Module 3
COMMUNICATION

If you want to move people, it has to be toward a vision that is positive for them, that taps important values, that gets them something they desire, and it has to be presented in a compelling way that they feel inspired to follow.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Module 3
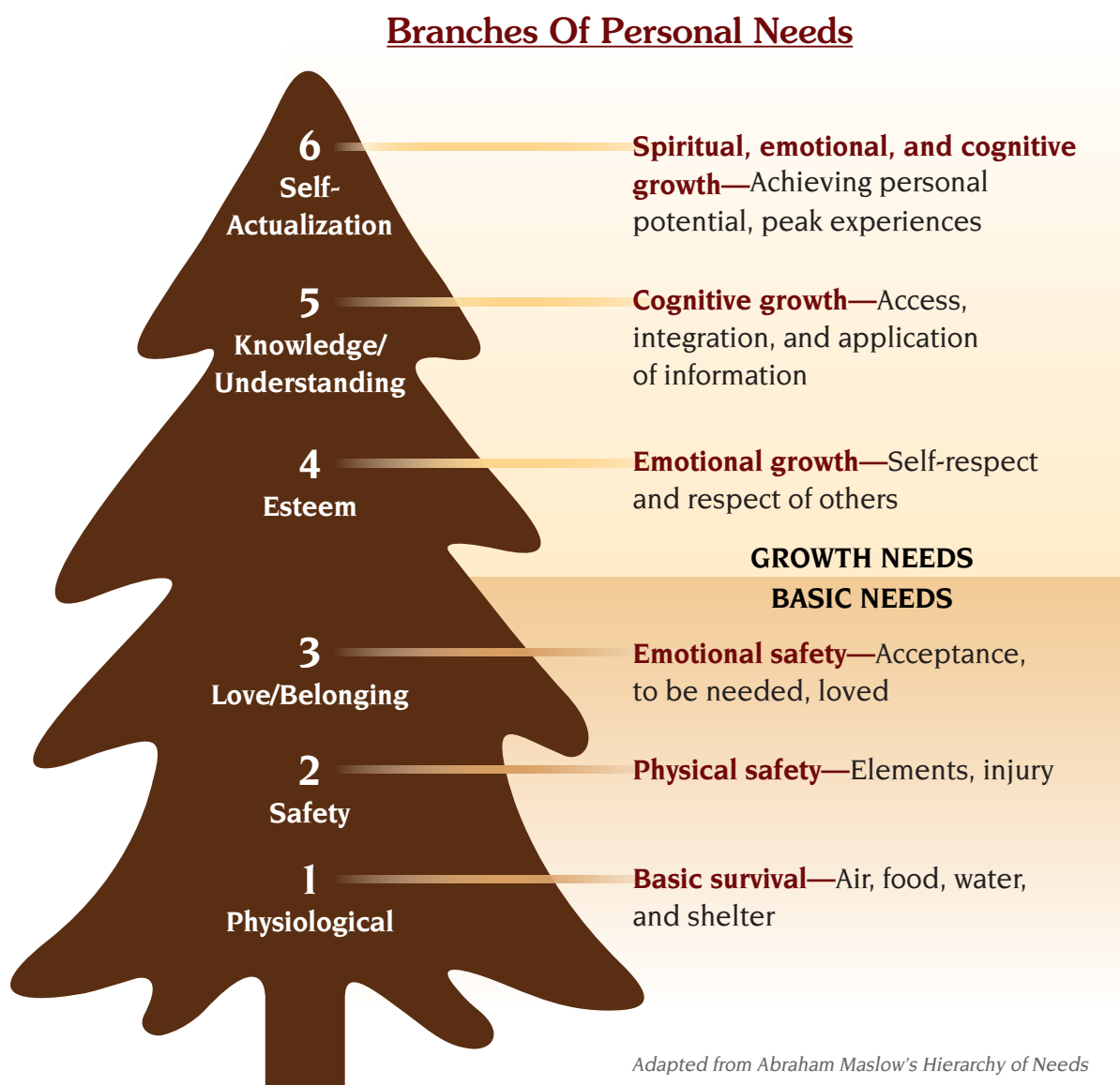# COMMUNICATION

INTERPRETATION: HOW DO WE DO IT?

Our first two modules give us an understanding of the history of interpretation, what it is and why we conduct interpretive programs. Now let us turn to the heart of the matter and review the principles of communication—the foundation of interpretation. The principles covered in this module form the foundation of all communication regardless of the media, the venues, the audience, or the message types. Although these elements are certainly important, there is basic theory and a process of communicating that sets the stage for building the specific types of programs covered in the remaining modules of this handbook.

Communication is the process of transferring meaning and understanding from one source to another. The primary goal is that the transmission occurs between the two sources with minimal distortion of the original message. Research suggests that on average **only 10% of what is verbally communicated is retained by the receiver** (Grater, 1976). This demonstrates why it is so important for you, the interpreter, to understand all the methods and techniques for successfully communicating with your audience. This also underscores the importance of creating emotional and intellectual connections between your site and your audience, rather than simply imparting information.

3.1 UNDERSTANDING THE VISITORS' NEEDS

Let's start by looking at the needs and motivations of our visitors. Psychologist Abraham Maslow (1954) developed a hierarchy of human needs (Figure 3.1) that helps us understand the nature of those needs. People's most basic needs must be met before their growth can be enhanced. Recognizing and understanding which level of need a visitor has is key to providing successful interpretive services. For example, a visitor's self-actualization cannot be met if he is, she is frightened or lost.

Figure 3.1

Branches Of Personal Needs

6
Self-Actualization
Spiritual, emotional, and cognitive growth—Achieving personal potential, peak experiences

5
Knowledge/Understanding
Cognitive growth—Access, integration, and application of information

4
Esteem
Emotional growth—Self-respect and respect of others

GROWTH NEEDS
BASIC NEEDS

3
Love/Belonging
Emotional safety—Acceptance, to be needed, loved

2
Safety
Physical safety—Elements, injury

1
Physiological
Basic survival—Air, food, water, and shelter

Adapted from Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

INFORMATION AND ORIENTATION SERVICES

The first and most common method of helping visitors meet their basic needs is providing visitor information and orientation services. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, these are among the basic visitor needs that must be met first. For example, the most common question asked in most parks is, "Where is the bathroom?" Nothing else can be achieved unless this need is met first.

Think about basic orientation and informational needs that you had when you first arrived at your training center. You needed to know things such as: *Where is my room? Where is the dining hall?* Visitor orientation is typically accomplished through websites and phone calls ahead of the visit, a stop at the Visitor Center or Entrance Station upon arrival, or from bulletin boards and information kiosks inside the park.

