

Long Lost Relative

Adapted by Alice Wu from an exercise of the same name from Janice LaVore.

What is it?

An ice breaker that helps people start to get to know each other, involving nonverbal communication factors and power and status differences.

Why do you do it?

When people communicate, 93 percent of their message comes from nonverbal factors, while their words convey only 7 percent of message! This nonverbal communication can include eye contact, personal space, gesture, and touch; in addition, it can include tone of voice, pace, volume, and other factors.

This brief exercise shows how much these nonverbal factors affect communication, and how these can vary in relation to issues of power, status, and culture. This exercise can be a simple way to start a discussion of nonverbal factors in communication, as well as issues of power/distance and how these are influenced by culture.

What is the process?

Walk around the room, greeting people.

- 1) First, greet the person as if they were the president of your college or university, or the CEO of your company.
- 2) Next, greet the person as if they were a long lost, much loved relative who has just returned after a long absence and you did not know if you would ever see again.
- 3) Third, greet them as if they were a service person at your school or organization.

Discussion questions:

How did you feel when you were greeting the other person/when the other person was greeting you?

Did you notice any differences in your/ the other person's nonverbal or verbal behavior when you were giving/receiving the three greetings?

How do power and status affect how we communicate?

How does culture influence this communication?

Does this remind you of any real life situations that you have been in?