

5. Communication strategies proposed by Romanian team

5.1. EFFICIENT COMMUNICATION: ASSERTIVENESS (OR HOW TO EFFICIENTLY COMMUNICATE WITH PEOPLE AROUND)

2. Objectives:

Purpose:

- developing assertive communication ability.

Objectives:

- to identify the main characteristics of the three communication types: passive, aggressive, assertive;
- to acquire the necessary knowledge to use assertive communication;
- to raise awareness of the importance of efficient and assertive communication between the group members and in the career development strategies;
- to improve abilities of making communication efficient by applying assertive principles and practising the communication types in different situations characteristic to the business environment;
- to practice brainstorming as active-participative method;
- to identify a communication style.

3. Workgroup/target: students aged 15-19

4. Pre-requisites

- Notions on types of communication (what communication is, communication types).

5. Time

- The material contains useful resources to approach the theme „assertive communication” in activities with students. The teacher may select and adapt the exercises proposed according to the time on disposal.

6. Means/tools:

- Activity organisation forms: frontal, individual, group
- Didactic methods: conversation, brainstorming, exposition, group debates and reporting, case study/problem setting, role play.
- Didactic means: writing instruments, flipchart sheets, handouts.

7. Evaluation

- According to the time on disposal, the teacher may make initial, formative, final evaluations.
- These evaluation activities may have as objective: the evaluation of the students performance, the evaluation of the content of the exercises developed, the evaluation of their activity moderators.
- Evaluation methods to be used: tests, appreciation scale, the observation of the students behaviour during the exercises, “The Newspaper”, representing the collectively, the article, the evaluation that each student makes for the training process. The articles are debated and make up the newspaper, based on the idea of unity.

8. Strategies

Exercises proposed:

- Exercise 1. Brainstorming: „What is communication?”
- Exercise 2. Brainstorming: „Why is the development of the communication skills important?”
- Exercise 3. Brainstorming: „How can we better communicate with others?”
- Exercise 4. Group activity: „The mouse and the monster”
- Exercise 5. „Assertiveness–key of efficient communication”
- Exercise 6. The assertive message
- Exercise 7. The compliment
- Exercise 8. The construction of an assertive message: How do we say NO assertively?
- Exercise 9. The construction of an assertive message: How do we answer criticism assertively?

DETAILS OF THE EXERCISES PROPOSED

Exercise 1: Brainstorming: „What is communication?”

- The activity presenter says: “*When I hear the word communication I think of...*”
- For two minutes the students will utter all the words that cross their minds, knowing that they will not be criticised, without fear of making a mistake.

Communication is the process of sending, receiving and interpreting the messages by which we are in relation with the others and adapt to the environment.

People communicate daily, efficiently or inefficiently, verbally or non verbally, artistically and scientifically.

Elements of communication: emitter, message, receiver.

Forms of communication: verbal, non-verbal(mimics, gestures, posture) para-verbal(expression, accent, intonation, word order).

Exercise 2: Brainstorming: „Why is the development of communication skills important?”

- The presenter of the activity mentions some information on the communication ability:

By communication skills we must not strictly understand having talent at writing or being a good speaker. To know how to communicate means the capacity of talking to people, explaining, convincing or motivating people in a certain direction. Anybody needs this attitude, especially when a certain task needs team work.

*Communication abilities: **The art of saying what must be said, when, what, how and to whom it must be said...***

- The presenter of the activity proposes the statement: “*The development of the communication skills is important because ...*”.
- For 2 minutes, students mention the reasons why the development of the communication skills is important, continuing the presenter’s statement.

- All the reasons will be written on the flipchart and the presenter will make theoretical mentions.

Communication represents the basis of all our relations. Our personal, professional life as well as a considerable measure of our happiness depend on the way we communicate. The better one communicates, the more successfully one is in the relationship with family, friends or in the business environment.

As one must enter into contact with people, one must make oneself understood, try to understand what others might want in order to relation with them and solve certain life situations.

The making of personality by education, practicing a job depend on communication. Communication is an indispensable component also regarding the career orientation as by means of it we make the others know our knowledge and skills. Success or failure in career depend 50% on the way we know to communicate with those around. Numerous conflicts are the result of communication conflicts.

Efficient communication helps us develop qualitatively the love, friendship and professional relations and avoid conflictual situations in our life. The first step in developing the communication abilities is awareness. To be aware of the communication skills that you miss and need to study, to develop in order to master them better.

Exercise 3: Brainstorming: „How can we better communicate with others?“

- The presenter of the activity proposes the statement” We can communicate better with others if...”.
- For 3 minutes, students mention ways of improving communication, continuing the statement.
- All the modalities will be mentioned on the flipchart, and according to them, the presenter may make theoretical mentions.

Possible answers:

- *To express opinions and emotions without attacking the interlocutor.*
- *To use an encouraging tone, a positive one, even if it is about critical observation, proving respect to the one to whom the message is addressed.*
- *To respect the others’ rights.*
- *To avoid raising voice.*
- *Not to criticize the others’ opinions.*
- *Not to offend, to prove respect.*
- *To listen attentively to what the other says and to offer feed-back.*
- *Smile!*
- *Give up irony!*
- *Give up the attitude of superiority!*
- *Maintain visual contact!*
- *Do not dominate conversation!*
- *Do not interrupt frequently the conversation!*
- *Do not look insistently at the watch!*
- *Do not look at the walls!*

Exercise 4. „The mouse and the monster” – group activity

- This exercise has the role of helping students identify the characteristics of aggressive and passive behaviour, of identifying the differences between the characteristics of aggressive and passive behaviour.
- Students will work in groups to fill in a work sheet (Annex 1). The representative of each group will present the answers.
- The moderator of the activity will present information on the passive and aggressive communication styles.

Exercise 5: „Assertiveness – key of efficient communication” (Annex 2)

- Theoretical presentation on assertive behaviour made by the presenter of the activity.
- Reflection exercise for students/Brainstorming: *Identify the persons in your life towards whom you have passive, aggressive and assertive behaviour.*

Exercise 6: Assertive message

- Theoretical presentation: Construction of assertive message (Annex 3).
- Practising the ability of making an assertive message. Annex 4. Make up groups of 4-5 students. Each group receives a worksheet with three situations characteristic to the business environment. The student will collaborate and will write assertive answers for each situation. The representative of each group will present the answers. The teacher and the other students may make comments, may add passive and aggressive answers.

Exercise 7. The Compliment (Annex 5)

- Brainstorming: How do you react to a compliment? Students are asked to think of the latest compliment received, to describe the situation in which they received the compliment and what they did.
- Practising the ability of making compliments: Each student is requested to make a compliment to his neighbour, to make him feel good.

Exercise 8. Constructing an assertive message: How do we say NO assertively?

- Brainstorming: Why is it hard to say NO? What are the consequences of the fact that we are not able to say No? How do we say NO assertively?
- The presenter of the activity fills in the answers given by the students. (Annex 3)
- Students practise the ability of saying NO assertively. Students, grouped in pairs, get a ticket with a situation. Each pair will make an assertive refusal to the situation described on the ticket.

Exercise 9. Making an assertive message. How do we answer criticism assertively?

- Brainstorming: How do we answer critics? Students are asked to think of a situation in which they were criticised and present the way in which they answered the criticism.
- Brainstorming: Which are the beliefs regarding criticism?
- Theoretical presentation: How do we answer criticism constructively? (Annex 3).
- How do we answer criticism constructively? – role-play for students to practise the ability of answering criticism assertively.

CONCLUSIONS

The presenter of the activity mentions conclusions on different aspects of communication:

- Importance of interpersonal communication.
- Success/failure strategies in communication.

- The importance of assertive communication.
- Developing communication skills.

The importance of communication

- *Interpersonal communication is the most important and often used communication form. People may not avoid this type of communication; their social existence depends on the ability with which they may start discussions with others. Family life, relations with friends, professional activity, all depend on this quality.*
- *Interpersonal communication is face to face communication. It is important to understand yourself and to construct relations with the others. To do this, we should develop self analysis, self-knowledge, self-exposure capacity as well as know the barriers and the disturbing factors that make communication process difficult.*

Efficient communication vs. Inefficient communication

Efficient communication (success strategies)	Inefficient communication (failure strategies)
<i>Using peoples' names during conversation Clear instructions Listening to the others Showing appreciation Visual contact Smiling</i>	<i>Dominating conversation Ignoring frustration Stubbornness and inflexibility Looking to the floor or to the ceiling Frequent interruptions of the discussions Lack of interest Folding arms Looking frequently at the watch</i>

Importance of assertiveness

- *Assertiveness affects almost all life sides. People that get this ability have less conflicts, less stress, succeed in meeting their needs, have strong relationships they may count on. All these lead to a better mental state and better health.*
- *Assertiveness develops. First, a clear distinction must be made between assertive, passive and aggressive behaviour, secondly you must practise assertiveness until you develop a range of behaviour to be applied in the most varied situations, even under stress. People were born assertive. Let's think of a child. He cries when he wants something and expresses emotions freely. Then, step by step, he adapts emotions in conformity with the answers he receives from the environment..*

Remember! Assertiveness is:

- The ability to communicate needs, emotions, opinions and convictions in a manner that does not offend the others' rights;
- An ability that may be learnt;
- A way of communication and behaving with the others that will help your self confidence.

