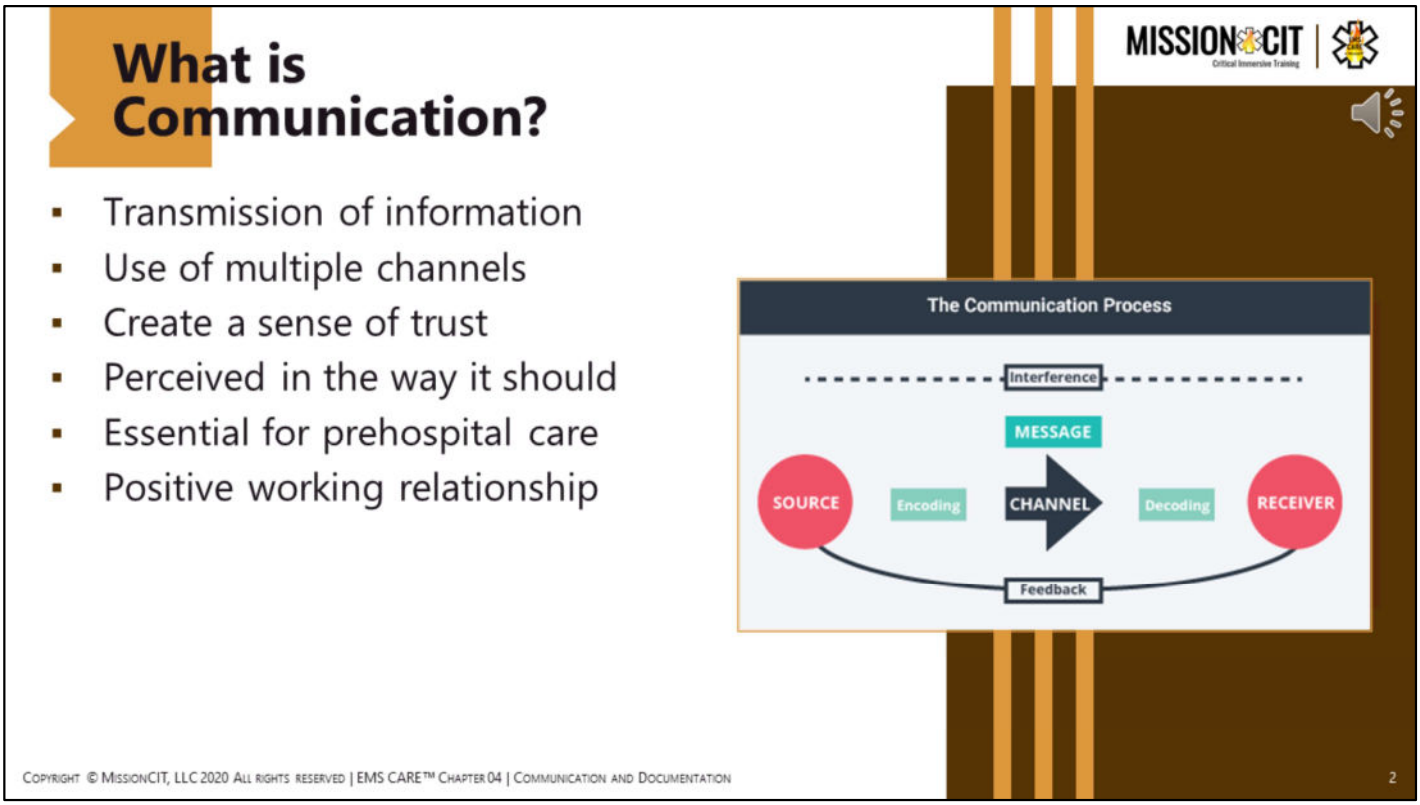


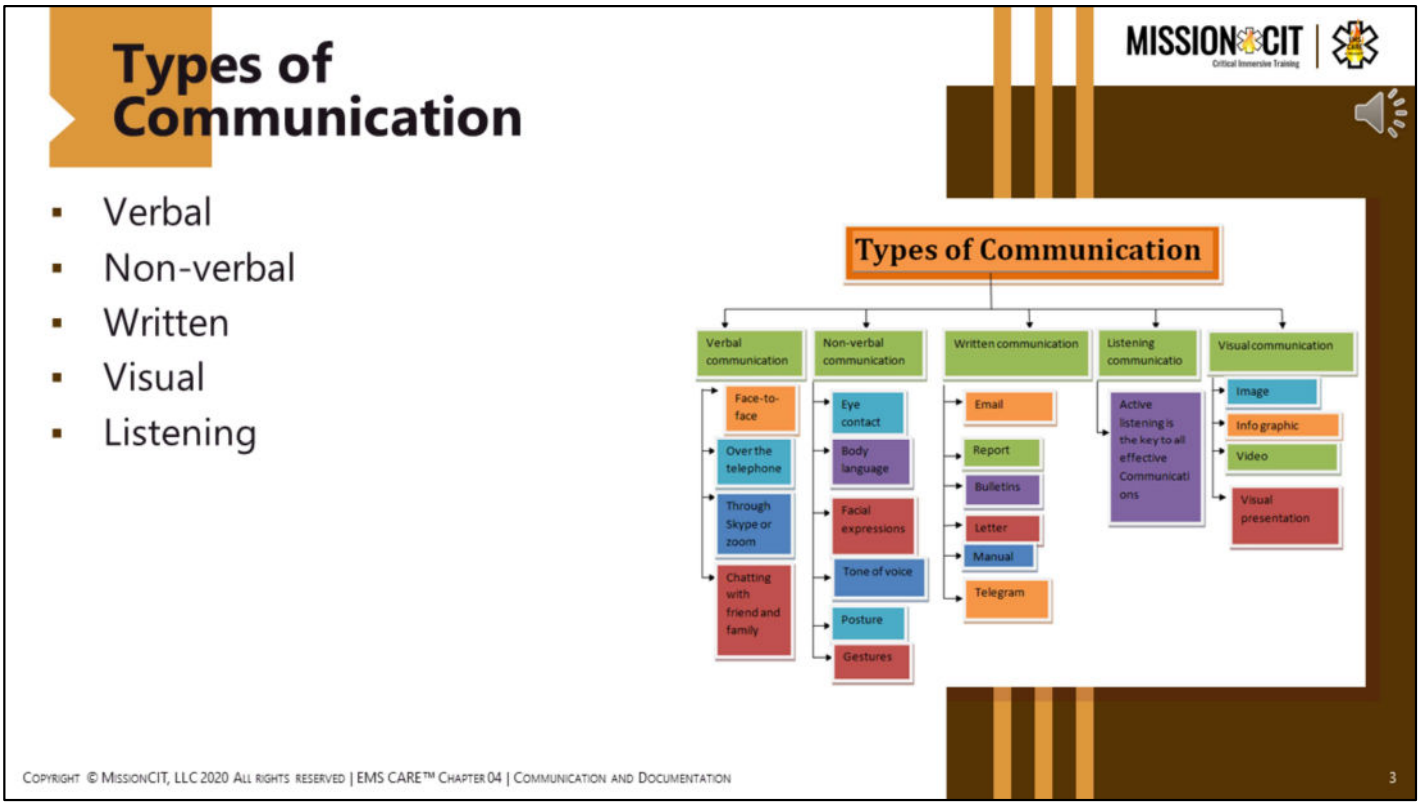
Welcome to the first lesson where we will talk about the basics of communication. In this lesson, we will talk about the basic principles, goals, and barriers to communication. We will end with a bunch of communication tools that can come in handy for you.



What is communication? Simply put, it's the transmission of information from one person to another through multiple channels such as words, gestures, and even body language.

