

**Course Name: Sports Psychology**  
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DISCUSSION ON COMMUNICATION AND PERFORMANCE

Hello everyone. So, in this section, I am going to be starting with a little explanation on the NVC, which is the Nonviolent Communication by Dr. Rosenberg and then this will be followed by a discussion. After the discussion section, there is going to be a final closing with a little demonstration of a video. So, let us begin with this.

Another vital aspect called nonviolent communication. So, it is called NVC and it is given by Dr. Rosenberg. Why is nonviolent communication important? This, we have been discussing, right, how am I coming across and what is it that I am picking, right, becomes very very important, right? So, what this communication advice is, what they propose, is to witness and express ourselves as non-judgmentally and uncritically as possible with ourselves and another.

So the four aspects that they really advise is observation. So what is it that I am seeing, what is it that I am hearing, what is it that I am picking up, without judgment. One of myself, of the situation and of another, right? And what do I feel? How am I feeling? Again, not saying this is good, this is bad, okay? So, you are just recognizing not the tone but really the emotional quality over here, right? And then what is the need that I have or what is the need being conveyed by another, okay?

And then finally, how can I make my request, right? Can I ask, this is what I would like you to be or to say, right? And can I also hear the request of another with as much empathy as I possibly can. So this is why it is called non-violent communication because we are trying to express ourselves in the best way, not just for ourselves but also for the other, okay? Thank you.

Today we are going to be discussing communication, okay? So we all know communication but then do we really know it and you know, we are going to try to tease out communication in sport and the vital aspects. So that is going to be Priyanka and my task today with you all. And so, hi Priyanka, welcome. Thank you, ma'am.

So let's first start with what comes to mind, is it an example, a player or what comes to mind when we just think of communication? Probably a lot of things are coming to my mind. There are teams which are coming to my mind, there are individual players who are coming to my mind, the ones who actually communicate what they want, what they feel without the fear of judgment. They are able to express what they want. So that is coming to my mind and body language is coming to my mind, how subtle cues from your body communicate a lot of things which you cannot communicate.

Right. When Priyanka is talking, if I just sit exactly without expression, I think I will get scared. Yeah, so that's exactly and you know because then and that's what we see, right? Like sometimes when interviews and it's supposed to be a stressful interview, you don't know what's going on. Whereas when I'm open, I'm probably nodding my head and you know, she's picking up cues of okay, I feel like okay, I can open up, I can share, right? I feel safe. And I think it's so vital. So when we look at sport especially, you know, it's got so many nuances, so much pressure.

And, how our message is being communicated. So we look at not just the good, but we'll also look at the not so good examples. And sometimes I feel those examples actually when we work through is how our role, especially a psychologist, how we can aid in not just the team's performance, but you know, be that bridge to probably, the support staff or the coach. Difficult job because I think for us, learning to communicate is an important skill that I think psychologists have to take, right? Because everybody comes with their own perceptions, they have their own understanding of how things will move forward. But I think how you communicate can be taken very well or it can backfire also, especially when it comes to sensitive issues.

Correct. Yeah. So I think for us, we I mean, with experience, of course, all these things will be developed to a very large extent. Right. But I mean, I know that even in my career, I've experienced certain things where, okay, this did not go well.

Yeah. Few things went very well. Right. So I think now we have the skill in terms of okay, what kind of personality does a coach have and how do I have to communicate it? Yeah. Yeah. And it's also sometimes when you're working with, let's say even the parents group, right? Yeah.

It's, what's the line? What's the tone? And when do you need to use what? Like, you know, the boundaries also come into play. So I want to bring in this example and I thought we could really look at it because especially our role, I think I like how you brought that in. This team would lose from a winning position. Okay. The more they're led and you know, it kind of reached this place where they got this dubious status of, Oh my God, you know, they lose from a winning position.

And, so as usual, you know, they came in quite late. It was almost to the fag end. And I like to work, get to know, at least to whatever extent possible, every individual there. And then I was meeting people and then what actually happened was there started to be one tagline.

Okay. Can you guess that Priyanka? No, it's like, you, we have to lose to win. Is it something like that? Very close. You know, they were like, ma'am hero nahi banna hai. Hero nahi banna hai, ma'am. And trust me, it's been a few years now.