Developing communication skills

- *Communication skills develop in time, we are not born with them.*
- *Developing communication skills is a process that may start anytime, no matter the age.*

ANNEX 1: THE MOUSE AND THE MONSTER

Șoarecele și monstrul

1. Notează cel puțin cinci cuvinte care descriu șoarecele din imagine.

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2. Notează cel puțin cinci cuvinte care descriu monstrul din imagine.



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ASSERTIVENESS – KEY OF EFFICIENT COMMUNICATION

Assertiveness is the ability to express emotions and convictions without affecting and attacking the others' rights, without being aggressive or passive.

Characteristics of assertive communication:

- Expresses preferences, emotions and convictions without attacking or affecting the others' rights.
- Communicates directly, openly and honestly, winning the respect of colleagues and friends.
- It has the capacity of initiating, maintaining and ending a conversation in a nice way.
- It expresses negative emotions without attacking or embarrassing the other.
- It has the ability to request or refuse.
- It expresses positive emotion it makes and accepts compliments.
- it makes and accepts compliments.
- says „NO” without guilt or embarrassment.
- copes with the pressure of the group and expresses openly personal opinions.
- it bases on equilibrium.
- it considers the ideas and opinions of the others.
- when it criticises, it does it constructively.
- it is a good interlocutor, it listens to people without interrupting.
- it uses” I” – Statements.
- it criticises constructively.
- it avoids expressions such as: we should”, “it is necessary”, and replaces them with ”what do you think about”, “would you like to.
- disposal for exploring solutions (“How can we solve this problem?”).
- it considers the people's suggestions and thanks them sincerely.
- It asks and offers help with pleasure.
- It is receptive to the others' needs.
- It recognises the responsibilities to the others.

The assertive style discusses the problem, supports its rights, are self confident, recognize their rights and those of the others. It supposes to find a solution of the “win-win” type, so the rights of both parties are admitted and respected, in order to find an alternative to the benefit of both.

Verbal expressions used:

- *"I think that ..."*
- *"I would like to do this..."*
- *"Would you mind if..."*
- *"I appreciate much what you did for me "*
- *"I think we should ..."*
- *"I feel offended when..."*
- *"I think that it is unfair regarding me "*
- *"Can you help me?"*
- *„I would like to hear your opinion”*
- *„I don't loke it when you talk to me on this tone ”*
- *"Thank you for your help".*

Non-verbal signs: calm but sure voice, as not to offend the interlocutor, he smiles sincerely when it is necessary, acknowledges by head.

Examples:

- *Assertive behaviour:* calm, understanding the need of the friend but also the fact that you have priorities: "I understand that you need help taking into account that this need a lot of work, but I have already made other plans that I cannot cancel. I hope you can find somebody else".

Way of thinking:

- "I will not allow you to take advantage of me and I will not attack you for what you think".

Assertive communication is in contrast with passive and aggressive communication.

Passive communication style:

- It avoids conflicts and confrontations;
- It wishes everybody to be happy, but without considering the personal needs and wishes;
- It does not protect its interests, it does not express feelings or opinions;
- It does not make requests, it does not request something particular, it does not imply itself in getting some personal rights or in defending an opinion(it considers that its opinions and ideas are unimportant);
- It allows others to influence it;
- It avoids direct confrontation;
- It justifies itself often;
- It is hesitation, with big communication breaks;
- It shows guilt and helplessness feelings, solitude, loneliness, fear, anxiety(it is timid, obedient, subjective, humble);
- It thinks that its passive behaviour will help it be accepted and approved by the others;
- It cannot take decisions;
- It coincides with the solution "you win- I lose ";
- This person feels hurt, frustrated, irritated, without trying to express dissatisfaction in front of others".

The passive style avoids the problem, the own rights, lets the others choose in his place, sees the rights of the others as more important.

Specific verbal expressions:

- *"I'm sorry I have taken your time but..."*
- *"If you say so ..."*
- *„O h, it's all right "*
- *„Sure, I do not want this . "*
- *„I leave this to your decision"*
- *"Please don't get upset with me "*
- *„We do as you wish"*
- *„I'm so sorry I upset you"*

Non-verbal signs: avoiding people, low voice, monotonous, minimal visual contact, nervous movements, bent posture, bent shoulders, head between shoulders, folded arms.

Examples:

Passive behaviour (with guilt feeling): "Well, I think I could change my program to help you with the furniture. It will be difficult to rearrange my program but I will help you."

Way of thinking:

- *"I do not matter".*
- *"My needs and feelings are no so important".*
- *"If I say this the others will like me".*
- *"If I say not the other will be upset with me."*

Costs of passive behaviour

- Accumulation of frustrations that may become violent at a moment.
- The others know he cannot refuse and will take advantage by certain requests.
- Diminishing self esteem and a positive self image, low self esteem.

Aggressive communication style:

- It blames and accuses the others.
- It breaks the rules imposed by authorities (parents, teachers, police).
- It is insensitive to the others feelings, humiliates people, finds defects in what the others do.
- It does not respect colleagues and everything it does is to its benefit.
- It considers it is always right, it does not accept other ideas and opinions.
- It interrupts the interlocutor to express opinions.
- It has an attitude of superiority.
- It relies on winning (it coincides with the type "I win-you lose").
- It solves problems by violence.
- It is fluent, with no hesitations in speaking.
- Rapidity in speaking.
- Critical, mean comments.
- It considers those around often unfair to it.
- It is ironical and often uses criticism in communication.
- It often fights, talks much.
- It is hostile, mean, furious (uses raised voice, manifests dissatisfaction violently).

The aggressive style attacks the problem, supports its rights without considering those of the others, choose their activity and consider their rights are more important than those of the others.

Verbal expressions often used:

- *"Are you doing it or not?"*
- *"Nonsense!"*
- *"It's obvious you can't understand!"*
- *"You are all stupid!"*
- *"You are crazy!"*
- *"Do as I say!"*
- *"You are terrible!"*
- *"I've had enough of you"*
- *"You are stupid, you don't understand anything".*
- *"I don't care what you think, I do my way".*

Non-verbal signs : tension, it stays next to the interlocutor, it frowns, rigid face expression, it stares at the interlocutor to intimidate him, it make provoking gestures, agitates the fist, points the finger, has cold, threatening voice, raised in the end of the sentence.

Examples:

Aggressive behaviour: (with fury): "How do you think I will carry so much weight for you? Don't you think I have better things to do?"

Way of thinking:

- *" I will knock you down before you do!"*.
- *"I'm the best!"*
- *"I must win at any price!"*.

Costs of the aggressive behaviour:

- Creating hard feelings around the person with aggressive behaviour.
- Instable relations based on negative emotions.
- Lack of relaxation because of the tendency to control situations and persons.

Examples:

Situation: Somebody enters in front of you at the supermarket.

Aggressive answer: "Shame on you! Stay in the line like the others!"

Passive answer: absence of reaction, ignoring the situation.

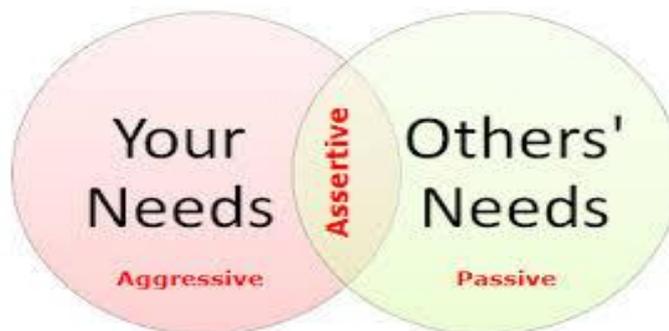
Assertive answer: Excuse me, I am waiting too".

Situation: Your friend, very talkative, calls you to complain about a bad day at work. You are busy and have no time to talk.

Aggressive answer: "Let's talk other time! I have enough problems, I don't need yours!"

Passive answer: let her talk, and the phone at the ear , try to do something of your work.

Assertive answer: listen 1-2 minutes, then say:"I'm sure you had a bad day. I'd like to talk but now I don't have time. Can we talk later"?



ANNEX 3: Constructing an assertive message

A. Sugestions for building an assertive message:

Constructing an assertive message supposes a positive expression, without judgments, criticism or guilt

Instead of: "I told you not to do that because we will lose money!"

Say: "Let's try another variant".

1. Describe the behaviour that disturbed you without judging, without going into deductions about the reasons, attitudes and the character of the other person. Try to put yourself into the place of the other.

Your friend is 20 minutes late although he knew you had something important to tell him. Instead of "you are so insensitive! You knew we had to talk about something important, but you were late!"

Say: „We had to meet at 5pm. Now it's 5.30".

2. Describe the behaviour without exaggerating things.

Instead of: "You ruined all my evening! We had important things to talk about!"

Say: "We will have less time to discuss the problem we met for, because at 6.30 I planned something else."

3. Use the 1st person message. Thus you will concentrate on the way in which the behavior of the other affects you. If you start with "you", the other will consider this as an attack and will maintain the conflict. The message is centered on your own person, not on the other.

Instead of "You had to be more careful, you had to let me know you were going to be late!"

Say: "I would have felt calmer if I had known you were going to be late. In the 30 minutes I waited for you, I thought about different things and in the future I would feel better if you checked your phone."