BEFORE ARRIVAL

Many of our visitor information services are not conducted face-to-face, but through means such as telephone, website, and mail contacts. These methods of communication are the first line of contact for many visitors. Think about the last special location you visited. Did you call first, check out a website, or ask for brochures before you actually visited? Many visitors use this information to decide which park to visit and how much time to allow.

When meeting information and orientation needs for visitors over long distance, there are a few special things to consider. Be sure that you are responding to requests for information in a timely manner; don't make people wait! Try to personalize your contacts as much as possible. If you can, give them what they request and include a signed note thanking them for their interest and expressing that you hope to see them when they visit. This personalized attention to detail means a great deal to visitors and functions as a great public relations tool for your agency, helping forge visitor connections to the resource.

Lastly, make sure the information that you are offering via long distance is accurate. Look at your park's website regularly so you will know what your visitors are seeing. Do your part to make sure the website reflects current activities, lodging information and seasonal updates.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL PHONE CONTACTS

- **Smile while you're on the phone.** Smiling while talking changes the inflection and tone in your voice. People can hear a smile even though they may not see it.

- **Treat visitors on the phone as you would treat them in person.** How many times have you put a person on hold who is standing in front of you?

- **Answer the phone with a greeting that reflects the park name and your name:** Hello, my name is Carolyn. Thanks for calling Humboldt Redwoods State Park. How may I help you?

- **Have common information ready.** Post answers to the most commonly asked questions on the wall near the phone to help volunteers and new staff.

AT THE PARK

Information Desk/Entrance Station

The most common place for providing information to visitors is at the entrance station or behind the desk in the visitor center. Visitors who come to these locations are often seeking to meet their basic physiological and safety/security needs; "Where is the bathroom?" and "What kind of snakes are here?" are typical questions.

There are several methods that you can use to help meet these needs. Be prepared to provide clear, concise, and accurate information. Keep a list of the questions your visitors ask. In the beginning, you

Many visitors' first stop will be the front desk of the visitor center.

may not know many of the answers, but as time passes the number of questions that you hear for the first time will dwindle. In time, you can create (if they do not currently exist) several books of "commonly asked questions" that you can leave on the front desk for visitors to peruse and volunteers to study. These will be available when you are not, and thus reach even more visitors.

PROVIDING HELPFUL INFORMATION AND ORIENTATION

- Always have trail, park, local and highway maps available.
- Listen to what is really being asked.
- Anticipate questions.
- Provide interpretive answers *(don't just give facts; tell stories!).*
- Have common field guides and reference materials handy.

It can get tiresome hearing that same old question over and over. However, keep two things in mind: 1) it is the first time the person standing in front of you has asked the question, and 2) they had to get up a lot of nerve to approach you. For many visitors, it takes a lot of curiosity, fear, uncertainty, etc., to spur them to ask a question. As you will learn in *Module 10—Roving,* these spontaneous interactions with visitors are often the most meaningful. These interactions also affect the overall impression an individual has of the entire agency.

Bulletin Boards/Information Kiosks

Bulletin boards are an effective and inexpensive way to provide information and orientation services to visitors. Answering the basic what, where, when, and why questions is a common function of these mediums. One drawback to bulletin boards is that they must be maintained regularly. Bulletin boards will be overlooked by visitors if they contain daunting amounts of text and clutter, or are dirty and unattractive.

We know from research that people do not read very much. **On average, most visitors read about 30-40 seconds worth of material. That is about 200-250 words** (Serrell, 1996; Trapp, Gross, and Zimmerman, 1992). Writing in a short, concise, and clear manner is more difficult than writing lengthy pieces of information, but it is essential. As Mark Twain said, "I would have written you a shorter letter but I did not have the time." Maximize the effectiveness of bulletin boards by using a few simple pointers provided in the box on the following page.

THOSE MESSY BULLETIN BOARDS!

- Keep everything up to date.
- Pictures are worth a thousand words.
- Keep it simple and short.
- Organize information into meaningful categories and subcategories.
- Connect information to the tangibles visitors have around them.
- Include emergency contact information.
- Vary the size, shape, color, etc. of graphics.
- Remember to follow accessibility guidelines.
- Make it look new each season to engage repeat visitors.

3.2 BASIC COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Once we have helped our visitors meet their basic needs, we can move on to using interpretation to achieve the purposes discussed in *Module 2—Purpose and Value.* To do this we first must have an understanding of the basic communication process. Through understanding of the basic communication process, we can maximize the visitor's retention, comprehension, and understanding of our messages.

Communication (Figure 3.2) begins with a communicator (first step), in our case, an interpreter. The interpreter has a particular message that needs to be transmitted to the receiver, in our case, the visitor. The message is the second step in the communication process. Once the target message has been identified, the interpreter encodes (third step) the message into the appropriate language and communication medium. After the actual communication of the message, the visitor receives the message (fourth step) and decodes it (fifth step). After decoding, there is a feedback process (sixth step) for communication back to the interpreter. All of this occurs in a particular setting with its own set of characteristics that influences the entire process (Fazio and Gilbert, 2000).

Let's take a closer look and identify ways to make the process more successful.

