state communication rule 1

When the ego state that was targeted receives the communication, and returns it to the sending ego state, there is a parallel or complementary communication. It is important for officers and subjects to express themselves clearly and firmly as adults so that others understand, and thereby resist the temptation to play games, argue or get upset, be angry, critical or sarcastic, especially when involved in problem-solving or trying to make oneself understood.

Ego state communication rule 2

Sometimes the ego state, which the communication is aimed at, does not respond, but a different one does, not back to the original state, but to a different one. This is referred to as crossed communication. When this happens communication can stop, go badly, or the arena may change. The critical point of crossed communication is that we no longer understand the communication link, and may be talking at cross-purposes.

Ego state communication rule 3

Sometimes we operate on more than one level at the same time. It may look as if we are having an adult-to-adult conversation, but it may be obvious that the other person is holding back criticism, annoyance, or upset or hurt feelings. This is known as two level communication.

If an officer or subject is communicating on two levels, the fact level and the feeling or opinion level, the feeling level will determine the outcome of the relationship. If this is so, it makes sense to find out what the feelings are, or what the criticism is about.

Meta talk

From ego state communication rule 3 lies meta talk. This is derived from the Greek word 'meta', which means 'above and beyond'. It refers to a subject's non-verbal communication of feelings, emotions or attitudes that go beyond their verbal communication. In order to resolve conflicts with subjects, or gain their co-operation, officers must pay attention not only to their verbal communication, but also their meta communication.

Guidelines for using the technique of meta talk

- ◆ Actively listen to others. Notice whether the subject is sending a non-verbal communication that goes beyond their words.
- ◆ Observe non-verbal communication and the paralinguistic communication such as tone, intonation, style, accuracy, brevity, mannerisms, gestures, facial expressions and speed of the interaction.
- ◆ If apparent, the officers should ask themselves what emotions are they sensing from the subjects:
 - () anger
 - () frustration
 - () hurt
 - () sadness
 - () nervousness
 - () joy
 - () innuendo
 - () sarcasm.

(For a complete list see Emotional Vocabulary - Use of Force Reporting, Monitoring and Writing Module.)

- ◆ Before continuing the officers may comment on the feelings that they have observed (if appropriate). These may be checked between officers to be sure that they have interpreted them correctly.
- ◆ The officers' meta talk statement should acknowledge the subjects' feelings (see Ego States) and create rapport and understanding with them.

Verbal pacing

Using questions to get to the heart of the matter is very important. It is the officer's job to get to the person, event, situation or object that stimulated the aggression. By diffusing the stimulus the officer may be able to re-establish the subject's quality of judgement.

By looking at the different types of questions, officers may be able to delve into the heart of the matter.

- **The closed question** is any question that requires a yes or no answer. In general, it may be best to avoid this type of question in any situation where information gathering is a major component.
- **The open question** is one that cannot be answered yes or no, as it requires some elaboration. In this aspect police officers may decide to use the model **5WH** to assist them.

Who?

What?

Why?

Where?

When?

How?

- **The probing question** is for seeking confirmation when there is doubt in the officer's mind, such as when there is conflict or hesitation from the subject. This may be an example of incongruence where the ears are hearing one message, but the eyes are receiving another. If this happens then it might be prudent to explore the issue further.
- **The leading question** is the type of question that police officers may be familiar with when appearing as a witness in court. A leading question is normally used for confirming details that have come to light in previous questioning.
- **The loaded question** is one to be avoided at all cost. This type of question may tend to destroy interaction and instil negative feelings within the subject. The loaded question is one to which there are no correct answers or to which all possible answers could be incriminating.
- **The power of silence.** It is important to mention that silence can be a very important tool. Ask a question, remain silent and wait for an answer.

The LEAPS model of communication

Below is a simple model which offers a structured approach to communicating, not only in confrontational situations, but also in all situations. Officers should understand that this is not a rigid model, and they may enter it at any appropriate time. Rather like having an out-of-

body experience (Psychological Splitting - see Personal Management Module) officers should experience themselves operating with this model. Under conflict situations, rather like breathing exercises, this strategy may reduce anxiety within officers, because they self-monitor themselves.

Listen

It is not always easy to listen and observe not only words, but also more importantly gestures, in a conflict situation; however, **aggressive verbal conditioning** may assist with this (see Communication Module). People generally spend more time listening than they spend on any other communication activity, yet a percentage of people never learn to listen well. One reason is that they develop poor listening skills that continue with them throughout life.

The following list contains some of the most common poor listening habits.