4. Describe in concrete, specific terms, both the effect of the other's behaviour on you and the desired behaviour. Avoid ambiguous, embarrassing expressions, the prolonged silence.

5. Be short, the longer the message, the sooner you lose the interlocutor's attention.

6. Use positive expressions and smile!

For example ; "When... then...." Is more useful than "No, you cannot because..."

7. Repeat (calmly, clearly, patiently and firmly) what you want/do not want (technique of the scratched record), but not for hours , with the same words.

8. Use humour to reduce tension!

9. Avoid fighting back, answering criticism with criticism, aggressively with aggressively, sarcasm with sarcasm. There will be a chain of criticism, offences, threatening that hurt both persons.

Steps to be taken while building an assertive message that expresses negative feelings towards somebody (fury, hard–feelings):

Describe the behaviour of the other without judging, criticising, exaggerating.	<i>Your being late with the report requested...</i> <i>When you don't let me know you are going to be late...</i>
Describe the impact the other's behaviour has on you clearly, specifically, without generalization .	<i>"... it means I will have to work in the weekend..."</i> <i>"...I worried that something might have happened"</i>
Describe your feelings	<i>I would really appreciate</i>
Say how you would like him to behave in the future.	<i>...so from now on try to solve tasks in the deadline.</i> <i>...if you called to announce that you will be late .</i>

B. How do we say NO assertively?

For many people it is hard to say “NO”.

Beliefs/Prejudices that makes saying NO difficult:

- Saying “No” is impolite and aggressive.
- Saying “No” is selfish.
- Saying “No” will hurt the others and will make them feel rejected.
- If I say “No” to somebody, that person will not like me anymore.
- The needs of the others are more important than mine's.
- I always try to be liked and helpful.
- Saying “No” means a closed vision.

Avoiding to say this word, we are sometimes drawn to situations in which we don not want to be, we will do what we do not want to do. For this reason, we may feel anger or hard feelings to the person to whom we said “yes”, although this person did not do anything wrong. We may become disappointed, frustrated, stressed.

Beliefs/opinions that help us say “NO” assertively:

- The others have the right to ask and I have the right to refuse.
- Saying “No” means refusing a request, not a person.
- When saying “yes” to a thing, you say “no” to another. We always have to make choices.
- People that have difficulties in saying “no” usually tend to imagine in an exaggerated way the way in which the other will accept the refusal. They do not consider that the others may accept a negative answer.
- Saying “NO” in an inconsiderate manner is not assertiveness. Basic principles that must be respected when saying “NO”.
- Be direct and sincere, but don't be impolite.
- Be short.
- Tell the respective person if it is difficult for you to do this.
- Be polite-say” thank you for asking”.

- Speak rarely, with warmth, otherwise the word “NO” will sound taunted.
- Do not excuse yourself in excess. It is your right to say no, without justifying yourself too much.
- Remember that, on long term, it is better to tell the truth than to get hard feelings and misery inside.
- When saying “NO”, take responsibility for this. Do not accuse yourself and do not invent excuses.
- Change “I can’t” into “I don’t want to do this”.

Ways of saying no

There are some ways of saying “No”. Some of them are more suitable in certain situations. Trevor Powell describes 6 ways of saying “no”:

- **The direct no.** When somebody asks you to do something and you don’t want to, simply say “no”, without excuses. This technique may be efficient with salesmen, for example.
- **The thought over no.** This technique contains an exposition of the request’s content and adds the assertive answer in the end. For example: ”I know you can’t wait to go for a walk, but today I can’t”.
- **The motivated no.** This technique proposes the justification of the refusal by sincere, short reason.
- **The flexible no.** It is not a clear “no”. It is a way of saying “no” at present, but leaves place for “yes” in the future.” I can’t have lunch with you today, but we see each other next week sometimes.”
- **No by another question.** It is a method of trying to find another variant for the respective problem:”can we meet other time?”.
- **The broken record.** It can be used in many situations. One must repeat the refusal as long as necessary.

Source: *Assert yourself. Module Six. How to say „No” assertively*
(<http://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/docs/Assertmodule%206.pdf>)

C. How to answer criticism assertively?

The word criticism comes from old Greek and describes a person that offers a reasonable or analysis judgment, a clue judgment, an interpretation or an observation. To answer assertively to criticism may be a big challenge.

Criticism may:

- **Constructive.** Constructive criticism offers healthy feedback, so that the person criticised may learn and develop itself. Example: “I really like the way you wrote this report, I think you had better concentrate more on spelling”.
- **Destructive.** Destructive criticism is not true, or if it is, it is presented in a destructive manner. It is made to hurt and put the other in a bad light. Example. “This report is horrible, your spelling is terrible”.

Constructive criticism have the form of feedback and are non- threatening, so that they permit the person to learn something and develop. Destructive criticism is either valid or non-valid, but it is offered in an unsuitable manner. The way in which we accept criticism has much to do with our childhood experiences. If we were not criticized during childhood, when we meet them for the first time, we may be devastated. If we received constructive criticism it is possible to face criticism. If we were punished and criticized badly, probably we perceive criticism as something painful. This happens when those around did not criticize our behavior but our person. If we made a mistake and our parents said” you are stupid” we felt rejected.

If, on the other hand we were told: "What you did was foolish", our behavior and our person became two separate things. It was behavior that was foolish, not us.

Negative beliefs on criticism:

- If I am criticised, I am stupid.
- They criticised me, so they do not like me anymore.
- They are right, I can't do anything right, I am a loser.
- I can't criticise them, as they will no longer like me.
- How dare them tell me I did something wrong? They have no right.
- He is an idiot anyway. I'm not listening to him.
- If I criticize myself and make jokes, people will not see I'm hurt.

Non assertive ways of answering criticism:

- Be confused.
- Become furious and pass responsibility.
- Begin to protect yourself.
- Keep quiet.
- Act foolishly.
- Get off the discussion.
- Ignore criticism and suffer inside.
- Run away.
- Keep fury inside.

Types of answers to criticism:

Passive answer	Aggressive answer	Assertive answer
<p>If we have such behavior in general, it is very hard to answer criticism. We will run, hide and become confused. We will have the tendency to agree to any criticism, true or not. We say "Yes, you are right. I have no value". And this has to cease.</p> <p>Those with a passive behavior see criticism as a rejection of their person. This behavior will lead to depression, anxiety and low self esteem. They will agree to all criticism, adopting an attitude of: "if I criticize myself and make jokes, nobody will know how much I actually suffer".</p>	<p>Aggressive persons interpret criticism as personal attack."How dare you? I was not late. You are always late!"</p> <p>This type of answer will generate conflicts and will amplify aggressively, leading to depression and low self esteem.</p>	<p>When we use assertively in such situations, it is recommendable to identify the difference between constructive and destructive criticism and answer accordingly.</p> <p>We may understand the fact that criticism addressed to our behavior does not necessarily say something about that person.</p> <p>We will not be defensive, angry, upset and hurt. We can stay calm and accept criticism without negative emotions.</p>

Type of assertive answers at constructive criticism:

- **Accepting criticism.** If criticism is valid, it will be accepted without expressing negative emotions. We must accept the fact that we are not perfect, we all may learn from mistakes. We may thank the person for the feedback and we make changes to be better.
- **Negative statements.** If criticism is real, accept it and agree without apologising and feeling down. If you are untidy and on your desk there is chaos, you may say: "Yes, it is true, I'm not very tidy". Another method of using negative statement is to admit your mistake openly without being highlighted.
- **Investigations by supplementary questions/negative inquiry.** If you are not sure that you received valid, constructive criticism, you may use this answer in order to ask more questions. Thus you will obtain more details and will know how to report to the person that brings the criticism.

Types of assertive answer for destructive criticism:

- **Disapprove criticism.** It is important to stay calm and control non-verbal language (tone of voice, visual contact). If you are told "You are always late", your answer may be "No, I do not. I was late in some situations by I was not behind with what I was supposed to do". **Accepting criticism (partially or totally).**
- **Negative inquiry.** If somebody criticizes you and you are not sure if the criticism is valid or constructive, ask for more details.

Learn how to criticize constructively!

There are abilities we learn when we criticize so that the person should be more receptive to what we say. Offering the others feedback on their behavior may be a proof of affection and may be helpful. This feedback may be positive or negative.