Figure 3.2

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

6. FEEDBACK

5. DECODING

4. RECEIVING

The Real World

1. INTERPRETER

2. MESSAGE

2. ENCODING
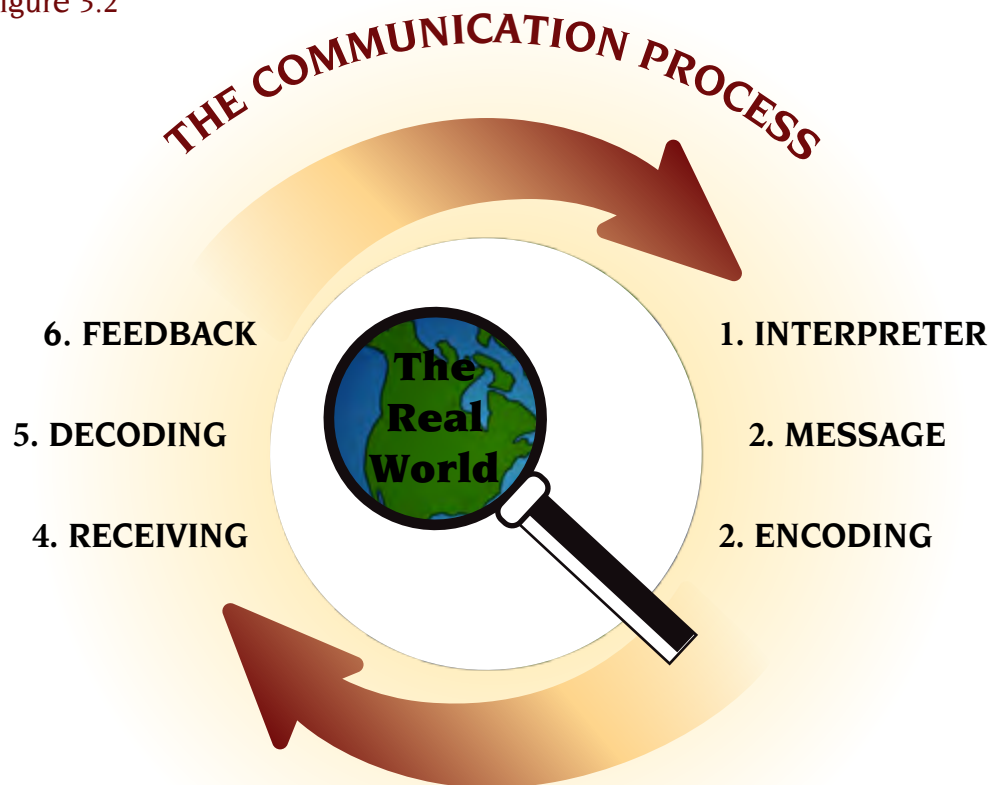
A. INTERPRETER

Some characteristics of an interpreter affect the overall reception of the message by the visitor. Appearance, voice, body language, etc., are all linked to one quality—credibility. There are many things that affect a visitor's perception of your credibility. Remember, it does not matter how credible you actually are, all that matters is the perception the visitor has of your credibility. For example, you may be the resident expert in a particular topic, but if you shuffle your feet and cannot maintain eye contact, you will not appear very credible. Think about the last time you asked someone a question and he/she would not look you in the eye and answer. That person may have been telling the truth, but you were probably skeptical due to the lack of eye contact. It should also be mentioned that judgments of credibility vary depending on the target audience. The following is a brief overview of the major elements that affect a visitor's perception of your credibility.

Credibility

Content

The primary aspect that many think of when considering credibility is content. Do they know what they are talking about? Again, we will discuss many things that affect this perception, but you must begin with truthful, accurate information. There is nothing worse for your credibility than to be proven wrong during a talk. The judgment of being trustworthy will, in part, be influenced by whether or not visitors think you know what you are talking about. The key for success in this step is easy: thoroughly research your topic before presenting information to your visitors. In *Module 4—Planning* we will review in detail appropriate methods and practices of conducting good research.

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The way to become boring is to say everything.

Voltaire

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Confidence

Another characteristic that influences perceived credibility is the confidence you project. Judgments of confidence are based on several elements. Eye contact, voice quality and body language are three of the primary elements that influence confidence perceptions.

Eye contact is definitely important. "Studies have found that, whatever the status, age, gender or physical size of individuals, **those who maintain effective eye contact are perceived as more honest, warmer, and more knowledgeable** than those who look away from their listeners" (Brownell, 1982, p. 33). You do not want to stare at visitors, but instead maintain two or three seconds of eye contact with individuals and try to look at everyone at least once. For large audiences, do not focus your attention and eye contact on one side of the group; try to sweep the entire audience.

Voice quality also reflects your confidence. Meek, mild, and high-pitched voices are not thought to be as confident and do not command as much attention as low-pitched, authoritative voices.

Another characteristic of the voice is the **rate of speaking.** Talking too fast or too slowly impacts perceptions of credibility. In addition, filling in silences in speech with "ums" and "uhs" also has a negative impact on visitor perceptions. There is great power in a dramatic pause. Know when to stop talking. Your voice should be loud enough in tone and pitch to hear, fluid in pattern, and slow enough in speed to understand.

Body language is a third element that impacts visitor perceptions of confidence and thus overall judgments of credibility. "The cues your body sends are often more accurate indicators of the way you feel and what you think than the words you choose" (Brownell, 1982, p. 33). In fact, it is estimated that approximately **"60-95% of the meaning transferred in a communication system is accomplished through non-verbals"** (Jurin, Danter, and Roush, 2000, p. 143). We use body language, often subconsciously, about two-thirds of the time when communicating. The trick for an interpreter is to consciously channel that use of body language in appropriate ways. Standing up straight, holding your head up, and using your body for emphasis are all ways of improving your body language.

Appearance

Physical appearance also influences credibility. The old saying "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" is certainly applicable in this situation. However, there are generalities that can be identified regarding how appearance impacts credibility. One of the primary elements that will increase credibility is your uniform. Wearing a uniform typically signifies having authority and being of an expert status; be sure your uniform is always neat, pressed, and clean.

Passion and Sincerity

Finally, the passion, enthusiasm, and sincerity with which you speak affects the communication process. Tilden (1957) called this the "priceless ingredient." Visitors respond to and can sense the innate interest of the speaker. Changing the variable voice inflection helps pace, rhythm, and tone of speech to convey interest in the subject matter. Active, animated body language and facial expressions help convey passion. Think about hearing monotone speakers. It is hard to believe that they are really interested in what they are saying. The best method to improve

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Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration.

Thomas A. Edison

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and convey your sincerity is to have it. Believe in what you are doing, the agency for which you work, and the message you are conveying to the public. The audience forgives many technical mistakes if they believe you are sincere in the attempt.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS THAT IMPACT COMMUNICATION

- Voice Quality
- Body Language
- Accurate Content
- Appearance
- Eye Contact
- Passion
- Sincerity
- Uniform
- Title

B. MESSAGE

The second step in the communication process is the message itself. As interpreters, we call this the theme of the program. We will cover themes in detail in *Module 5— Programs.* The message is the reason communication takes place. There are several techniques and strategies that can be used to create successful messages. We will review some of the basic characteristics of an effective message and examine more advanced techniques for improving persuasive communication. Keep in mind that **the overall goal is minimal distortion of the original message between the sender (interpreter) and the receiver (visitor).**

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Dry words and dry facts will not fire hearts.

John Muir

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The basics of good message delivery are things we instinctively know. Think about telling a good joke. It has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Each has its place in the story and must be told in the appropriate order and with the right emphasis. Communicating interpretively is not a new form of communication. It is simply being able to tell a good story. And in our case, that story has a moral or message we are trying to convey.

C. ENCODING

There are a lot of ways messages can be communicated to visitors. The primary methods are verbal, visual, hands-on and written. Encoding is the process of coding a message into a particular channel to be communicated to visitors. Deciding which channel will be the most effective depends on numerous factors, including the target audience, the message itself, the time frame, the interpreter, and the resource being interpreted. Each channel has its own characteristics and benefits. The key for interpreters is that the more channels you can incorporate, the more the visitor remembers. The most retention comes when we see it, hear it, and do it.

