Communication apprehension (CA) is the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons. Although some people desire to communicate with others and see the importance of doing so, they may be impeded by their fear or anxiety. People who do not have appropriate communication skills or whose communication is ethnically or culturally divergent may also develop communication apprehension. Most people who are communication apprehensive, however, are neither skill deficient nor different from others in the general culture. Typically, they are normal people who are simply afraid to communicate. Because it is natural for people to avoid things that they fear, communication-apprehensive people tend to be less willing to communicate. Therefore, they may be labeled shy by others around them. It is important to note, also, that many communication-apprehensive people do not feel restricted by their feelings about communicating—they can be as happy and as productive as nonapprehensive communicators. Most of the social problems that are experienced by these individuals stem from how they are perceived by others and how others respond to them.

This entry focuses on the discussion of communication apprehension on norms from the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) 24 scale. Completing the scale allows the user to know where he or she falls within the normative range of scores. Scores on the PRCA24 scale should range between 24 and 120 (if they are below 24 or more than 120, a computational error has been made). The PRCA24 scale is designed to measure a general trait of communication apprehension. Between 60 percent and 70 percent of the people who have completed the PRCA scale have scores ranging from 50 to 80. This is called the "normal" range. If one's score falls anywhere outside this range, the idea of communication apprehension may be especially relevant to that person. If one's score is between 24 and 50, that person is among those people who experience the least communication apprehension. This individual is apt to be higher talkers and may actively seek out opportunities to interact with others. Very few, if any, communication situations cause this individual to be fearful or anxious. If one's score is somewhere between 50 and 60, that person experiences less communication apprehension than most people. However, he or she is likely to feel some fear or anxiety about a few situations. If one's score falls between 60 and 70, that person's level of communication apprehension is similar to that of most people. There are some communication situations that may cause this person to feel anxious or tense; in others, he or she will feel quite comfortable. If one's score is between 70 and 80, that person experiences more communication apprehension than most people. Probably, many communication situations cause this person to be fearful and tense, but some do not. If one's score falls between 80 and 120, that person is among those who experience the most communication apprehension. This individual is likely a low talker, one who actively avoids many communication situations because he or she feels much anxiety and tension in those situations.

Those people who fall within the various score ranges on the PRCA scale will now be examined more closely. People in the "normal" range (50 to 80) tend to respond quite differently in different situations. They may be very tense in one situation (when giving a speech) but quite comfortable in another (when out on a date). Those who score in the "low" (below 50) and "high" (above 80) ranges tend to respond to most communication situations in the same way. Researchers consider both extremes to be abnormal. The "low" communication-apprehensive person is considered abnormal because this person is unlikely to feel any fear or anxiety about communicating, even in
they could classify as "good friends," the high apprehensives indicated a range from zero to two, with more than one-third indicating none. More interesting was the finding that, when asked to list the names of their good friends, the high apprehensives most often named relatives while the low apprehensives seldom listed relatives. Just as in school, then, it seems that low talkers tend to fare less well in the general social environment than do talkative people.

**Workplace**

The many perceptions that people have of low talkers are perhaps most felt in the work setting. Low talkers are less likely than talkative people to be given job interviews, especially when their qualifications are equal. Even when an interview is granted, the low talker will garner negative perceptions from the interviewer because of her or his likelihood of engaging in dysfunctional communication behaviors. This is not to suggest that low talkers never get job interviews or obtain employment. Most do, but it is much harder for them than it is for talkative people.

Similarly, low talkers and talkative people are not equally successful once employment is gained. Research in a variety of occupations has found low talkers to be less satisfied with their jobs than are talkative people. The most dramatic work-related difference between low talkers and high talkers, however, appears at promotion time. Not only are low talkers less frequently promoted than talkative people, but they often report not anticipating or even wanting to be promoted. This is because promotions to higher positions typically require greater communicative responsibilities. In short, then, as in the school setting and social environments, life at work seems much more difficult for low talkers than it is for more talkative people.

People have perceptions about low talkers being incompetent and, therefore, being in a highly undesirable condition. Is this necessarily true? Fortunately, it is not. Many quiet people are most happy and content with their lives, and they are successful at what they do. When offered help to overcome communication apprehension, many quiet people decline. Many have adjusted well to their lifestyle and have no desire to change.

**Conclusion**

Willingness to communicate can be a dominant force in a person's behavior. This is particularly true when the person's low willingness to communicate is generalized, or trait-like. In such cases, any communication situation may cause a person to be apprehensive. The person who is willing to talk is one who knows when to talk, when to be silent, and what are the appropriate responses to communications from another person.

See also: Group Communication; Group Communication, Conflict and; Group Communication, Decision Making and; Group Communication, Dynamics Of; Group Communication, Roles and Responsibilities in; Interpersonal Communication; Interpersonal Communication, Conversation and; Interpersonal Communication, Listening and; Intrapersonal Communication; Public Speaking.

**Bibliography**