Try to consider the following aspects when criticizing:

- Make sure you chose a right time and place for this. If you want to bring in discussion a situation that caused an emotional reaction, wait to calm down. But do not wait for next time when the same behaviour may appear from the same person.
- Describe the behaviour you criticise, not the person. Say "I think you made a mistake here", not "You are an idiot".
- Describe your feelings, using "I" statements, without blaming the other. Say "I am furious when" and not "You are annoying me".
- Ask for a change. If you only complain, you cannot help the person change behaviour. Instead of saying "I hate this music" you may say "This music seems annoying to me; can you turn it off after 8 , please?"
- Specify the positive consequences the behaviour change may have and the negative consequences of the refusal to change.
- Be realistic when you remember the positive and the negative consequences. Don't say thing like "I'm killing you if you don't turn the music down."
- Ask the other what he feels about what you said. Being assertive means balanced interaction.
- Close the discussion in a positive note. If it is the case, say positive things about your feelings regarding the other person

Sources:

- <http://www.consultanta-psihologica.com/cum-sa-te-descurci-cu-brio-in-fata-criticilor/>
- *Assert yourself. Module Seven. How to deal assertively with criticism* (<http://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/docs/Assertmodule%207.pdf>)

ANNEX 4. Practising assertive communication skills

Situation	Assertive answer
<p>Situation 1: Boss to employee: <i>“This project is totally wrong! It is not realistic and proves you have no idea on the realities in our company! You must do everything again by the end of next week. If you don’t do everything as I want I’ll cut 25% of your salary for the next 3 months!”</i></p>	Employee answer:
<p>Situation 2: During lunch break, a lawyer enters the firm kitchen for the lunch he had left in the fridge. At a moment he observes that a colleague takes his lunch from a paper bag that looked like that he had left in the fridge. He rushes to his colleague: <i>“I don’t believe you! You are insensitive! I understand you made bad business and have no money, but can you be so insensitive?”</i></p>	Accused lawyer answer:
<p>Situation 3: Three clerks from the town hall have to work on the first Christmas day to finish the documents for a very important European project. The documents must be finished by the next day, otherwise the town hall risks not getting an important sum of money for a street started 4 months before. At 11.30, one of the clerks announces he leaves earlier to the restaurant nearby to have lunch as he had left home without having breakfast or making a lunch. He returned after 3 hours. As he entered the door, one of the clerks started on him: <i>”Aren’t you ashamed? You are irresponsible and take advantage of the others. You left us with all these documents although you knew we had to finish it today! I will report you. You should be fired for not making the tasks”!</i></p>	Accused clerk’s answer:

ANNEX 5. The art of making and receiving compliments

Characteristics of assertive behavior: to be able to make and receive compliments. »Accept compliments with grace is one of the rules of assertive behavior.

It sounds strange but many find it hard to accept compliments. They feel uncomfortable in this posture. Being able to accept positive commentaries of the way we look, our work or other aspects is a very assertive characteristic.

How to make a sincere compliment? (Allan și Barbara Pease, *Communication abilities*, Ed. Curtea Veche, București, 2007, pp.17-20)

- Compliments make people feel special. And a new way is open to those to whom compliments are made..
- Compliments may refer to **behaviour, aspect, goods**. But the most convincing refer to behaviour.
- Compliments are more powerful if they contain the name of the person (if you say the name of the person first, they will listen more attentively).
- Be specific! Compliments are more effective if you say what you like! So, instead of “Mrs Croitoru, you are a good teacher! Say ”Mrs Croitoru, you are a good teacher because you have the patience to explain the difficult information more times!”.
- How to receive a compliment? When somebody makes a compliment, accept it and thank for it. Accepting compliments means you have a good opinion on yourself. Rejecting a compliment is interpreted as a personal rejection of the one who makes it.
- Advice: Make a habit of complimenting daily three persons!
- Smile and be enthusiastic when making compliment! This will make the other feel that you are sincere.
- If you want to use the compliment to start a conversation, ask questions:” You look so well in this dress! Where did you buy it from?”.

How to say” thank you”? (Allan și Barbara Pease, *Abilități de comunicare*, Ed. Curtea Veche, București, 2007, pp.24-25)

- Saying thank you is one of the most important abilities in building relationships between people.
- Keys of an efficient ”thank you”. Say the thanks clearly, look at and touch that person, say the name of the person.

Here are some non assertive ways of answering a compliment:

- Ignoring the behaviour and changing the subject.
- You disagree with the compliment or a part of it. “*What a beautiful dress!-I don ’t like its colour at all!*”.
- Minimising the compliment: “*Oh, this, old thing, it’s nothing special.*”
- Become sarcastic: “*Yes, sure, it’s wonderful, right?*”.
- Laugh or smile anxiously.
- Criticise yourself.

Answering a compliment:

- Look in the person's eyes. Stay straight. If you get farther or not see that person, it may seem you don't like her or believe her.
- Listen to what he says.
- Smile when receiving a compliment. It is meant to make you feel good. If you frown or look down, the person may get confused.
- Don't interrupt.
- Say thank you or something to show your appreciation.
- Accept the compliment without feeling as you have to return the favour. This will help you be more self confident and like yourself more.

Advice to make compliments:

- Think of the exact words you want to use. It will help you be more self-confident.
- Be specific. "This necklace looks very good on you" will have a better impact than "You look good today". The more specific, the better.
- Be honest about what you say. People feel when you are not sincere. Don't exaggerate.
- Smile and be enthusiastic when making compliments. That will feel the other you are sincere.
- Consider the relation with the other. Do not make too intimate compliments to somebody you do not have a close relation with.
- Ask questions when you want to use the compliment to start conversation: "The necklace looks good on you. Where did you buy it from?"

It is very important to know how to make compliments. Offering compliments is a method by which you show that you appreciate an aspect related on a person or a situation. People like to stay with open and friendly persons. Knowing how to make a compliment shows that you should be confident in what you think, which is essential in assertive communication. Start making a compliment today!

Source:

- *Assert yourself. Module Nine. How to Give and Receive Compliments assertively* (<http://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/docs/Assertmodule%209.pdf>)

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5.2. EFFICIENT COMMUNICATION: ACTIVE LISTENING

2.Objectives:

Target:

- Students' use of active listening in their behaviour.

Operational objectives:

- to explain the meaning of active listening;
- to identify the elements which help or prevent active listening;
- to improve their knowledge about those techniques of active listening which help active listening;
- to become aware of the importance of active listening in overcoming the barriers of communication, in putting conflicts to an end and in establishing positive relationships with other people;
- to improve their communication skills through active listening;
- to practise team work skills.

3. Workgroup/target: 15 to 19-year-old students

4.Pre-requisites

- Notions of communication types (what is communication, types of communication).

5. Time:

- The material contains useful resources for applying the subject of "active listening" with students. The teacher can choose and adapt the activities according to his/her time in class.

6. Means/tools:

- Types of activities: frontal, individual, group.
- Teaching methods: warm-up activities, conversation, brainstorming, lecturing, group debate and case study/problem solving.
- Teaching means: writing tools, work sheets/flipchart sheets.

7.Assessment:

- Depending on the time, the teacher can assess the students initially, formatively, finally.
- These assessment activities may have the following objectives: evaluating the students' knowledge levels, evaluating the activities content, evaluating the activity's moderators.
- Assessment methods to be used: quizzes, appreciation scale, noticing students' behaviour during the activities, "The Paper" (A group method, "The Paper" representing the group, "Article" the assessment each student makes to the formative process. The articles are discussed and thus, The Paper is being created, based on the idea of unity.).

8. Strategies

Proposed activities:

Activity no.1

- Motto: "We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak." (Epictetus)

Variant no. 1: Warm-up: "Favourite colours"

- The students are asked to think of their favourite colour, and at the moderator's signal (for example: 1,2, go!), they should yell it as loud as they can. Then, the moderator asks some students to tell one of their classmates' favourite colour. It is likely that most of them might not be able to do it. The moderator asks the students WHY they can tell it. This small game teaches the students that good communication requires talking as well as listening.

Activity no.2:

Variant 1: Are you a good listener?

- The students are given Annex 1 and answer questions about the listening process.
- Analysing the results of the test.

Variant no. 2: Listening test: The Taxi Driver

- The Moderator reads a text, telling the students to listen carefully. "Imagine you are a bus driver. You drive your bus between Vaslui and Oprișița every day. One day, you got on your bus and started counting. At the first stop, 5 people got on, at the second stop, 3 people got on and 2 people got off. At the third stop, 2 people got on and at the fourth stop, 5 people got off. At the fifth stop, 3 people got off and 2 people got on. Who knows the answer to the following question please raise the hand: What colour is the driver's eyes?"
- The Moderator asks the students who haven't raised their hand why they could find the answer. Students' possible answers: "I focused on counting the people who got on/off the bus", "I kept thinking what question you might ask and I didn't pay attention from the very beginning".
- Conclusion: When a person starts thinking of what he/she has to say while the other person is talking, that person stops listening.

Activity no. 3: "To hear vs. To listen" – group activity.

- The students work in groups to answer the question "Is there any difference between hearing and listening?"
- The group representative presents the answer.
- The Moderator draws the conclusions.

Activity no. 4: "Why do we listen?" - Brainstorming

- The students mention the reasons why they listen to what other people say to them.

Activity no. 5: "Elements preventing/supporting listening" – group activity

- The students discuss in groups in order to identify the elements which prevent or support listening by means of filling in a work sheet (Annex no. 2).
- The group representative presents the answer.
- The Moderator draws the conclusions.
- Think over: "What mistakes do you do while listening?"

Activity no. 6: Theoretical presentation: "Techniques of active listening"

Activity no.7: Practising active listening skills

Variant 1: Group activity

- The students work in groups of 4 or 5.
- Each group pick up a card describing a certain situation (Annex 4). Each group writes down a dialogue about applying the techniques of active listening. Each group presents their dialogue by means of a play role.
- After presenting the play roles, they can discuss the techniques used, the positive and negative aspects etc.

Variant 2: Group activity

- The students work in groups of 4 or 5.
- Each group fills in a work sheet (Annex 5).
- The representative of each group presents their work.
- After the presentations, they can discuss the positive and negative aspects of their dialogues.