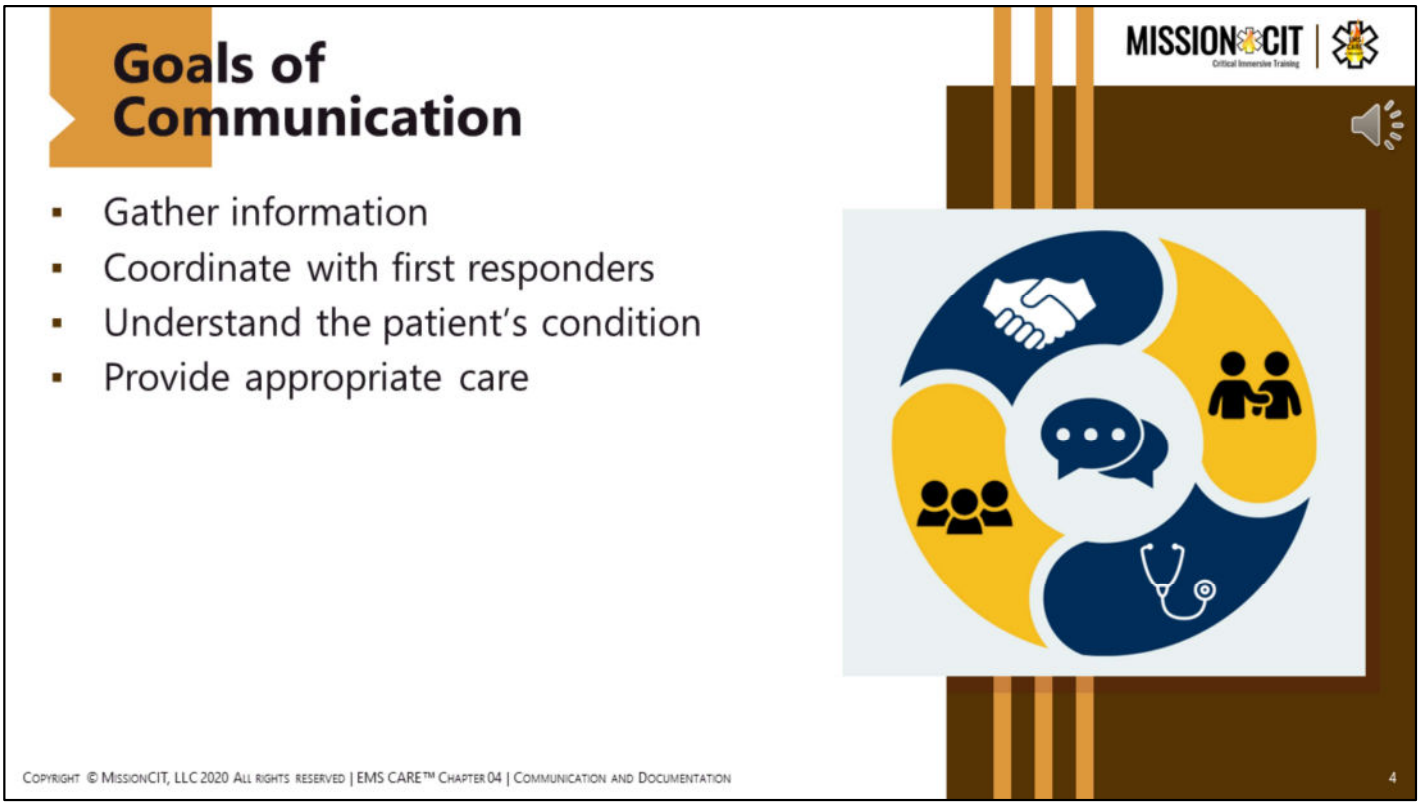
Effective communication involves creating a sense of trust in the minds of all the parties involved in communication and this ensures that the message being sent out by the senders is perceived and understood in the way it should by the receivers.

Excellent communication is an essential component of prehospital care and is necessary to achieve a positive working relationship with patients and other healthcare providers.



There are five types of communication, and they are:

