

A . C A R E . N E T . I N I T I A T I V E .

*Caring* for those considering  
**ABORTION**

SESSION 4:

Communication Basics & Active Listening

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TAKEN FROM

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*making* **LIFE**  
**DISCIPLES**<sup>™</sup>

*Equipping the Church to offer compassion, hope, help,  
and discipleship to women and men considering abortion.*

## SECTION 3.3: COMMUNICATION BASICS

Communication between two or more people involves the exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages. Four basic elements must be present for communication to occur.<sup>3,4,5</sup>

There must be a:

- **Sender:** The person who sends the message
- **Message:** What is communicated, such as a fact or an expression of a feeling
- **Channel:** Through what (or how) the message is sent
- **Receiver:** Who receives the message

Additionally, basic communication takes place through three channels:

1. The spoken word (7%)
2. Voice tone and inflection (38%)
3. Body posture and gestures (55%)

While most people think of speech as the cornerstone of communication, the fact is that over 90% of communication is nonverbal—conveyed through body language.<sup>6,7</sup>

Body language includes a wide range of nonverbal communication such as:

- Posture (e.g., slouching, sitting on the chair's edge, etc.)
- Appearance (e.g., makeup, attire, hygiene, etc.)
- Head movement (e.g., nodding, etc.)
- Hand movement (e.g., waving, clutching, etc.)
- Eye movement (e.g., winking, staring, etc.)
- Eye contact (e.g., eye to eye, etc.)
- Facial expressions (e.g., frowning, smiling, squinting, etc.)
- Sounds (e.g., laughing, grunting, sniffing, etc.)
- Ways of talking (e.g., inflection, voice tone, pauses, etc.)

To be an effective Life Disciple, you must pay attention to the nonverbal messages you *receive from* the women and men you serve, as well as the nonverbal messages you *send to* them.

For example, if you talk with your arms folded across your chest, it might be that you are chilly, but people might infer that you are not comfortable in their presence or have something to hide.

Equally important is **how** we say things to those we serve.

Consider the expression, “It’s not what you said, it’s how you said it.”

Try reciting this sentence, seven times, and emphasize a different word each time. This exercise makes the importance of tone and inflection very clear.

“I didn’t say he stole the money.”

(The words to emphasize are in bold below.)

- I didn’t say he stole the money.
- I **didn’t** say he stole the money.
- I didn’t **say** he stole the money.
- I didn’t say **he** stole the money.
- I didn’t say he **stole** the money.
- I didn’t say he stole **the** money.
- I didn’t say he stole the **money**.

Notice how the meaning of the sentence changes with the emphasis on a different word.

An excellent approach to effectively use body language to communicate and connect with those you will be serving as a Life Disciple is captured in the acronym

**R.O.L.E.S.:**

- **Relaxed:** Body not tense.
- **Open:** Arms and legs relaxed, not crossed; upright posture, not slouched.
- **Lean forward:** Just a little, while maintaining an upright, relaxed posture.
- **Eye contact:** But do not stare, and keep in mind that in some cultures, eye contact is not appropriate; watch for signals from the women and men you meet.<sup>8</sup>
- **Squared off:** Directly face the women and men you meet at a proper distance, keeping in mind that cultures differ in the appropriate space to maintain between two people.





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Cover design by Brian Gage, Coldwater Media, copyright © by Care Net.

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ISBN: 978-0-9972285-0-2

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