INCREASE MEMORY

- Verbal
- Hands-on
- Visual
- Written

D. RECEIVING

Many characteristics of the visitor affect the communication process. Although we cannot change or affect these characteristics, it is important to be aware of their impact on the communication process. David Larsen, the former interpretive training manager for the National Park Service, likes to remind his rangers that the visitor is "sovereign." "No matter how much confidence we have in our science and our professional procedures, no matter how enthusiastic and polished our presentations, the audience ultimately decides if the resource has value. The audience determines if they will care enough about the resource in order to support the care for the resource." Larsen, David L., "Be Relevant or Become a Relic" *Journal of Interpretation Research* 7,1, (2002), 17-23.

Visitor Characteristics

- **World view**—The visitors' view of and belief system about the world influence communication. Visitors selectively receive and process information that supports an established belief system. This is known as emotional deafness.

- **Significant others**—The social group that the visitor occupies impacts communication. For example, a teenage boy surrounded by his friends will react differently from the same boy in his family group. This could be considered peer pressure.

- **Knowledge/experience level**—What a visitor knows about a subject influences the communication process. Previous knowledge can positively or negatively affect the process, depending upon perceived credibility of the sender.

- **Attitude toward the agency**—A visitor's belief system regarding California State Parks will impact judgments of credibility and trustworthiness.

- **Personal distractions**—Visitors' social, physical, and emotional settings create various degrees of distraction.

- **Information needs/motives**—Visitors' motives and needs for information impact what is retained.

Barriers to Receiving

Regardless of the channel you choose for your message, you may encounter barriers. These barriers to communication might be inherent to the individual, such as language and physical barriers. Language barriers can result from differences in semantics, dialect, language origin, and jargon. Interpreters can break down these barriers by including more sensory exploration, hands-on demonstrations and analogies and avoiding technical vocabulary. You may even require the services of a language interpreter.

The seeds of great discoveries are constantly floating around us, but they only take root in minds well prepared to receive them.

Joseph Henry

Physical barriers to communication are also common. For example, can the visitor see, hear, or navigate adequately to experience the program? What is the trail surface like? Is there another, more accessible trail where you could do the same progr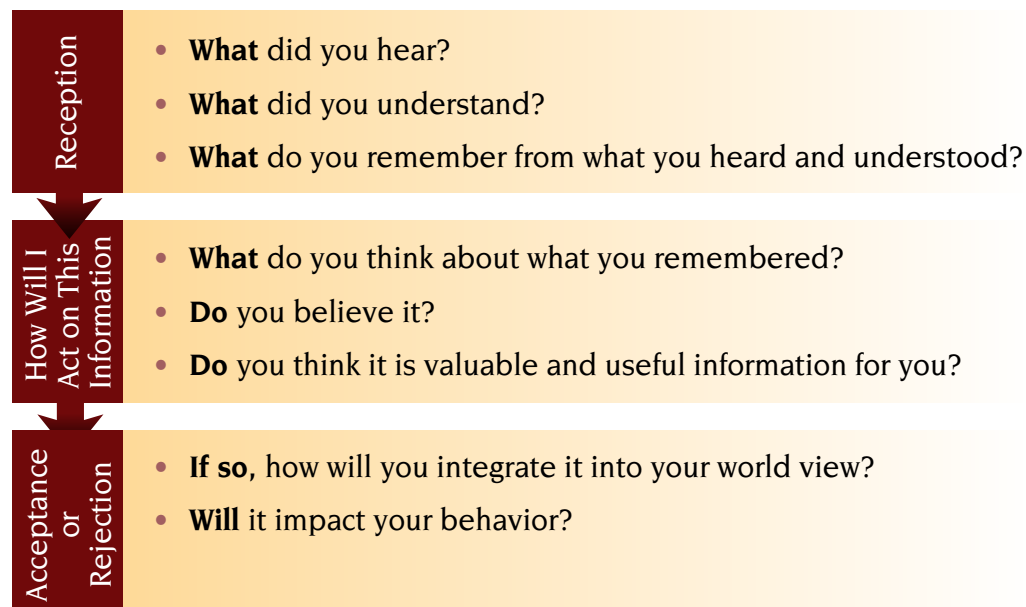am? These and other similar questions are important for you to consider when designing communication opportunities. Please refer to *All Visitors Welcome*, a publication produced by and for California State Parks, for more details and suggestions on addressing accessibility issues (Porter, 1994). In addition, we will review program-specific accessibility concerns and techniques in later modules.

E. DECODING

Decoding is the process that happens after information is communicated from the interpreter to the visitor. There are three primary steps that information goes through once it has been communicated. Each of these steps impacts the ultimate goal of communication—the understanding or exchange of meaning. The first step after the sender gives the message is reception. Not all information is heard, remembered, or comprehended. The second step is acceptance or rejection of the information. Given what a visitor heard and understood, value judgments about the information are then made. Once the information has been judged, then appropriate parts are assimilated (or not) into the existing belief system.

VISITORS DECODING INCOMING INFORMATION

When communication is sent...

Reception
- **What** did you hear?
- **What** did you understand?
- **What** do you remember from what you heard and understood?

How Will I Act on This Information
- **What** do you think about what you remembered?
- **Do** you believe it?
- **Do** you think it is valuable and useful information for you?

Acceptance or Rejection
- **If so,** how will you integrate it into your world view?
- **Will** it impact your behavior?

There are many elements that impact the decoding process. One of the primary elements is that individuals learn and process information differently. For example, many people need visual cues to understand a new concept while others may only need to hear it to understand. Even within the individual, there are times when details are needed for comprehension and other times when the big picture will do. You cannot control how a visitor will decode your message, but you can increase your chances of successful communication by understanding how messages are processed. Tilden's fifth principle reminds us that interpretation must address itself to the many phases of an individual. This means that **at any given time for any one individual, there are many ways information is processed or learned.**

INFORMATION PROCESSING
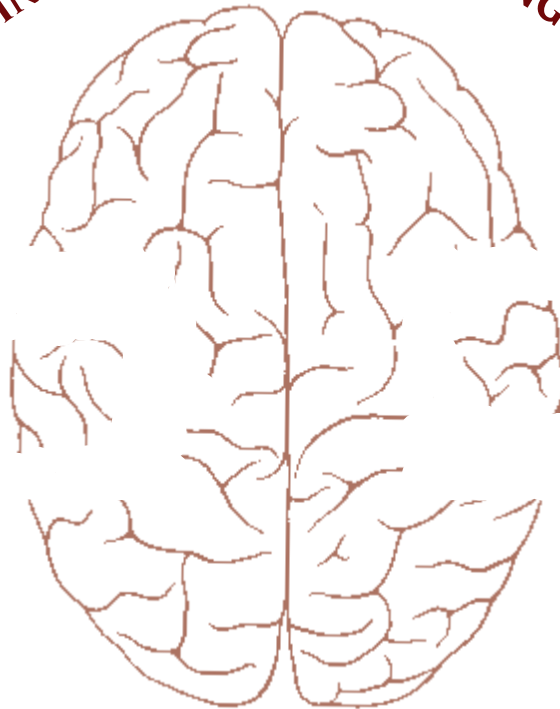
Left Brain Example
More than 60 species of insects are associated with this shrub, including 22 species of bees that feed only on its flowers

Right Brain Example:
Rub and then smell the leaves of this creosote bush. Can you feel and smell the oils that are present?

