

## Effective Communication Skills: Paper Fold Exercise

Purpose: This activity demonstrates what can go wrong in communication: poor listening, lack of feedback, different contexts/backgrounds and perceptions.

Materials: 8 ½ sheet of paper for each person

Time: 10 to 15 minutes plus discussion time

Directions: Lead into this exercise by asking folks if they think communication is easy. Tell them “let’s see.” Give each learner a piece of paper and then read the directions to them.

Instructions to participants: This exercise requires listening to and following directions. As you hear the instructions, perform the task. You may not ask questions. You must close your eyes.

- 1) Fold your sheet of paper in half
- 2) Tear off the upper right corner
- 3) Fold your paper in half again
- 4) Tear off the lower right corner
- 5) Fold your paper in half
- 6) Tear off the upper left corner
- 7) Fold in half a final time
- 8) Tear off the lower left corner
- 9) Unfold your paper and hold it up
- 10) Open your eyes, look at your product and compare it with the other student’s

Debrief: What happened? Does everyone’s look the same? Remember when you communicate with others, they may not receive the message you sent. Individual perceptions vary. If you were given the same directions, why are everyone’s products different? People have different context. You were not given feedback...you had to keep your eyes closed and you could not ask questions.