Variant no. 3: The Story

- The students work in a circle. Each student says only a word when it is his/her turn. Thus, the student is challenged to pay attention to all the words said by his/her classmates so that he/she continues the story with a proper word.
- At the end of the story, they can think of a title.
- One of the students can play the leader and thus, he/she will indicate the person who comes next.

Variant no. 4: Class Memory

- Depending on how many students are, they are split up in at least 3 groups: group A – 5-7 students, groups B, C, D etc.
- One at a time, every student from Group A goes in front of the classroom and answers 3-5 questions asked by the other students (examples: What is your favourite colour? Who is your favourite actor?, What is your favourite school subject? etc.). The students don't know how the activity is to be deployed. While the students are being questioned, the students can take notes (for example, writing down all the questions being asked).
- Groups B, C, D etc. take part in a contest about their class. The same questions are asked again: What is Mihai's favourite colour?, What is Ioana's favourite school subject? etc. Each correct answer gets a point. The team with the highest number of points wins the contest.
- The game can be funny, the students being encouraged to listen to each other and, also to get to know better.

ANNEX 1. Are you a good listener?

In order to check the knowledge about the listening process, please mark A if the statements are true and G if they are false.

Nr.	Statement	True or False?
1.	To hear and to listen is practically the same thing.	
2.	To listen well is not difficult; it is more difficult to talk well.	
3.	When people listen, they tend to anticipate.	
4.	For most of the people, it is not a problem to pay attention to a certain subject for a long period of time.	
5.	The person talking is entirely responsible for the clear and coherent conveying of what he/she intends to say.	
6.	Listening is as important as talking.	
7.	Disturbances in the listening process do not represent an essential problem for communication.	
8.	People often pay attention to that piece of information which has a personal meaning for them.	
9.	People usually "hear" what they expect to hear.	
10.	Professional training, life experience, and education are factors which influence what we "hear" when we listen.	
11.	To listen is an ability you are born with, not a skill that you learn.	
12.	To listen is one of the easiest things to be done (shut up and listen).	
13.	A good listener pays attention to verbal and non verbal behavior.	
14.	The level of correct listening and understanding of what is being said lowers as the listener's emotional level raises.	
15.	In order to be a good listener you should "think over" the speaker's points of view while listening.	
16.	While listening, you should prepare the answer, before the speaker finishes what he/she has to say.	

(H.A., Robbins, How to speak and listen effectively)

Analysing the test

- To analyse the test's results, compare your answers with the following: 1-G, 2-G, 3-A, 4-G, 5-G, 6-A, 7-G, 8-A, 9-A, 10-A, 11-G, 12-G, 13-A, 14-A, 15-G, 16-G.
- For each correct you get 1 point; if the answer is wrong, you get 0 points.
- The more points you get, the more competent you are in active listening.
 - A score below 8 points should make you think something is wrong.

**ANNEX NO. 2: ELEMENTS SUPPORTING
OR PREVENTING LISTENING**

Elements preventing listening:



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Elements supporting listening:

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ANNEX NO. 3: ABOUT ACTIVE LISTENING

1. What is active listening?

- Active listening is, most and foremost, an ability which is based on supporting behaviors and which implies conscious and voluntary effort;
- It is a way to interact in which the partner is stimulated to continue talking and which allows you to be sure that you understand what you are being told.
- Active listening is empathic and requires respect towards yourself and towards the others.
- It is based on attitudes and techniques, but, above all this, it is a way TO BE.

Listening is one of the most important and difficult part of the communication. We tend to be focused more on what we are saying rather than what others are saying to us, thus missing the point of communication: exchanging information.

Active listening means not only listening, but also answering to what people are saying to us (through questions and answers), with the view of clarifying the meaning of the message and facilitating the communication. Thus, active listening can be described by means of several stages:

- 1.A conveys a message
- 2.B gets the message and asks clarifying questions or expresses what he/she has understood
- 3 a. A answers the question or
- 3 b. A agrees with what B has understood or conveys another message if B hasn't understood the previous one.

To listen is an art and a discipline. As in other skills, self control is required. You need to understand what listening implies and also you have to develop your self control so that you are quiet and able to listen, "forgetting" your own needs and focussing on the other.

In our daily life, people listen to less than 25% of the messages conveyed to them. Right after he gets the message, an average listener remembers only 50% of the information, and 48 hours later, only 25% of the message is kept in the active memory.

Active listening is the ability through which we prove we are interested in what the other person is saying and that we support and encourage him/her to continue communicating.

2. Hearing vs. Listening

There is a fundamental difference between "hearing" and "listening".

Hearing is a sense, an involuntary act.

Listening is a skill to be trained, developed, it is a voluntary act.

The words "hearing" and "listening" refer to two different concepts:

- **Hearing** refers to the perception of sonor vibrations.
- **Listening** refers to the action of understanding and analysing what we hear.

In order to listen it is necessary for you to hear, although hearing doesn't necessarily imply listening.

Examples of "hearing":

- While driving, the car radio is on, we sometimes listen to what is being said, but most of the cases, we hear the sounds that are broadcast (especially when we have other activity going on).

- When we take part in a conference on a subject we are not interested in, we might start listening to the speaker, but, as the time passes on, we tend to not focus and we end up hearing only the words.
- When on the street, we hear different sounds (car engines, people talking etc.) but, only few sounds get our attention.

Examples of “**listening**”:

- When we call a friend and ask him how was his/her first day at his/her new job.
- When someone is giving us directions on how we could get to a certain place.
- When we watch a movie, we listen to what the main characters are talking, so that we could understand the movie.

3. Why do we listen?

- To get information;
- To learn;
- To understand;
- To develop certain relationships;
- To understand better the other people;
- Reciprocal listening;
- For pleasure, to feel good etc.

Generally speaking, listening is a part of communication which is neglected or not taken into account, seen as a passive ability for which little can be done. According to some statistics, we spend around 45% of our communication time listening, 30% talking, 16% reading și 9% writing. According to other statistics, for a better communication you should spend more than 50% of the communication time listening. It has been discovered that around 60% of the misunderstandings are due to poor listening. The conclusion is that listening is an extremely important part of communication.

4. Types of listening:

- **Inactive/passive listening**—you hear the words, but you don’t get the meaning.” In at one ear and out at the other.”
- **Selective listening**—you hear only what you want to hear, most of the time you filter the message; the most common type of listening.
- **Active listening**—you make an effort not only to hear the words, but also to understand the whole message.

LISTENER’S BEHAVIOUR

...passive

- Listens to style, words and grammar.
- Spends time thinking what he is going to say.
- Listens only to facts.
- Pretends to be listening and easily gets distracted.
- Does some other things while listening.
- Shows impatience.
- Doesn’t check understanding from time to time.
- Doesn’t show interest to the speaker.

...active

- Listens to what is being told to him/her.
- Wants to get the complete message.
- Listens to the real message.

- Pays attention and doesn't allow other factors to distract him/her.
- Does nothing else while listening.
- Doesn't jump to conclusions.
- Doesn't show impatience.
- Confirms that he/she understands what is being said.
- Confirms non-verbally that he/she is listening.

5. Factors supporting listening

Factors supporting listening	
<p>Psychological mood, means getting ready to listen to somebody.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me: What happened when you arrived there? • Everything seemed abandoned, the place was deserted. • I'm sure you were disappointed. • Yes, this is the best word to describe the way I'm feeling now.
<p>Inform the other person that you are listening to him/her. For this, use verbal communication (I see, Oh, etc.) and non verbal communication (visual contact, gestures, body language, etc.).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Then I picked up all the books that had fallen off the shelf. Besides, I did it quickly and orderly. Do you understand me? • I see, yes... • Then he entered the room and yelled very loudly. • Oh, no... • I didn't know I was wrong. • You are right...

6. Factors preventing listening (obstacle attitudes)

Factors preventing listening	
<p>Distractions. The level of attention is very high at the beginning, lowers as the message is being conveyed and raises again at the end. We have to analyse our own level of attention, especially at mid conversation.</p>	<p>If we are in a place where the music is loud, it is difficult to be able to listen to our speaker.</p>
<p>Inner thoughts and dialogues (listening with glass-like eyes).</p>	<p>Sometimes a certain statement triggers an idea that we want to express immediately. Some other times, we prepare in our mind what we are going to say, before the other person to finish speaking. The inner dialogue during listening prevents us from following what the other person is saying, thus missing parts of the message.</p>