Information processing is related to regions of the brain. Right brain processing involves visual, intuitive, emotional, and spatial elements. It is the creative side of the brain. Techniques for involving right brain thinkers include anything that incorporates the senses or emotions. To reach this group, remember that emotions are often more important than facts. Left-brain processing involves factual, linear, logical thought. To engage these logical processors, include facts, ideas, concepts, and the relationships among them.

Kinesthetic learners benefit from moving their bodies in meaningful ways.

Another way to discuss decoding is to consider the style of learning. There are three primary styles: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.

Although most people favor one style of information processing over another, their choice in a given situation may be influenced by many things. As you communicate with visitors, you will not know how any of them are processing your information. To be most successful, you will need to provide a combination of processing opportunities.

VISUAL LEARNERS	**Must see the information in order to understand it.** Whether it is seeing the printed word, a picture, or the object itself, a visual learner must engage visually with information.
AUDITORY LEARNERS	**Must hear information.** The voice of the interpreter and the sounds of the resource serve to reach auditory learners
KINESTHETIC LEARNERS	**Must use information.** Demonstrations, hands-on activities, and tactile sensory involvement with the resources address these learners.

INCREASE DECODING SUCCESS

- Incorporate all the senses.
- Tell stories and paint pictures.
- Engage visitors directly with the resource.
- Use visual aids and props.
- Convey facts and information.
- Highlight relationships and ideas.
- Demonstrate concepts.

F. FEEDBACK

Feedback is the process through which an interpreter can determine if communication is effective. There are three basic types of feedback: verbal, visual, and written. Each method has its own limitations and benefits in the communication process. For each type there are various methods of modification possible for improving communication. We will discuss evaluation and feedback at length in *Module 12—Evaluation.*

3.3 RAPPORT: BASIC MESSAGE EFFECTIVENESS

California State Parks uses a system called **RAPPORT** to help interpreters evaluate and improve their interpretive programs. This method establishes uniform standards to promote effective communication. The acronym **RAPPORT** (see Table 3.3) represents the standards that are necessary for creating a successful interpretive program. These standards are evaluated through the use of the Standard **RAPPORT** form DPR 461.

Table 3.3

RAPPORT
Relevant—Related to the audience
Accurate—Well prepared and researched
• **P**rovocative/Enjoyable—Interesting and fun
• **P**rogrammatically accessible—Accommodating for all visitors
• **O**rganized—Logical sequence of ideas presented
Retained—Memorable
Thematic—A central message throughout

RELEVANT

An effective message must be relevant to the audience. Visitors must be able to understand the concept in terms of something they already know or something with which they can associate. **When you connect a tangible resource in your park with a universal concept you are making your resource relevant for the audience.** (Larsen, 2003) Remember, universal concepts are ideas and notions that almost everyone can relate to, but that, they do not mean the same to any two people. Examples of universal concepts include: joy, death, family, suffering, love and birth. There are many more processes, systems, relationships and values that are also universal concepts. Audiences presented with tangible/intangible links that include universal concepts are offered the opportunity to relate their own perspectives to the resource as well explore the way others relate.

In a park setting, for example, a pile of pot shards may not mean much to an audience until an interpreter tells them about the Native American women who used these pots to make food for their families. Each person in the audience is familiar with the concepts of mother, family, and food, yet the meanings may be different for each.

In another example, a barrel cactus that barely reaches the interpreter's knees may look unimpressive to the audience until the interpreter explains the myriad challenges it has met and overcome to survive for over 100 years to achieve this size. We have all overcome challenges and can imagine what living to one hundred would entail. Without contextual understanding, new information is sterile and will quickly be forgotten. In addition, if information is not contextually relevant for an audience, it could cause them to become bored or feel unintelligent.

Sam Ham (1992) suggests two more ways to make information personal to visitors, by using **self-referencing** and **labeling. Self-referencing** is a technique to get visitors to tap into their own experiences and memories as new information is conveyed. *"How many of you have ever…?"* or *"Remember the first time you made a snowball with your bare hands?"* By tapping into a visitor's own memories, we are once again trying to facilitate connections that are emotional (feelings-based) as well as intellectual (knowledge-based.)

Labeling involves using more specific terms to relate to the audience besides generic pronouns such as, **you, us,** and **we.** *"As Americans, we can all relate to the sense of tragedy from the events of September 11, 2001."* The phrase "As Americans" is labeling. *"As cadets at the Mott Training Center…"* is another example. Use care when labeling so you do not exclude people needlessly or include people in negative or derogatory categories.

TILDEN'S FIRST PRINCIPLE

Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.

Freeman Tilden

Techniques to Increase Relevance

- **Analogies**—Drawing similarities between two things. *A shaken soda can is a way to think of a volcanic eruption.*

- **Examples**—Referring to something that is representative of what you are talking about. *This seastar is one of the many creatures that travel with the tides.*

- **Stories**—The telling or accounting of an event that explains or describes what you want to interpret. *For example, this would be like telling the creation story of the Pomo People to convey how they revere the earth.*

- **Metaphors**—A figure of speech in which a comparison is made between unlike things that actually have something in common. *This meadow is a restaurant. This tree is a factory.*

- **Similes**—Comparing two things using like or as. *Tectonic plates can hit together like bumper cars. This wetland is like a highway rest stop for migrating water birds.*

- **Visual aids**—Using a tangible object to demonstrate, represent or explain something. *Pour water onto a dry sponge to represent how marshes soak up and hold water. Show pictures of animals that might not be commonly recognized by everyone.*

- **Universal concepts**—Anything that is known, felt, or believed, regardless of most demographic characteristics. *For example, most emotions and Maslow's basic needs are included.*

- **Practical application**—Demonstrating the usefulness or application of something. *Show visitors the medicinal qualities of plants and indicate potential uses in the future. Make pasta with stinging nettles and invite the audience to taste it.*

ACCURATE

One of the key characteristics affecting and influencing credibility is the presentation of factual, truthful information. This is not as easy as it seems on the surface. Whether you're interpreting in a natural, cultural, or recreational setting, it is important to present a fair, unbiased, and accurate picture of one whole story. Tilden (1967) points out **there are many whole stories to tell regarding any one topic.** The choice of **which** story to tell is driven

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All interpretation must be built upon accurate and comprehensive information, but if audiences were simply seeking knowledge, most would have little reason to experience the site at all.

