We need communication, we transmit, and receive information.
Faulty communication generates misunderstanding.
Effective communication encourages a healthy relationship between two people.
Communication is a process through which messages are exchanged.
Communication is effective only if the messages are understood by the sender and the receiver.

Communication in Action

Communication operates in many dimensions. The most commonly recognized are:
- Intrapersonal
- Interpersonal
- Person-to-group
- Official communications
Intrapersonal Communications

- Takes place within the person.
- We “talk to ourselves” as we solve all problems or perform our tasks.

Interpersonal Communications

- Takes place person-to-person.
- Our ability to form and maintain caring connections with others depends largely on our effective interpersonal communication skills.
- This is the dimension to which most discussions regarding communication skills is addressed and to which definitions of the communication process most directly refers to.

Interpersonal Communication

- There are three interpersonal channels of communication:
  - Verbal — words and combinations of words transmitted.
  - Nonverbal — vocal characteristics, body language and facial expression, personal and social space.
  - Symbolic — style of dress, place of residence, place of employment, type of car driven, jewelry worn, vacation spots.
Person-to-Group Communication

- This implies a structured situation in which one person addresses a group on a predetermined subject.
- Public speaking engagements, a witness before a jury, a minister before a congregation, and a teacher to his class are all examples of person-to-group communication.

Official Communications

- This is usually written and can appear to be person-to-person or person-to-group.
- Official communication is an important part of the communication in action.

The Process of Communication

- Achieving effective communication.
- An ongoing effort to sharpen communication skills.
- Communication skills must be practiced in many different ways and in many different situations.
- Sometimes the most effective communication skill is listening.
The Elements of Communication

- The process of communication begins with a source. This is the person with the idea or meaning, and wishes to transmit the message to a receiver.
- It must be coded into symbols we call spoken words, gestures, or pictures.
- Once the message is encoded, it must be transmitted and received.

The receiver must decode the message into meaning then the receiver's response, or feedback, to the source is based upon the receiver's perception of the meaning of the message sent.

Communication is a continuing process of sending, receiving, and feedback.

Sources of Distortion

- Symbols are misunderstood.
- The message was confusing.
- The receiver received only part of the message.
- The receiver was not open to receive a clear message.
- A noisy room, a crowd of people, poor lighting, interruptions in the sending or receiving of elements in the process, and even the passage of time can affect what is sent and received.
Verbal and Paralanguage Cues

- Articulation — the poverty of language skills is determined by your choice of words and how they are spoken.
- Volume and rate — our society equates fast speech with excitement; loud voices can mean the sender’s hearing is diminishing although they are arguing in earnest, e.g., the Jerry Springer show.

Language

- Human beings have the most unconscious ability to turn thoughts into words.
- Unless people involved in interpersonal communication have common meaning for the language used, the message will not be mutually understood.
- Language, then, can become a barrier to communication as well as a tool for effectively achieving it.

- Profanity can be used for gaining attention or expressing verbal hostility. However, in the final analysis it reduces the user’s power to negotiate. Those who want to use their profanity to upset the listener should remember that the more they use profane expression the less shocking it is.
Profanity and Law Enforcement

- There are at least three interactive contextual dimensions in which the officer might use profound auxiliary in dealing with a citizen:
  - To satisfy their psychological or personal agenda. The officer may build up tension, frustration, and anger on the job and find the catharsis in verbal expression.
  - The officer uses profanity as a means of dealing with a variety of stressful situations, such as perceived danger, provocation, or resistance.
  - The way an officer is socialized and their experience, including their training provides the formal and informal definitions of persons of groups. "Some citizens are labeled as assholes by the police and are treated accordingly." (Van Maanen, 1978).

Nonjudgmental Listening

- In order to understand the verbal message well, you must understand the speaker to some degree.
- A major barrier to communication is the tendency to judge, evaluate, approve, or disapprove with the statement of the other person or group. We tend to "tune out" if we don't like what is being said.

Empathy

- People entering the criminal justice profession need to possess a very special communication quality.
- It is the caring attitude, the developed capacity to understand another, and to comprehend another's feelings, attitudes, and sentiments.
- A senior citizen on social security whose check has been stolen may resent an officer who arrives to take a report and doesn't seem to care that the victim needed the money to fill a prescription.
Blocks to Effective Communication

- Community distrust of the police
  - If the citizens do not trust the police, they will avoid police contact and they will not talk to them.
  - Citizens will not report crime, give statements, or will not testify in court.
  - The result is inefficiency and an unsafe community.

Blocks to Effective Communication (cont’d)

- Police distrust of Community
  - If the police view the community as dangerous and full of people who are hostile to them, the police will react in a negative way.
  - They will not feel free to communicate with the community.

Blocks to Effective Communication (cont’d)

- Poor Training
  - Training has increased for the police.
  - Conflict management and sensitivity were not taught in all police academies.
  - Dedicated and responsible officers may be placed on the street unprepared for the experiences they will face.
Blocks to Effective Communication (cont’d)

- Organizational Structure
  - Majority of police forces are paramilitary organizations.
  - This blocks effective communication within the organization.
  - The same working relationship inevitably is transferred to contacts between officers and the citizens.

Blocks to Effective Communication (cont’d)

- Scapegoating
  - Police have often focused their attention on particular groups or individuals when such attention was really unwarranted.
  - A number of steps precede scapegoating:
    - Simple preferences
      - We like people who agree with us
      - Who have similar backgrounds
      - Who share our value system
    - Active biases
      - Simple preference turns stronger
      - State their preference in negative terms
      - The stepping-off point toward a closed mind
      - An ineffective person
      - A uniformed person
    - Prejudice
      - Have a tendency to prejudge certain groups, persons, or events
      - A prejudgment that is rigid and inflexible
Discrimination
- An act of exclusion prompted by prejudice
- It is one of the most significant social problems in the United States.
- Some officers still look upon minorities as unworthy, unwanted, and unacceptable as human beings.

Full-fledged scapegoating
- Manifests itself after all the preceding steps are fulfilled.
- It consists of concentrated aggression in both word and deed. The victim is abused both physically and verbally.

Why Scapegoating Occurs

Table: Tabloid Thinking
- People simplify a problem by blaming a group or class of people.
- Allows people to overlook real issues while they focus on the wrong cause.
- Some people have inferiority complexes.

Table: Peer Pressure and Conformity
- Need to belong to a group or organization
- New officers who join an organization that engages in scapegoating will find themselves joining with other officers just so they can be part of the group

Strategies of Change

Table: Achieving Mutual Respect
- Achieved best in an atmosphere in which everyone counts
- Strategies for overcoming blocks in mutual respect include establishing programs that encourage honest, open exchange and positive contact between citizens and officers.

Table: Improving Training
- Police training is an intense experience that has improved immensely over the years.
- Change training to improve effective communication in police-community relations.
Strategies of Change (cont’d)

- Rethinking Police Organization
  - Reorganization in police agencies is traumatic, and it is difficult to conceive, achieve, and retain.
  - Some communication blocks seem inherent in the organizational structure.
  - Small system changes can help to reduce the number and influence of these blocks.

Strategies of Change (cont’d)

- Preventing Scapegoating
  - Efforts that will increase mutual respect also will help to decrease scapegoating.
  - Organizational changes that encourage personal growth and community service help to discourage scapegoating.