	<p>Sometimes, we stare at a person, giving the impression that we are listening, but our mind is at something else. In those moments we are caught in the comfort of our own thoughts. Our eyes are glass-like, and we are dreaming. With little experience, we can realize when people have this expression on their faces.</p>
Start-stop listening	<p>Start-stop listening comes from the fact that most people think 4 times faster than they can talk.</p> <p>Consequently, the listener has some time to think over. Sometimes, he/she uses this time to think about his/her own problems, preoccupations, sorrows instead of listening, making connections or summarising what the speaker has just told.</p> <p>This can be overcome by paying attention not only to the words, but also to the non-verbal signs, such as gestures, hesitations, etc, in order to be able to concretize the level of feelings.</p>
<p>Interrupting the person speaking</p> <p>Too pushy questions</p>	<p><i>"We should pay special attention to all the activities underdone at work".</i></p> <p><i>"Indeed, it is important to pay attention".</i></p> <p><i>"Our debts are the key for success ...".</i></p> <p><i>"Of course, we'll keep in mind everything you want to say".</i></p> <p>Too many questions can be annoying, blocking communication.</p>
<p>Making an opinion about the person who is talking.</p> <p>Assessment /judgement/critics.</p>	<p><i>"Never do it again this way, one mistake can have serious consequences. Do you understand?"</i></p> <p><i>"You have no idea what you are talking about."</i></p> <p><i>"You've made a mistake."</i></p> <p><i>"I don't want to listen to you anymore."</i></p>
<p>Offering help or solutions and not waiting to be asked for.</p> <p>To find a solution for somebody's problem, even before being told about it. (The expert syndrome).</p>	<p><i>"I need your help with something that truly bothers me."</i></p> <p><i>"You don't need to say it again, I'll be there as soon as you call me."</i></p> <p><i>"Take your time, this isn't the kind of help I need."</i></p> <p><i>"When I used to attend his/her lectures, I realized it was very difficult for me to understand what he/she was presenting. I attend the course very day, but..."</i></p> <p><i>"You should stop attending that course."</i></p> <p><i>"I feel that when I am in class, I don't understand what the teacher is saying."</i></p> <p><i>"You should stop attending that course."</i></p>
Doesn't take into account the speaker's feelings.	<p><i>"I had to see the doctor several times."</i></p> <p><i>"Oh, I didn't know that!"</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, I was worried when I saw those spots on my arm."</i></p> <p><i>"Ok! Don't panick, it's nothing serious!"</i></p>
Tell "your story" when other person is trying to tell you his/her story.	<p><i>"We visit this city pretty often. We think it is a lovely city, where we feel good all the time."</i></p> <p><i>"When I was in London, I felt the same. I really enjoyed</i></p>

	<i>visiting the most famous monuments, I even went on an organized tour..."</i> <i>"We'd really like going back there."</i>
Is always contradicting	<i>"This situation has't been a pleasant one. I feel very bad..."</i> <i>"Me, too."</i> <i>"I've never been involved in such a situation."</i> <i>"Neither have I."</i> <i>"I can't go on feeling this way."</i> <i>"Neither can I."</i>
Lack of verbal or non-verbal feed-back.	
Guesses and prejudgements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We don't often listen due to prejudgements or assumptions we make regarding the speaker or his/her message.
Anticipating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Do not anticipate</i> what the speaker is going to say and do not finish his/her sentences.
Non-verbal behaviour means impatience, boredom, lack of interest.	Looking at your watch, yawning, looking somewhere else, incontrollable movements etc.

7. Techniques of active listening

How to listen actively? Techniques of active listening Parts of conversation which strengthen active listening	
Shut up and focus on the speaker.	
Maintain visual contact.	<p>Listening means watching; There is no active listening without visual contact;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your looking opens up the communication channels; By looking you take notice of the other one's presence, you show your desire to communicate, your interest, your respect. By looking you show your mood, and the other person can read a certain "positive expectation", meaning you are paying attention to what you are being told and also, that you expect to find out important information. <p>You should continually look back at the person you are talking to.</p>
Make connection to the other person.	<p>People feel comfortable next to other people alike them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjust your tone according to the speaker's; Adjust your position, gestures; Open up to communicate.
Ask clarifying questions.	<p>When you are not sure that you have understood what has been said to you, ask clarifying questions. Otherwise, avoid interrupting the speaker. Do not interrupt him/her unless you don't understand what he/she is saying.</p> <p>Examples: <i>"You mean?"</i> <i>"Would you like telling me more about....?"</i> <i>"What made you think that...?"</i></p>

	<p>Ask not only yes/no questions, but also wh-questions. Examples: <i>"What exactly did you like at the event?"</i> instead of: <i>"Did you like the event?"</i></p>
Paraphrase the answers	<p>By paraphrasing you show that you are paying attention to what is being told to you. It also helps you :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ keep the information in your mind ; ▪ make the speaker aware of his words. <p>How do you paraphrase? By repeating what has been told <i>"So, you mean...."</i> <i>"Well, your point of view regarding this is that..."</i> <i>"I see you are worried about..."</i> <i>"What you suggest is that..."</i> <i>"You got angry when you..."</i> <i>"Do you think that ..."</i></p> <p>For example if Maria says: <i>"I will learn this time"</i>, you paraphrase her: <i>"Do you mean you are going to read carefully, underlining the most important information so that you learn it easier?"</i>.</p> <p>Paraphrasing represents an opportunity to clarify the message and also, to express your interest. It shows your level of understanding and the need for further explanations.</p> <p>Paraphrasing is used in these situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ when you think you have understood what has been told to you, but you are very sure; ▪ when you need a better understanding of the message before answering it; ▪ when you realize there is a contradiction; ▪ when you have a powerful reaction to what you have just heard and so, you have missed part of the message.
Summarise	<p><i>"Let's see if I got it right. You've told me about you are going to win if you change your job..."</i></p>
Empathize with the other person.	<p>Try to understand what the other person is saying to you and also what he/she is feeling. Put yourself in his/her shoes, see the world through his/her eyes. Encourage him/her. The objective: to show that you respect his/her point of view and that you understand his/her feelings. Examples: <i>"I know how you feel..."</i> <i>"It must have been very disappointing for you ..."</i> <i>"I know why you see this as a threat..."</i></p>
Show that you are listening (using verbal	<p>Make gestures which show that you are listening very carefully: Say "aha", "hmm", etc.</p>

and non-verbal communication).	Listen with your whole body: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lean forward; • shake and nod your head; • smile; • maintain visual contact;
Don't advise.	
Give feed-back.	Feedback means describing the other person's behavior and your feelings towards it.
Reflecting the feelings	Reflecting the feelings ("I know what you feel...") leads to a much higher empathy;

Examples

1. Dialogue between teacher and student (without the use of active listening techniques)

Student: "Please, excuse me for being late again!"

Teacher: "Ioana, the fact that you are always coming late is a problem to me. When you are late, I have to interrupt my work.. It distracts me, I lose my point, then I have to repeat the explanations and I feel very frustrated."

Student: "I've had many things to do lately and sometimes I can't get on time."

Teacher: "It's good to be involved in other things. I appreciate it, but, I can't stand being interrupted while teaching."

Student: "I don't know why you are so upset. I'm a little late, big deal!"

Teacher: "When you talk to me like that, I feel as if I were unimportant."

Student: "You don't have to take it personally. When I am late, just ignore me and it won't be any problem. It's only few minutes, it's no big deal!"

Teacher: "Don't tell me what to do! Are you listening to me? Come on time from now on! If you don't come, you'll be punished! Understood? Go to your desk!"

Student: "Yes, I understood, even if you are yelling it... (grumbling, going to her desk): What a nasty teacher!"

2. Dialogue between teacher and student (with the use of active listening techniques)

Student: "Please, excuse me for being late again!"

Teacher: "Ioana, the fact that you are always coming late is a problem to me. When you are late, I have to interrupt my work.. It distracts me, I lose my point, then I have to repeat the explanations and I feel very frustrated."

Student: "I've had many things to do lately and sometimes I can't get on time."

Teacher: "I see, you have your own problems."

Student: "You know, the head teacher has asked me to be part of the committee organising a Prom, to help the Headmaster with this. I said yes, without thinking too much."

Teacher: "You are happy that she asked you."

Student: "Of course I am! I want to be involved in as many activities as possible, to be a volunteer. You know I want to apply for a faculty in Denmark and I need all these for your CV."

Teacher: "It seems that your involvement in such activities will bring you some benefits in your future. It's good that you have about about all this."

Student: "Yes, I know you are upset because I have been late. I didn't know that interrupting can be so disturbing to you."

Teacher: "It surprises me the fact that interrupting the lesson can cause so many problems."

Student: "Well, not really. I get what you mean. You need to stop teaching, to tell me about the theme under discussion, and to continue with your ideas. I understand. I'll tell the Headmaster to practise after school, so that i don't have to come late to your class. Is it all right?"

Teacher: "That would be ok. Thanks, Ioana!"

Student: "For nothing".

8. Misconceptions about listening

- Smart people are good listeners.
- To hear means to listen.
- The older we are, the better listeres we become.
- Women are better listeners than men.
- The best listeners say nothing while listening.
- You are born with the listening ability.
- Listening is a passive process.
- A good listener never interrupts the speaker.

9. The importance of active listening

The technique of active listening brings a number of **benefits** not only to the organisational communication, but also to the management process.

It allows establishing correct and efficient relationships, built on reciprocal respect, self knowing and honesty;

- it leads to a better work environment and conflict solving;
- it facilitates coordination and control, quick identification of misbehaviours and their causes and thus, their eliminating them;
- it allows people to admit to themselves things that are usually not recognised;
- it encourages employees to assume responsibilities, to use their intellectual and professional potential;
- it facilitates taking the right decisions.

The effect of active listening

Active listening:

- supports open communication;
- multiplies the information under discussion;
- does not trigger negative feelings;
- points the attention to the speaker;
- reduces misunderstandings;
- allows problems solving by your own;
- creates the readiness to listen;
- reducesconflicts;
- in the case of a huge amount of information, it leads to its most important part;
- the discussion atmosphere is improved.