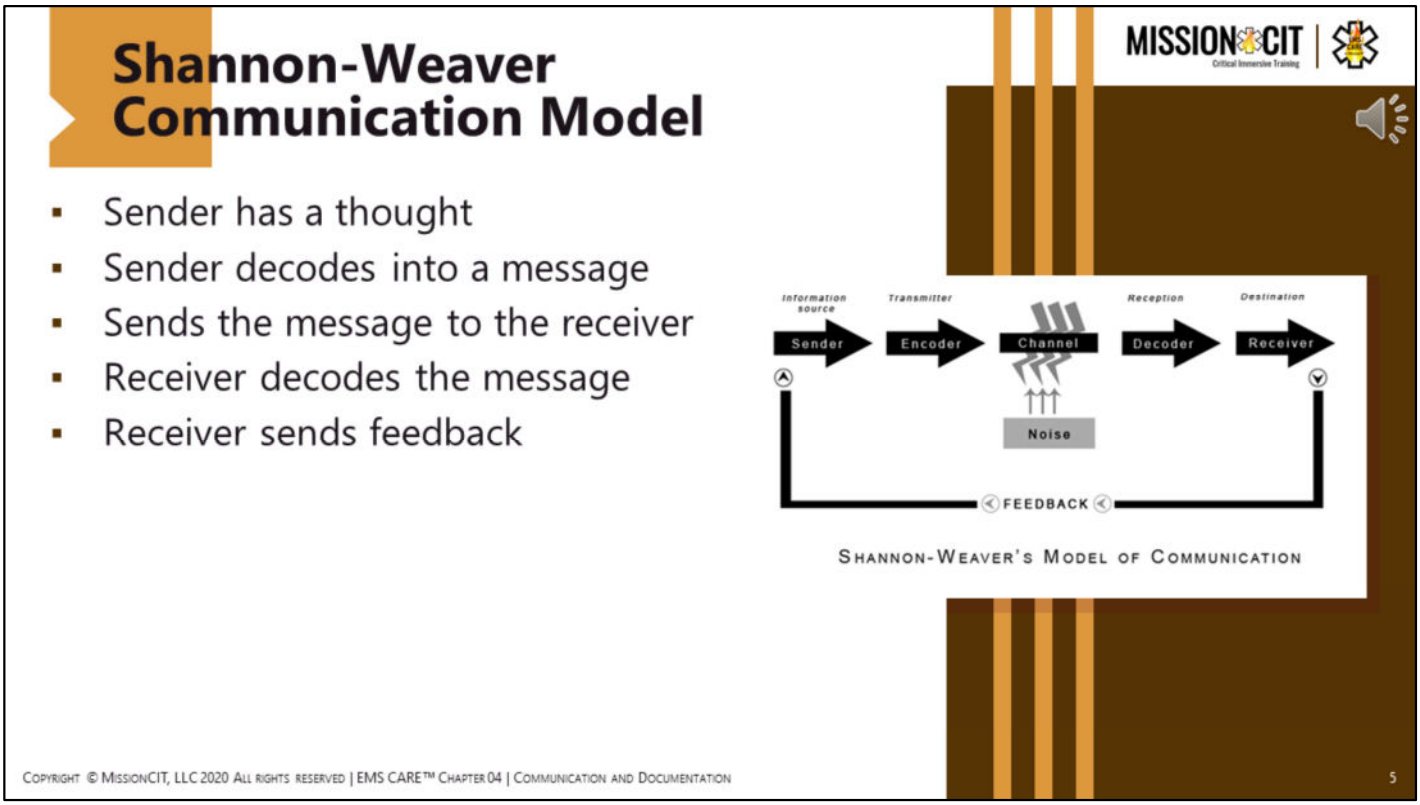
- Verbal communication where words are exchanged between the sender and the receiver. This includes face-to-face conversations as well as exchanges that happen over the phone and other electronic media.
- Non-verbal communication – This type of communication includes all the gestures that convey the senders' intent. It encompasses facial expressions, posture, eye contact, body language, hand movements, and more. Often, non-verbal communication is deemed to be more effective than just words.
- Written communication – This constitutes all the written means such as emails, notes, reports, etc, that aim to disseminate information clearly and concisely.
- Visual communication – This type of communication involves visual media such as images, videos, movies, and more.
- Listening – Listening is an art and an important type of communication. Active listening, however, is perhaps one of the most important types of communication because if we cannot listen to the person sitting across from us, we cannot effectively engage with them.



What's the purpose of these communication types?

Essentially, the goals of your communication are:

- To gather information from the patient, family members, and bystanders
- Coordinate with the first responders and healthcare professionals
- Understand the patient's condition, so you can provide the appropriate care

