



We all communicate in many ways.

When we say something, we all use different channels at the same time.

- Words
- Facial expressions
- Gestures
- Posture
- Breathing
- Pictures
- Objects



When we talk to someone, we use more than just words to send a message. We use our whole bodies. Our facial expressions, gestures, loudness, tone, and even posture enhance actual words. Using nearby objects can also emphasize the words.

Facial expression can tell others whether we are serious, upset, excited, or joking. Instead of looking right at someone, our eyes might glance toward our cup of coffee to communicate that we are tired, or feel impatient. Emotional content is often conveyed non-verbally.

Tone of voice impacts meaning. We may sound happy, angry, sad, or enthusiastic—all conveyed by voice volume, rate, pitch, and timbre. When a person is sarcastic, their tone of voice lets the listener know that words alone are not the entire message. People tend to speak faster when upset. Meaning is not determined by the words alone.

Gestures also influence our message and can be a good way to measure the emotional content of what is said. Gestures get larger when we are enthusiastic.

People talk and point at what they are referring to. We might 'punch the air' when feeling triumphant.

Our body can influence our message. Posture will be different when feeling upset, relaxed or confused. When we get excited, our breathing and heart rate will increase and influences how others receive what we are saying. We may not be aware of this aspect of communication.

The brain is our control center tells the body what to do. It both creates the message and determines how it is transmitted. Our brains help us to communicate in multiple ways. Saying "Let's go get some groceries" while rubbing your belly or opening the front door may add more information to what you said.

People who don't speak verbally still communicate in multiple ways and are sometimes better at using multiple modalities than speaking people. People who are non-verbal might combine gestures, vocalizations, and facial expressions—like someone who points to the bathroom, while bouncing up and down, might tell us it's urgent.