10. Conclusions

Active listening – as other communication skills– can be improved through training and practice. In order to master it, you need perseverance and use of every opportunity to practise it.

Its importance is expressed through its pragmatic feature – active listening clarifies different points of view and possible misunderstandings – and also its more subtle feature of the human relationships.

By showing the person who is speaking to you that you are interested in what you are being told, means showing respect. To him/her and also, to you, the listener.

You have the chance to use your personal potential, to come into contact and to understand different thinking, to use your time efficiently and, also, to create value.

Active listening does NOT imply:

- agree with the other person's point of view. It'd better to express your opinions than accept other points of view.
- Verbal tics, unsupported by a real interest from the speaker.

11. Quotes on listening

„When I was listened to and understood, I was capable of seeing my inner world differently and going forwards. It is surprising to see that feelings once unbreable have become bearable when someone is listening to us. It is surprising to see that problems that couldn't be solved have answers now that someone understands us.”(quote by Carl Rogers, the one who had used the term active listening for the first time)

“It takes a great man to be a good listener!” (Calvin Coolidge)

“I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. ... I may not be feeling' the blues myself, but I'm writing them for other people who ... Most of the successful people I've known are the ones who do more listening than talking.” (G. Jones, American writer)

“I make progress by having people around me who are smarter than I am and listening to them. And I assume that everyone is smarter about something than I am.”(Henry John Kaiser, American industrialist)

“The first duty of love is to listen.” (Paul Tillich)

“The one lesson I have learned is that there is no substitute for paying attention.” (Diane Sawyer)

“Wisdom comes from listening, penitence comes from speaking.” (Italian proverb)

“Listening, not imitation, may be the sincerest form of flattery. If you want to influence someone, listen to what he says. When he finishes talking, aks him about any points that you do not understand.” (Joyce Brothers, author, psychologist).

“Most of the successful people I've known are the ones who do more listening than talking.” (Bernard Baruch, businessman)

"It seemed rather incongruous that in a society of super sophisticated communication, we often suffer from a shortage of listeners." (Erma Bombeck)

"Many people may listen, but few people actually hear." (Harvey Mackay)

"Most of us tend to suffer from 'agenda anxiety,' the feeling that what we want to say to others is more important than what we think they might want to say to us." (Nido Qubein)

"Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood." (Stephen Covey)

"I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never listen."(Ernest Hemingway)

"For, while the right to talk may be the beginning of freedom, the necessity of listening is what makes the right important."(Walter Lippmann, author, journalist).

"A man is already halfway in love with any woman who listens to him." (Brendan Francis)

"A good listener tries to understand what the other person is saying. In the end he may disagree sharply, but because he disagrees, he wants to know exactly what it is he is disagreeing with."(Kenneth A. Wells)

ANNEX NO. 4: SCENARIOS FOR ROLE PLAY

1

Two classmates are talking about the next weekend prom. Dan is worried about its cost, as he doesn't have much money.

2

Andrei and Ionuț are in 12th grade. Andrei tells Ionuț that he thinks his girlfriend, Dana might go out with her exfriend. Ionuț feels embarrassed, yet willing to listen to his friend.

3

It's breaktime. Two classmates, Ana și Maria, are chatting in the back of the classroom. They keep looking at you, and you feel uncomfortable about it. You decide talking to Maria about this at the end of the classes.

4

It's Friday evening. The next day you are going on a mountain trip with your friends. This trip has been planned in advance but it was hard to find a weekend when all 3 of you to be free. But your boss calls you telling that he needs you the next morning. You discuss with Mihai the fact that you can't go on the trip.

5

Marius și Dana, husband and wife, are talking about the day. Marius is very tired, he has had a hard day. On his way to work, he had a flat tyre and, consequently he was late. His boss was upset about this. Ion, the colleague he was going to work with to finish a report, left work earlier, due to some problems he had. For this reason, he will either have to work alone, or he won't finish the report on time.

6

You are coming from the doctor. You've just had your monthly investigations and the doctor wants you to have some further investigations. You talk to a friend about this.

ANNEX NO. 5: TECHNIQUES OF ACTIVE LISTENING

Situation no. 1: Your friend Dan is paying you an unexpected visit. He seems pretty nervous and asks if he can have a talk with you. You let him in. He sits down and seems feeling a little less nervous. He says: *"I feel you have been avoiding me lately. We rarely talk to each other, even if we work for the same company. I thought maybe you are upset about something, maybe something has bothered you."*

Empathy:

Clarifying:

Paraphrase:

Situation no. 2: Your colleague Andrei comes into your office. His body language suggests he is stressed and frustrated. You know he's been working a lot lately to bring new customers. You are trying to finish a report and you've been interrupted a lot so far. Your colleague says: *"These deadlines, these targets we have to accomplish are very frustrating. Isn't it possible to work without them?"*

Empathy:

Clarifying:

Paraphrase:

Situation no. 3: Mihaela, your friend and colleague, is part of the team working to implement a new European project. The selection process is taking place and it involves a lot of work. Mihaela is very attentive to details and works thoroughly. One day she tells you: *"I am supposed to work with some other 4 colleagues yet, my points of view are not taken into consideration, although I make suggestions on how to improve things."*

Empathy:

Clarifying:

Paraphrase:

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5.3. PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION: GO TO THE INTERVIEW!

2. Objectives:

- to identify positive and negative features related to three key terms for the professional development: career, interview, manager.
- to describe the steps that must be taken to planning the interview, highlighting the basic rules to be followed to ensure a successful interview.
- to consider the basic rules of an outfit appropriate for a professional interview.
- to analyze the effects the body language has on the interviewer and identify positive and negative elements.
- to establish depending on their personality traits, answers to possible questions for professional interview and analyze the impact of these responses on the interviewer.
- to participate in simulation exercises for a presentation to an interview.

3. Workgroup/target: students between 15-19 years old

4. Pre-requisites

- information on personal marketing: fill in a CV and making an intent letter.

5. Time: 120 minutes

6. Means/tools:

- Forms of activity's organization: frontal, individual, group
- Teaching methods: conversation, exposure, debate, simulation
- Teaching tools: pens, worksheets

7. Strategies

Step 1: What to do and what not to do the interview?

- interactive discussion with students (Annex1).
- interview outfit: Brainstorming, completing a graphic organizer.

Step 2: Role play: Go to the interview!

- Students simulate attending an interview.
- 3 students will act as candidates for a particular post. The three students will answer the same questions (4-5 questions).
- The other students will play the role of employers/interlocutors will listen to candidates' answers to questions, and note their opinions on the worksheet "Who is the perfect candidate?" (Teacher selects the three questions). (Appendix 2)
- Discussions based on students' responses to questions interviews, views of students.

Step 3: Evaluation of the activity.

ANNEX 1. What you should take into consideration for the interview?

If you have been called for an interview, it means that your cover letter and your CV drew the attention of the employer who considers that you deserve a chance to prove that you're the right man for proper job.

- For a successful interview you should follow three steps:
- Before the interview: information on the job, about the company, recapitulation the answers to possible questions.
- The day of the interview: attire, punctuality, body language.
- During the interview: flexibility, smile, security, strengths, enthusiasm, interest, motivation, skills.

The outfit at the interview - basic rules

- Appearance counts so it is very important how you choose your clothes. The outfits must be characterized by good taste and simplicity and well combined.
-
- The recommended interview outfit is a business casual one, such as a comfortable suit (especially if the job involves actively working with the public). If there is no a suit, you can combine various pieces of clothing (jacket with trousers or skirt in assorted colors). Avoid shiny clothes or obvious applications. It is recommended soft colors, not garish. It recommends navy, black, gray, dark green, dark purple, ochre, beige, white. Skirts should not be too short. In case of a dress to complete the picture business, is recommended adding a jacket.
- Garments must be sober but not austere.
- Women must have a moderate makeup, not too many jewels, simple shoes. Shoes should be clean.
- Women should avoid: tight or short dresses and skirts, transparent tops or too low cut, intricate cuts shoes too high, sandals or platforms, accessories that upload the outfit (long earrings, dozens of bracelets on hand, necklaces, sophisticated trinkets, tights with pattern).
- Men should avoid: jeans, sport shirts, shorts, socks too short, precious stones strap shoes, too garnished ties etc.
- The clothes must be clean and ironed to show that you're a tidy and neat person, which may further promote an appropriate image of the company.
- The outfit must match and organization's culture.
- Extravagant outfits are not appreciated.
- It is recommended moderation in the use of perfume. Some people are allergic to certain scents.

What do you do before the interview?

- The aspiring to a job must be prepared to do "homework" before the interview.-
- It costs them to know nothing about the company or about the job he applied for. Many information can be found on the Internet and is helps the candidate to document in advance and be prepared to respond to any questions from the employer.
- The candidate can practice answers to possible questions and to set some questions for the employer.

First impression

- The first impression counts and is formed in about 90 seconds! How we use these 90 seconds is very important. In 90 seconds you can say hello and introduce yourself. A neat, decent outfit and adapted to the specific of the company or position will create a positive first impression.
- The candidate enters the employer's office head up (to show confidence) and presents with a smile (smile transmits the employer that the candidate is sociable, opened, self-controlled, and has nothing to hide).
- The candidate will sit at the invitation of the employer/interviewer.
- The candidate will sit only at the invitation of the employer/interviewer, says thank you and then will sit.