- **Not paying attention.** Officers may allow themselves to be distracted or to think of something else. Also, not wanting to listen often contributes to lack of attention (see Attentional Control - Personal Management Module).
- **Pseudo-listening.** Often, officers who are thinking about something else may deliberately try to look as though they are listening. Such pretence may leave the subject with the impression that the officer has heard some important information or instructions offered by the subject.
- **Listening but not hearing.** Sometimes an officer may listen only to the facts or details, or to the way they were presented, and miss the real meaning (see Ego State Communication Rule 3).
- **Rehearsing.** Some officers may listen until they want to say something, then they stop listening, start rehearsing what they will say, and wait for the opportunity to respond.
- **Interrupting.** The officer may not wait until the complete meaning can be determined, but interrupts so forcefully that the subject stops in mid-sentence.
- **Hearing what is expected.** Officers may frequently think that they heard subjects say what they expected them to say. Alternatively, they sometimes refuse to hear what they do not want to hear.

- **Feeling defensive.** The officers may sometimes assume that they know the subject's intention or why something was said or, for various other reasons, they expect to be verbally confronted.
- **Listening for a point of disagreement.** Some officers may seem to wait for the chance to verbally confront the subjects. In this regard, they may listen intently for points upon which they can disagree.

Empathy

The word 'empathy' has Latin and Greek roots: **em** from the Latin means '**to see through**' and '**pathy**' from the Greek means '**the eye of the other**'. Additionally, a dictionary definition of empathy may describe '**the intellectual identification with or vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts, attitudes of another**'. Although we may seek far and wide for a solution to the sensitive side of cultural diversity, the answer might be in this one word, '**empathy**'. This one word may represent the greatest bridge between all cultures; it may also be one of the most powerful tools in verbally persuading another person. The key to empathy may be to actually be interested, and possibly the biggest hurdle to empathetic listening is a feeling that the officer already knows what the subject is speaking about.

It is important to allow the subject the opportunity to tell their story and for the officer to listen to it thoroughly. Another hurdle to empathetic listening may be evaluating issues that a subject tells an officer, or the officer disapproving of the subject's action, which they may have done differently. The following example sentences may help in the empathetic process.

- "Just let me be sure that I heard what you just said."
- "Just let me be sure that I understand you."
- "Just let me be sure that we understand each other."

Ask:

- The Closed Question.
- The Open Question (5WH).
- The Probing Question.

- The Leading Question.
- The Loaded Question.
- The Power of Silence.

(See Verbal Pacing Element.)

Paraphrase

Defined by the dictionary as '**a restatement of a text or passage giving the meaning in another form for clarity**', this might also be known in this regard as:

- There may be nothing that a subject will listen to more than the restatement of their own words. **Interest the subject and make them listen.**
- The subject is listening, the officer is talking. **The officer has taken control.**
- The officer can only respond effectively to a subject's words if they heard them correctly. **Is the officer sure that they heard correctly?**
- Being correct is not the issue. Making an attempt to get it correct is the issue. **The officer has created empathy.**
- Some officers may have made a statement in anguish and in haste. Once they heard it paraphrased, they may have wished to take it back. Sometimes, a subject may not realise what they have said, until it is parroted back. **Allow the subject or officer to modify the original statement.**
- People standing around a situation may need to be the officer's witnesses. Therefore, a clearer picture of what is being said might be to the officer's advantage. If the people standing around happen to be part of the problem, then an effective strategy to remove the hostility may be to paraphrase the leader and allow the crowd to hear and understand what they are really saying. **This may have a clarifying effect for people standing around.**
- There may be subjects who are effective at placing unwanted words and phrases in the officer's mouth. Paraphrasing is a useful tool to prevent this action. **Paraphrasing may prevent subjects from putting inaccurate words into an officer's mouth.**

- Paraphrasing may be an effective tool with superiors, colleagues and family too. **Do not rely on others to always say what they mean, no matter what their position; paraphrase it back.**
- When a subject makes an unreasonable request or demand, if they hear it paraphrased, it may make them back down to a more fair resolution. **Paraphrasing may generate a 'fair play response'.**

Summarise (action)

Condensing the facts, being brief and decisive, may assist the officer, before taking whatever action is necessary.

Insults - deflection and redirection

As a subject moves from anxiety towards the loss of verbal control, they may often resort to swearing, vulgarity and insults. The officer may be able to deal with these by the use of deflection and redirection strategies, such as:

- I appreciate what you are saying, **but ...**
- I hear what you are saying, **but ...**
- I understand you, **but ...**

Deflection and redirection phrases **deflect** the insults, **push** you in the direction you wish to go and **disempower** the subject throwing the insult. Another subtle example of using deflection and redirection is to use third party assistance. For example, if subject 1 is being confrontational towards an officer, and the officer is finding communication difficult, then they may ask subject 2 to help, such as "I can't seem to make your friend understand, could you explain to him/her what I mean?". This may redirect the responsibility from the officer to the third party.