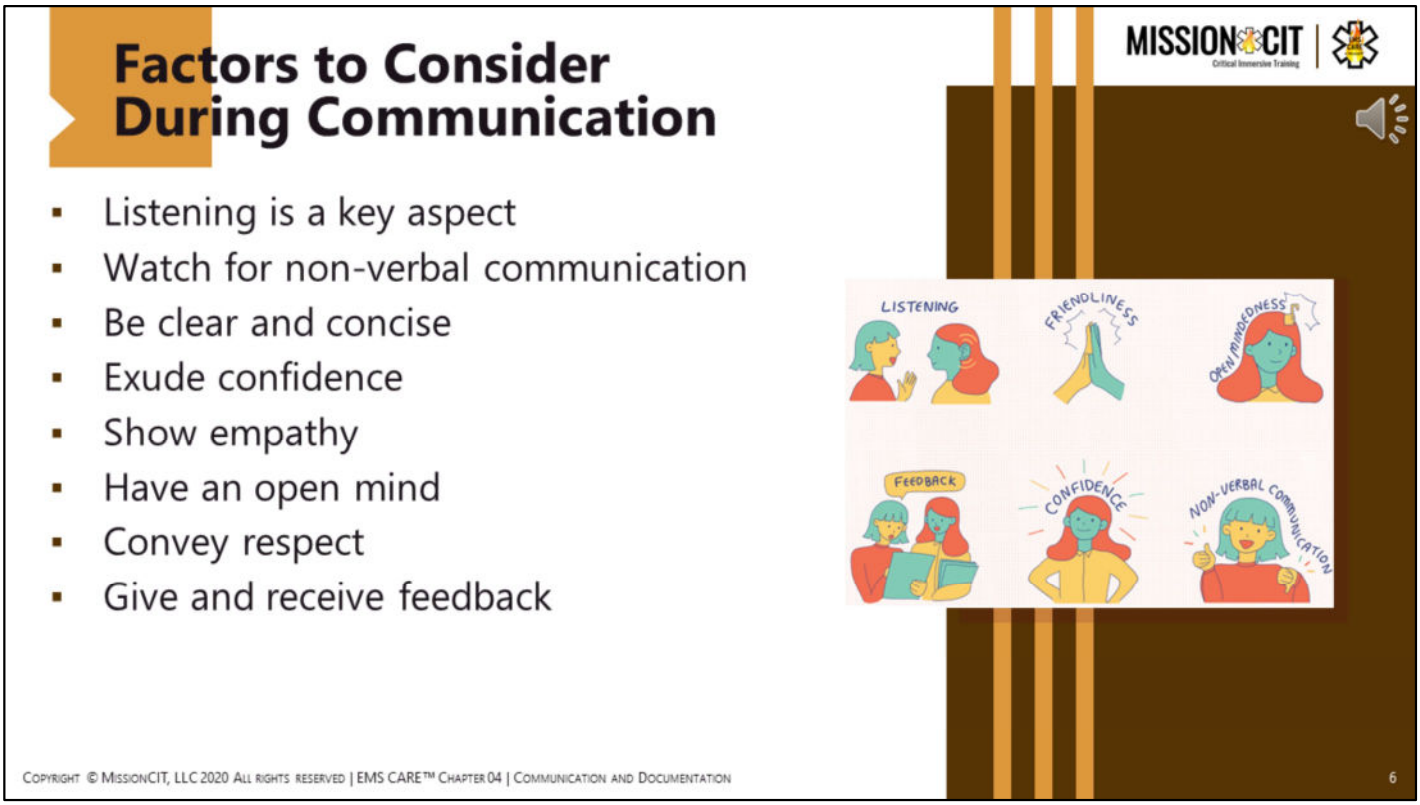


The Shannon-Weaver Communication Model was originally developed in the 1940s for Bell Telephone Labs to give them a mathematical theory of communications. Later it was used for understanding the role of communication.

This model encompasses five steps and they are:

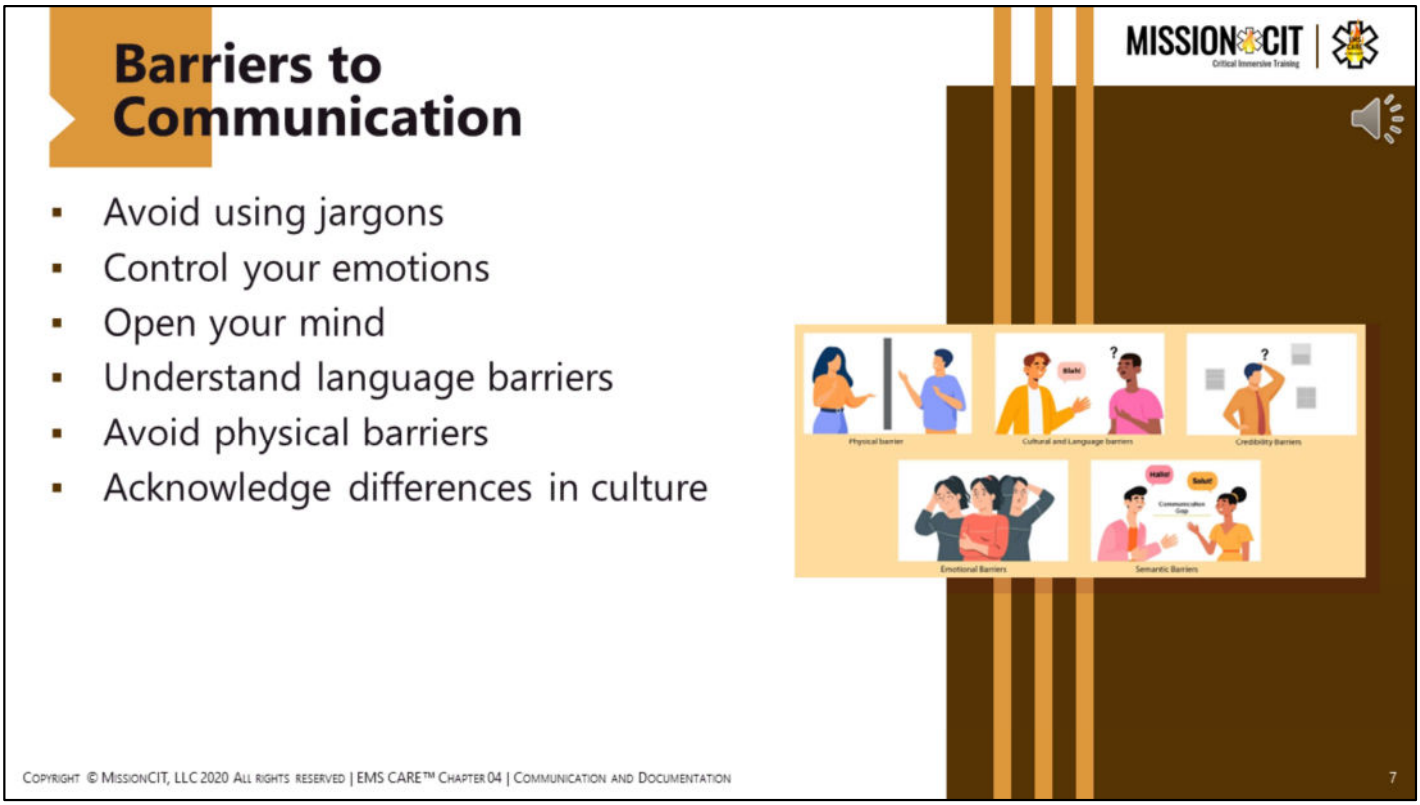
- The sender has a thought and decides to communicate it
- The sender encodes the thoughts into a message
- Sends the message to the receiver
- The receiver decodes the message
- Finally, the receiver sends feedback to the sender to acknowledge the receipt of the message

Understanding this model will give some clarity about the way messages must be formulated and more importantly, the need for the receiver to send feedback to the sender.