David Larsen

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by many factors that we will discuss in *Module 4—Planning.* The key for accuracy is to conduct honest, thorough, and unbiased research in an attempt to truly understand the concept, theory, story, or fact. When conducting research, you soon realize that you can never know "the truth" of an event, place, time, or scientific concept. What you can do is adhere to good research practices and paint as honest and accurate a picture as you can.

PROVOCATIVE/ENJOYABLE

MAKE FACTS MORE FUN

- Smile.
- Tell stories, do not just give facts.
- Encourage participation.
- Do hands-on demonstrations.
- Ask questions.

- Use analogies.
- Be enthusiastic.
- Use visual aids.
- Engage visitors' senses.
- Relate it to visitors.

Mainly, LOVE what you do!

TILDEN'S FOURTH PRINCIPLE

If we make learning fun and enjoyable, we create life-long learners. Provoking the visitors to be curious, to want to know more, and to seek more information on their own is the primarily off-site goal of our programs. Given the nature of science, knowledge, and interpretation itself, one of the great achievements of an interpretive program is when the visitor begins to question. As important as a skillfully conveyed message is having visitors wonder, question, and desire to know more!

Methods of accomplishing this wonderment are not easily put into a list. In fact, it is the success of a number of things that results in provocation. There are some things you can do to help facilitate provocation through your programs. Do not always have "the answer;" instead ask good, thought-provoking questions throughout. In addition, always encourage discussion and feedback during your programs.

TILDEN'S FOURTH PRINCIPLE

The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.

Freeman Tilden

PROGRAMMATICALLY ACCESSIBLE

Programmatically accessible means that we have created programs that are accessible to the general public. Making our programs programmatically accessible has a lot to do with considering our target audience's needs, wants, special concerns, and circumstances. It also involves thinking about who is not coming and asking why. **The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA-PL 101-336) is a civil rights law informing all that people with disabilities have the right to visit, enjoy, and participate in public recreational programs and facilities.** Although we will not provide a complete review of the legislation and how it affects California State Parks, we will discuss things to consider when designing communication techniques. Refer to *All Visitors Welcome* for an in-depth discussion of techniques and strategies for accessibility (Porter, 1994).

Make it Accessible!

- **Begin each program with a thorough review of all of the basic visitor needs** (e.g., bathroom, breaks, length of walk, dangers, etc.) and any services or facilities that are accessible. Be sure that you always provide this announcement, no matter who your audience is.

- **Face the audience and speak clearly.** Many hearing impaired people read lips.

- **Incorporate as many senses as you can during the presentation.** Those with limited English can still appreciate seeing, touching and doing something.

- **When using visual aids, be sure that everyone gets to see them. A**sk visitors who have seen the object to please step back and let others see. Have the group make a viewing circle.

*Be considerate of others—be a good host!*

ORGANIZED

An organized presentation is one of the more fundamental characteristics of interpretation. Information that is organized is presented in an easy-to-understand manner that follows a logical progression of ideas. If information is not presented in an easily understood manner then the audience will soon get frustrated and tune out or walk away.

There are four primary techniques you can use to organize a presentation: a cognitive map, transition sentences, themes/subthemes, and practice. The use of advanced organizers or **cognitive maps** is proven way of increasing organization and thus impacting knowledge acquisition and understanding. (Hammit, 1981; Knopf, 1981). Just as you would use a spatial map to find your way in a foreign place, **cognitive maps provide the mental orientation for the interpretive journey.** Cognitive map theory suggests that providing an initial structure through which the listener can organize the information helps facilitate understanding and comprehension of the message. Learners are said to construct new information, and cognitive maps serve as the blueprints for that construction. A cognitive map tells the visitor what is going to happen.

WHAT'S A COGNITIVE MAP?

Here is an example of a cognitive map:
Today, we will journey together and discover what the forest has to provide. That way if you are ever lost in the woods you will be able to survive! We will discover the easiest way to find water, what the most nutritious thing is to eat, how to build a fire and seek shelter, and finally how to find your way out. We will take an easy, short walk around the visitor center and end up right back here in about one hour.
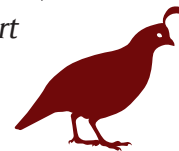
A second technique to increase organization is to use **transition sentences.** These sentences provide listeners the verbal cues that you have finished one main point and are continuing on to the next. They allow the listener to fade in and out of attention and not lose the ability to follow the program. For example, a listener who has been watching a bird and not listening to your program could hear the transition *"Now that we have discovered how to find water in the forest, let us turn to three primary ways to find food for survival"* and return to the program without feeling lost.

It is important not to have too many main points in an interpretive presentation. In fact, most of the literature recommends five main points (Ham, 1992; Knudson et al., 1995; Miller, 1956). Remember, your audience will not be taking notes and if on vacation, may not be willing to work hard to process too much new information. At the same time, too

Programs that are logically organized are easier for the audience to follow.

little information could cause them to become bored. **You'll want to select five main ideas and organize them around a main theme or message,** which is the third technique of increasing organization. We will review thematic presentation of information later.

A fourth technique for improving organization is practice. As the presenter, your comfort level with the program directly results in the ability to present the information to the public in an organized fashion. Trying to remember what you are supposed to say results in a choppy, jumbled program. Being prepared directly affects the outward organizational appearance of information. We will review strategies and methods of practicing in *Module 6—Talks.*

RETAINED

We want the message or main point of the interpretation to be memorable. Providing a good organizational structure and a sound theme or message facilitates this retention of information. There are other techniques that can be used to increase retention (see Table 3.4).

▪   ▪   ▪

People are out for recreation and need restful, intellectual visions, and not dull, dry facts, rules, and manuals.

Enos Mills

▪   ▪   ▪

Table 3.4

LEST THEY FORGET
Repeat main theme/message often. **Ask** questions throughout to assess retention. **Make** it relevant. **Provide** summaries throughout and especially at the end. **Provide** opportunities to apply the information. **Incorporate** many senses.

