

Cole Bishop

Alison Zepeda

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The Lifesaving Languages of Lifeguarding

I think communication is key to growing as an individual. Humans live off of interaction with other humans, it's just natural science. Everyone is influenced by their own spoken language and their verbal environment; though I wonder how many people actually pay attention to their physical environment. I don't mean where they live, I mean their actions.

Whether people like it or not, an individuals' actions speak louder than words. As a lifeguard, this principle of putting body language above other elements becomes a necessity on the job. Watching a person's actions is so important that the act itself can determine an individual's life or their new date of death. Most people normally slouch if they were sitting at a school desk all day; if that individual was on the job projecting that unaware body language, they would likely be fired. Not only would that lifeguard project insecurity to anyone at a glance, how are they able to look over the entire pool and see who is in need of assistance. While on stand, a lifeguard also needs to read other people's body language as well, they need to be able to read the difference between someone holding their breath underwater for fun and an actual passive unconscious drowning victim. Body language is extremely important when lifeguarding.

If someone is in danger, you need to be able to catch the attention of the victim in danger and the rest of your fellow lifeguards; in this scenario, and many other ones, a whistle would be a likely tool to for a lifeguard to use. Normally when people whistle, they do the activity to hum a song or catch someone's attention, would you ever think to use whistling as morse code though? While working, whistles do catch attention of everyone around, though lifeguards blow their whistles in different tones at different times to communicate certain messages to the entire staff. Two short blows mean they need assistance in a non-critical situation, while one long blow of the whistle would indicate a lifeguard is in the action of saving an individual from certain harm or danger, with their being many more combinations with different meanings. If one long whistle is blown the lifeguard must be able to point out the victim, attract enough attention to themselves, likely waving to other guards, and swiftly dive in or rush towards the person in distress. This is nothing but peak communication with both body language and real time morse code, but an individual may wonder how any of these actions have correlation to the topic of culture and autoethnography.

Culture is not just a set of beliefs and values ingrained in an individual's mind; culture can be defined as a behavior of a shared group of people. All lifeguards must act in a necessary, protective, shared behavior as they took a great responsibility upon themselves taking the job. Saving others' lives over their own in a state of crisis or distress is a belief that lifeguards must adopt taking on this responsibility. When out on stand watching over everyone in the water, lifeguards are looked at with higher authority and value, like an actual moral value, as they are the first response to aid in those unknown moments of medical and life saving urgency. All of this describes culture, and if autoethnography is basically the study and application of culture and language practices, then lifeguarding is nothing far from being a culture in itself; to deny such a supported claim like this would be nothing far from ignorant.

So, the next time you see someone spread kindness through your words and actions, like how lifeguards put their lives on the line to save others. Make sure to pay attention to yourself and hold yourself with a higher regard, like how a lifeguard is held in regard for saving lives. Anyone and everyone can affect culture, like how poor and efficient lifeguarding can affect the outcome of a drowning person's life. Just like how lifeguarding can affect others, cultures can affect others too. Cultures can tell stories, stories can tell messages, and if you want to tell others a message its key that your message was properly communicated.