So it's not any of the recent. And it was very sad, hero nahi banna hai because sport is so much about, you know, hero. It's the hero's journey. And, the first time I heard it, I'm like, okay, what does it mean? And you thought, okay, maybe this is a younger player. And, and I also hadn't done that much work, very honestly.

So I was also trying to, you know, get into the nuances of the game. And this became a tagline. Okay. And I didn't understand because now, now see the thing is, this is a group which probably did not know what psychology was, who's a sports psychologist. So suddenly, but, they would say this, okay.

And then, the important point was, this was a really high profile, you know, the coach was the who's who, the captain was doing exceptionally well, even in that league.

Vice captain was doing well, but as a team, they were not performing. And there were also small groups. So then, so, you know, I was meeting everyone. And then I said, oh, I also want to meet one of the key players.

Okay. And they said, no, no, no, you know, leave him out. Like, uska kuch nahi hone wala. Like, you know, and they kind of had made him the problem.

Got it. Yeah. And I said, I said, he may not come, that's okay. But I want to meet. Let's make that effort. He came, okay. And he came, you know, typical, communication that you're talking.

So this, what does this mean? And very tight jaws. Okay. So I don't want to, though I've turned out. But what I appreciated was he still came.

Right. And then as soon as he came in, he's like, mujhe koi problem nahi hai, I don't have any issue. So I said, yeah, I know. And that took him by surprise. Because you know, without being told they had made him this bad guy.

Yeah. Right. And I said, I know. But you have so much influence with the team. And trust me, that session was probably one of the longest. And I said, I want your help in understanding what's happening and how we can work with this. He was the one who told me finally, that you know, it really was a management coaching issue. Because, when we do the analysis, it was a little old school.

So players would get pulled up. So every player was like, so once they reached a certain lead. I don't want to make a mistake. Right. So that's where it became. I don't want because when someone gets pulled up, maybe it was once or twice, but the message which went out, is shame.

I don't want to be picked this way. Yeah. Toh mein kuch nahi karne wala. So that is why they would freeze as the team.

Got it. Yeah. Right. And so with this guy, so I and you know, so that's how it went. And I'm like, okay, how do we work together? And that evening I went for training. Okay. And

what happened was then somewhere I was somewhere there and he called up Dr. Ji, you know, and I didn't hear at first and he called out like practically everyone could hear and he's like Namaste.

So I said, Oh Namaste, kaise ho and all that. And then the support staff were, what did you do? And I said, I didn't do anything. I treated him like a normal human being. There's a difference between you are the problem and there is a problem.

Absolutely. Right? Yes. And you know, it's been one of the most heartening, cases for me. And of course at that, it was far again. And then I also told them, listen, this is a management issue. And you know, one of the first thing they said was, should we change the coach? And I said, no, maybe he doesn't know. It was a little conventional way to, a lot of coaches use that, not challenge the players or pull them up.

I said, no, he doesn't know. And the next season they came back and started performing really well. You know, and for me, I think, these are moments which stand out for you. Like, it was really that inclusion of that player who was so key was really vital. And you know, like, and I want to also connect this to elephants, Priyanka, I work with elephants because I spend a lot of time in the wild, right? Like, when they say, oh, a wild elephant has entered, it's because we've taken, encroached their space and they label them as problems or worse, they label them rogue. So, what ecologists really say and those who work are, there's a problem here.

Let's not make one individual be it an individual, be it an elephant as the problem, you know. So what do you think of this? I really thought this was a nice example to look into. Yeah, I think it's so important because, even when we look at constellation, we want to include the excluded.

Because exactly. Wow. Yeah. Because the more you keep excluding somebody, that person can have a huge impact on the system. Right. Yeah. So absolutely. So basically, I think including giving everybody the same level of respect, and including everybody and thinking that everybody has a right place on the team is so important.

I love that. I absolutely love what you're saying because I was just also pondering on, you

know, what you said about how when someone's excluded, the energy they're actually drawing out, you know. And also, if this is the field, if this is, you know, let's say the dining area, you're going to see one individual literally being pulled or pulling themselves out. But then they're also drawing so much energy. Absolutely. Because see, when one person who's excluded, that person may be giving out the vibe of anger or that frustration.