THEMATIC

The theme is the anchor point to which all of the information presented will relate. It is the message of the program. Subthemes are the sub-messages of each main point within the program (see Table 3.5). Using themes and subthemes around which the information is organized serves two main purposes. First, it provides an organizational hierarchy for the program. Second, the message is the reason you are presenting the program. In other words, the theme and subthemes guide your research, establish the structure of your presentation, and convey the reason or message of the program.

The theme is your message for the visitor to take home. If you think about a story with a lot of facts and bits of information, after time, much of the story will be forgotten. However, if the story has a message, that message will likely be retained longer than any of the individual details that made up the story. This is the true success of an interpretive program, not that the visitor walks away knowing all the plants you talked about, but that they retained the bigger message or theme.

Using the elements of **RAPPORT** will help you develop high quality, effective interpretive programs. It will also ensure that your programs meet the standards by which the Department evaluates interpretive performance. Remember **RAPPORT!**

Table 3.5

THE THEME SAYS IT ALL
Theme: *The forest provides, so you could survive if lost in the woods.* **Subtheme 1:** *Find water first, as it is essential to survival.* **Subtheme 2:** *Food is as easy to find as turning over a rock.*

3.4 PERSUASIVE TECHNIQUES

All of the messages we provide for visitors are aimed at influencing what they know (cognition), think (attitudes), feel (emotions), or do (behaviors). Whether the goal is to alleviate fear or to educate them about the resource, we are trying to influence them in some fashion. Given this relationship, there are several methods that can be used to increase the overall effectiveness of any type of persuasive message.

ATTITUDES

One of the primary methods of increasing message effectiveness is matching the message to the target audience. As covered in the **RAPPORT** section on "Relevance," understanding the visitors' needs, attitudes, and motives is one key to success in message formation. For example, if you are presenting a message to a group of horseback riders identifying the need to remove horseback riding from an area, your approach should be very different than it would be if you are presenting the same program to a group of backpackers. There are three potential attitudes a visitor could have about any given subject: for it, against it, or neutral. Appropriate strategies for each are given in the box below (Table 3.6).

Table 3.6

KNOW THY AUDIENCE		
They are for it	**They are against it**	**They are neutral**
• **Spend** little time giving facts and evidence (they already support you). • **Focus** most of the message on action statements (what they can do now). • **Provide** opportunities for them to contribute (let them share their knowledge).	• **Establish** common ground (begin with what you both have in common). • **Identify** the facts/information from their side (take away arguments before they can use them against you). • **Point out** major elements from your perspective (use only items that can easily be demonstrated—credibility is crucial). • **End** with common actions that both sides can agree on (leave them with things that you share in common).	• **Provide** information (they have not made up their minds—educate them). • **Present** both sides of a logical argument (don't let them wonder what the other side is). • **Conclude** with sources of opportunities to learn more.

Most visitors in our parks care about the resources within them, and our messages simply need to remind or prime visitors of that already-held belief. Successful persuasive messages must also convey to visitors that their behavior makes a difference and that they are responsible for that difference (Fishbein and Manfredo, 1992; Petty and Cacioppo, 1984; Vincent and Fazio, 1992). Research supports this theory and indicates that if messages are to affect behavior through attitudes, the appropriate attitude regarding the behavior must be primed. Visitors must be able to predict what will happen after a behavior and must be willing to accept responsibility for those consequences.

> ### HELPING THEM OWN IT
>
> **Interpreter's statement,** *"It is so nice to see everyone out here because you love and care about our coastal resources. Remember, the tide pool animals need our help to survive. If we remove them from the rocks even once, it can kill them. It is up to us to keep these awesome tide pools alive and healthy."*
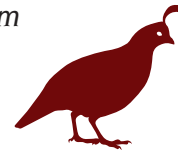
Norms

Another method of increasing message effectiveness is to make use of the expected and accepted norms for behavior. Every situation, social group, and setting has a set of expected norms for behavior. For example, laughing during a funeral is not the norm for behavior.

Two types of norms are social norms and descriptive norms. Social norms reflect the most accepted form of behavior in any given situation. These are what people **should** be doing. Descriptive norms tell us what others are doing. The most successful messages will incorporate both types of norms in conjunction with each other (Cialdini, 1996). In other words, what we tell visitors to do (social norm)—e.g., *"Do not litter."*—should be in line with what we say others are doing (descriptive norm), e.g., *"99% of visitors do not litter."*

Using norms to affect behavior works because people are influenced by the expectations of others and by the social pressure of what they think others are doing (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). For example, if visitors believe that most everyone walks off the trail (descriptive norm), it will be difficult to convince them they should not (social norm). After all, *everyone is doing it,* how much more could I hurt it?

Specific Requests

When trying to influence behavior, it is important to be specific with behavioral requests. Do not use general statements like *"Help us protect the resource."* Remember, most

depreciative behavior occurs out of ignorance, and asking someone to protect the resource assumes that they know how to do so. *"Help us protect the resource by staying on the trail."* conveys the specific behavior you want them to perform. Compliance with this request will be much higher than with the generic one.

Positive Spin

Try to frame messages in a positive light. For example, the above message, *"Help us protect the resource by staying on the trail,"* is positive. *"Do not hike off the trail as it damages the resource"* is the same message framed in a negative way. People respond better to positive messages than to negative ones.

Reasons Why

Another approach that is very effective for influencing others is to tell people why you want them to do something. Identifying the reason behind the rule prevents visitors from guessing the reason and deciding it is not that important. In addition, Wallace (1990) suggests reasons for behavioral requests should be given in reference to the resource first, the visitor second, and the management third. Visitors are more likely to modify their behavior to protect the resource or other people than to satisfy management. In addition, knowing the reasons behind the rules makes you more informed and thus a better interpreter. If you cannot identify the reason behind the rule in terms of the resource or the visitor, then how can you expect a visitor to do so on his or her own?

Always Give a Reason

Please stay on the trail as we pass through this area. The plants you see are homes to animals that can easily be harmed by our footsteps. Staying on the trail will also keep you from getting poison oak or ticks.

MORAL REASONING

Moral reasoning theories suggest persuasive messages should include a message addressing both lower stages of moral development **(preconventional)** and higher levels of moral development **(postconventional)** (Christensen and Dustin, 1989; Kohlberg, Levine, and Hewer, 1983). Individuals in lower or **preconventional** stages of moral development respond to messages that promise a reward or threaten punishment.

Children most closely reflect this level of moral development. Individuals in the **postconventional** moral stages of development respond to what others think and the ethics associated with a behavior. Messages should be tailored to the stage of moral reasoning held by the target audience or individual. For example, individuals in the preconventional stage of moral development will be more likely to change behavior in response to threats of punishment or promises of rewards than to ethical appeals. On the other hand, individuals in the postconventional stages of moral reasoning will tend to be more responsive to ethical appeals.