I versus you language

Use the pronoun **'I'** to take responsibility and to promote co-operation and understanding when making statements to others.

This is in contrast to **'You'** statements that tend to promote an atmosphere of conflict by sounding accusatory, judgmental and threatening to others.

Whether officers are criticising the subjects' actions or disagreeing with them, the difference between getting co-operation or resistance can often be based on what pronoun is used, **'I'** or **'You'**.

'You' negatives

- Sounds accusatory
- Sounds judgmental
- Sounds threatening.

'I' benefits

- Takes 100% responsibility
- Promotes co-operation and understanding
- Lessens the threat to a higher authority.

Officers may be able to avoid conflicts such as communication failures, misunderstandings and personality clashes by using **'I'** instead of **'You'** language. Officers may find that subjects may be more likely to pay attention to the substance of what the officer says, instead of reacting negatively to the style in which the officer says it.

Manipulation

In confrontational situations, manipulation is a common way for subjects and officers to accomplish results. Generally, people may not be aware of their manipulation tactics, and their manipulation may be habitual or even unconscious. Officers should be aware that there are four primary ways in which people manipulate each other:

- intimidation
- sympathy
- guilt
- flattery.

This is not an exhaustive list.

These are examples of negative manipulation within a confrontational environment; however, officers and subjects can also manipulate in a positive manner. The difference between positive and negative manipulation often depends on whether the officer or subject has the other person's best interest at heart, or just their own, and whether they are acting with a sense of fairness, and consideration for the others' rights to make free choices.

Five-step communication model

The following five-step appeal model offers a valuable means of final approach in cases of resistance whereby subjects are given every chance to comply with the officer's requests. This, in effect, is mediation and it is the officer's role to give the subjects a fresh personal view of the situation from their own perspective. Let the subject say what they want, as long as they do what the officer wants.

- ◆ Step 1: simple appeal. Ask the subject to comply with the officer's request. Some members of the public may respond to a direct request from a police officer
- ◆ Step 2: reasoned appeal. Explain why the request has been made, what law if any has been broken, and what conduct has caused the request
- ◆ Step 3: personal appeal. This may remind the subject that they may be jeopardising values that are high priorities to them such as:
 - ◇ the loss of free time if arrested or while in court, or imprisonment
 - ◇ the loss of money, to pay travelling expenses or court fines, costs etc
 - ◇ the loss of income and prestige of their employment
 - ◇ the possibility of a criminal record, and its potential impact upon future job applications
 - ◇ the loss of respect of their partner and family

Officers may need to think for the subject, and create and present certain options for them

- ◆ Step 4: final appeal. At this stage subjects may have confirmed their resistance to the officer's requests. The officer should now finally tell them what is required and use a phrase that means the same as the following example:

"Is there anything I can reasonably do to make you co-operate with me/us?"

- ◆ Step 5: action. Physical force may be the only option left in a case of continued resistance. The option that the officer may choose will be based upon the threat that

they perceive (see Use of Force, Conflict Management Model and Personal Management Module). It may also be necessary to record the events (see Use of Force Reporting, Monitoring and Writing Module).

Ancillary communication skills

The following skills support the bulk of this module and may provide the officer with additional points for consideration.

Commentary work

In police driving terms, when officers get behind the wheel of a police vehicle under instruction, it is required that they give a running commentary about everything that is happening around them. This systematically takes into account 360-degree awareness, both outside and inside the vehicle. With practice, this forces the driver to look well ahead instead of looking just in front of the bonnet, thereby seeing hazards early and dealing with them effectively.

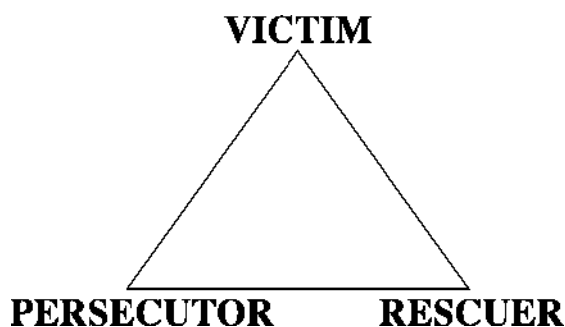
In personal safety terms, it is also important to read the situation early, in order to make appropriate decisions. The greatest benefit of talking commentary, however, is that while officers are doing it, they cannot do anything else. By not being able to do anything else, this prevents the officer from thinking about issues that are not relevant to the matter in hand. Without commentary, officers might give the impression of awareness, yet their mind might be elsewhere. All ancillary, superfluous thoughts are excluded in favour of talking commentary.

Additionally, with practice, talking commentary becomes 'habit-forming' and can be a key to permanent awareness at a subliminal, subconscious level.

