

TOP TIP #6

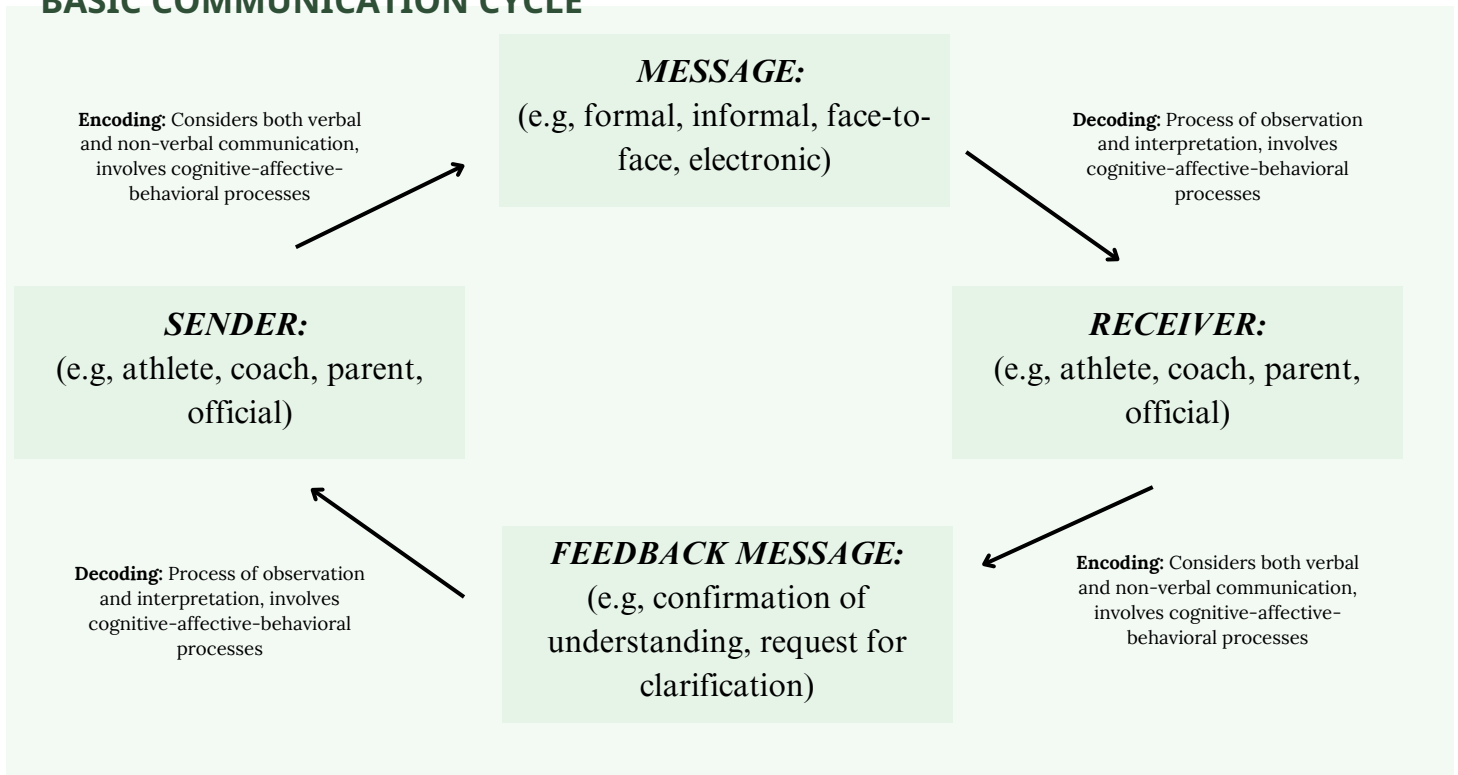
We have two eyes, two ears, and one mouth for a reason.

An important part of successful coaching is having an ability to communicate effectively. This includes a thorough understanding of the basic communication cycle and recognizing that each message cycle includes a process of encoding and decoding that involves cognitive-affective-behavioral processes.

“We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak”

- Epictetus, Greek philosopher
c. AD 55-135

BASIC COMMUNICATION CYCLE



Because communication involves emotions, we as humans tend to feel we need to react. It is not uncommon to react to a situation initially with an emotion (e.g., panic, excitement) and proceed with an emotionally loaded response to the situation, resulting in behavior which, at times, is not helpful or beneficial.

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS:

Reaction: A quick response to a stimulus, typically involves immediate self-serving emotions intertwined with the behavioral response

Competence: Any clearly defined, planned behavioral response to a stimulus, typically characterized by four key cognitive-behavioral processes: taking a pause, processing the information, planning a response, and proceeding with response.

As outlined in TOP TIP 1, a successful coach is an emotionally intelligent communicator who signals credibility, competence, respect, and authority. A big part of the success is having an ability to respond instead of react. In doing so, they can create more space between the situation they are in, and how they respond to it. This short PAUSE affords coaches to use their ears to listen, eyes to observe, and immediate emotions to “breathe” and therefore gain a better sense of what is going on. This PAUSE allows them to make rational decisions – and communicate effectively with clear, concise, and consistent messages – which research has found to be beneficial for athlete performance (Teques et al., 2019).

Critical Questions:

When reflecting on your communication skills, ask yourself:

1. How would I describe myself as a communicator?
2. What percentage of my communication is reactive?
3. What percentage of my communication is responsive?
4. What types of situations are more likely to result in reactive communication?
5. How well do I utilize my various senses when communicating with my athletes?
Parents? Other coaches? Officials?
6. What are main areas of communication I can improve on?