Body language

- There are studies that have shown that the first impression is based in more than 50% on body language and verbal content only 7%.
- The candidate should be attentive to body language because gestures can pass the employer/interviewer the impression that you are not the right person for the job.
- Be confident, but not arrogant!
- Shaking hands. The employer/interviewer's hand is shaken but only if he initiates the gesture. The candidate must be careful how they shake hands. Will smile, will keep eye contact during handshake and say that he likes to know him. A too strong handshake is not an asset. Even if the candidate wants to make a good impression and to show that he is a confident person, must not shake with force the other's hand. The duration of handshakes varies depending on the degree of intimacy between two people. Do not withdraw your hand too suddenly, as if you would be afraid to keep physical contact, but do not keep tightening too much, because the gesture may be considered too private. Shaking hands is a natural gesture, is in the routine of interpersonal communication, but its power should not be underestimated.
- **The position on the chair.** The position of the candidate on the chair should be relaxed, but neutral. He will avoid being rear (because it will seem too relaxed and posture too relaxed may suggest that interview is not treated seriously) legs crossed because it gives the impression not only of assertiveness, but also of superiority, will not move on the chair (because it will show that it is nervous, excited) will not invade the personal space of the employer/interviewer. The candidate will stand straight, not hunched (this posture can send a message showing the candidate's lack of enthusiasm to the job). If he stands too straight is too rigid.

- **Be interested!** The candidate must not be distracted or uninterested. Frequent change of position in the chair might make employer/interviewer to believe that it is bored. If the candidate leans slightly forward, tilting his head and nodding occasionally, this suggests interest in what the employer/interviewer says. It is important that the candidate to express interest in the job and interview both verbally and nonverbal. Many times we think that if we approve what the caller says, nodding his head, he will be satisfied. Things are not quite so. It is better to nod your head in approbation from time to time, but we should not turn into a nervous tic checking the phone during the interview is something which no employer will pass over. it You should better be hang up the phone before the interview.
- **Maintain visual contact but do not stare.** The candidate must look far enough into the eyes of the employer/interviewer as lack of eye contact will make the latter to consider him unsure, that he has not given the right answer to the question referred, it is ideal to maintain eye contact the interviewer 60% of the time. If there are several interlocutors, look at each one of them. And do not stare, remember to blink occasionally.
- **Avoiding tics.** The candidate must avoid uncontrolled gestures (playing with her hair, touching the face, biting lips, fingers firecrackers, rocking legs, hands kneading), which highlights emotions. Touching the face denotes nervousness or dishonest. Do not play with the loose change in your pockets, do not eat your nails for such gestures show is stressed or controlled by emotions.
- **Hands must not be crossed or hidden!** Crossed hands indicates that the candidate is uncomfortable and defensive. When you cross your arms, you tell the interlocutor that you are closed, detained, defensive or simply bored. The hands can be kept on the table as this indicates confidence. Kipping your hands in your lap may indicate a shy person. Instead, gestures indicating involvement, interest, enthusiasm, expressiveness. However, the candidate must not gesticulate too much for that to be perceived as a calm, controlled and balanced person.
- **Smile!** The smile sends confidence, honesty, sincerity, warmth, energy. If the candidate smiles this will determine the interlocutor to do the same. If there is no smile the candidate can be perceived as a distant person.
- After the assessment of the body language during the interview, an employer can tell about a candidate's self-confidence, about the level of stress or how it will react under pressure.
- However, body language cannot become more important than the answers at the interview. the mistakes from the nonverbal communication make you lose your job if they are associated with wrong answers or unsatisfactory.
- After the end of the interview, the candidate will shake hands and smile politely then will say goodbye.

Mistakes to avoid during the interview:

- Do not stop the employer/interviewer!
- Do not speak too loudly or too softly!

- Do not compromise yourself by lying about your personal qualities or achievements to other jobs!
- Do not criticize your former colleagues or employers!
- Avoid No answers!
- Do not try to leave a false impression using jargon and technical details.
- Do not ask questions that may raise suspicions!
- Avoid too short answers.
- Do not give confusing answers lacking clarity!
- Do not recite memorized answers!
- Do not give defensive answers or overly motivated!
- Do not go into details which are not to your advantage! ("I left the company because I did not understand X boss").
- Do not look on the walls!

Frequent questions at interviews:

Questions on education and studies:

- What studies have you followed? What benefits have you had from the undertaken studies?
- What was your favourite subject?
- How many languages do you speak?
- Have you encountered difficulties during the studies?
- What extracurricular activities have you attended during the studies?
- Have you participated in training courses?
- What is the result of which you are proud of?

Questions about previous jobs:

- Have you been fired or left voluntarily from your last job? Tell me the reason.
- What is the reason for which you paused so long in the professional experience?
- Why did you apply for a function different from that previously considered?
- Why have you changed three jobs in a such short time?
- What did you not like at previous/current employer?
- What were your responsibilities at the previous/current job?
- What was the main motivation to change your job?
- What are your expectations about the position for which you applied?
- What would the former employer think about you?

Questions about the applied position:

- Why are you interested in working for our company? Why are you interested in this job?
- Why do you consider that you are suitable for this job?
- What do you bring in addition to other candidates?
- What are the expectations for the new position?
- What do you expect from your supervisor?
- What do you know about our company?
- What are your expectations about the position for which you applied?
- Why do you want to get from this position?
- What are the first steps you would do if you get this job?
- Why did you requested an interview for a job that required a person younger than you?

- Why are you interested in a job that is underpaid and below than the one you had before?
- Are you willing to work overtime?
- Do you feel ready to assume greater responsibilities than the old job?
- Do you think your experience lets you assume greater responsibilities than the old job?
- If you were offered the post when could you start?
- What do you know about our company?
- What major trends have you seen tied to the industry in which we operate?

General questions:

- What kind of job would you like to have if you did not depend on salary?
- Do you prefer teamwork or the individual one?
- Give an example of when you lead a team.
- With what kind of people you would not like to work?
- What motivates you?
- Are you willing (a) to travel? Did you applied for other positions? How many job interviews have you been? Do you have other offers?
- What are your career plans?
- Where do you see 3 or 5 years?
- What do you do in your free time?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- How would you react if your colleagues would not agree with your project?
- We received over 300 applications for this position. Why exactly would I accept you?
- What are the main events that have formed your personality?
- Can you work under stress or having short deadlines?
- What are your career goals?
- What are your future plans?
- What are your hobbies?
- What is your former employer opinion about your work?
- Tell me about yourself in 30 words.
- What do you think about the last company you worked?
- In what medium you prefer to work? In a restricted environment or a larger one ?
- What about teamwork?
- What was the hardest decision you had to make?
- What are your goals for this year?

Advice:

Give short, optimistic and true answers. There are no right or wrong answers. The person asking the questions wants to know you better and observe your reactions.

Possible questions to be addressed to the employer/interviewer

From the way the candidate asks questions, the employer/interviewer extracts information that make an important contribution in the hiring decision. To succeed in this attempt, the candidate needs a previous training. Prepare at least five "good" questions about the job, about the company, about our industry or profession, working program, about employees, about deadlines of work. The questions will reflect the interest in this subject and that the applicant has read or thought about them. If you do not have any questions, the employer may conclude that you are not interested.

It is preferred the questions about the job, about the responsibilities they imply, about team size etc. Do not overdo with too many questions, and be sensitive to the atmosphere (if you see that they are in a rush, then noticed it and say you're not going to put many questions, but one or two is helpful to have prepared).

Possible questions:

- If I succeed, what are the main tasks that I need to focus on?
- What are the specific duties of the job?
- How is the job located in the company's organizational chart?
- Who will be my direct supervisor? How long has he been working here? What training does he have?
- Will I have subordinates? How many exactly?
- What authority will the job have?
- What must be approved by my superior?
- Is there any training for this position? / What training opportunities / promotion are available?
- I'm very interested in this position. Do you think that my experience and previous job I had, are enough for the position I candidate?
- Where can I find more information about your company
- How is structured the department from which the job takes part in?
- What is now the company's biggest challenge?
- What are the priorities of this job for the first 12 months?
- What is your company's culture? What are the principles of current culture?
- What are my chances of advancement?
- Can I participate in the recruitment process, if necessary, of a new team member?
- Is there the opportunity to meet the directors of the company (board of directors)?
- What is the structure of the ownership in the company?
- What is the company's position on the local, regional and international market?
- The company has plans for expansion or restriction?
- To what extent is the company incentive?
- What kind of management does the company's management promote?
- What are the objectives of the company in a short/long term?
- How does a typical day in the company look like?
- What are the qualities, personal and professional, that a person needs to be successful in the current culture of the company you lead?
- How does the company keep the employees motivated, enthusiastic and creative?

Tip: Always be prepared to answer questions about motivation addressing the above questions. Do not ask questions whose answer is easy to find on the internet because it highlights that you have not done your homework.

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ANNEX 2. Who is the perfect candidate?

Name and surname of the candidate	Positive aspects/ Strengths	Negative aspects/ Weaknesses
The candidate selected for the job:		