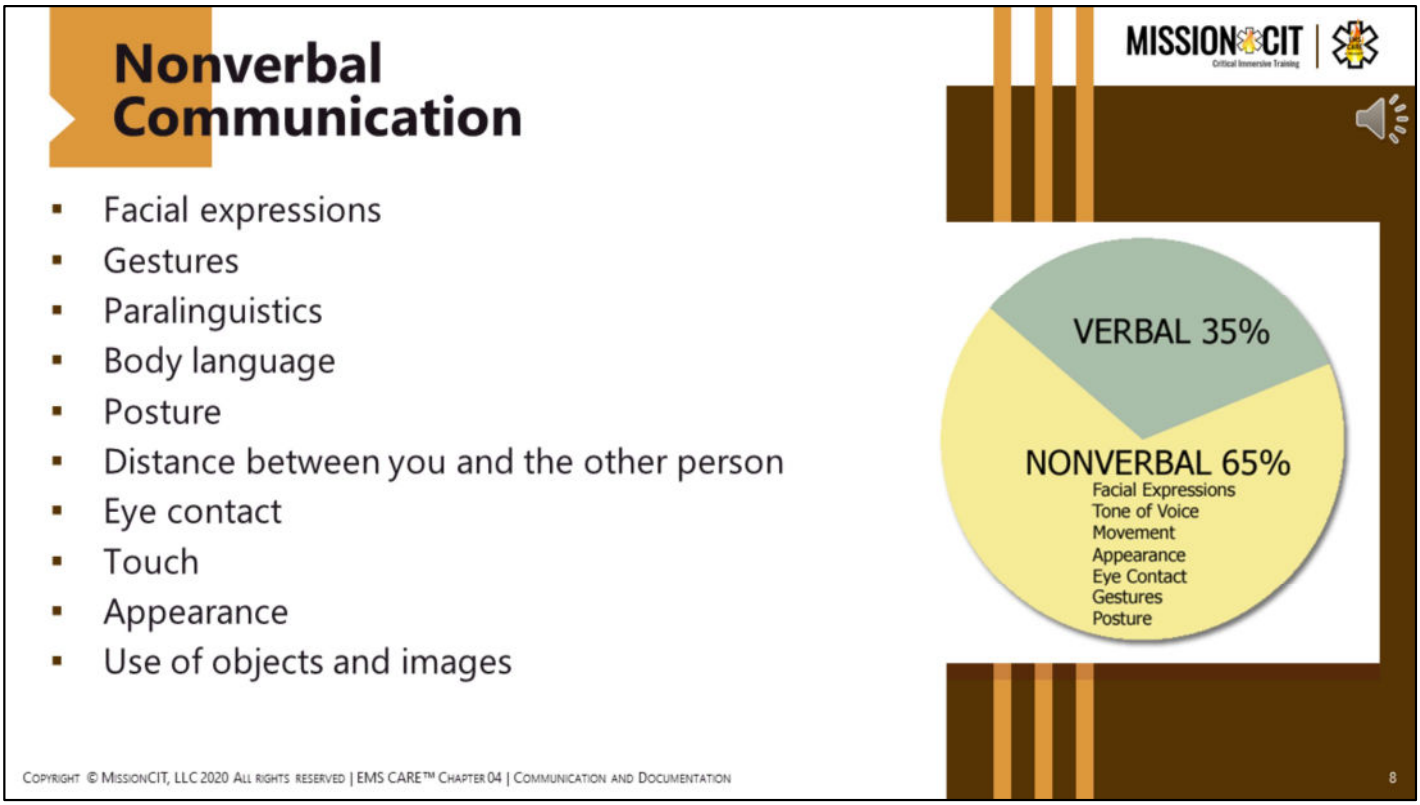
Keeping this model in mind, some of the factors to consider during communication are:

- Listening is a key aspect of effective communication
- Watch out for non-verbal communication
- Be clear and concise with your factors
- Exude confidence in your words without sounding harsh or arrogant
- Show empathy
- Have an open mind while handling patients
- Convey respect through your words and actions
- Always give and receive feedback



Here are some barriers you must avoid at all costs as this impedes your communication.