I think, what you're saying is how we were, you know, I was in the previous section, I was talking about mirror neurons and how we're all affected by each other's energy. So and being in, especially when it's an influential member, and this person for whatever reason has pulled, you know, they're actually pulling down. Yeah. Right. And I remember another league, you know, there was this player who was a little, let's say, cribbing type, but was extremely smart.

Okay. I was part of the leadership group. And I said, let's give him something that can, you know, keep his energy channeled in the right manner. And then it worked like magic.

Wow. Yeah, that's really good. Yeah. Yeah. And, if you go back to this player, right, the minute, he got included, he is inclusive, it became a team. If not, they were just mini minor fragments there. And how do you expect to perform? It's very difficult. And, you know, although we say that focus on what you really need, these things really influence the way you work there and perform.

Yes. It's somewhere running on your mind. Like, I also remember, for example, when we're going out to teach a crowd, if somebody keeps giving you this judgment, that you're drawn to that particular person in terms of okay, I consciously make an effort that okay, I don't want to look at this person, I want to look at somebody, you know, who I feel is warm and safe. So it's a conscious effort, but it really plays on your mind when you're looking at them. So it's the same. That's a brilliant example.

Yeah, that's a really nice example. And also, I'm just wondering if we can touch on the coach-athlete, you know. Maybe we should talk about a positive example here and then bring it up. I think some of the coaches I've worked with, have been so empathetic, so kind and so compassionate, and it's such an important skill, especially when it comes to coaching.

Yeah. Right. So relational coaching is what you're saying. Yeah. It's very beautiful. Yeah. So beautiful. I mean, they literally touch players' hearts because we've been having a lot of hard conversations.

The way they're present to the player when the player comes up and has an issue is so beautiful, because they're literally, yes, I hear your pain. I'm here for you. Yeah. Yeah. And it's not they're using that particular incident and saying that, yeah, you went through this.

So now, exactly, that doesn't really happen because they know that, you know, what I'm going to be more encouraging and more supportive towards your life experience. Precisely. Yeah. And that I've seen has shifted and brought an immense confidence in a lot of players.

Oh, definitely. I remember, yeah, one of the other leagues I was working with the head coach was, it's not just about this tournament, but, how are we grooming, especially the young athletes, the young ones, how are we grooming? And I think it's a life experience for them to take. So, we used to have combined sessions, especially, COVID year and all that. It was online and it was so heartening because, you know, he would actually, give a nickname for the athletes. Okay. And it would immediately just ease up this, and how nicknames are, I mean, more than him giving, he would ask athletes and they would like, Oh, you know, I was called this or I'm called this.

And somehow, you know, when there's a little banter, when there's a little playfulness and also share your life experiences. In fact, you know, Priyanka, he was one of the coaches who actually told me, have you heard of Brene Brown? And I'm like, Oh my God, like really? Brene Brown is someone who's worked a lot with empathy and resilience. And, that's something that Australian cricket in particular apparently, you know, and I think then the English teams were bringing in.

And I see that percolating now here. So that's really, really heartening. And I remember this one coach that I really worked with, he was saying that I want my players to be vulnerable. Wow. Yeah. He said, you know that, right? That they bring themselves, they're so authentic and they bring themselves out there because you've brought in Brene Brown's work and I really love her work so much.

Yes. Yeah, exactly. And I think it brings to mind how teams which can bond, are the ones who can then feel safe to open up. Because conflict is an essential part, right? It's okay to have a tight body language. Like a lot of times, when athletes come to us, but, if I do this and go, okay, fine, I'm not gonna, then there's going to be no breakthrough. But then you understand what is it? What's their need? You know, what are they trying to communicate? And I think that's where it's very important to go beyond just the conscious. Because a lot of times, you know, I remember even this, this young athlete who had a head concussion, when I asked them, like, how are you feeling? I'm doing good.