When this happens it is said that officers have created 'multi-tasking', in that they may be able to function on a conscious level, ie while conducting a conversation, yet the colour code system is operating (see Personal Management Module). Essentially, this is another example of the officer detaching themselves from their body and watching themselves from a distance (see Psychological Splitting - Personal Management Module).

Multi-officer communication

When attempting to control subjects, the process of communication can be unprofessionally destroyed when officers ‘overtalk’ each other. It may be very easy to ruin an individual officer’s rapport with a subject by interrupting at a crucial time. Alternatively, it may assist an officer who is failing to verbally persuade the subject and needs rescuing. Be aware that in attempting to rescue an officer (the victim) from the subject (the persecutor) the rescuing officer may become the focus of attention. This is known as a **‘drama or Korpmen triangle’**, and it may be used in conjunction with **ego state communication**.



In an effort to prevent this happening, the use of the clock system of positioning may be helpful. The contact (communicating officer) generally stands at the 12 o’clock position and may communicate with the subject. If another officer intervenes, or if the subject decides to talk to another officer, then that officer will assume the 12 o’clock position.

Additionally, this may be used to tactical advantage when attempting to misdirect the attention of a subject by communication skills, in order to place them in a specific position (see Unarmed Skills, Baton, Incapacitant and Edged Weapon Skills Module).

Crisis communication

Occasionally, officers may need to use loud, repetitive, verbal commands by shouting as a means of controlling the subject. It is important to realise that simple language with short phrases should be used, because a determined subject or non-English speaking subject may fail to understand complicated messages. Similarly, the officer may not be able to physiologically mouth complicated words due to the stress of the situation (see Personal Management Module). Therefore, officers should attempt to use the following communication.

Before physical engagement

- “Stop”
- “Get back”
- “Stay back.”

There may be similar derivatives that officers personally use.

During the encounter

Physical actions take priority, therefore it may be impossible to shout while the officer is physically exerted and needs oxygen to operate effectively. However, if possible, clear messages should be given, such as:

- “Stop fighting”
- “Stop resisting”
- “Stop kicking.”

Following the encounter when control has been achieved.

At this stage, it is important for the officers to de-escalate their level of response. This may be achieved by paralinguistics such as lowering the volume of speech and reassuring the subjects. In this regard, officers may use phrases similar to:

- “Stop struggling”
- “Relax, it’s all over.”

Officers should also give the subjects information and, where necessary, instructions as to their next steps, such as:

- “I’m now going to handcuff you”
- “I’m going to stand you up.”

Such information may give the subject the chance to comply with the officer’s requests and to comply with their actions.

Occasionally, officers who are confronted by subjects who verbally shout and scream at them may momentarily freeze, simply because they cannot believe the ferocity of the barrage of verbal abuse that they are encountering (see Fright, Flight, Fight, Posturing, Submission - Personal Management Module). If this is the case, officers may decide to use aggressive counter-verbal and non-verbal communication skills.

Every officer may have a certain degree of aggressive potential, but the real skill is learning how to guide that aggression. The art of assertion can be a viable alternative, and the assertive skills that can be gained from quality personal safety training may guide officers, not only through potentially hostile situations, but also through minor irritations. In turn, assertiveness may lift the officer's spirits and preserve their self-esteem.

Establishing self-esteem is an important by-product of personal safety and nowhere is that more important than in the operational arena. Although some officers may be pacifist by nature, there may be some situations when they must change that nature very quickly. If officers present themselves assertively, then some subjects may not want to persist with the confrontation; however that does not mean that all subjects will comply. Aggressive verbal and non-verbal communication often precedes loss of physical control by the subject(s). For the untrained officer who may be emotionally 'disarmed', this can be dangerous, yet for the assertively trained officer, this time may be used effectively. During this period of verbal/non-verbal attack, the officer may use the window of opportunity that is presented, and be pre-emptive (see Use of Force and Unarmed Skills Module) or possibly escape from the situation (see Unarmed Skills and Edged Weapon Skills Module). Alternatively, officers may reply verbally with submissive or aggressive counter-verbals. This pre-physical management is a product of rehearsed theatre acting and modelling of the subject. This may turn the situation around in favour of the officer both in time and, ultimately, control, so that it is the subject who experiences the denial stage and is disarmed (see Colour Codes - Personal Management Module). However, officers should similarly be aware of the subject who has mentally rehearsed what to say and what to do, in a pre-meditated and cold, clinical fashion.

Further reading

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- Schwimmer, L. D. (1995), *The Art of Resolving Conflicts in the Workplace, Study Guide*. Kantola Productions, 55 Sunnyside Avenue, Mill Valley, California 94941-1924
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