

Communication Strategy Exercise: Concentration

In this exercise the instructor reads two stories to the group in the presence of background noise. Participants are asked to complete a page of math problems while the first story is being read, forcing them to look down and divide their attention between two tasks. When the second story is read, participants can watch the instructor, focusing their attention and using speechreading cues. After each story the instructor will ask five questions about the content. The exercise allows participants to see how much of the stories they missed, and whether dividing their attention affected their understanding of the story. They also will see the benefits of speechreading.

Instructor: "I am going to read you a story. While I read the story please complete as many math problems as you can. I will be asking you questions about the story, so try and listen while you do the math problems."

Story #1: Last week I took my dog Lilith for a walk. We walked in a wooded area near the river. Suddenly Lilith stopped walking and started to dig furiously. After just 30 seconds she made a hole in the ground and took out a mole. She was just about to eat the mole when I realized what she was doing and made her stop. Now I know why we no longer have any moles in our back yard!

Questions:

1. What was the name of the dog? (Lilith)
2. Where did I take the dog for a walk? (by the river)
3. What did my dog do when she stopped walking? (she started to dig)
4. What did my dog take out of the hole? (a mole)
5. What did my dog want to do with the mole? (eat it)

Instructor: "How many items did you answer correctly? Now let's try another story. Do whatever you can to improve your understanding. Try watching my face while I read the story."

Story #2: Last weekend my family took a trip to Chicago. We were supposed to fly up on Friday afternoon but the flight was canceled because there was an ice storm in Chicago. So, we woke up real early on Saturday and took a 6:00 a.m. flight. When we got to Chicago we went to the natural history museum in the morning and an art museum in the afternoon. For dinner we went to a French restaurant. It was difficult staying awake at dinner because we had all woken up at 4:30 in the morning.

Questions:

1. Where did my family go last weekend? (Chicago)
2. What happened to our original flight? (it was canceled because of an ice storm)
3. Where did we go on Saturday morning? (a natural history museum)
4. Where did we go on Saturday afternoon? (an art museum)
5. What kind of restaurant did we go to for dinner? (French)

Discussion:

- How many questions did you answer correctly for the first story and for the second story?
- What did you do differently during the second story so you could understand more?
- Discuss importance of:
 - Lipreading
 - Concentration
 - Filling in the blanks (using context)

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