APPEAL TO THEIR MORALS

Preconventional message: *There is a $1,000 fine for littering.*

Postconventional message: *Leave the resource as you found it—without litter.*

COMBINED APPROACH

The final suggestion for improving persuasive message appeal is to use a combination of several of the approaches previously discussed. Many researchers have concluded that no one strategy will effectively control all depreciative behaviors in parks (Knopf and Dustin, 1992; Van de Kamp, Johnson, and Swearingen, 1994; Widner and Roggenbuck, 2000). **In other words, incorporating multiple persuasive techniques should increase the overall effectiveness of a single message.** For example, if norm appeals (everyone is doing it) reach some people and moral reasoning messages can be used to influence others, a message that includes both approaches should be more effective overall than messages based on any single approach.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Look around the group at all the others just like yourself who care deeply about the natural resources here in the park. Protecting the park's resources is up to each one of you. Although 99% of park visitors do not disturb the tide pool animals, the small fraction that do, cause an enormous amount of damage. Please do not remove any of the animals from their homes. They deserve to live and other visitors should have the same opportunity as you to see them. There is a fine for damaging the tide pools, but destruction costs the animals their lives. Thanks for helping us protect your treasures in the park.

COVER ALL THE BASES

- Make it relevant to the visitor.
- Present accurate information.
- Have fun.
- Leave them wanting to know more.
- Ensure program accessibility.
- Present organized information.
- Help visitors to retain messages.
- Use a thematic approach.
- Tap into visitor attitudes.
- Relate the consequences for behavior.
- Always tell why.
- Frame messages in the positive.
- Appeal to morals.
- Give specific behavioral requests.

■ ■ ■

The moment one gives close attention to anything,
even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious,
awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself.

Henry Miller

■ ■ ■

WHAT'S AHEAD?

The basic principles of communication are the foundation of all interpretation. Now that we have a grasp of the generic communication model, let us examine the steps involved with planning specific programs using chosen mediums for target audiences in a particular location. We will examine the basic steps of the planning process and how planning is used to create maximum effectiveness of our messages.

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Module 3
COMMUNICATION

SELF ASSESSMENT

Answer each question in the section below before reviewing the material in *Module 3—Communication.* The answers are not provided. Check your answers with your colleagues and as you read *Module 3—Communication.* Items from the self assessment may be reviewed and discussed in class.

1) The primary goal of all communication is to:

a) Persuade or change behavior

b) Educate the listener

c) Transfer a message between two sources

d) Solicit a response from the listener

2) Research suggests that on average a listener retains _____ percent of what is verbally presented to them.

a) 10%

b) 30%

c) 50%

d) 60%

3) There are _____ basic steps to the communication process.

a) 3

b) 4

c) 5

d) 6

4) Which of the following does not usually influence visitors' judgments about an interpreter's credibility?

   a) Height

   b) Uniform

   c) Voice

   d) Body language

5) Eye contact is one of the most important indicators of credibility. (Explain your answer.)

   a) True

   b) False

6) The acronym _____ stands for the California State Parks system of establishing and measuring good communication.

   a) COMMUNICATE

   b) TALK

   c) RAPPORT

   d) MESSAGE

7) For an interpretive message to reach the audience it should be:

   a) Detailed

   b) Documented

   c) Relevant

   d) A new idea

8)   What is a universal concept?

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9)   There are definitely some inherently boring topics. (Explain your answer.)

a) True

b) False

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10) The acronym ADA stands for:

a) All Disabilities Able

b) Americans with Disabilities Act

c) Add Dimensions of Access

d) All Do Attend

11) Which of the following is not used to help organize an oral presentation?

    a) Cognitive map

    b) Transition sentences

    c) Practice

    d) Spatial map

12) What is the difference between a theme and a topic?

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13) All interpretive messages are aimed at influencing the visitor. (Explain your answer.)

    a) True

    b) False

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14) Which type of message is more effective at changing behavior?

    a) Neutral

    b) Negative

    c) Positive

    d) Fear

15) You should always tell visitors the reason why you request a particular behavior.

    a) True

    b) False

16) Who developed a six-step hierarchy of needs that is widely used to understand the visitor needs?

    a) B. F. Skinner

    b) Robert Marshall

    c) Abraham Maslow

    d) William Penn Mott Jr.

Now that you have completed the self assessment questions, review the material in *Module 3—Communication* to confirm your answers. After reading the module, move on to the workbook learning activities, which will assist you in developing your skills.

WORKBOOK LEARNING ACTIVITIES

To help you review and apply the material covered in *Module 3—Communication*, a selection of review questions and/or activities is provided. Again, no answers are included. Use the material from the module, outside sources, and your colleagues to help you complete the activities and answer the questions. There may be more than one right answer. Use the questions and activities to generate discussion about the material. Be prepared to discuss, perform or demonstrate your answers in class.

1) Which step of the communication process do you think is the most important for a successful interpretive presentation? Why?

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2) You have been asked to give a presentation to a group of mushroom collectors to explain why they can no longer collect in the park. What can you do to maximize the effectiveness of your message?

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3) Create a persuasive message that you could use to reduce visitors' desire to touch the marble statues in your historic site.

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4) You are leading a group of 30 visitors on a walk through the park and spot a tiny snake. You point out the snake and explain a little about its natural history. As you continue the walk, you turn around to check on your group and see a young boy stomp on the snake and kill it. Several other group members also witness the behavior. How should you handle this situation?

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5)   Indicate how you could help visitors relate to each item below.

Topic	Make it relate
A volcanic eruption	it's like shaking a can of soda
The movement of a snake	_____
Ocean waves	_____
The tides	_____
Geologic time	_____
Seasons	_____
Fog	_____
Cultural diversity	_____
Size of a redwood	_____
Depth of the ocean	_____
Earthquakes	_____
Desert plant life	_____
Significance of a tribal dance	_____
Importance of CSP	_____
Role of a ranger	_____
Importance of history	_____

Take it to YOUR Park

Answer each question with the information specific to your park. You will have to conduct some research in order to answer each question.

COMMUNICATION

Park name: _____

1)	What features exist in your park that might negatively affect the success of the communication process (natural barriers, distractions, etc.)?

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2) One of the most important aspects for conducting successful, meaningful interpretation is to know your park. What are the primary critical management issues/concerns that should be interpreted in your park?

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3) Create a message to address one need from the list above. Identify the need/concern and indicate how your message will help to address it.

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4) What types of information and orientation services or programs are currently provided in your park?

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5) Using what you've learned from *Module 2—Purpose and Value*, what other types of information and orientation services do you think could be provided in your park?

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