

ACTIVITY 4

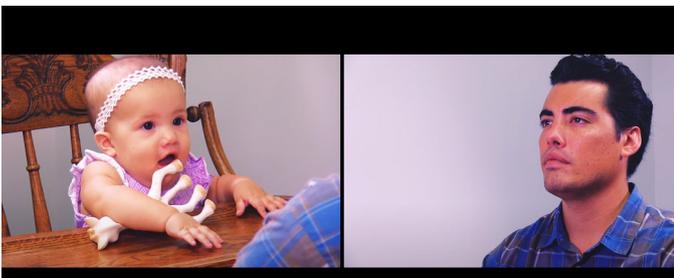
The basics of connection

This activity introduces students to the importance of non-verbal communication, and the different ways we can connect with others without using words.

Words aren't the only way that we can connect with others. Non-verbal communication - eye contact, touch, facial expression, smiling, nodding - is crucial for connection. It can be different in different cultures, for those of different ages and for some autistic people and others with different types of neurodiversity.

- Ask students to discuss some of the ways in which we communicate non-verbally to each other, and capture these on a mind map or similar.
- Think about how these might be different according to different social contexts (for example, personal space is different according to how well you know someone, whether you identify as male/female, according to different social norms.)
- Ask students to discuss this in terms of their own cultures, families, friendship groups etc.

Now, use the videos below to show students the power of non-verbal communication.



Video 1 Still Face Experiment with Dads

- How did the babies react when their dads looked away from them?
- Why do you think this is?

[!\[\]\(4b7a79268f6ba26c1471d4232fffa85a_img.jpg\) Watch the video here](#)

NB: Be particularly aware of care-experienced students, adopted students and those in kinship care during this activity, and students who may have limited contact with parents or other family members.



Video 2 Eye Contact Experiment

- How did people's mood change throughout the experience? Students may notice that people seemed nervous and uncomfortable at first, but were smiling and laughing by the end.
- How would you feel if you took part in an experiment like this?
- Why do you think eye contact is so important?

[!\[\]\(56549452e01ca28bdf2500ced9653143_img.jpg\) Watch the video here](#)

Now that students have considered the importance of facial expressions and eye contact, ask them to take part in this non-verbal activity.

- Ask students to line up and arrange themselves alphabetically by first name, without talking.
- You could ask them to do this a few times, also lining up by month of birth, surname etc.
- After they've lined up ask them:
 - How did you connect?
 - What aspects of communication are you relying on to connect with each other?

In the height of the pandemic and lockdowns, the way we communicated changed.

- How did we stay connected during Covid?
- What got in the way of good connectivity? E.g. face masks, social distancing.
- What impact did this have and why?
- If you could advise a future generation about the best ways to stay connected during a pandemic, what would you tell them?

Ask students to create a poster or leaflet with some tips on how they can better connect through non-verbal communication.

Optional extension activity

If non-verbal communication is so important for making meaningful connections, what does this mean for the connections we make online?

Emojis were developed to infuse written text with the basic contact principles of human interaction.

Ask students to consider:

- What emojis do you use most?
- Which ones are effective in conveying what you want to say in the best way possible?
- Are there any that annoy you?

Students' perceptions of emojis may be different, and emojis can be interpreted in different ways.



This activity is designed for 14-18 year olds, but could be used with other age groups too.