And then when you see them, they're like, oh, this is happening. So I'm like, why did you say I am doing good? And they just say, ma'am, but that's just how I see it. So then I asked, I'm like, okay, what would you like me to ask, you know, where I can get an indication? So then we walked out that, you know, I'm going to ask, okay, hi, how are you? And then, how are you feeling? What's happening? Then they're like, because when they say I'm good, right? Like, every time you kind of go, okay, if they're doing good, maybe they don't need an immediate session. Or, and absolutely, it's, I think culture, no, Priyanka, it's culture, plays such an integral role. Like it's like, I remember reading somewhere that, you know, someone says, how are you? Right? Like I say, how are you to you? Or if you say, and then sometimes, I don't even wait for your response. It's just become like a very, okay, you know, it's just a term that you're just using.

So, to really be present to like what Priyanka is saying for me to be present and then go, yeah, and this is what if not, there's going to be no communication, then, you're saying one thing, and I'm just patching up and saying something. There has to be, what is she trying to tell here? And, what do I understand? Absolutely. And I think I want to bring in Dr. Rosenberg's work, it's called NVC in short, Nonviolent Communication. And I know when we talk about sport and nonviolent communication, we would think about not injuring.

But let's remember what Gandhi said, it's the ahimsa in all ways, nonviolence. So, I find it very interesting because it's about observing myself and others without judgment. You know, they talk about four quadrants, four aspects. Second is, again, feeling, what am I feeling? What is the other feeling? Again with no criticism or judgment. And then what is the need being, or what's my need and what's the need of the other that is being communicated.

Because without having that openness, it's not really not possible. And then finally, it's about how will I communicate my need? And how will I respond to, let's say your need? And I think that's a really brilliant model, no? Yeah, it's very, very beautiful. Because a lot of times because you're bringing in this model, what I've also seen is players feel something, but they are not able to express that need. Right, exactly. Yeah. So maybe they feel that we need more rest, but then they will say the other thing.

They'll say that no, no, we'll train hard. But the need is something else. Their body needs the rest. But then the way they're expressing it is something opposite. Because yeah, exactly. I hear you, and also here we will look at why isn't this need being expressed? You know, fear of what? Being probably judged or is it that, thinking that this one, a particular person is not disciplined or not turning up? Yeah, or maybe you're weak because your body can't handle the kind of stress. And, my image, I don't want to, maybe the coach is actually empathic, but then I don't want to.

And I know this young, one of these young swimmers that I'm working with, who's going to train for the Asian Games. So she was saying, the training is of course, the load season, it was like at its peak. And then she said one of the days I could hardly get up. But then what I did was I woke up, I got ready and I told the coach, look, I feel like this.

I can get into the pool, but I'm practically dead tired. And the coach said go rest. She rested and then came back for that evening session fully charged. So what you're saying is right, but now this is someone who's obviously made it to the international stage already. So, she has enough self belief, she's got enough courage in herself and she's probably worked through to say, look, this is what's happening. But you know, with younger athletes, what we see, are they able to do it? It's very difficult. It's actually very difficult because sometimes also what happens is athletes are communicating and the stakeholders are not really understanding that.

I know some of the athletes probably say that, I don't want to play the sport anymore. But then it's like, no, no, this is a family tradition. This has to go on.

Yeah. You know, or maybe they want to say that I want to play another thing. But still it's like, no, you're good at this. So somewhere that, we make the young ones feel that your needs are not important.

Yeah. Just not seen and heard at all. Yeah. That again, maybe makes us feel that, okay, I have to suppress myself. Maybe I'm incapable of making decisions. So these things end up happening. Yeah, you're absolutely right.

You know, as you're talking, I recall this is one of these young golfers. So you know, some significant family member had passed on and she was very close. It was an elderly person. And there was a competition and I remember the parent saying, you know, you need to prepare her, she needs to win. My heart almost broke because, you know, I was kind of going, this child has lost someone, it's an important tournament, I agree.

But I think what is first really essential is to process that. And you know, I remember she came in and she's like, I'm okay, ma'am, I'm okay, I'm okay. And then she started crying. And then she said, I'm so sorry. And I said, I'm like, I'm glad you are because that's a natural response. You know, you care about someone, if not, you keep it bottled up, it's going to happen in different ways.