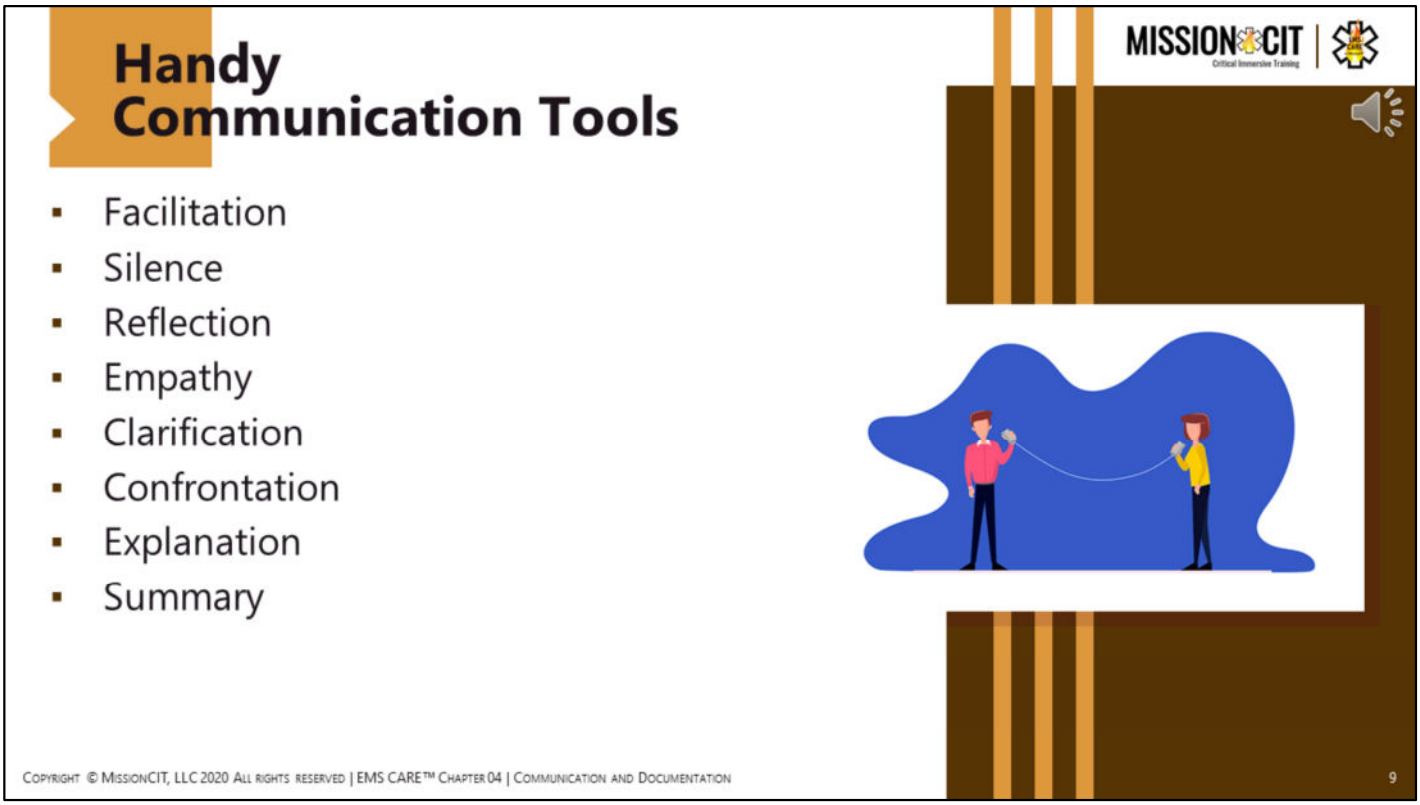
- Avoid using jargons that can make it difficult for others to understand what you're saying
- Control your emotions
- Open your mind to the needs of the patients and avoid any taboo or preconceived notions
- Understand that patients may not speak the same language as you, so be considerate of the differences
- Avoid physical barriers
- Acknowledge differences in culture and perceptions



A substantial portion of our communication is nonverbal. Experts have found that every day we respond to thousands of nonverbal cues and behaviors including postures, facial expressions, eye gaze, gestures, and tone of voice. From our handshakes to our hairstyles, nonverbal details reveal who we are and impact how we relate to other people.

Some of the types of non-verbal communication that you can use to better convey your thoughts are:

- Facial expressions
- Gestures
- Paralinguistics
- Body language
- Posture
- Distance between you and the other person
- Eye contact
- Touch
- Appearance
- Use of objects and images



Keeping in mind the above barriers and factors, some of the tools you can use to build trust and to avoid confrontations are:

- Facilitation: encouraging the patient to talk more or provide more information
- Silence: gives the patient space and time to think and respond
- Reflection: restating a patient's statement made to you to confirm your understanding
- Empathy: being sensitive to the patient's feelings and thoughts
- Clarification: asking the patient to explain what he or she meant by an answer
- Confrontation: making the patient who is in denial or a mental state of shock focus on urgent and life-critical issues
- Interpretation: summing up the patient's complaint to confirm your understanding
- Explanation: providing factual information to support a conversation
- Summary: providing the patient with an overview of the conversation and the steps you will be taking

All these tools and the aspects we discussed so far can be combined for an effective communications strategy with different groups and kinds of people. Justin will next talk about how you can communicate with different people.