

COMMUNICATE BETTER

Building rapport and mimicking body language can help you to get message across

COMMUNICATION is a cycle that usually involves a minimum of two people. It is hard to communicate with another person if he is asleep or disinterested.

For the communication cycle to work, you must have the willing participation of two parties. It usually works like this: you say something and the other person thinks briefly about what has been said and gives a response.

Of course, other things play a part in this exchange, such as your body posture, facial expressions and gestures. Not only that, your internal thoughts and feelings have an impact on the cycle of communication.

When all these factors are taken into account, it's hard to not communicate. You will convey a message even if you remain silent. Recognising that communication is so important in all that we do, the question is often asked: "How can I communicate better?"

The answer, of course, is to under-

stand that the meaning of communication is the response that you get.

To get the best response, you must enter the cycle while appreciating the other person's understanding of the world. The simplest way to do this is to establish rapport. Communication flows so much more easily when two people are in rapport. Rapport creates good communication, and good communication creates trust.

People who are in rapport tend to mirror and match each other's body posture, gestures and voice patterns. Have you been to a coffee shop and noticed couples who are deep in conversation? They are mirror images of each other as they sit facing each other. Those in deep rapport will even mimic each other's breathing patterns without realising it.

Successful communicators create rapport and you can do so too simply by observing your communication partner. Most people have rapport skills — the secret is to refine them



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for everyday use.

The starting point is to make eye contact. Next, mirror the other person's posture. Mirroring is not mimicry and must be done in a way that is

not exaggerated.

Matching the way the other person is sitting is a good place to start. Notice how they distribute their body weight, and do the same. Follow this

with small movements to mimic their gestures, move your hand to match their arm movement or move your head to match their body movement. The reason? People like others who are similar to them.

Keep an open mind about rapport, and give it a try next time you begin a conversation with someone. Notice what happens when you don't mirror your communication partner's posture and, then observe what happens when you do.

In particular, see what happens when you deliberately do the opposite of what they do. This is called mismatching and is just as useful if you need to disengage with someone.

Remember, creating rapport is your choice. You will know the difference when you try it. — Source: ST/ANN

■ **ARTICLE** by Lindsay Adams, an international speaker with Training Edge International and the president of Global Speakers Federation.