And I think that's what, as a parent, as a coach, as a significant support staff, I think what we need to realize is how are we communicating? Yeah, absolutely. I mean, because it's such a sensitive topic, I have seen some of the coaches handle it so beautifully. Yeah. I mean, I know of an incident where, you know, this player's father passed away and the coach got to know and he called him, he cried to him and, you know, he said that, you just go back to your family and be there with them.

And that was so heartening. Yes, yes, definitely. And I also know of coaches who say that, what the team is, of course important, but then what is important for you right now is to go back to your family and be there with them. And having that person be optioned, right? Yeah, the choice is so important. Exactly. Because, you know, and I also know of some of the coaches who said that even if it is the most important competition, I'll still give you this particular choice.

Yeah. And these are some of the things we discuss in the psychology sessions. We are like, okay, if something like this happens, how are we going to handle it? How are we going to support this particular person? Right. And players, some of them say that, you know what, I

need my space. Maybe some say that I need my support system, or maybe some say that at that moment, I want to say what I want to, whatever I'm feeling.

Yeah. And or not say anything at all at a particular point. Yeah, that's a brilliant example. Yeah, I think also what that also communicates in the process is, I'm being valued as a human being. Right. And that's something we always talk about in sport, right? You know, in the initial chapters, your self-worth, which we hear from a lot of our role models is, it has to be beyond just achievement. Yeah. Because you're not going to achieve or probably not going to achieve every single time, but that should not pull you up and down.

And I think the example that you were saying, what it really communicates is, then he doesn't have to worry, oh my God, mera career ka kya hoga? Yeah. I remember this one coach, you know, who said to these athletes that, like, you don't give a deadline with respect to injury also. That also gave a lot of safety to the players because they were like, okay, fine.

I don't have to rush myself and get back to the sport, even though I have to perform at a high level. Otherwise, players pressurize themselves so much and say that, I have to get back, get back. But yeah, I think what you're saying and, you know, I love what, because I was smiling because I remembered this one of these young athletes who was injured and her rehab was taking longer. And, you know, it was a combat sport, so knee injury, you know, like me. But anyway, and the point was, she was such a good, budding potential. And trust me Priyanka, you know, I remember seeing her in the beginning, they sent another athlete and she's just zoned out.

But the other one was in the recouping phase. So I thought the coach did really well to send someone else, you know. So it was a lot of audio messages, a lot of work with the physio. And then, you know, they had a review with the doctor. And I remember it was still, she wasn't yet ready to return to play. And I think, the coach and the physio and then what also happened was, you know, unfortunately the physio, changed because the previous one was leaving with whom she really connected.

So this new one has just come in and they were like, how to communicate. And I remember it was the cafeteria and it was a really full day and I was just going to have and they were like, did you talk to her? Did you talk? And I said, can I please finish my lunch? I'm going

to see her post lunch. But I could see, you know, they were also struggling to get this message across. How do you communicate? And the coach made one very, very interesting remark, you know, to tie up to what you're saying and he said, even once she returns, no one can beat her. She's that good. I said, oh, is it really good? And then, we were talking and then I said, you know, what your coach said and I said, he said this, there was this million dollar light coming on her.

Like, he said that. I said, yeah, this is the belief your coach has. And I know the physio was tough for your rehab. But this is the belief you will get back. And Priyanka, trust me, the next time I came, you know, the physio was like, you're not going to recognize her.

And just, you know, previously she had shrunken so much. Suddenly there was just this energy. This was, what the coach had communicated to me was very essential to put that because that was that spark she needed. And then she came back. And I think that's a great example as to how communication and especially the coach or, you know, an important family member or support staff can really have. And I think that's where our role comes in.

Like, maybe he had said it or he felt like, I shouldn't say this at this time. To integrate what he said and it really worked, in the best interest of the athlete. So this is great. This was a great discussion.

Is there anything you'd like to add in the, do you feel we need to add anything more? Or we are good to go? So this is good. I think we really brought it together in this way. And I hope you all can connect us to how, what you are saying, how you are saying, your tone, your body language can really have an impact on whoever it is that you are communicating with. So thank you so much. And thank you Priyanka. Thank you, mam. Thank you.